

**Town of La Pointe Regular Planning and Zoning Town Plan Commission
Meeting Agenda**

430 pm, January 7th, 2026 at Town Hall

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85817354068?pwd=WWY4REFXZ3dLaVROQXIMOWV3WVB4dz09>

Members Present: Chair Paul Wilharm, Charles Brummer, Jim Peters (arrived a few minutes late via Zoom), Suellen Soucek (via Zoom), Aimee Baxter

Staff Present: ZA Richard M Kula, TA Max Imholte, Clerk Alex Smith, Treasurer/Short Term Rental Administrator Katey Abbott

Public Present: Paul Brummer, David Ehlen (via Zoom)

I. Call to Order/Roll Call

II. Public Comment (less than 1 minute)

None

III. Zoning Administrator Report (Verbal & Written)

RKula summarized the accomplishments during the month of December. (The written report is attached.) In summary, during the month, RKula successfully completed the 1st Annual Lessons Learned Open House on December 10th, the Town’s Building Inspector and Ashland County Zoning Representative were both in attendance, participated and answered questions. We continued an in-depth review of Public Comments received on the Zoning Ordinance Re-Write and completed an updated/revised DRAFT Zoning Ordinance document. It was shared with the TPC Members on December 30th. Completed an in-depth review of permitting activities by month and by project type for all of 2024 and 2025. It is attached. There was a decrease in dwellings (10 or so), accessory structures (8-10) and driveways (a few) in 2025 (when compared to 2024). I conducted 2 site visits in support of permit requests, issued 7 land use permits during the month, and prepared 4 data packages for TPC discussion at the December Regular TPC Meeting and started identifying and preparing grant applications for the Town of La Pointe to pursue. I worked with the Airport Manager, Emergency Services, Police, and Fire Department on two grant applications that are due in Mid-January. One grant application (the FAA ATP application for a replacement terminal) was submitted in December.

IV. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

a. Regular TPC Meeting – December 3rd, 2025

CBrummer requested a rewording on the last page, Section J. Chapter 205 Building Code where we say that, “Too many people are building things out of inferior products using less than good techniques.” It makes it sound like a lot of the construction on the Island is that way, when we know it is not the case. CBrummer suggested that it read something like, “The concern is not having buildings constructed using inferior products and to ensure that good building techniques are employed.” RKula agreed and confirmed the location. CBrummer

made a motion to approve the Meeting minutes, with noted modifications. SSoucek seconded. All voted aye to pass.

V. Old Business

a. Review, Discuss and possibly approve land use permit applications:

i. None

b. Zoning Ordinance Re-Write – Status Update

CBrummer thanked Paul, Jim and Rich for going through the comments and updating the new draft. Changes including going from two to one camper. CBrummer believes that is a lot to digest in such a short time. He has a lot of comments in the August version that he would like to go through. He would like a separate meeting later this month to go through it in depth.

c. Response Letter to Property Owner Regarding Complaints Received for Wedding Events at 951 Whitefish Lane – Status Update

RKula reported that we were able to send out the letter. The property owner contacted RKula and asked for additional information regarding previous permits, which RKula provided. With the holidays, we decided it would be best to meet in early January. RKula is waiting for a call back from the property owner. Steve Schraufnagel and Katey Abbott (Short Term Rental Administrator) are willing to participate in that meeting. If RKula doesn't hear anything by early next week, he will reach out to him again to move it forward.

d. 1st Annual Zoning Lessons Learned Open House (La Pointe Building Inspector & Ashland County Zoning), Conducted December 10th Summary

RKula provided a brief summary of the meeting. We had the Town Building Inspector Steve Schraufnagel and Ashland County Zoning Office, Keresha Flint participate. It was live streamed. Wish the attendance would have been more. Will evaluate potential better ways moving forward to increase attendance, but so far there have been almost 40 that have viewed the online video. The Ashland County Zoning Official watched the video and appreciated the effort put into it. It gets the process out there. Hopefully there will be less issuing going forward. Maybe look at different times of the day, season changes. Will look at feedback we got on it and hopefully conduct it again next year.

e. Complaints Received – Status Update

i. Fence in Right of Way – RKula indicated that he had completed an internal draft today. Going through internal coordination and will share a draft with TPC before the next meeting.

ii. Home Business in Zoning District R-3 – RKula indicated, and this applies to this one and the next one, that this is in process. He is going

through the historical information at Town Hall, finding files, when the permits were acquired, what they look like, what process was followed. This, and the next one, are at about 50% and hopefully be available for the next meeting.

- iii. **Commercial Storage in Zoning District W-1** – See immediately above.
 - iv. **Building Setbacks (Variance)** – RKula completed a draft today (January 7th) and distributed it to all mailboxes and also via email. PWilharm suggested a change to the first sentence where it states, “building (garage)” that the work “garage” be deleted. This clarifies the unknown ultimate intent of the building. RKula is looking for comments or edits to send out the letter as final. JPeters thinks the letter is very good and spells out exactly what is needed and is a go. CBrummer just picked it up and hadn’t reviewed it so he would abstain from any sort of vote. ABaxter was on the road today and while she started reviewing it, didn’t finish yet. After a very brief discussion it was determined that we didn’t need a vote and any and all comments were welcome and appreciated. RKula could mail the letter.
 - v. **Potential Zoning & UDC Violations** – RKula stated that he had coordinated with the property owner right before the holidays and that we would revisit the issue in early January. If he doesn’t hear back by next week, he will reach out to the property owner.
- f. **6th Street Vacate Request Process** – RKula stated that it is still moving forward. He heard from the property owner on 12/16, and they are hiring a surveyor and will be providing us the necessary information requested. We shared materials with the property owner in early December. It is in process. Once we have the information, we can develop a timeline and keep everyone aware.
- g. **CUP Process – Discuss Online Training/Potential Joint Meeting with Town Board** - Place holder for now, will be on the agenda for future meetings.
- h. **Tech Memo #3 – Next Steps** - Place holder for now, will be on the agenda for future meetings.
- i. **Holding Tank Options – Update** - Place holder for now, will be on the agenda for future meetings.
- j. **“Do I Need a Permit?” – Update on creating an Information Permit Summary and Q&A for the Public** - Place holder for now, will be on the agenda for future meetings.

VI. New Business

- a. 2024 vs 2025 Permitting Summary** – As part of the monthly report, RKula provided a set of 6 tables that provide information on 2024 versus 2025 for both the Town of La Pointe and Ashland County, and the change in building and types of permits issued and fees collected during each year. The number of permits, and associated fees, were down in 2025. That is primarily due to fewer dwellings, accessory structures and driveways. Permits issued by month were compared between the two years as well. Winter months were lower and summer months were higher. It was a challenge in that the database contained 226 projects. RKula boiled it down to 34 categories. Tables 3 and 4 are for Town of La Pointe and Tables 5 and 6 are for Ashland County. The intent, going forward, is to include in the Monthly report, a month-by-month comparison.
- b. Permit Extension Process (beyond the first extension)** – PWilharm mentioned that we had an extension of an extension and that is why this item is on the agenda. RKula explained that we recently had a request and is looking forward to determining the best way of going forward as some projects can drag on for a bit. One option is increase the fees. Is that an option? Our permits really only allow one extension as shown on the permit, but it is not addressed in the Ordinance. Now that we are going through the re-write, now is good time to address it. JPeters indicated that an option would be to allow multiple extensions, but double the fees with each request. SSoucek was on board with this type of approach. CBrummer asked if it was a one-year extension or a two-year extension. ABaxter was on board with this type of approach and that we could revisit it in preparation for the 2027 fees.
- c. Zoning Ordinance Section 13.3 Membership – Potentially Increase from 5 to 7 TPC Members** – PWilharm introduced this topic and indicated that, in addition to the 7 TPC Members, 2 of them could be off-island, but property owners, residents. SSoucek stated that we have had 7 before and there was more conversation and things moved slower. (ABaxter asked if seats were hard to fill when it was at 7 before and SSoucek answered no.) We are trying to help people and don't want to drag it on. CBrummer is a fan of keeping it at 5. Membership should be year-round residents. While there might be some highly qualified that are seasonal residents, he believes it should stay at 5 with them all being year-round residents. JPeters believes that 5 works out well. In the past there have been issues in filling up membership. Having one member (of the 5) being a seasonal resident is proposed in the Zoning Re-Write and he prefers to have it that way. SSoucek added that, since it is a policy recommending group, having it be Island residents is preferred. ABaxter believes that increasing it to 7 members

might make seats that are hard to fill. There are some seasonal residents that are highly qualified that would be great additions, that would not be able to do it, if it were to remain all Island residents. PWilharm would like it to move to 7. A benefit would be workshops could be 3 people. RKula added that he would like it to be 7 and one, if not two, be seasonal residents. He would have been interested in it before becoming a permanent resident. Having that additional viewpoint is important. From a policy standpoint, we are only looking at 1 or 2 non-residents, which equates to between 15% and 30% of a potential vote being from non-full-time residents. Having 7 people helps get all of the viewpoints and perspectives and different resources to help make a decision. Having a couple more people would give us more to get viewpoints from. PWilharm added that the number of part time residents far outweighs the number of full-time residents. CBrummer just doesn't see this as the only way to appease people and get them more involved. He has heard the argument about taxation without representation as they pay the lion share of taxes on the Island. PWilharm brought it to a vote. PWilharm made a motion, with discussion, that we should increase it to 7 with 2 members being nonresidents who own property here. ABaxter seconded. JPeters added that things are working well with the set up that exists now. Trying to get two new members might not be easy. PWilharm and ABaxter voted aye. The motion failed.

- d. Short Term Rental Case Study** – PWilharm introduced the Nantucket case study on Short Term Rentals and thought it was a really interesting read. CBrummer thanked David Ehlen for sharing the original article and RKula for providing additional articles on recent happenings. He thought it was very eye opening and while the scale of the issue is different, it speaks volumes as to what is happening on this Island today. PWilharm found the outcome interesting. There are some identifiable differences. Nantucket didn't tie events to short-term rentals. La Pointe doesn't have motels/hotels like Nantucket has. Discussion continued on to talk about taxes. ABaxter believed they should be commercially taxed to help with the infrastructure and adding a community impact fee/tax. Some require rental receipts be turned over to make sure rentals are being properly taxed. Katey Abbott attended this meeting, as a regular audience member, as she is the Short-Term Rental Administrator. The TPC Chair, following the Robert's Rules of Order, acknowledged her and she gave an overview of how property rentals are taxed. In addition, David Ehlen was acknowledged and provided input during this agenda item. He worked with the State of Oregon – Travel Oregon and communities are rolling back their short-term rentals. If you have a lot of short-term rentals, you will not have a lot of long-term rentals. They don't pay out over the long term. That has a lot to do

with affordable housing. The data is directed and very correlated. PWilharm believes that the cap was implemented and is important.

- e. **2023 Wisconsin Act 73 – Potential Impacts on Some Rental Properties** – With the recent implementation date (January 1st) and the fact that we know that it impacts some renters on the Island we wanted to start talking about it here. We want to remain within Wisconsin State law and ensure that we are appropriately managing the implementation of the new law with the property owners correctly. It is important to note that the law became effective about a week ago. As it is still being discussed, any of the below may be determined, at a future date, to be incorrect. PWilharm reviewed the three options for those that want to continue to rent their venue for events where alcoholic beverages are to be consumed:
- 1) Obtain a No-Sale Event Venue Permit from the Division of Alcohol Beverages and limit the events where wine or beer are consumed to no more than 6 per calendar year and one per month, or
 - 2) Obtain a retain alcohol beverage license(s) from the municipality where your venue is located, or
 - 3) Do not serve or allow consumption of alcohol beverages at events, thereby avoiding the need for a DAB permit or local license.

PWilharm added that receiving an alcohol beverage license from the municipality is not a realistic option. They can serve beer and wine with the proper license but not liquor. Alex Smith attended this meeting, as a regular audience member, as she is the Town Clerk. She was acknowledged by the TPC Chair and provided input on alcoholic beverage requirements. Property owners could apply for a liquor license, but the Town of La Pointe does not have any that are available. We are maxed out. There are temporary liquor licenses that can be applied for, but the criteria is pretty limited; limited to the extent that probably no current property owners would qualify for. Discussion migrated to enforcement and how this would be enforced. Katey Abbott, as the Short-Term Rental Administrator, added that the rental ordinance requires the property owner to have someone on the Island while the event is happening. This law could be changed, but is currently law now. ABaxter mentioned that it was brought up during the Rental Ordinance public hearings and it is noted on our current rental agreement. The Town of La Pointe has been transparent on this change and let property owners know. RKula indicated that we will continue to understand this and make sure we are implementing it correctly.

VII. Future Agenda Items

1. Chapter 205 Building Code

VIII. Extended Public Comment (less than 5 minutes)

- David Ehlen was reading through the opening paragraph of the Town Plan Commission Board and the TPC was established for the purpose of promoting compatible development, esthetics, stability of property values to prevent impairment of depreciation of existing development. Not including a seasonal resident is not representative of the property owner population and not representative of tax revenue generated and not representative of property owned. (PWilharm indicated that in the revised DRAFT Zoning Ordinance Re-Write we already have TPC consisting of 5 members with one nonresident that owns property here.)
- Paul Brummer – To protect peaceable enjoyment, remember that when Craftivity starts having wedding receptions again.
- Jim Peters, who had difficulty logging into the meeting at the beginning, asked about the timeframe for the Zoning Re-Write and next steps. That led to the discussion about the next meeting.
- David Ehlen added that, regarding short-term rentals, to watch out for the high occupancy creep. They can quickly go from 4 to 14 people.

IX. Next Scheduled Meeting – Regular TPC Meeting - February 4, 2026 @ 430 pm –

While February 4th will be the next Regular TPC Meeting for the month of February, we will have a Special TPC Meeting at 430 pm on Wednesday, January 21st to review the DRAFT Zoning Re-Write as well as any other relevant items.

X. Adjournment @ approximately 5:32 pm

Paul Wilharm, Town Plan Commission

Upon reasonable notice, efforts will be made to accommodate the needs of disabled individuals through appropriate aids and services. For additional information or to request this service, contact the Town Clerk. Note: It is possible that members of other governmental bodies of the municipality (and possibly a quorum) may attend this meeting to gather information. No action will be taken by any governmental body at this meeting; other than the governmental body specifically referred to in this notice.