

WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP
REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION
December 10, 2025

Chair Hollerith called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Roll Call: Hollerith, Remus, Dohan, Osetek, Thompson, Green

Absent: Forster

Visitors: Garon Gopigian, Ed Murphy, W.T. Long, Martha Remus, Kristin Neal, Scott Williams, Amy Hackman, Joanne & Dick Stewart, Shannon & Shane Welsh, Douglas Brown, Pat Lennon, Ed Taylor, Charlotte Corbett, Barb Bear, Mary Hughes, Lisa Morris, Karen Bezilla, Dawson Moore, Karin Offield, Scott Sergeant, Joe Labdie, Kaful Okhi Adje “K.K”, Sue Cullup, Kamon Nijer

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all.

Approve Agenda as presented or with additions: **Thompson made the motion to approve the agenda. Remus seconded. Six (6) ayes, one (1) absent.**

Public Comment – Karin Offield informed the Board that the City of Harbor Springs is updating their AV equipment and their old equipment is available if the Township is interested.

Minutes: **Dohan made the motion to approve the minutes of October 8, 2025, as presented. Thompson seconded. Six (6) ayes, one (1) absent.**

Unfinished Business –

a. **Master Plan Review**

- i. Updated initial draft 2025-2026 Master Plan – 63-day review – ZA Lane informed the Board that the West Township Board approved the draft at their November 11, 2025, meeting. Letters to surrounding communities/Townships were mailed out, along with a notice from “Textmygov.” A Public Hearing will be held on January 14, 2026, the date will be advertised in the Harbor Light newspaper and on the Township’s website. Lane indicated a sample motion was available in the Board packets.
- ii. Schedule Public Hearing- January 14, 2026. – After Board discussions, Chair Hollerith asked for a motion to hold a public hearing to solicit public comments. Dohan made the following motion. ***“I, John Dohan, move that the West Traverse Township hold a public hearing to solicit public comments on the draft West Traverse Township Master Plan 2026-2031, at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, January 14, 2026 at West Traverse Township Hall, and that Township staff provide proper notice of such public hearing in accordance with Section 43 (MCL 125.3843) of Public Act 33 of 2008, known as the Michigan Planning Enabling Act.”*** Remus seconded. Six (6) ayes, one (1) absent.

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New Business:

Public Hearing – Case #03-2025, consider a request for site plan review and the expansion and enlargement of a Non-Conforming Use by Special Use Permit, pursuant to Section 410.3 of the Zoning Ordinance, to allow for renovations to the existing pool, expansion to the existing hotel building, the addition of a Wellness Center and Event Pavillion, and the addition of detached cabin units, at the Otis Harbor Springs, 7291 S. lake Shore Dr and 7707 S. Lake Shore Dr, Harbor Springs, MI 49740. The properties are more particularly described in Tax parcels # 24-16-15-09-100-031, and #24-16-15-09-100-032. Thompson made the motion to open the Public Hearing at 5:40 p.m. Green seconded. Six (6) ayes, one (1) absent. Hollerith explained the process for the Public Hearing that included the presentation by the Planner and applicants followed by public comment. Hollerith noted that any public comment should be directed to the Planning Commission and not to exceed three minutes. Commissioner Remus recused himself at 5:42 p.m. Hollerith asked ZA Lane to present the findings of the case including the applicable standards for review. Lane began his summary noting that the Planning Commission has three options regarding The Otis' request: recommend to the Township Board approval with or without conditions, recommend denial, or postponement. Lane gave a brief history of the hotel noting its existence since the 1960's, the number of owners and renovations, and that the second story section of the hotel was declared unsafe in 2023 by the County Building department. Lane noted that non-conforming requires Planning Commission approval and pointed out the list of items that The Otis owners need to meet. Items such as parking lot size, traffic circulation, parking lot material, landscaping, how the rental/hotel cabins will be classified, the number of parking spaces required for occupancy and/or daily visitors, destruction and replacement of the condemned second story portion of the hotel. Lane pointed out that the ZBA met a few days ago and approved the replacement of the two-story building. Lane also noted that the Commission is not responsible for the hotel's ADA compliance. Lane referenced the letters received from the public showing support or opposition to the renovations. Chair Hollerith thanked ZA Lane for his summary and gave Pat Lennon, Attorney for The Otis Hotel, the opportunity to speak for his clients. Lennon thanked the Board for their time and attention to this proposal. He introduced the applicant, JV North Shore Lodge, LLC and outlined their vision for the property. The expansion involves adding three hotel rooms/cabins, renovating the existing pool, and constructing a Wellness Center and an Event Pavillion that will be open to the public not just hotel occupants. He emphasized the compatibility of the proposed changes with the existing use and the community. Israel Hernandez, one of the owners of The Otis introduced himself, co-owner Ty Humpert, John Gibbs, Kamron, Shane and Shannon, and other valued employees. Israel presented detailed plans for the renovations, and the new structures while highlighting the preservation of the property's mid-century modern architecture. He also mentioned The Otis being recognized in numerous magazine publications. Hernandez expressed not only his, but the others, desire for the hotel to be noted for its beauty, charm, and compatibility within the community and for its support of local growers and farms. Israel gave a

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presentation highlighting the history of The Otis, how it has impacted the community and their dreams for the hotel's future. He responded to the concerns of neighbors who are worried about traffic and noise. He thanked the Board for their time and consideration of this project. John Gibbs echoed Israel's statements about the tranquility of the property and what a great fit it is and will be for the community. Attorney Lennon spoke to the legal aspects of the project noting that this is already an existing property, the changes will be incremental, the compatibility and internal use is not changing and to consider when deliberating the things the hotel can and will do to support the community using local produce, etc. Lennon believes all SUP standards have been met. Chair Hollerith thanked them for the presentation. Chair Hollerith opened the Public Comment portion of the meeting at 6:42 p.m. calling for those who wish to speak in support of The Otis and the plans for expansion/enlargement. Teddy Griffin, Karin Offield, "KK", Mary Hughes, Scott Williams, Kristen Neal, and Charles Grynska all spoke in favor of the proposed changes and look forward to using the amenities. Chair Hollerith asked if there was anyone that wished to speak in opposition of The Otis's plans for expansion/enlargement. Martha Remus, Joy Labadie, and Karin Offield spoke against the proposed changes citing concerns about noise levels, traffic, and loss of open space. Glenn Remus noted the words, "shall" and "may" are in conflict. Chair Hollerith asked for a motion to close the Public Comment portion of the meeting. **Thompson made the motion to close the Public Comment portion at 7:18 p.m. Osetek seconded. Five (5) ayes, one (1) absent and one (1) abstained.** ZA Lane highlighted the following for the commissioners to consider during their deliberation; expansion of property, its use, focus on impact over and above current use, pool, kitchen and will those issues be consistent with the number of guests, whether or not Day Passes will be issued to persons not staying there, the number of events, noise levels, hours of operation, landscaping, the definition of the rental cabins as they are detached from the main buildings, lighting and vehicular circulation. Hollerith asked if the Planning Commissioners would be allowed to do a walkthrough of the property, questioned the hours of operation, asked what is the plan with Day Passes (hours versus day long), maximum capacity for the property, parking and if the increasing volume of visitors could be a strain on M-119 Heritage Hwy. Chair Hollerith asked the Planning Commissioners for their thoughts, questions and opinions. Dohan questioned easement issues for parking and current usage of surrounding area. Hollerith asked about the clarification of Day Passes, will they be sold as membership and how that will be managed, the consolidation of the two parcels, lighting plan, kitchen, and front entrance expansion, where will the exhaust be vented. Osetek asked about the impact on the kitchen expansion to the front deck. Dohan asked for a more accurate description of the max size of the cabins. Hollerith inquired about the hotel room count. Chair Hollerith thanked the commissioners for their questions and asked ZA Lane to give a review of items identified by the Board. The Commission requested the additional information from the applicants:

- 1) Allow members of the Planning Commission to inspect the property to better visualize the proposed improvements. Inspections can be scheduled in advance.
- 2) Provide the proposed hours of operation for the Wellness Center and Event Pavillion, and any changes to the bar and restaurant hours.

- 3) Provide the number and types of events proposed for the Event Pavillion.
- 4) Provide the estimated number of Day Passes or memberships that will be issued to persons not staying at the hotel and provide information on what amenities will be included in a Day Pass or membership.
- 5) Provide the estimated capacity for the Event Pavillion, Wellness Center and outdoor pool area and the estimated number of Day Pass holders and hotel guests that might on the property at the same time.
- 6) Provide information on the existing detached "Kitchen Container."
- 7) Provide a complete parking space count consistent with the Zoning Ordinance.
- 8) Provide information on how the cabins will be used and accurately depict the dimensions of the cabins on a revised site plan.
- 9) Provide a detailed landscaping and screening plan on a revised site plan.
- 10) Provide proposed lighting information or a lighting plan.
- 11) Provide information on the thirty-three' foot wide easement depicted on the site plan that appears to run through the parking area.
- 12) Provide updated information on the hard surface proposed for the parking spaces.
- 13) Determine whether the parking areas can be shifted farther from the rear of the property (adjacent to the Birchwood Golf and Country Club).

Chair Hollerith asked ZA Lane to collaborate with the applicants to address these issues. The applicants hope to come back before the Planning Commission by February. Chair Hollerith asked for a motion to postpone the decision on Case #03-2025. Thompson made the following motion. ***"I, Molly Thompson move to postpone until February 11, 2026, Case #3-2025, a site plan to review and the expansion and enlargement of a legal non-conforming use by Special Permit, as submitted by Israel Hernandez on behalf of JV North Shore Lodge, LLC and The Otis Harbor Springs, because we have additional information that was required and want to give the applicant time to get that answered sufficiently so we can provide the support we need to move this forward."*** Osetek seconded. Five (5) ayes, one (1) absent and one (1) abstained.

Other:

- a. Zoning Administrator Report – Lane noted the ZA report is in the packet and told the Board that no complaints have been made about Pond Hill Farm. Chair Hollerith asked if they are keeping counts on vehicles.
- b. Township Board Representative Report – Green updated the Board on the recent developments with the progress of the new Township Hall. A Bond Counsel and a Municipal Manager were selected and approved by the Township Board. A Notice of Intent will be advertised in the Harbor Light. Green expressed the desire to hold a joint meeting with the Township Board and Zoning Board of Appeal. The Board approved the idea and discussed meeting dates in either January or February of 2026. Dohan asked Green about the big Barn and what the Township was planning to do with it. Green answered that the Township Board was discussing options.
- c. Correspondence – ZA Lane noted letters received before the posted public hearing deadline were in the packets. Any correspondence received afterwards will be referenced in the meeting minutes but will not be considered part of tonight's public hearing. Written comments received as part of the public hearing: David & Sue Barkhausen, Ed & Karen Bezilla, Kenneth & Edith (no last name provided), Glenn Remus, Donald & Sara

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Para, Sandra Gay, Martha Remus, Patrick & Mary Hickey, Charles & Lisa Gantz, Bill Stark, Ellie Deskin and Rhonda Blakely. Written comments to be included in the minutes: Jane Harrison, David Lundeen, Bridget McDonald, Jessica Sheets and Maureen Taylor.

Planning Commissioner Comments (open discussion) – The Board members thanked Chair Hollerith and ZA Lane. The Board also discussed the need for transparency and public input for the new Township Hall.

Public Comments – Martha Remus thanked the Planning Commission Board for their hard work.

Next Meeting: Planning Commission next regular meeting will be held January 14, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

Adjournment: **Dohan made the motion to adjourn at 8:20 p.m. Osetek seconded. Six (6) ayes, one (1) absent.**

Respectfully Submitted by:
Jim Osetek, Secretary

Transcribed by:
Amy Peters

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