WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP
REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION
October 14, 2026

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

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

Absent: Thompson

Visitors: Jim & Lauren Bernacki, Ed Murphy, Scott Sergent, Dianna Wessel, Mark Bueby, John Watson, Lindy Sobonya, Pat Verhelle, Ed Taylor

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all.

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

Public Comment – none

Approval of September 9, 2026, Regular meeting minutes: Dohan suggested clarification regarding the comment of, "*allowing ZA Lane to approve any changes*", for the Storage Unit project on State Rd and replace it with, "*allowing ZA Lane to approve any changes within the original permit parameters and revised site plan*". **Dohn made the motion to approve the minutes of September 9, 2026, as presented with corrections. Osetek seconded**. **Six (6) ayes, one (1) absent.**

Unfinished Business:

a. Discussion – Data Centers – The Planning Commission reviewed a Data Center Template Ordinance, felt it was a good outline and will work to modify it for West Traverse Township. Lane asked the Commissioners to read through it and, if needed, adjust wording or any changes, if necessary, to discuss at the November meeting.

b. Discussion –Battery Energy Storage Systems – The Planning Commission agreed to use the same draft template for Battery Energy Storage Systems with Lane asking the Commissioners to, as with the Data Center template, consider the language and bring changes, if any, to the November meeting for discussion.

New Business:

a. Case #6-2026 – Forster introduced Case #6-2026, a Public Hearing to consider an application by North 45 Development Company, on behalf of property owner Michael Idorowitz, to amend the Birchwood Farms Planned Unit Development ("PUD") to allow for the construction of six single family duplex condominiums. The proposed amendment pertains to changes to a condominium development previously approved in June 2021. The property for the proposed project is more particularly described as

701 Greenway Drive, Harbor Springs, MI 49740, ID #24-16-33-426-001. Forster opened the public hearing at 5:35 p.m. Dohan questioned if Birchwood has approved of the project and should the case be delayed until Birchwood approves it. Lane noted that it is up to the Planning Commission and that the application has been submitted and the fee paid. Hollerith questioned the possibility of a Planning Commission Board member conflict to which Lane said there is none. Remus noted that the case is scheduled for approval in November. Lane recapped the project noting the Birchwood PUD had been approved 50 years ago, the project is under the density cap and that the applicants are new owners of the property. Lane stated that the architectural review has been completed by Birchwood, that a notice was posted in the Petoskey News Review on September 29, 2026, the Harbor Light on September 30, 2026, and letters were mailed to neighbors on September 28, 2026. Lane pointed out correspondences received from Mager and Thompson were included in the packet. Lane covered the Zoning Ordinances and the staff findings in the analysis memo. Section 727.9 Density requirements fulfilled. Section 727.5 Environmental, satisfied. Section 727.11, not satisfied, the floor plans need to be more specific. Section 506, deficient, landscaping, snow storage, drainage, etc. need to be addressed and that sewer is regulated by Birchwood. The applicant, Mark Bueby reported that the initial drawings were denied, they are awaiting Birchwood approval of the plans on October 26, 2026, and that the ownership of the properties was not yet finalized. Dohan asked when the ownership issue would be rectified. Forster noted a larger project "The Woods" was denied and that the renderings for the "The Ridges" were originally for "The Woods" project. Osetek asked how far into the process is the project with finalizing drawings, ownership and etc. Forster inquired if there was any public comment regarding the project. Ron Wessell addressed the builder, Mark Bueby, with the Chair's permission, asking questions regarding split of property, whether or not it would be a separate association, what the timeline for construction is, inquired about the septic system, the space between buildings, storm water drainage and etc. Jim Bernacki noted concerns over the effect of property values, felt the plans were different than originally provided, feels that expectations are not being fulfilled and is disappointed with the project. Pat Verhelle stated she was not aware of the project, noted concerns about John Watson, the builder, their use of inferior materials, various lawsuits, and bad reputation. John Watson spoke to the Board regarding the project, replied to Pat Verhelle's comments about his reputation, that the lawsuit claims are false and irrelevant with Mark Bueby echoing his statements. Forster asked for a motion to close the Public Hearing at 6:10 p.m. **Green made the motion to close the public hearing at 6:10 p.m. Osetek seconded. Six (6) ayes, one (1) absent.** The Planning Commission commented on needing more information regarding the plans, landscaping, County Department approvals, sewer capacity, elevations, etc. **Dohan made the following motion.** *"I, John Dohan, move to postpone a decision on Case #06-2026, a preliminary/final PUD plan to amend the Birchwood Farm PUD to facilitate the construction of "The Ridge Condominiums" until November 11, 2026, because the following additional information is needed.*

- *Written approval from the Birchwood Farms Golf & Country Club Association Board confirming its acceptance of the proposed PUD amendment and addressing how sanitary sewer facilities will be provided to the proposed*

development.
• A revised site plan that includes a drainage plan and stormwater retention calculations consistent with Article 7 of the West Traverse Township Zoning Ordinance.
• A revised site plan that includes screening, buffering, and landscaping information consistent with Article 7 of the West Traverse Township Zoning Ordinance.
• Final building plans and elevation drawings for the proposed duplexes.
• A revised site plan that depicts adequate snow storage areas.
• Written approvals of the proposed development from the Harbor Springs Area Fire Department and the Emmet County Road Commission." **Hollerith seconded. Six (6) ayes, one (1) absent.**

Other:

a. Zoning Administrator Report – provided in packet. Hollerith had questions regarding blight violations for two properties on Lake Rd and the number of chicken registrations received. Lane noted that letters of violation were mailed to the owners of the properties.
b. Township Board Representative – Green informed the Planning Commission about the previous nights Board meeting where a 1% Administration Tax was reinstated by a vote of 4-1, him being the no vote, he also reported on the estimates to repair Lower Shore Dr., a contract for a new cell tower on Hughston Rd., that the Board gave its approval for the cell tower pending Planning Commission and legal counsel review.
c. Correspondence – Lane noted correspondence received from Molly Thompson and George Mager regarding the proposed Birchwood Condominium project.

Planning Commissioner Comments (open discussion) – none

Public Comments – none

Next Meeting: Planning Commission next regular meeting will be held November 11, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

Adjournment: Forster asked for a motion to adjourn at 6:26 p.m. **Dohan made a motion to adjourn. Olson seconded. Six (6) ayes, one (1) absent.**

Respectfully Submitted by:
Jim Osetek, Secretary

Transcribed by:
Amy Peters

Proposed: 10-14-26
Approved: 11-11-26