

**Town of Gnesen Planning Commission
January 21, 2026, Minutes, 7pm**

Members Present: Carter Williams, Sherri Underthun, Richard Delano Matt Thibodeau, Pete Bergman, Kathy Buran, Carol Jacobson, Nancy Poppenberg- Town Board Liaison, Zoning Officer Mike Polzin, Zoning Officer Rick Hogenson, Deputy Clerk Sara Rowe, Planning and Zoning Secretary, Town Clerk Sarah Blix

Members Absent: Joe Ferguson

Others Present: Randy Dulinsky, Mike Rowe, Jen Pattersen, Mary Bjorklund, Sue Lyons, Jon Nelson, Jay Haller, and AJ Jensen

Approval of the agenda: Matt made a motion to approve the agenda with additions of the subject of attendance and an apology from Carter; it was seconded by Carol. The motion passed.

Approval of December 17, 2025, minutes: A motion was made by Matt to approve the minutes, seconded by Kathy. The motion passed

Approval of Minutes from May Variance: A motion was made by Pete, seconded by Dick to approve the minutes for the May Variance. The motion passed.

Old Business: No old business reported.

New Business:

St. Louis County Ordinance Change Proposal:

A draft of St. Louis County's ordinance change proposals was presented for reference for Gnesen upcoming change proposals

Ordinance Change Proposals:

OR-25-24:

Discussion was initiated on "accessory dwelling" being in different sections in the Ordinance and asked why. Sherri highlighted one of them, section v, in her proposal. Carol suggested putting together a group that could look at the Ordinance and fix the issues before talking about them. Since the County is cleaning up their ordinances, we need to look at that and compare it to ours. Carol made a motion to create a committee to work on ordinance changes. Kathy seconded the motion. Sherri did not want to table the proposals already being discussed, but supported the committee being put together. The motion was voted on and passed. Discussion continued with OR-25-24 proposal with disagreement on definitions and the use of an IUP. Sherri suggested to remove item c on page 64 under V, "Accessory dwellings" and add that a recreational vehicle is not to be used as a year-round dwelling, and to add if an RV is used as an accessory dwelling the owner must be able to show evidence of proper septic maintenance. Kathy made a motion to leave the Ordinance as it is. It was seconded by Carol. The question was asked if this was a response to the Stewart Camp by Matt. Sherri said yes, that is one of the people that came forward. Carter said that the intent of the Ordinance was accessory dwellings are to have a primary structure. The deputy clerk asked if there were people in the township that have a camper on their property, that is the primary structure and how this would play into the discussion. Carter said that would become a seasonal dwelling. Sherri said we have seasonal cabins all over the place. It was discussed that section V should be titled "Recreational Vehicle". Kathy's motion was voted on and passed. Matt made a motion to accept the change to the Ordinance that would add a sewage requirement under section V, that it should require the owner must show that there is proof of proper septic maintenance. The motion was seconded by Carter. The

verbiage would read “must” instead of “be able” The motion passed. Mike asked about when the 120 days starts. Matt said it would be the interpretation of the zoning officer and mentioned the calendar year. Sarah Blix stated that it should be rewritten then, if it was that open to interpretation. Dick made a motion for the Ordinance to say “120 consecutive days”. Sherri seconded the motion. A point of order was made on writing down the motions on the cards. No action was taken to write the motions down. Pete asked if we really want to make this “consecutive days”. There was confusion about what motion was on the floor. Matt discussed the difficulty of making rolling changes on the floor and the difficulty in recording that. Dick’s motion was voted on and failed. There was more confusion about what motion was on the floor.

OR-25-26: This proposal was rescinded by the author

OR-25-25: Clarification, Section 4, item 3 on page 2 of the Short-Term Rental Regulation: Current certificate of compliance requirement to be changed to “current passing certificate”. Jon Nelsen stated that it was not confusing at all, or a clarification issue, but do we want to reverse ourselves. He stated nonconforming and passing wasn’t good enough. He wouldn’t want to start changing ordinances to solve people’s individual problems. We are here to enforce what is best for the community. Kathy made a motion that any requests for short-term rental changes be scrapped. She stated the Ordinance is only five months old, the caps have not been met, and a document from June 15, 2022, written by Mike Polzin and Sue Lyons stated “The short-term rental industry’s two biggest supporting industries are tourism and realtors. Real Estate develops and realtors profit while neighborhoods suffer.” Dick seconded Kathy’s motion. Carol stated you don’t change the ordinance for one person. Kathy stated it is the responsibility of the zoning officer to say “no”. Sue Lyons spoke in favor of Kathy’s statements, along with Mary Bjorkland. Rick stated that people have called and told people they have the right to apply for a variance. Sarah Blix stated you cannot apply for a variance for a change in use. Rick clarified the term as you can come to Planning and Zoning. Jen Patterson questioned the commercial zone and stated it could use some revision. Carter stated STRs need to meet the requirements in the commercial zone, the distance requirements being an example. Jen Patterson asked about the caps. Jen stated she thinks her proposal is in line with the comprehensive plan and would hate to see the changes scrapped. She stated she is not a resident. The motion was voted on and passed. Because this motion was passed, it cancels out

OR-25-25, OR-25-33 and OR-26-01 as proposed.

OR-25-27 : RV can only be used in addition to principle building: Sherri made a motion to deny this request. Carter withdrew his OR-25-27 and respective **25-28** proposals.

OR-25-29: “Substantial construction”: Add “any construction on site described in the building permit beyond site prep”. Dick asked if this goes with permit penalty. The Deputy clerk asked if we have a definition in the Ordinance of what “site prep” is. Matt said no and it was asked how that is determined by the Deputy Clerk. Sherri stated she asked people previously what they thought site prep means. She said she got anything from putting the stakes out to cutting down trees. Everybody had a different idea of what site prep really was. Sherri suggested those be the site prep definers. Sherri made a motion to clarify site prep as marking where you want to build with stakes only. Matt asked what the intention was of the change. Sarah Blix reminded Carter that there was no second for the motion. The motion was removed from the table. Carter answered Matt’s question; if somebody starts a project without a permit, at what point do they cross before it becomes a fine. If they do substantial work, which is work on any construction site as described on the building permit beyond site prep. That’s when it becomes a violation. That was in response to the zoning officer’s question of where are we on that one. Rick stated you don’t want substantial work prior to the permit being issued. If the site is cleared of trees, leveled and gravel hauled in and leveled, that’s site preparation. Carter agreed. Rick then said if you choose to put a floor drain in, or other type of work, other than your leveling, then you are no longer in compliance. Carter agreed. The Deputy Clerk stated we need to look at information that is already in the Ordinance because “site prep” can mean different things in different areas such as riparian, where if you are moving dirt, maybe you can only move 50 cubic yards of dirt before you need a permit. Kathy stated you don’t want the site to be a huge land alteration before you even walk on site and issue the permit. This issue was tabled for lack of clarity on what site prep is and the word substantial.

OR-25-30: Improper lettering of Ordinance 10: Carol and Kathy thought it should be done during cleanup of the Ordinance. Matt made a motion that we recommend to the Supervisors they put out for public hearing the requested change which is now listed as OR-25-30, which talks about the improper numbering of the sections from pages 58 to 67, and he thinks we should make the changes after we get from A through Z, the system should restart numbering as AA, BB, CC, DD, EE, FF, as written on the requested change. Dick seconded the motion. Carol stated the costs of the changes and asked if this could be done after the committee meetings. Jon did not think the change needs public hearing as it is not changing policy but clearing up a clerical error. The motion was voted on and passed.

OR-25-31: remove section referring to Tool sheds-Carol read the Ordinance 10.022c3. Kathy added that the proposed changes to the St. Louis County was to increase the square footage of a building not needing a permit to 160 square feet, because that is the standard 8x 20 storage container. Carter said he was told the reason for the no fee permit was to ensure they only have one of these structures. Mike Rowe said the whole section is redundant and contradictory. "Tool sheds" should be removed from page 58. Sherri made a motion that on page 58, we remove the "tool sheds are" from the sentence "tool sheds are accessory structures. Carter seconded the motion. The motion passed. Sarah Blix mentioned the 15-foot height requirement and referred to page 35 and noted a contradiction.

Carol asked for a new motion to discuss the previous motion just passed further. Matt said no. Jon Nelson said anyone who voted in favor of the motion can vote for a revote. Carter asked for a revote. Carol seconded. The motion failed on the second vote. It will go to committee.

OR-25-32: Rewrite the section for shipping containers:

There was discussion and confusion within the Commission about whether the current Ordinance allows shipping containers. Mike Rowe said what he read is that they are allowed only for permitted businesses, home occupation, or home businesses. It was determined there never was a public hearing on it. Carter said it was changed some time ago to allow them for residential. Mike said the words, shipping container and trailer, if read strictly, it would say that a person in a residential zone could not have a shipping container or even a trailer of any kind on their property unless they are a business. He does not think that is the intent of the Ordinance because many people have shipping containers and many more have trailers, utility, snowmobile, etc. Mike wanted to better fit what is already going on in the township and chose to use the word "storage structure" over shipping container because there is already a definition on page 20 that clarifies the wording about trailers. "Storage structures shall include shipping containers". That's why he chose to go with the term storage structure. Sherri made a motion to strike the paragraph as requested on page 58, under "tool sheds" that talks about shipping containers and trailers that have been crossed off as presented in this ordinance change. Carter seconded the motion. Kathy hesitates to remove the term shipping container from the verbiage. Rick agreed. St. Louis County is already looking for change because of this. Rick mentioned using shipping containers for constructing a home. Carter said that would be a different function of a storage container. This is talking about storage structures. Carol suggested we don't remove it until it goes to committee. The motion was voted on and failed. This will go to committee.

Jon Nelson suggested a process to help the change proposals in committee. That if it is expected the Board does not want proposals to be brought up by the Town Board, they be removed, like the short-term rental changes. The Committee was assigned to Kathy, Carol, Sherri, Sarah, Nancy, Carter, Matt and Rick to be held Tuesday, February 3rd at 6pm.

Attendance: Joe was asked to let Carter know by March if he wants to continue and let him know because he would be up for renewal in April. If he chooses to resign the Board has chosen to move this committee down to seven people.

Apology: Carter made an apology regarding lots of record on leased land. For MN Power leased land lots, if there is proof prior to the passage of the Ordinance, then it becomes an acceptable lot. Our Ordinance requires road access, however.

Zoning Officer's report:

Rick has nothing to report

Mike mentioned Gary Juten's letter regarding the Humes property and stated there was a pause on any future activity.

For Hemlock Drive, Mike said the County has not yet sent a repurchase proposal and it was recommended by the County for us not to proceed with any further actions at this time. Mike said that property reverted to the County on December 10.

Motion to Adjourn: Kathy made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Dick. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 8:50pm.

Ordinance Change Committee Meeting February 3rd, 6pm

Next Planning and Zoning meeting February 18, 7:00pm

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Rowe, Deputy Planning and Zoning Secretary

Carter Williams, Planning Commission Chair

Date