Town of Gnesen Planning Commission
June 17, 2026

Members Present: Carter Williams, Sherri Underthun, Dick Delano, Matt Thibodeau, Pete Bergman, Kathy Buran, Carol Jacobson, Zoning Officer Mike Polzin, Zoning Officer Rick Hogenson, P&Z Secretary Sarah Blix

Members Absent: Joe Ferguson, Nancy Poppenberg

Others Present: AJ Jensen, Jay Haller, Randy Dulinski, Shawn & Kim Bolf, Gary Juten, John Ramos

Approval of the agenda: Carol made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Sherri. All vote in favor.

Approval of May 20, 2026, minutes: Sherri made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Carter. All vote in favor.

Discussion: None

Old Business:
Hemlock Drive – Mike reported that he had a dumpster scheduled for delivery to Scott's property on June 15, 2026, however that will not be happening due to Scott being non-agreeable and threatening that if a dumpster was delivered, he would push it off his property into the street. Mike stated that they are revisiting the game plan to figure out how to move forward. Carter asked Mike if the planning commission could be provided with documentation of what the abatement will really entail to which Mike said yes. Carol questioned what the court order actually stated. Mike said he could send that to Carol. Mike said since NERC is no longer willing to give volunteer labor for abating the property and Scott is refusing to allow St. Louis County to deliver free dumpsters to his property, there will be significant costs now associated with both. Gary questioned if the pricing would be provided at the July Town Board meeting to which Mike said that is what he was planning as he would need sign off and approval for both. Mike said that Jon Nelson asked for a plan to be forwarded to the Town Board and Sarah for review, discussion and approval. Gary questioned if Mike has been transparent with companies he has been getting quotes from and explaining the possibility of a hostile situation, to which Mike said yes, he has.
Data Centers – Feedback from Town Board – Andrew Tiede provided a definition of data centers that the township could adopt into the ordinance. Andrew also suggested adding a line within the ordinance that states, "*Data Centers are prohibited in all districts within the Town of Gnesen."* Carol made a motion to send the verbiage from Andrew Tiede as presented to the ordinance subcommittee, seconded by Carter. Rick commented that the verbiage from Andrew just came in and questioned if the commission would like to take time to review it before recommending it for approval. Carol said it would be going to the subcommittee before sending it to the Town Board. Rick said he misheard and was ok with it going to the subcommittee for further discussion before presenting it to the Town Board. All vote in favor of accepting Carols motion.

New Business:
Short Term Rental Septic's – Rick presented a change to the STR ordinance regarding non-conforming septic certificates. The proposed change to **Sect 4 Review and Approval** is as follows,

3. *Permit Application is filled out in its entirety with all associated required documentation including the following:*
    a. ~~*A valid, current certificate of compliance for the property's septic system showing that the system is compliant. St. Louis County, as our septic authority, delineates on-site wastewater inspections into four categories: compliant, non-conforming, non-compliant, and imminent threat to public health. For purposes of this ordinance, compliant means only compliant and excludes non-conforming, non-compliant, and imminent threat to public health.*~~ *A valid, current certificate of compliance for the property's septic system issued by St. Louis County, our septic authority.*

b. *A valid, current certificate of non-conforming for the property's septic system issued by St. Louis County, our septic authority.*
    i. *A certificate of a non-conforming system submitted shall cause the Zoning Officer to establish that the septic system is eligible for a short-term rental license under current St. Louis County ordinances.*
c. *Property Manager contact info and secondary contact information.*
    i. *Property Manager and/or secondary contact person/firm must be located within 45 minutes of STR to ensure prompt response to serious complaints.*

Carol questioned why we are proposing to change the ordinance again when we just had a public hearing in March which changed the verbiage regarding septics. Gary said the township's intent was never to govern septics, however that is what keeps happening. Gary said that Bob Whitmeyer who is a septic designer explained that Gnesen does not have the authority to deny something that St. Louis County would approve. St. Louis County approves non-conforming septics for short term rentals. Depending on the reason why it is deemed non-conforming, St. Louis County may add conditions such as a reduced capacity. Sherri said that she likes this proposal. She added that if St. Louis County approves a non-conforming septic for a short-term rental, then she would like if they could also provide Gnesen a letter stating that they approve. Gary said he did not believe St. Louis County would do that as Gnesen has their own zoning. Carol said if we recommend Ricks proposal then we should also propose to remove the plus two as St. Louis County does not allow that and we must be as strict or stricter as St. Louis County. Carols proposal would read as follows, *"The maximum number of overnight guests is limited to two (2) people per bedroom ~~plus two (2).~~"* Sherri made a motion to accept the proposed ordinance verbiage suggested by Rick, seconded by Matt. There was discussion about making changes to the ordinance when it is so new and the costs associated with making changes. Carol asked if this proposal should be sent to the subcommittee for further review. Sherri said she did not believe it should. All vote in favor of Sherri's motion. Sherri made a second motion that on page 3 section 8, 4 of the STR ordinance, remove, *"plus two (2),"* seconded by Carter. All vote in favor. Mike questioned if there are STR's who are permitted with the plus two are we going to take that away? Carol said she believes STR's are like a 3-year contract and upon renewal they have to start over. There was discussion about grandfathering in, what gets grandfathered in, and if septics are included in grandfathering in. For clarification, Sarah read a portion of the ordinance, *"Any existing short-term rentals existing prior to October 24, 2022, will be exempt from both the distance and cap requirements."* Sarah said that septics are not grandfathered in, only distance and cap.
Cease & Desist – Rick questioned how to handle cease & desist. Carter said he believed this would be a town board question. Gary said he believed the City of Duluth has something written up and he will look into it.
Bolf Property – Rick said the Bolf's had applied for a land alteration permit. Upon review Rick realized the property is over the allowed percentage of impervious surface for shoreland property. Rick questioned if he could suspend the Bolf's permit to allow them time to revisit their plan and see if they can reduce the percentage of impervious surface to meet the guidelines. Carter said he believes Rick can suspend the permit and if the Bolf's can redesign their project then they can move forward. Sherri said she agrees with Carter.

Zoning Officer's Report: Mike had nothing new to add. Rick discussed the permits that he has been working on.

Correspondence: None

Motion to Adjourn: Sherri made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:06 pm, seconded by Carol. All vote in favor.

Upcoming Meeting:
P&Z Meeting – July 15, 2026 - 7:00pm

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Blix, Planning and Zoning Secretary

Kathy Buran, Planning Commission Chair

Date