Town of Gnesen Planning Commission
August 19, 2026

Members Present: Carter Williams, Sherri Underthun, Dick Delano, Matt Thibodeau, Joe Ferguson, Kathy Buran, Nancy Poppenberg, Zoning Officer Mike Polzin, Zoning Officer Rick Hogenson, P&Z Secretary Sarah Blix

Members Absent: Pete Bergman, Carol Jacobson

Others Present: Mickey Ferguson, Ben Potter, Adam Marzolf, Gabe Campbell, AJ Jensen, Chris & Shannon Montague, Randy Dulinski

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

Approval of July 15, 2026, minutes: Sherri made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Dick. All vote in favor.

Discussion: None

Old Business:
Hemlock Drive – Mike reported that the abatement on Hemlock Drive took place earlier today. Mike said that three dumpsters were filled and taken away. Mike said he spoke with some neighbors, and they were not happy and thought there was not enough garbage removed from the property. Mike said there may need to be a second day of junk removal to complete abatement. Mike said there were five sheriff deputies present, three remaining on site the entire day. Mike said the deputies were under the assumption that Gnesen was only abating hazardous waste material. Per the court order, Gnesen has three weeks to complete the abatement. There was a lot of discussion about scheduling a second day and who has the right to authorize that as today's abatement cost roughly $7000.00. Sarah reminded the Commission that only the Town Board has the right to authorize expenditures. Sarah will reach out to Chair Nelson and explain the situation, inform him that the P&Z Commission's consensus is that a second day is needed to complete the abatement to satisfaction, and to find out how Mike should proceed.
Cease & Desist – Rick reported that Supervisor Juten was trying to get a stop work order from the City of Duluth but has not had any luck. Rick has reached out to the City of Hermantown to see if they can provide him something but has not heard back yet.
Data Centers – Sarah said that the TB has accepted the P&Z Commission's recommendation of putting a moratorium on data centers to provide the township time to research and create ordinance verbiage that will protect our community. Sarah said that Chair Nelson reached out to Andrew Tiede and he will provide sample ordinance language for the subcommittee to use as a resource and he will also provide a sample resolution that will need to go before the Town Board for approval. Once the resolution is approved, Gnesen will have one year to research and approve ordinance verbiage. Discussion about creating a subcommittee. Sherri said she thought a notice in the newsletter asking for volunteers who would be interested in being on the subcommittee would be a good idea. Sarah said she could put the notice in the October newsletter.

New Business:
Zoning Map/Thompson Lake Classification – Sarah explained that a building permit on Needle Lane was turned into the office and it was brought to her attention that although the Gnesen zoning map shows Thompson Lake as a W1 Natural Environment Lake, the DNR classifies it as a W2 Recreational Development Lake. Upon further research Sarah found that the ordinance verbiage supports the DNR and lists Thompson Lake as a W2 Recreational Development Lake. Carter made a motion to follow the W2 designation as proved by the DNR, seconded by Matt. All vote in favor.
Salvage Yards – Sarah said that she received a call from Ted Raymond questioning the grandfathering in of the two existing salvage yards. This discussion was brought up by Ted on October 16, 2024 at his CUP review. Carter said he remembered the discussion being that the two existing salvage yards should not have to participate in the annual CUP reviews or pay the fees unless a complaint is made. Matt made a motion that the two existing salvage yards owned by Ted Raymond and Steve Larson not be required to pay the annual CUP

review fee or attend the yearly review meeting. This will run from year to year unless there has been a complaint made, seconded by Dick. All vote in favor. Sarah will send the two salvage yard owners a letter notifying them of this decision.

Adam Marzolf – IUP Application – Adam explained that he was applying for a STR under an IUP. Adam is a resident on Island Lake and would like to operate a STR in his home, however he does not meet the 1500ft distance requirement as there is an existing STR operating down the road from him already. Sherri said she thought Adam's presentation was wonderful and has no concerns with his request. Rick said that STR are processed under the STR ordinance not Ordinance #10 under IUP's. Rick said he believes this is not allowed if we uphold the ordinance as written. Kathy said she opposes this request as the applicant does not meet the distance requirement. Carter agreed that nowhere in the ordinance does it state that an IUP can be used for STR's and also that Adam does not meet the distance requirement. Sarah said that at the last Town Board meeting the question was raised if an IUP would allow STR applicants to break requirements. Sarah said that Chair Nelson had reached out to Andrew Tiede about governing STR's with an IUP and Andrew confirmed that Gnesen can continue to use all of the current requirements from the existing STR ordinance. Sherri told Adam that he could rent long term with no restrictions. Kathy made a motion to deny Adam's IUP application based on the fact that he does not meet the distance requirement of the current ordinance, seconded by Carter. Adam asked if it would be a reasonable request to lessen the distance requirement on riparian property, to which Carter said a proposal for an ordinance change could be presented to spark discussion. All vote in favor of Kathy's motion.

Montague Variance V-26-02 – A public hearing has been set for Wednesday, September 16, 2026 at 6:30pm. Ben Potter will be representing the Montague family at this public hearing.

Campbell Variance V-26-03 – A public hearing has been set for Wednesday, September 16, 2026 at 6:45pm. Gabe Campbell will be representing Dennis Campbell at this public hearing.

Personnel/Zoning Garage Issue – The issue of two garages that were issued on Island Lake was brought forth for discussion. Both garages were permitted and allowed to be constructed even though they were both twice the allowable size. The discussion was how to proceed since both applicants obtained permits. Carter said if permits were granted and the sizes of the requested garages were clearly indicated then even if they were approved in error there is nothing that can be done. Kathy said use it as a learning experience and move forward and do a better job to catch mistakes before it is too late. Sherri said she would like to move to a closed meeting to discuss it further. Sherri made a motion to finish the agenda but then go into a closed meeting to obtain all the facts prior to making a decision. Carter said he agrees with Sherri. Matt said he disagrees and believes that the Town Board should be notified to deal with this situation. Sherri rescinded her motion as she agreed with Matt that this is a Town Board issue.

Amending August 2025 P&Z Minutes - Sarah explained that a surname was disclosed by mistake in the August 2025 P&Z minutes and needed to be redacted. Kathy made a motion to redact the surname that was mentioned by mistake in the August 2025 P&Z minutes, seconded by Carter. All vote in favor. Sarah said that moving forward all complaints will be given a number such as Comp-26-01 and that will be how they are referenced.

Working with Lake Associations – Rick explained how Gnesen had a application for a STR turned in and while during research found that the road association does not allow STR's. Rick said it would be beneficial for the township to get a list of contacts for road association presidents to have on file. Sarah will put a notice in the October newsletter.

Zoning Officer's Report: Mike had nothing new to add. Rick said a STR application was turned in where the landowner was listed as homesteaded in both Gnesen and elsewhere. Rick will send a letter asking where the applicant will be homesteaded in January of 2027. Rick is researching the need for Gnesen to have their own permit to install a driveway off township roads. Rick said there was a complaint about an unlicensed campground on Island Lake. Rick said he drove by the property and noted five campers, and several electric plug-in stands. A letter has been sent to the property owner questioning if they have a license for the campground. A STR permit was issued where no capacity was indicated on the permit.

Correspondence: Carter said he has been trying to contact a representative from Firewise to get a chipping event scheduled for this September, however because of the fires in Ely there was delay in response. Due to this, there will be no chipping event scheduled for this year.

Motion to Adjourn: Sherri made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:36 pm, seconded by Matt. All vote in favor.

Upcoming Meeting:
Montague Variance V-26-02 Public Hearing – September 16, 2026 – 6:30pm
Campbell Variance V-26-03 Public Hearing – September 16, 2026 – 6:45pm
P&Z Meeting – September 16, 2026 - 7:00pm

Respectfully submitted,

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Sarah Blix, Planning and Zoning Secretary | Kathy Buran, Planning Commission Chair

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Date