

**CITY OF IRON RIVER
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, June 12, 2025
9 AM
Minutes**

Chairman Bob Byczek called the meeting to order at 9 a.m., in the Council Chambers of the Iron River City Hall. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Roll Call: Benjamin Garcia, John Kolbas, Mike Hoinowski and Byczek.

Absent: Jim Dellies, Pete Djupe and Michael Poindexter.

Also present: City Manager Rachel Andreski and City Clerk Tyana Elenbaas.

Public in attendance: Chief Harrington.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

APPROVE AGENDA

Garcia motioned with support from Kolbas to approve the agenda as presented. All in favor; Motion carried. Absent: Dellies, Djupe and Poindexter.

APPROVE MINUTES

Garcia moved with support from Hoinowski to approve May 8, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes. All in favor; Motion carried. Absent: Dellies, Djupe and Poindexter.

MANAGER'S REPORT

- MDNR Conversion Issue – Andreski reported that her column in *The Reporter* received positive feedback. In response, Glenn Dobson, CFO of Aspirus Iron River Hospital and Clinics, contacted the City and requested a detailed proposal to present to the Real Estate Management Board. She prepared and submitted the request, which was subsequently approved by the Board, contingent upon the City covering the surveying fees and closing costs. The proposal will now proceed to the U.P. Board for consideration. If approved at that level, it will move forward to the main Aspirus Board for final approval.
- Reporter Building – Andreski reported that renovations to the building are progressing well. The roof installation has been completed successfully. Work is currently underway on the HVAC system, after which drywall installation will proceed. Some cost savings were realized due to the electrical panel not needing replacement. Pending City Council approval, these funds will be reallocated toward upgrading both outdoor and select indoor lighting to energy-efficient LED fixtures. This upgrade is expected to provide long-term cost savings.
- Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) Project Plan - WICKWIRE held a mandatory pre-bid meeting at City Hall at 11 a.m. on June 4th, where numerous contractors and Andreski attended. The bid opening is June 23rd at 10 a.m. Work can begin immediately after the contract is signed, so construction could start this fall.
- Burned House on Genesee – The house was foreclosed on and auctioned by the County and then purchased sight unseen by the current owner. Chief Harrington has been in contact with the new owner as he is in violation of many of our blight ordinances. He plans on

demolishing the house and rebuilding either a duplex or quadplex and has been in contact with Andreski regarding Zoning.

- Blight – On May 1st, the City launched its annual “Fight the Blight” campaign. Approximately 147 warnings were issued by IRPD for non-compliance with property maintenance standards. Currently, around 40 properties remain non-compliant, though many are actively working toward meeting requirements. A small number of property owners continue to resist compliance, consistent with patterns seen in previous years.
- Siding Ordinance – Letters have been sent to those non-compliant with a deadline of July 1st to obtain a Land Use Permit. Permits are valid one full year after approval. The number of violators has decreased significantly.
- Nelson Field Lights - Andreski shared that there has been significant public interest and feedback regarding the replacement of the lights at Nelson Field. In response, the City Council has agreed to allocate gate fee revenues to support the project, and the Parks and Recreation Committee has also committed funding of \$13,000.

During the discussion, Chairman Byczek inquired about the school’s financial involvement, specifically questioning why it appeared the school had donated a large portion and whether the City intended to transfer ownership of Nelson Field to the school.

Andreski clarified that, to date, the school has not contributed any of their funds to the project. She also stated that the City has had preliminary discussions with the school about ownership of Nelson Field. However, she emphasized that the playground equipment at Nelson was funded through a Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) Trust Fund Grant along with other projects in the Park. Transferring ownership of the property to the school would put the City in violation of the grant terms—similar to the situation involving the Ice Lake Conversion Issue.

- Congressional Spending Grant - Andreski reported that the City has successfully advanced past the first stage of the grant application process. Notification regarding the final award is expected in August or September. This is a 25% match grant, and if awarded, the funds will be used to replace a snowplow truck and acquire a front-end loader to support City operations.
- Zoning Administrator –The new Zoning Ordinance has gone into effect on May 30, 2025. The City Council is currently serving as the Zoning Board of Appeals until a new board can be established. Byczek expressed interest, to which Andreski stated the Planning Commission would need to vote on whom they would like on the ZBA.
- Bylaws - Andreski informed the Commission that, according to the Planning Commission’s Bylaws, members are required to maintain regular attendance and if three consecutive ones are missed action be taken. She noted that Pete Djupe has repeatedly missed multiple meetings without providing notice, which is in violation of those rules. She asked the Commission for guidance on how to proceed.

Chairman Byczek recommended that Andreski reach out to Mr. Djupe via phone or letter to ask whether he is still interested in serving on the Planning Commission. Commissioner Garcia emphasized that the Bylaws are in place for a reason and must be followed. He

stressed that Commission members have a responsibility to the community, including consistent attendance. Garcia also noted that important business is conducted at each meeting, and a lack of quorum could delay decision-making on key issues.

Chairman Byczek also noted that Jim Dellies has missed multiple meetings as well and he believes that Dellies has frustrations with him a Chair. Andreski stated that Dellies has been informative when it comes to his attendance. He had expressed concerns with the conduct of Chairman Byczek stating that he needs to stick to the agenda.

Garcia motioned with the support of Kolbas to accept the Manager's Report. All in favor; Absent: Dellies, Djupe and Poindexter. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

CY2026 CIP

Andreski stated that this will continue to show up on the agenda, just in case the Commission would like to add anything to the Capitol Improvements Plan.

NEW BUSINESS

Conditional Use Permit – Home Occupation, P. Gruss Dog Grooming Business

Paloma Gruss submitted a Conditional Use Permit request to operate a dog grooming business from a trailer located at her residence. She previously operated the business while living in the Township and now wishes to reopen at her new location within the City.

Chairman Byczek expressed opposition to the request, citing concerns that the business would be operated from a trailer rather than within the home itself. He stated that the proposal does not align with the intent of the Home Occupation ordinance and warned that approving such a use could set a precedent allowing businesses to operate from accessory structures, which is not permitted under current regulations.

Commissioner Garcia acknowledged those concerns but noted that Gruss's residence is in a low-density area and her business would likely have minimal impact on neighboring properties.

Garcia moved, with support from Kolbas, to approve the Conditional Use Permit for the home occupation, with the following conditions:

- The business may operate out of the current structure (the trailer).
- If a new structure is to be used in the future, a new Conditional Use Permit must be submitted.
- The structure used for the business may not exceed 20 feet in length.

Roll Call: Ayes: 3 – Hoinowski, Kolbas and Garcia. Nays – 1: Byczek. Motion Carried. Absent: 3 - Dellies, Djupe and Poindexter.

Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance

Andreski noted that the item had been requested for inclusion on the agenda. She explained that while she had provided the current language of the ordinance in question, it does not fall under the Zoning Ordinance. As such, it is not within the official purview of the Planning Commission, but rather under the jurisdiction of the City Council. However, she stated that the Planning Commission

could review the matter and provide recommendations to the City Council, although it is not technically a responsibility assigned to the Commission.

Garcia recommended that the Commission proceed with drafting a set of recommendations. He suggested that these could be reviewed and finalized at the next meeting, after which a comprehensive recommendation list could be submitted to the City Council for consideration and approval.

Food Truck Ordinance

Byczek noted that Andreski had provided the Commission with an example of a food truck ordinance from the City of Crystal Falls.

Andreski stated that the City currently does not have an ordinance regulating food trucks. She mentioned a noticeable increase in food truck activity and noted that many communities in the Upper Peninsula have begun implementing food truck policies. She also included a copy of Crystal Falls' food truck application for reference.

Byczek inquired about the possibility of adding a "tax" on food trucks. Andreski responded that any such tax would require a public vote and could not simply be imposed by the City.

Kolbas asked how ice cream trucks are currently regulated. Andreski explained that while the Health Department ensures compliance from a health and safety standpoint, the City itself does not currently require any additional permitting or regulation.

Garcia suggested that local food trucks be charged a reduced fee compared to non-local vendors, as a means of encouraging local economic growth.

Andreski reiterated the need for a formal ordinance, noting the increase in inquiries and the absence of existing City regulations on the matter.

Hoinowski raised concerns about where food trucks would be permitted to park, emphasizing the importance of ensuring adequate parking availability.

Andreski pointed out that Crystal Falls has many of the answers carved out in their ordinance and it would be a great map for us to follow.

Byczek asked the Commission to ponder this and at the August meeting we can begin to draft out an ordinance.

Short – Term Rentals/ Air BnB's

At the last regular meeting it was requested Andreski seek ordinances for Short-term rentals and Air BNBs. Andreski informed the Commission that most communities in the Upper Peninsula do not currently have regulations in place regarding short-term rentals such as Airbnb. She noted that she had contacted the City of Iron Mountain, which does not have a policy, as it has not been deemed necessary. In contrast, the City of Ironwood does have a policy, but it is administered through their local lodging association rather than directly by the city. She also emphasized that developing a regulatory framework for short-term rentals would be a significant undertaking. She asked the Commission to consider whether it would be worthwhile pursuing at this time, given the currently low number of inquiries the City has received on the matter.

Garcia emphasized the importance of proactively planning for the future of the City, particularly regarding housing availability. He expressed concern about the potential loss of long-term rental units due to the unregulated growth of short-term rentals. Garcia recommended that the City complete the Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance and include short-term rentals as a subcategory within that framework. He expressed support for limiting the number of short-term rentals permitted in the City. To illustrate his concerns, Garcia referenced the City of Munising, noting that it has become primarily a tourist destination with little to no availability of long-term rental housing. He cautioned against allowing a similar trend to take hold locally.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.


COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Chair Byczek stated that he heard from a resident that no one is allowed to cook outside. He wanted to inquire about the validity of that statement. Byczek stated that the person who told him this was at one of the meetings and that is where he was told he couldn't cook outdoors. Andreski assured Byczek that no such discussion took place.

Byczek also inquired about the City View parking lot and asked if that lot was included in the DDA Parking Lot plan. Andreski clarified that the City View parking lot is not City owned but is privately owned. It is not included in the DDA's plan.

ADJOURNMENT

Byczek moved with support from Garcia to adjourn at 10:25 a.m. All were in favor; Absent: Dellies, Djupe and Poindexter. Motion carried.



Tyana Elenbaas, City Clerk