

**CITY OF IRON RIVER
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, August 14, 2025
9 AM
Minutes**

Vice Chairman John Kolbas 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: Michael Poindexter, Benjamin Garcia, Mike Hoinowski and Kolbas.
Absent: Jim Dellies, Pete Djupe and Bob Byczek.

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

Public in attendance: Jay Berry and Jon Ahlberg

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Jay Berry and Jon Ahlberg, who were representing the First Lutheran Church requested that the City redo a portion of East Genesee Street. The portion runs through the parking lot of the church. It was noted that the road heaves in the winter and is dangerous to pedestrians.

Andreski noted that this issue has been brought up previously by different representatives from the church and does agree that the road does heave. She noted that there are no utilities that could be causing the heaving. She believes it might be related to an old foundation to a house but ultimately the cause is unknown.

Garcia tossed out the idea of abandoning the road and allowing the church to take possession of it. He also suggested that this project could be put on the Capitol Improvements Plan.

APPROVE AGENDA

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

APPROVE MINUTES

Garcia moved with support from Hoinowski to approve June 12, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes. All in favor; Motion carried. Absent: Dellies, Djupe and Byczek.

MANAGER'S REPORT

- MDNR Conversion Issue – Andreski reported that the proposal is scheduled to go before the U.P. Board on August 18, 2025, for consideration. She has been in communication with Rae Kaare, CAO of Aspirus, who expressed confidence that the proposal will be approved at that level. If successful, the proposal will then proceed to the main Aspirus Board for final approval.
- Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) Project Plan – Andreski reported that despite encountering significant red tape, progress is being made with the assistance from WICKWIRE. We will be receiving the Bond Purchase contract on August 18, 2025, there will be a pre-construction meeting on August 27, and the final closing date on September

5th, 2025. Roustala Construction has expressed interest in beginning construction this fall, pending final approvals.

- Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) – We have submitted an Intent to Apply form to EGLE for the next round of SRF funding. We will be notified in October whether we are successful in obtaining the grant.
- Category B Grants – This is a 50% maximum grant of eligible costs, up to \$250,000. We will be notified mid- September if we are successful.
- Hazard Mitigation Grant – Andreski noted that this time around we have a better chance of receiving funding. Andreski has entered into a miscellaneous service agreement with WICKWIRE to proceed with an application.
- DDA Parking Lot Project – Bacco Construction will tentatively start construction after Labor Day. WICKWIRE will be scheduling a pre-construction meeting prior to the start date.
- DPW Superintendent – Andreski noted that the DPW Superintendent position has been filled by Steven Saunders. He has experience in water and in sewer as he previously worked in Public Works in California.
- New Businesses – Andreski updated the Commission on some new businesses that are coming to the City. The old Town Hall by the Post Office has been bought and will be turned into a dog grooming business. She also noted that she has been working with another who would like to open a candy store on Genesee Street. Both businesses will be in the downtown area.
- Land Use Permits/Blight – Andreski noted that it has been one full year since the Chicken, Duck and Hen Ordinance. Garcia questioned how many residents followed the Ordinance and obtained a permit before they purchased chickens? Andreski stated that most have done it backwards and obtained the animals first.

Garcia recommended fully enforcing all ordinances, including applying the corresponding fines. Andreski expressed challenges with enforcing blight ordinances due to a lack of cooperation from the presiding judge. Garcia proposed that each member of the Planning Commission draft a Letter of Distaste to the judge, in hopes of encouraging stricter enforcement. Andreski noted that Bates Township, the City of Crystal Falls, and Gastra are all actively addressing blight issues. Bates and Crystal Falls are reportedly reviewing our blight ordinance as a model for their own. She stated that Bates and Crystal are looking at our blight ordinance as a template for theirs. She added that Caspian has adopted a different approach—rather than going through the courts, they assess unpaid blight fines on property taxes Garcia expressed support for Caspian's approach. Hoinowski inquired if the Planning Commission recommended a policy like Caspian, if the judge could “throw a wrench in it?” Andreski stated that there isn't.

Poindexter recommended that the City Council adopt a policy to place unpaid blight tickets onto property taxes, following the example set by the City of Caspian. Garcia seconded the recommendation. All in favor; motion carried. Absent: Dellies, Djupe and Byczek.

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

OLD BUSINESS

CY2026 CIP

Andreski stated that she hasn't had anything to add to this but will converse with Craig from WICKWIRE regarding the First Lutheran Church's request. She expressed concern with adding their request to the CIP as there are other roads that are in further despair.

Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance

Andreski noted that she has provided the Commission with an alphabetized list of landlords as requested. She noted that it is incomplete and is a working document.

Poindexter asked who oversees rental inspections under our current ordinance. Andreski stated that this ordinance has not been implemented. She added that John Lacoangeli recommended that the person be a certified Michigan contractor or a certified home inspector.

Andreski stated that Jim Dellies provided her with a copy of the rental inspection he had from Arizona. The homeowner pays for an annual rental inspection.

Poindexter noted that the current ordinance allows for inspections every three years, he expressed concern over the timeline. He suggested changing inspections to yearly.

Garcia suggested putting fines on property taxes for non-compliant landlords as a "slum lord deterrent."

Andreski reiterated that it is important to work on this ordinance as there is a high demand for housing. She noted that she obtained Iron Mountain's rental and inspection ordinance. They require annual registration and have a checklist for the inspector to go by during each inspection.

Garcia noted that the registration fees could fund the employment of an inspector. He suggested that the Zoning Administrator position also includes the rental inspection position. He suggested finding a zoning administrator and adding the rental inspection with the promise of the City paying for the Certificate. He noted that by combining the positions, the city will be creating full-time employment, which would be more tantalizing to an interested party.

Poindexter recommended that the Commission proceed with adopting Iron Mountain's ordinance and put any fines on property taxes. He suggested we revamp the ordinance, create a home inspection checklist and implement new blight language.

Food Truck Ordinance

Andreski stated that the City currently lacks an ordinance regulating food trucks and highlighted a recent increase in food truck activity during events such as the Rodeo, Iron County Fair and Father's Day Cruise Night.

Kolbas emphasized the importance of protecting local brick-and-mortar establishments, which contribute to the community through taxes and reinvestment, unlike outside vendors. Poindexter acknowledged this concern but stressed the need to balance protection of local businesses with encouraging outside vendors to participate in community events.

Garcia proposed implementing a tiered fee structure, suggesting reduced fees for local food trucks to promote local economic growth. He also recommended creating an event-specific fee or a category-based permit system for food truck operators.

Kolbas asked for clarification on the definition of “local,” specifically whether Iron County residents would qualify. After some discussion, it was agreed that “local” refers to residents of Iron County and that brick-and-mortar businesses located in the City of Iron River would be exempt from food truck fees.

Additionally, Kolbas suggested using the vacant city lot near McDonald’s as a designated food truck area, citing issues with scattered placement during downtown Market Days for the Rodeo, which led to reduced visibility for some vendors. Garcia supported this idea.

Finally, Poindexter recommended that we model our ordinance after the City of Crystal Falls. Hoinowski agreed but stated that the fees needed to be revised.

Kolbas with the support of Garcia agreed to table this item to allow the Commission more time to make notes and suggestions, which will be discussed at the next meeting. All in favor; Motion Carried. Absent: Dellies, Djupe and Byczek.

NEW BUSINESS

Zoning Board of Appeals Appointment

Andreski explained that under the recently adopted Zoning Ordinance, the City Council will no longer serve on the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). The ZBA will now function as a separate board, with the provision that one member or the Planning Commission may serve on it.

Garcia initially nominated Michael Poindexter but rescinded the nomination after Michael Hoinowski expressed interest in the position.

Garcia motioned with the support of Kolbas to recommend Michael Hoinowski for appointment to the Zoning Board of Appeals. All in favor; Motion Carried. Absent: Dellies, Djupe and Byczek.

Resignation Letter

Andreski explained that we have received a resignation letter for Peter Djupe, who felt he no longer had the amount of time needed to perform the duties of the Planning Commission. She expressed appreciation for his years of dedicated public service and noting his irreplaceable knowledge and contributions, which will be greatly missed.

Garcia moved with support from Kolbas to accept Peter Djupe’s letter of resignation. All in favor; Motion Carried. Absent: Dellies, Djupe and Byczek.

PUBLIC COMMENT

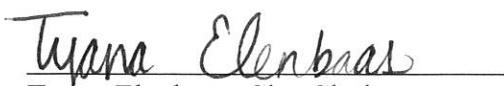
None.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Kolbas moved with support from Hoinowski to adjourn at 10:50 a.m. All were in favor; Absent: Dellies, Djupe and Byczek. Motion carried.


Tyana Elenbaas, City Clerk