

Approved: 6/17/2025

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508 Second Street, P.O. Box 277, Pepin, WI, 54759, Phone 715-442-2461 Emails:
clerk@pepinwisconsin.org and treasurer@pepinwisconsin.org

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Village of Pepin Municipal Building
Thursday May 8, 2025, at 6:00 PM

MINUTES

1. Call meeting to order - Randy called the meeting to order just after 6pm

Appoint a secretary - Randy noted he spoke with Brittany last week about being the secretary. Steve Westman made a **motion** to appoint Brittany. **Seconded** by Kevin.

2. Roll call - Randy discussed changes to the membership composition of the planning committee, including Mike coming off but remaining involved for now in what Mike described as a transitional role for the sake of continuity in the ongoing work with the zoning map update. Steve Westman has joined the Planning Committee and Tom Latane was invited back on. Tom moved from the attendee's area to the table for members after agreeing to do this at this time. After this discussion, the roll call was completed - members present included Randy Kallstrom, Pat Sandstrom, Steve Westman, Tom Latane, Kevin Sandwick, and Brittany Dondlinger. Mike Michaud present in advisory role. Member not present - Jeff Heit.

3. Approval of the meeting minutes - Minutes from the 4.23.25 meeting reviewed. **Motion** to approve by Kevin, **seconded** by Pat. All members present in agreement, minus Steve who abstained. Motion passed.

4. Public Hearing - Regarding a Conditional Use Permit under Chapter 115 regarding a license to operate a Short-Term Rental at 110 Pine Street.

Mike provided background information about the application and supporting documentation included in the packet, including confirmation that applicant Mike Belzer is the official representative of the LLC.

Applicant Mike Belzer introduced himself, describing his relationship with Pepin, his intention to rent out 110 Pine Street on weekends he currently stays in Pepin on his boat, and to off-set costs associated with the home while he continues to work/live in the Twin Cities until one day hopefully residing here fulltime.

Attendee Dougie Padilla spoke about being a resident of Pepin 1/2 time and his concerns about the number of Airbnb listings on a particular block

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(18). He voiced concerns about the gentrification of the community and some residents of Pepin being forced out to live elsewhere because of this. He questioned if a moratorium on short term rentals was possible. Randy and Mike referenced past research indicating that the State of WI prevents property owners being told what they can/can't do with their property, leading to ongoing discussion of what role a village may play in regulating. Kevin added that these types of concerns have been brought up at many past meetings as well. Attendee Sue Fedie added that she felt that this should be discussed at an ordinance meeting and the focus here should remain specifically on applicant Mike Belzer's application. Mike added additional background information on the previously completed Comprehensive Plan completed in 2009 with goals to have updated in 2020 although COVID interrupted this when it was questioned if the village has considered long term planning needs related to housing.

Attendee Lori Clark spoke about being a neighbor to the Mike Belzer/the 110 Pine Street property, noting that this meeting includes applicant Mike's specific property, larger issues around short term rentals in the community, and specifically concerns with the density of short term rentals on that block. Mike added that there was previously research into the possible effect the new internet option coming into Pepin may have on short term rentals although it wasn't as high as anticipated and working within the limits of what law allows on regulation. Randy spoke to the revenue issue that Pepin has particularly in the winter with many homes only being occupied seasonally. Pat added that a previous meeting in the fall featured many local business owners voicing about the need to keep tourists in town to make their business successful and keep them open, which includes having short term rentals available. She also added that last year short term rentals brought in \$28,000 to the village in revenue and they only composing about 5% of the housing stock in the village.

Attendee Pat shared concerns about noise from tourists staying in short term rentals and Mike added that there may be work to be done on the enforcement piece of noise related ordinances. It was additionally discussed that if there isn't a record of noise complaints/complaints made, there is little that can be done. Mike clarified that the lumberyard building is classified as a hotel and not a short term rental. Attendee Jan Buntz noted that as an owner of a short term rental, she would rather have someone call her personally if there is an issue with renter and not law enforcement if not needed.

Brittany asked Mike Belzer if he had an expected timeline of when they may move to Pepin permanently. Silvana noted that she is likely to be present more than Mike for now with Mike stating he will have to be in the Twin Cities for a number of years before being able to fully transition to Pepin. Mike Belzer also added that he only intends to take Airbnb 5 star rated guests to reduce issues and not take any last minute reservations. Discussion returned to the question of density, regulation and how local rules fit into this.

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Attendee Dugan Rossalini spoke about Jan Buntz's situation being different as she lives on the property she rents out compared to other owners that may not be physically present. He spoke of concerns with the numbers of individuals he described as a transient population being concentrated in part because of density issues, the number of long term residents in town, discussed the need for a quantitative analysis and supported a moratorium. Brittany asked Mike Belzer if using his home as a long term rental was ever considered, which is also a housing need in town but he stated that didn't fit their plan. Attendee Shari Breitung voiced concerns about the density of short term rentals as well as concerns of noise.

Mike Belzer shared that he appreciated hearing feedback from the community and added that the previously mentioned idea of sharing his number with the neighbors around the property was something he found reasonable to ensure that he is accessible/available should a concern arise. He added that short term rentals are not the main reason that there are housing issues occurring right now and feels that he is here/doing this for the right reasons. Attendee Dugan suggested revenue generated should be used to attract families that would live in town permanently. Attendee Rebecca asked if the idea of having property owners provide their personal number to neighbors surrounding the rentals could be added to an ordinance. Mike asked Mike Belzer about the 30 minute response time required as he lives in the Twin Cities currently and he spoke of having a network of connections/individuals within Pepin who would be available to respond in an emergency. Mike also asked about the parking requirement and Mike Belzer confirmed they have adequate parking per the policy.

Pat suggested adding the noise ordinance policy itself to the STR packet provided to renters which has been done before and Mike Belzer agreed that this could be a possibility. Attendee Lori also voiced support for neighbors having a phone number of a property owner if there is an issue. Dugan and Mike spoke additionally about questions surrounding a moratorium and how the planning committee can make recommendations to the ordinance committee. Attendee Jan voiced support for additional work related to the overall variety of housing available in Pepin. Randy spoke about discussions of annexing land as the village is at the limits of physical space.

Tom asked if the presence of the firepit on the property required any additional attention - only if there was a fire ban would this be a factor. Kevin did share/suggest noting that if a renter calls 911 from a cell phone in an emergency the call may go to dispatch in MN so a caller will need to identify that they are in Pepin WI. Randy spoke about the difficulty in balancing the needs of the village between long term residents and tourists to keep the village successful.

5. Discussion/Action Regarding a Conditional Use Permit under Chapter 115 regarding a license to operate a Short-Term Rental at 110 Pine St.- Randy noted with the public comments appeared to be over. Steve noted he felt it

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was cut and dry to approve the request as it is Mike Belzer's property to do with as he wishes. Steve made a **motion** to bring it to the board. Pat **seconded**. Members supporting - Randy Kallstrom, Pat Sandstrom, Steve Westman, Kevin Sandwick. Member opposing - Brittany Dondlinger. Member abstaining - Tom Latane.

6. Discussion/Action Regarding updates to the Village Zoning Map - Mike noted he felt the changes to the zoning map should go to a public hearing but also that additional review may be needed from attorney Jon Seifert. He suggested possibly a form letter being sent to all owners of properties affected. To date, "public property" does not have a defined definition. Mike noted that he will work with Clerk Julie Wheeler on the language for the forms. It was questioned if Pepin County will need to go through their GIS update before moving ahead at the village level. Once the Pepin County update is complete, changes should be able to happen in real time. The county should now know the number of properties that need changing but costs may need to be checked. Additional discussion of the timing of bringing this to the board, scheduling a public hearing, sending out letters to affected property owners, and the updates that need to happen at the Pepin County level.

Pat made a **motion** to close review of the zoning map changes, check with Pepin County on the costs/timeline, set the date for the public hearing, and send out letters to affected property owners with at least two weeks' notice. Kevin **seconded**.

7. Set next meeting date - Topics for the next meeting included making recommendations to the ordinance committee and discussion of defining what is in a public category, allowed/conditional uses of this category. Noted - churches and the Lions Club were identified as what could be in the public category. Next meeting set for 6/3/25 at 6pm.

8. Adjourn - Pat made a **motion** to adjourn, Steve **seconded**

Randy Kallstrom-Chair

Brittany Dondlinger – trustee