

Pierson Township Planning Committee

21156 W. Cannonsville Rd,

Pierson, MI 49339

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 14, 2026

1. Call to Order: 7:00 pm
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call Present: Tyler Lecceadone; Paul (Chip) Dunneback, Donna Ericksen, Sheldon (Rick) Fahner, Jeff Smith, Caleb Sower, Travis Workman
4. Approval of Agenda. Motion: Erickson Second: Sower All: Aye
5. Approval of April 23, 2026, Meeting Minutes Motion: Ericksen Second: Workman All: Aye
6. Public Comments:

Maggie Ver Merris stated that her family has owned property on Big Whitefish Lake since the 1960s and expressed concerns that the proposed development would increase boat traffic on the lake. She stated that increased use could contribute to safety concerns and the introduction of invasive species. She questioned whether the proposal was consistent with the Township Master Plan.

Jim Bruinsma, attorney with McShane & Bowie, speaking on behalf of approximately 150 township residents and property owners as specifically identified in a letter to the Planning Commission, stated that the application has been altered after the public hearing process began. He stated that the Planning Commission was being asked to consider a materially different proposal than what was originally presented to the public and argued that information regarding density, intensity of use, and operational details remained incomplete. He requested denial of the application on the basis that the application was incomplete and that the revised proposal had not been subject to public hearing.

Christine Nicoletti stated that her family has owned property on Whitefish Lake for more than fifty years and discussed the historical ownership and stewardship of the subject property. She expressed concerns that the proposed development was inconsistent with the residential and rural character of the area and stated that she did not believe mini-storage or boat condominiums aligned with the Township Master Plan. She further expressed concerns regarding the scale of the development and stated that community members had explored alternative purchase options to preserve the property and proposed to purchase the property for \$11,000 per acre which exceeded the developers purchase price of \$4,500 per acre.

Andy Harwood, adjoining property owner at 22232 W Cannonsville Road, stated that the proposed development did not satisfy the intent of the ordinance's required greenbelt buffer because significant existing vegetation would be removed and the stormwater basin would be located within the buffer area. He further expressed concerns regarding stormwater management and drainage impacts to his neighboring property. He referenced Section 15.02(E) of the Zoning Ordinance that stated that the Montcalm County Drain Commission and the Township Engineer must both approve the stormwater system and stated that per the Montcalm County Drainage Commission their required approval had not yet been obtained.

Laura Wiltz of 2975 Elmwood stated that her primary concern was fire protection and public safety. She referenced the ordinance requirement that a special land use not adversely affect fire and emergency services and stated that nationally recognized fire safety standards call for a minimum of twenty feet of unobstructed roadway for emergency vehicle access. She noted that the Sand Lake Fire Department, the permanent AHJ (Authority Having Jurisdiction), requested the 20-foot access road width. She noted that Cannonsville Road did not meet those standards and questioned whether adequate emergency access existed for a development of this size.

Dr. Joan Downs of 3095 N. Grand, expressed concerns regarding potential impacts to public health, drinking water quality, and natural resources. She referenced letters submitted by a professional hydrogeologist and the co-chair of the Big Whitefish Lake Ecology Committee, which raised concerns about stormwater runoff and the potential for contaminants associated with vehicle storage and maintenance activities to reach groundwater and Big Whitefish Lake. She also discussed concerns regarding standing water in retention areas as potential mosquito breeding habitat and the associated risk of mosquito-borne illnesses, including West Nile virus. Dr. Downs questioned whether the applicant had provided sufficient evidence to satisfy the standards of Section 15.03, specifically whether the proposed use would avoid adverse effects on natural resources, drinking water, and public health.

Derek Burgess of 3127 Grand Avenue expressed concerns regarding roadway safety and the capacity of Cannonsville Road to accommodate traffic generated by the proposed development. He stated that the road is narrow and expressed concern that the addition of boat trailers and increased vehicle trips associated with the proposed development would create safety hazards and increase conflicts between vehicles and other road users. He questioned whether the existing roadway infrastructure was adequate to support the proposed intensity of use and stated that increased traffic could negatively impact the safety and character of the surrounding area.

Chris Hartmeyer of 2605 Elmwood stated that he was concerned about the safety of children who regularly use area roads and neighborhoods. He explained that his three young daughters frequently travel between nearby family properties by bicycle and scooter and that existing seasonal boating traffic is generally predictable for residents. He expressed concern that the proposed development would introduce additional and unpredictable vehicle and boat trailer traffic, increasing safety risks for children and families, and recounted that his 5-year-old daughter's young friend had recently been killed by a delivery truck. He urged the Planning Commission to deny the application.

Michael Florentine of 3199 North Shore Drive expressed concerns regarding the review process for the proposed development. He stated that many seasonal residents were not present during earlier meetings when the Application was initially considered. He noted that residents had requested consideration of an ordinance amendment and temporary moratorium related to self-storage facilities, and he questioned why those matters had not been placed on the Planning Commission agenda. He expressed concern that the Application was being advanced to a final vote before those issues had been fully considered and stated that, in his opinion, the process appeared rushed. Dr. Florentine urged the Planning Commission to ensure a fair and transparent review process and expressed concern that approval of the project could have long-term impacts on Big Whitefish Lake and the surrounding community.

Mike Julien of 2397 N. Dagget Road noted he was a former Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals member with 27 years of experience. He referenced Section 15.03 of the Zoning Ordinance. He stated that the proposal would adversely affect adjoining and nearby properties, increase traffic and safety concerns, create additional demands on public services, negatively impact natural resources, and the application did not satisfy the standards required for approval of a Special Land Use Permit.

Robert Blitchok of 2695 Elmwood questioned whether the proposed development complied with the standards applicable to the site and expressed concerns regarding the overall scale, intensity, and potential impacts of the development on surrounding properties. He stated that the size of the project was not compatible with the surrounding area.

Don Knottnerus of 2175 Dagget Road stated that the proposed boat storage condominium development was inconsistent with the intent of the Rural Residential zoning district and the Township Master Plan. He noted that Special Land Use approval should not be used as a means of introducing a commercial-scale storage facility into a residential area, describing the proposal as a "back door" to commercialization that would undermine residents' expectations regarding the character and use of surrounding properties.

7. New Business: None

8. Public Hearing(s): None

9. Ongoing Business

A. Marijuana Ordinance (Recreational) to Public Hearing June 25 (due to posting requirement)

B. Short Term Rentals - Move to next meeting

C. Additional Dwelling Units to Public Hearing June 25

Motion: Ericksen Second: Dunneback Aye: All

D. Special Land Use for Agri-Business in the AG district to Public Hearing June 25

Motion: Ericksen Second: Dunneback Aye: All

E. Kropf Rowland Boat Condos:

The Planning Commission continued its review of the Kropf Rowland Boat Condominium/Storage Facility Special Land Use Application.

The Applicant's engineer, Matt Cole, outlined revisions made in response to public and Planning Commission's comments.

The Planning Commission discussed comments received from fire service authorities. Township staff and consultants responded to questions regarding fire service jurisdiction and emergency response considerations.

Commissioner Dunneback noted that based on all the information he had read over the last few weeks regarding this project, it would have an adverse impact on the traffic safety and emergency services. The engineer addressed his comments. He also discussed drainage concerns with the township engineer.

Commissioner Smith noted that the facility didn't meet the Master Plan and that it would be more appropriate where infrastructure was better suited.

Commissioner Sower noted the distinction made in the Zoning Ordinance as to certain impacts that must be shown not to be "substantially adverse" whereas the operative subsections of Section 15.03 specify that projects cannot be approved unless they are shown

not to have an “adverse impact”. He determined that there would be an adverse impact with this facility.

Township attorney, Michael Homier, answered questions from Commissioner Sower and others.

Commissioner Fahner expressed his ongoing concern that W Cannonsville Road was not adequate to support the proposed development and stated that he viewed road conditions and traffic safety as a significant issue. Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Sower moved to deny the Special Land Use Permit application based on Sections 15.03(b), (c), (d), and (e) of the Pierson Township Zoning Ordinance. In support of the motion, Commissioner Sower stated that he concluded that the proposed development would have an adverse effect on road capacity, traffic volume and traffic safety; police, fire, and emergency services; the protection and preservation of natural features and natural resources; and views from adjacent and nearby lands. Commissioner Sower further noted that while Section 15.03(a) references a "substantial adverse effect," Sections 15.03(b) through (e) prohibit an "adverse effect" or "adverse impact," and that his motion was based on the standards as written in the Ordinance.

- Pursuant to Section 15.03(b), the proposed development would have an adverse effect on road capacity, traffic volume, and traffic safety due to the increase in traffic and nature of the traffic associated with a 62-unit storage development served by a single access road.
- Pursuant to Section 15.03(c), the proposed development would have an adverse effect on police, fire, and emergency services due to the concentration of 62 units served by a single gated access point and the resulting concerns regarding emergency response and fire protection.
- Pursuant to Section 15.03(d), the proposed development would have an adverse effect on the protection and preservation of natural features and natural resources due to site clearing and removal of existing timber.
- Pursuant to Section 15.03(e), the proposed development would have an adverse impact on pertinent land use factors, including views from adjacent and nearby lands.

Motion: Sower Second: Fahner

Aye: Dunneback, Ericksen, Fahner, Smith, Sower

Nay: Workman and Lecceadone

10. Adjourn: 8:55 pm

Motion: Ericksen Second: Dunneback Aye: All