

**Au Train Township, Planning Commission**  
**Special Meeting**  
July 10, 2025 – 6:00pm  
Au Train Township Hall - N7569 Spruce St – Au Train, MI 49806  
**MINUTES**

- **CALL TO ORDER** - The meeting was called to order by Chair LaCombe at 6:00pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.
- **ROLL CALL** – Members present: Chair Scott LaCombe, Vice Chair Jesse Cadwell, Secretary Scott Smith, Member Matt Lang, Township Board Liaison John Carr

Others present: Zoning Administrator Donna Shields, Dan & Phyllis La Combe, Duane Newton, Bob & Tricia DesArmo, Kathy Towne, Raelene O. Reilly, Tyler Penrod

- **APPROVAL OF AGENDA** – Motion by Carr, second by Lang to approve agenda as presented. Motion Carried
- **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Motion by Lang, second by Carr to approve minutes of the June 11, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting. Motion Carried
- **ZONING ADMINISTRATOR REPORT** – ZA Shields presented her report on zoning activity in the past month. Report is on file at the Township Hall and on the Township’s website.
- **PUBLIC COMMENT** – Public comments were heard from Duane Newton and Raelene Reilly
- **BOARD COMMENTS** – None
- **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

a    **Au Train Township Master Plan**

**Chair LaCombe opened the hearing at 6:07 pm.**

ZA Shields indicated that public comments were received from Robert Des Armo of Ridge Road and Amy Hernandez of Christmas during the 63-day public comment period. Their e-mails were forwarded to the members of the commission for review prior to the hearing.

Chair LaCombe opened the floor for public comments.

Bob DesArmo of Ridge Road gave comments on the Master Plan amendments stating that it was good for developing the area as a tourist area but nothing indicated for growth of industry that would produce work to keep our young people here. The population in the township is in decline because there’s nothing to sustain workers year-round. He stated that we have all kinds of natural resources around but the Township isn’t doing anything to attract any type of professional business and felt that’s what we should be looking into.

Duane Newton gave public comment that the signs on M28 states that Au Train is a recreational area. He asked if there was any information on the Forest Lake Dam. Does the Township have any preventative measures for flooding? Are they prepared for anything catastrophic? He also gave comments that the parking situation at the Northwoods Outpost is dangerous noting the amount of traffic there and that there's bike traffic and children and having cars and campers parked on the street, there should be bike lanes and a bike trail to Christmas. He thinks there needs to be more business and be more friendly to the residents.

Comments were heard from Jesse Cadwell wondering if there was anywhere residents can take yard waste for disposal so you don't have to smoke out your neighbors burning pine needles, etc.

Comments were heard from Raelene Reilly of Au Train. She stated she understood that there was going to be a left turn lane installed on M28 which she is happy about. She commented on the number of short-term rentals that have been allowed in R1/2 district and that she feels that shouldn't have ever happened as it's not following the intent of zoning. She also commented on how noisy it's become where she lives because of the rentals to snowmobilers and ORVs and how they are using Woodland Ave instead of the trail near M28.

Tyler Penrod of Riverview Estates in Au Train gave comments on short-term rentals. He stated that it's noticeable in the Winter just how many homes are not residents as they only get plowed out for rentals arriving. It makes it so it doesn't feel like community. At the same time, he is interested in getting a rental permit for his home, but not as a full-time investment. He would hope that the Commission would look toward allowing rentals of a shorter nature, for example no more than 30 nights in a year, just to allow him to have the place occupied while he is away on travels and that would put a few dollars in his pocket. Can we find some middle ground on this issue?

**With no further public comments, Chair La Combe closed the public hearing at 6:29pm**

**b Au Train Township Short-Term Rentals Zoning Amendment**

**Chair LaCombe opened the hearing at 6:29 pm.**

Chair LaCombe opened the floor for public comments.

Public comments were heard from Duane Newton who asked where the amendments were so he could see them. He has no idea what we are about to talk about. Can we use the Television monitor to present? The Commission explained the amendment has been posted on the Township website. There was a public notice in the Munising Beacon published with link to the website for review and it has been available at the hall for review by request as well. Mr. Newton indicated he has been "off grid" for a month. Mr. Newton indicated he would like to be able to read and review these changes. Commissioner Lang provided Mr. Newton with his copy for use during the meeting.

**With no further public comments, Chair La Combe closed the public hearing at 6:40pm**

- **NEW BUSINESS –**

- a **Master Plan Discussion/final changes/resolution**

The Commission felt that no further discussion on the Master Plan was necessary. No changes were noted. Secretary Smith moved forward with reading the Resolution to Adopt the Au Train Township Master Plan and roll call vote was taken:

LaCombe: yes, Cadwell: yes, Carr: yes, Lang: yes, Smith: yes

**Chair LaCombe declared the resolution adopted**

Motion by Smith, second by Cadwell to send the Master Plan on to the Au Train Township Board of Trustees for their approval and final adoption.

Roll call: Smith: yes, Lang: yes, Cadwell: yes, LaCombe: yes, Carr: yes

- b **Short-term Rental zoning amendment discussion/ final changes/ resolution**

Smith opened with comments about the 802A Standards. He didn't feel totally comfortable with the changes proposed by the previous commissioners and felt they were simplified too much. Smith presented a few changes in writing which included changing the wording "*be hazardous to*" to read instead "*interfere with the public health, safety, and welfare of*" in item #2; re-adding the wording "*and shall not change the essential character of the surrounding area*" to item #3; incorporating item #5 into item #4 which would now read: "The conditional use shall be adequately served by, and not place demand on, essential public facilities and services in excess of current or planned capacity, or it shall be demonstrated that the person responsible for the proposed conditional use shall be able to adequately provide for the facilities and services deemed essential to the conditional use under consideration."

Ryan Carrig of CUPPAD and ZA Shields brought discussion forward on the adding of the wording in item #3 "*and shall not change the essential character of the surrounding area.*" Carrig explained to the commission that this wording was fine in itself, but that all must understand its meaning. Carrig explained further: To know if something has changed the essential character, one must define what that essential character is. In this case, the essential character is defined in the Zoning Ordinance (and supported by the Master Plan) as being the defined "Intent" of the district. Furthermore, surrounding area is not to be thought of as a pocket within a district or that directly around the parcel requesting the use, it is the district as a whole. Carrig stated that if an allowed use is found to be changing the character of a district, then the township should look into amending the Master plan and the Zoning Ordinance.

The commissioners also discussed a change to the definition of a short-term rental agreeing that "transient use" should be further noted in parenthesis following as (less than 30 days).

Further discussion was had on the newly proposed item 802F Item #G regarding shared private roads and easements. It was decided to remove item G in totality.

Motion by Carr, second by Smith to accept the short-term rental zoning amendment with changes.

Roll call: Carr: yes, Smith: yes, LaCombe: yes, Lang: yes, Cadwell: yes

Secretary Smith proceeded to read aloud the resolution. Roll call vote was taken:  
Lang: yes, Carr: yes, Smith: yes, Cadwell: yes, LaCombe: yes

Chair Lacombe declared the Short-term rental zoning ordinance amendments adopted and it now shall move on to the Board of Trustees for their review and approval.

- **CORRESPONDENCE/ANNOUNCEMENTS** – None
- **PUBLIC COMMENT** – Public comments were heard from Dan LaCombe and Duane Newton
- **BOARD COMMENT** – Comments were heard from Commissioner Carr who stated the lack of knowledge on the public's part is because more people need to attend the Township meetings, check the website and read the local newspaper to stay informed.
- **NEXT MEETING** – The next meeting is scheduled for August 21, 2025 at 6:00pm
- **ADJOURN** – Chair LaCombe declared the meeting adjourned at 7:40pm

Minutes submitted by: Donna Shields, Recording Secretary, to the Au Train Township Planning Commission

Approved: August 21, 2025

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ on file \_\_\_\_\_  
Donna Shields – Recording Secretary

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ on file \_\_\_\_\_  
Matt Lang - Interim Secretary