

Pleasant Plains Township
7333 S. M 37
Baldwin MI 49304
Planning Commission Open Public Meeting
September 2, 2025

The Open Public Hearing was called to order at 6:06 pm.

The purpose of the hearing is to allow public review and to gather public input on a proposed amendment to the Pleasant Plains Township Zoning Ordinance involving, Short Term Rentals (STR)

After a brief explanation of the Zoning Ordinance Amendment content by the Attorney, the Chair Deb Anderson explained the rules for the meeting and asked for comment from the public.

For a summation of those comments please read attachment, (3) pages:

The public input was closed at 6:42pm.

The Planning Commission went into regular session and continued with deliberations and discussion.

MSC to table the voting on the Amendment until further discussion can take place at the September 15, 2025, Planning Commision Meeting. Motioned by Linda TenHave and seconded by Anthony Riley.

MSC to Adjourn meeting, Motion by Ray Novakoski and seconded Anthony Riley.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:15pm

Respectfully Submitted by,



Raymond Novakoski, Secretary

Summary of Short-Term Rental Ordinance Debate

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Overview

- Public hearing on proposed short-term rental zoning ordinance in Pleasant Plains Township.
- Key proposal: cap of 27 short-term rentals township-wide, with allocations by zoning district.
- Majority of current short-term rentals are technically illegal under existing zoning, except if grandfathered.
- Community divided: strong support for both regulation and for the economic/tourism benefits of short-term rentals.
- Concerns raised about enforcement, housing availability, and potential conflicts of interest on the planning board.
- No final vote taken; motion to table the ordinance for further discussion and input.

Attorney's Overview: Short-Term Rental Trends and Legal Context

- Short-term rentals identified as top municipal issue in past 6-7 years.
- No universal Michigan definition; typically ≤ 28 or 30 days rental period.
- Non-commercial zones cap, not ban, short-term rentals; commercial zones less affected.
- Estimated 90-95% of short-term rentals in Pleasant Plains Township likely illegal unless grandfathered.
- Proposed cap: 20 short-term rentals in non-commercial zones; regulation via zoning and separate licensing ordinance.

Public Hearing Procedures and Ground Rules

- Opened public hearing 606 for proposed amendment to Pleasant Plain post-conscious zoning.
- Purpose: gather public input and review proposed amendment.
- Public comments limited to three minutes per person.
- Speakers asked to state full name and address for the record; comments directed to commission only.
- Orderly conduct required: no personal attacks, outbursts, or interruptions; speakers selected by raised hands.

Clarification of Ordinance Structure and Process

- Zoning ordinance under review; reasoning ordinance to follow.
- Short-term rental defined as less than 30 consecutive days/nights.
- Maximum of 27 short-term rentals allowed township-wide: 5 in commercial, 22 in other districts (A1: 5, A24: 4, A30: 0, workforce: 3, commercial: 5, mobile home park: 0).
- Short-term rentals prohibited as venues (e.g., weddings, reunions); must meet building codes, minimum size, not on private roads, and be 2,000 feet apart.
- Planning commission to recommend approval, denial, or changes to township board; township board makes final decision.

Public Comments: Definitions and Scope of Short-Term Rentals

- Public comment session held; not a Q&A format.
- Questions about short-term rental definitions (motels, hotels, resorts, BnBs) raised but not answered during meeting.
- Attendees directed to submit questions via planning commission email or website.
- Planning commission to follow up on questions after public hearing.

Community Questions: Legality, Housing Impact, and Enforcement

- Short-term rentals in Pleasant Plains Township outside commercial districts are illegal unless operating since before 1970s ordinances.
- Michigan Supreme Court classifies short-term rentals as commercial businesses in residential zones.
- Township plans to legalize short-term rentals by amending zoning ordinances, allowing a set percentage per area based on data analysis.
- Goal is to balance short-term and long-term rentals, potentially increasing housing availability for sale or long-term rent.
- Enforcement, current housing percentages, and impact on overall housing market remain key concerns for stakeholders.

Resident Statements: Economic and Social Impact of Short-Term Rentals

- 2018 and 2024 master plans identify Pleasant Plains as a seasonal, tourism-based community.
- Nearly 50% of homes are seasonal; population doubles in summer.
- Tourism and short-term rentals support local economy, tax base, and property values.
- Current ordinance caps short-term rentals at 27, viewed as too restrictive by property owners.
- Speakers request ordinance revision to better align with master plans and support community growth.

Personal Testimonies: Benefits and Concerns from Owners and Neighbors

- Concerns raised about limiting short-term rentals on natural rivers; questioned state, federal, and township authority conflicts.
- Committee composition questioned; potential conflict of interest noted if members own commercial competitors to short-term rentals.
- Long-term short-term rental operators (25+ years) asked if new ordinances allow rentals within river corridors.
- Airbnb operator reported 200+ reservations, 4.97 rating, zero complaints, and significant economic contribution to local community.
- Requests made for reasonable regulations and taxes to allow continued responsible operation of short-term rentals.

Further Public Input: Enforcement, Housing, and Community Effects

- Concerns raised about unclear future licensing conditions for special uses.
- Short-term rentals provide essential income for local workers and small businesses.
- \$1.8 million spent in the community between May–September attributed to short-term rentals.
- Questions raised about conflict of interest and need for financial disclosure by board members involved in visitor lodging.

- Calls for clear enforcement plans and further public input before voting on new regulations.

Detailed Q&A: Enforcement, Zoning, and Economic Data

- Residents reported noise, trespassing, and inappropriate behavior from neighboring Airbnbs.
- Sheriff's department documented very few Airbnb complaints; only one in Baldwin.
- Concerns raised about regulating short-term rentals versus long-term rentals, with long-term issues noted as worse in Baldwin.
- Discussion of permit system for short-term rentals as a regulatory option, with potential legal risks.
- Short-term rental phenomenon increased significantly post-2018, driven by economic changes and COVID-19.
- Michigan courts generally classify short-term rentals as commercial use; if not allowed in zoning, likely illegal.
- Most citizens support reasonable regulation of short-term rentals.

Debate on Caps, Percentages, and Zoning Fairness

- Planning publications recommend short-term rentals remain at 2–5% of housing stock; some municipalities exceed this (e.g., South Haven at 20%).
- High short-term rental rates reduce local housing availability and can negatively impact communities, especially in concentrated areas.
- Rural townships lack resources for enforcement and do not significantly benefit from property taxes or fees from short-term rentals.
- Licensing ordinances and zoning caps are common regulatory tools; enforcement typically includes complaint-based license revocation and due process.
- Regulations aim for implementation by fall, with enforcement starting next spring; caps can be liberalized later but not reduced retroactively.

Final Community Discussion: Numbers, Enforcement, and Next Steps

- Cannot reduce number of short-term rentals once allowed; can only increase.
- Accurate count of short-term rentals is difficult due to unregistered and illegal properties.
- Enforcement and regulation of short-term rentals is a primary concern; township receives tax revenue from both short- and long-term rentals.
- Estimated 50–70 short-term rentals in the township; county-wide numbers increased from ~200 to 300+ in one year.
- Regulation aims to legalize currently illegal short-term rentals and address impacts on housing availability and local infrastructure.

Meeting Conclusion: Motions, Votes, and Adjournment

- Discussion focused on setting limits for special land use, particularly short-term rentals.
- Disagreement existed over whether current zoning ordinances list these as special land uses or permitted by right.
- Concerns raised about correct numbers (e.g., 27, 601, 701, 501) and ordinance accuracy on the website.
- Need identified for clear conditions and departmental inspections (fire, health, building) for special uses.
- Motion made and carried to table the issue for further discussion and adjourn the meeting.