POPE COUNTY
MINNESOTA

MEETING MINUTES
POPE COUNTY PLANNING ADVISORY COMMISSION
Thursday, July 23rd, 2026

The Planning Advisory Commission (PAC) convened in regular session on Thursday, July 23rd, 2026 at the Pope County Courthouse, 3rd floor Meeting Room.

Members Present: Roger Isdahl, John Messenger (Chairman), Mark Halls, Russell Barkeim, Haylee Wildman, and alt. Paul Wildman (County Commissioner).

Other Officials Present: David Green (Director), Jessica Hill (Deputy Director) and Leigh Nelson (Senior Administrative Associate).

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Messenger at 6:51 p.m.

Additions and Corrections to the Agenda

There were no additions or corrections to the agenda. A motion to accept the agenda was made by Commissioner Wildman and seconded by Member Halls. Motion carried unanimously.

Review minutes of June 25th, 2026 Regular Meeting of the PAC

The minutes of the PAC meeting that was held on June 25th, 2026 were submitted for approval. Motion to accept the minutes as written was made by Member Isdahl and seconded by Member Barkeim. Motion carried unanimously.

General Business

Deputy Director Hill informed those in attendance that the June Conditional Use Permit applications and the Ordinance Amendments presented at the June 25, 2026, County Commissioners meeting were approved by the Board of County Commissioners.

Member Isdahl brought up, as a question, is there a way for a Board Member to attend meetings virtually? Director Green responded that administratively, the technology is not set up at the present time. While it is possible, the County has yet to set up a policy for virtual meeting attendance.

Member Barkeim brought up a concern regarding counseling applicants regarding all possible outcomes if all Board Members were not able to attend, as in the June meeting. Director Green agreed with the concern, and stated that Staff does give information to applicants, and are encouraged to ask the Board to table their application if things aren't going their way. Member Isdahl commented that the applicants could be at a disadvantage if there are only four Board Members present, to which there was a collective murmur of assent.

Old Business

No old business.

New Business

Interim Use #IUP-26-001 Josh & Marin Ettesvold PID# 09-0661-600

The applicants request approval to continue operating the existing Vacation Home Rental through issuance of a new Interim Use Permit. It is currently approved as a vacation rental limited to eighteen (18) person occupancy. Historically, prior to the adoption of VHR standards by Pope County, the property has accommodated larger groups. Any advertising and occupancy shall remain limited to the maximum occupancy permitted by the Pope County Land Use Controls Ordinance, the approved septic system design capacity, and the Horizon Public Health license, whichever is more restrictive. Lake Amelia is designated as a Recreational Development lake. Vacation Rental use in the Shoreland-Recreational Development (S-RD) zoning district is permissible but must meet the performance standards identified in section 10.30.

Chair Messenger read the background from the Staff Report, then asked Deputy Director Hill if there was any additional background information to provide. Deputy Director Hill said that this is a new Interim Use Permit (IUP) for a Vacation Home Rental, similar to the previous IUP issued in September of 2021. The Applicants have combined their parcels, and we have up to date septic permitting as well as licensure from Horizon Public Health. There have been no compliance issues or complaints since the original IUP was issued. Staff does not object to the Interim Use Permit application, and recommends approval with the conditions presented in the Staff Report for a period of 10 years. The Subsurface Sewage Treatment System Operating Permit remains as an annual renewal, and the IUP is not transferrable to new owners. The limit on rental capacity is limited to the septic system design capacity or the current Horizon Public Health license, whichever is more restrictive. Deputy Director Hill also read the positive comment from a neighbor.

Member Barkeim asked Deputy Director Hill if the neighbors were notified. Deputy Director Hill affirmed this, and that Statute requires notification to all property owners of record within 1320 feet of the Applicant's property. The Public Notices had been mailed out as required, and are recorded.

Chair Messenger invited the Applicants, Josh & Maren Ettesvold to the presentation table, and asked them if they had additional questions or comments. Mrs. Ettesvold provided a background of the many improvements that had been made to the property since September of 2021, including a new septic system, new well & combining of the lots. Commissioner Wildman asked about parking for the number of people allowed, and the Applicant described that they allow only 6 cars, no overnight parking on the road. She went on to describe their interview process for their guests, and that all but one of their guests for their current bookings were return guests whom they consider to be people that they have relationships with, not just guests. She also said that they do not allow bachelor/bachelorette type parties at the cabin.

Chair Messenger opened the public hearing and asked for anyone to speak in favor of the

application. Hearing none, he then asked for anyone opposed. Sharron Lund introduced herself as a neighbor on Lake Amelia, 5 houses away, and agreed that the Applicants take good care of the property, but does not approve of 36 people staying on the property. She is also concerned about expansion onto the vacant lot. Chair Messenger asked the applicant if they were open year round, and Mrs. Ettesvold replied no, that the cabin opens on May 1 & closes November 1. He then asked about having 36 people, to which the Applicant replied that 36 individuals is the Horizon Public Health guideline number for the maximum number of people allowed on the property, but that the overnight limit is 18, and that their own family is the largest group that they have. She also added that there is no vacant lot – they have conjoined 3 lots, which was not required, but they did, and they have no plans to expand.

Commissioner Wildman asked about local contacts. Mrs. Ettesvold replied that she has a local contact – her sister – who is available by phone within 30 minutes, and can be on site within 1 hour. They have a contractor and a handyman, and have needed repairs done as quickly as possible, even after hours.

Hearing no other public comments either in favor or opposition, the Chair closed the public hearing at 7:10 p.m.

Chair Messenger asked the Site Team if they had anything further to add. Member Barkeim noted that there is plenty of room in and around the house, and that it is well kept. He also complemented the Applicants on not having any complaints from neighbors. Member Messenger said that the property is impeccable, and it shows that they take great care of the place.

Motion:

Chairman Messenger seeks a motion. Commissioner Wildman made a motion to recommend approval of the interim use permit with the conditions and findings as outlined in the Staff Report, and the motion was seconded by Member Wildman. The motion carried unanimously at 7:12 p.m. The findings are as follows:

1. **The project is in compliance with the setback and other provisions of this ordinance unless a variance has been granted:**

   Finding: The proposed use is identified as a permittable in the Pope County Land Use Controls Ordinance, and approval is expressly conditioned upon continued compliance with all applicable ordinance requirements.

2. **The use is not in conflict with the County Comprehensive Land Use Plan:**

   Finding: The current Comprehensive Plan includes goals that state a recognition of diverse and existing land uses throughout the county. It is noted that not all uses are compatible and that there should be consideration as to separation, siting, development requirements and operating standards. The Comprehensive Plan also states that the ground and surface water resources should be protected for future use and enjoyment and that there should be ample overview, regulation and standards to prevent activities that are not sound from an environmental perspective. Based on the location of the vacation rental operation including distance from sensitive environmental features, roadway and neighboring properties, the proposed use is not in conflict with the County Comprehensive Plan.

3. **That the use will not be injurious to the use and enjoyment of other property in the immediate vicinity for the purposes already permitted, not substantially diminish or impair neighborhood property values in the area and will not interfere with the best interest of the surrounding area or the community as a whole:**

   Finding: The proposed use is permitted within the zoning district through an Interim Use Permit. The property has operated under an Interim Use Permit since 2021 without documented complaints, is served by a compliant SSTS, and is licensed by Horizon Public Health. Based on this operating history and the proposed conditions of approval, the use is not expected to substantially diminish neighboring property use or interfere with the surrounding area.

4. **The use will not create an excessive burden on parks, schools, streets, water supply, public drainage systems and other public facilities and utilities which serve or are proposed to serve in the area:**

   Finding: This land use is not expected to have any negative impacts on public infrastructure.

5. **The structure and sites shall have an appearance that will not have an adverse effect on adjacent properties:**

   Finding: The site is expected to remain neat and orderly in appearance.

6. **The road on which the project is proposed is adequate to handle increased traffic during operation, and that the use will not cause traffic hazards or congestion:**

   Finding: The existence of the vacation rental property is not likely to have any impact relating to traffic or use of the roadway system.

7. **Existing businesses nearby will not be adversely affected because of curtailment of customer trade brought about by intrusion of noise, glare, odor, or general unsightliness:**

Finding: There should not be any negative impacts related to the intrusion of noise, glare, odor or general unsightliness upon nearby existing businesses.

8. **That the establishment of the use will not impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of surrounding vacant property uses predominant to the area:**

   Finding: The predominant neighboring land use is shoreland recreational/residential in nature. The proposed vacation rental property will not interfere with that use.

9. **That adequate utilities, drainage and other necessary facilities have been or are being provided:**

   Finding: Adequate utilities and an approved compliant subsurface sewage treatment system currently serve the property and support the proposed use.

10. **That adequate measures have been or will be taken to prevent or control rodents, insects, offensive odors, fumes, dust, noise, and vibration in order that none of these will constitute a nuisance, and that adequate measures have been or will be taken to prevent negative impacts on surface water, groundwater, and air quality, and that measures have been taken to control lighted signs and other lights in such a manner that no disturbance to neighboring properties will result:**

    Finding: Compliance with Section 10.30 of the Pope County Land Use Controls Ordinance, the Horizon Public Health license, the approved SSTS operating permit, and the conditions of this Interim Use Permit provide enforceable operational standards intended to minimize noise, lighting, refuse, parking, water quality impacts, and other potential nuisance conditions.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Commissioner Wildman to adjourn the Planning Advisory Commission meeting, with a second by Member Barkeim. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Leigh A. Nelson/Senior Administrative Associate
Pope County Land & Resource Management

David Green/Director
Pope County Land & Resource Management