VILLAGE OF SISTER BAY
PLAN COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, JULY 22, 2025
(APPROVED AS AMENDED)

1. Call To Order & Roll Call

Chair Bhirdo called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and took roll call.

Present: Plan Commission Chair Denise Bhirdo, and Commission members Steve Bacsi, Nate Bell, Patrice Champeau, Laurel Harff, Skip Heidler, Ron Kane

Staff Member(s): Village Administrator Julie Schmelzer

Others: In person- Kurt Harff, Brian Frisque, Brodie Overbeck, Josh Becker, Tim Perille, Vivian Nienow, Nick Deviley. Virtual attendance- Ellie Soderberg-Guger, Karen Berndt.

2. Approval Of Agenda

Motion by Bacsi, seconded by Champeau, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried - all ayes.

3. Approve Meeting Minutes: June 24, 2025

Motion by Champeau, seconded by Kane, to approve the meeting minutes of June 24, 2025, as presented. Motion carried - all ayes.

4. Comments, Correspondence and Concerns from the Public

Chair Bhirdo asked if anyone from the public would like to address the Plan Commission. There were no comments from those in attendance, and the Administrative Assistant confirmed there were no participants wishing to speak via Zoom. When Nick Deviley arrived he requested the Commission review their codes regarding historic signage, such as the signage that exists on his property.

5. Discussion/Action Items

(a) Certified Survey Map; Nick Deviley; 10440 Orchard Dr.

Village Administrator Schmelzer introduced the certified survey map (CSM) for Nick and Mary Deviley's property at 10440 Orchard Drive. She noted that the staff report and proposed CSM were included in the packet, and that surveyor Brian Frisque was present to answer questions. Mr. Deviley arrived slightly later in the discussion.

Schmelzer explained that the applicant wishes to create three parcels from the property, with the restaurant to be on its own parcel. The proposed division would follow along the easement that runs to the farm. She noted that future sewer laterals would follow the lot lines, making future connections more straightforward.

Chair Bhirdo referenced the staff report, asking about the southernmost motel building not meeting the 40-foot setback from the egress easement. Schmelzer confirmed this was a nonconforming structure, noting that the existing building appears to be about 15-20 feet from the easement.

Skip Heidler asked about the intended purpose of the second lot. Schmelzer explained that it would potentially be used for another B1 use or something associated with the farm use in the future. Deviley conveyed he would rather not disclose the proposed use of the property at this time.

Mr. Deviley arrived and addressed the Commission directly about his plans. He clarified that he intends to sell the restaurant, likely by August 15th if the CSM is approved. He explained that he doesn't want to sell the entire property, preferring to retain portions of what he considers his "front yard" to the farm.

Mr. Deviley provided background on the property, noting that it had expanded from 2.5 acres to nearly 6 acres when they were planning to build a brewery in 2018. He described how the sewer and water laterals would need to be configured, and how the division would help eliminate an easement for the existing septic system currently located on his farm property that serves the restaurant and motel.

Heidler asked about access to the public street, noting that lot 2 would be on an easement rather than a public street. Schmelzer explained that the Land Division Code allows for lots on private roads or easements with Plan Commission approval, and that the existing easement meets the required width.

Motion by Bhirdo, seconded by Champeau, to recommend approval of the certified survey map to the Village Board. Motion carried - all ayes.

(b) Courtesy Review; Awning Signage; Champeau Flooring/Tim Perilla; 2613 S Bay Shore Dr.

Administrator Schmelzer introduced the courtesy review request for awning signage for Champeau Flooring. She explained that the owner, Tim Perille, was requesting guidance on how much lettering could be placed on an awning before it would be considered a sign under the village code. Schmelzer noted that she prepared an extensive write-up in the packet along with renderings provided by the owner.

There was a discussion on commercial centers and whether the property was part of a commercial center. The Commission agreed they needed to revisit the code and clarify what constituted a commercial center.

Chair Bhirdo mentioned that Brita's business had previously been considered a sign when they came before the Commission. She expressed concern that the proposed awning design did not match other businesses in the village and appeared more like a fixed face than a flap. Heidler noted that the proposed design blurred the line between an awning and a sign. He suggested that perhaps 20-25% of the vertical height of the awning should be the limit for lettering. Bell recalled previous discussions about treating any writing on an awning as a sign, though it wouldn't count toward size limitations in the same way as a traditional sign. Chair Bhirdo read a definition of a flap as "the act of waving or fluttering" and argued that the proposed design with its taut face didn't meet this definition.

Tim Perille, the business owner, addressed the Commission and explained that his business had recently been approved for a Door County building enhancement grant. He noted that the purpose of updating the awning was to increase visibility, as many people were unaware that a flooring store existed in that location despite living in the area for years. He explained that structured awnings are more durable and aesthetically appealing than unstructured flaps.

After extensive discussion about the dimensions of the proposed awning and its face, the Commission determined that the applicant would be allowed 35 square feet of signage in total, including his existing roadside sign. By consensus they directed him to work with the Administrator to ensure his final design would comply with this limitation.

The Commission also recognized the need to clarify the code regarding awnings versus signs, and agreed to address this in a future text amendment.

(c) Text Amendments; Ch. 18 & 50; Garbage

Schmelzer explained that the current code requires short-term rentals to have door-to-door garbage service with containers kept up by the buildings rather than on the road. She noted that the code didn't account for owner-operated short-term rentals, where owners are present during the rental period and use the same garbage cans.

Schmelzer introduced Vivian Nienow, who owns a short-term rental and was affected by this issue. Ms. Nienow has a mother-in-law apartment in the same building where she lives, which she rents as a short-term rental.

Heidler suggested modifying the wording of the proposed amendment to be more specific, recommending "onsite property management by owner" rather than "owner-occupied rentals."

After discussion about properties with multiple buildings versus those with separate units under one roof, the Commission agreed to support the amendment with language that would clearly address situations where the owner lives in the same building as the short-term rental unit.

Motion by Kane, seconded by Heidler, to recommend approval of the text amendment regarding garbage requirements for owner-occupied short-term rentals to the Village Board. Motion carried- all ayes.

(d) Text Amendment; Ch. 66; Park District Uses

Schmelzer presented proposed amendments to the P1 (Park District) zoning district. The first change would add “public marinas” as a permitted use, noting that the village’s marina became a non-conforming use after “marinas” were removed from the code two years ago.

The second amendment would modify green space requirements to allow the Plan Commission more flexibility during site plan review. Schmelzer explained that this would help with properties like the Historical Society complex, which had exceeded the code-allowed maximum coverage, and would enable common-sense decisions for structures in parks.

The third amendment addressed setbacks in park properties, noting that in some cases strict adherence to setbacks would place structures, like restrooms, in impractical locations.

Heidler expressed concern about perception that the village might ignore standards for its own properties. Schmelzer assured the Commission that the village has been held to the same standards as everyone else, noting that the parks building and marina building both went through site plan review.

The Commission agreed to send the amendment to public hearing, planning for October to allow time for discussion of other text amendments in the August and September meetings.

Motion by Bell, seconded by Kane, to schedule a public hearing for the proposed Park District text amendments. Motion carried- all ayes.

(e) Request For Proposals; Multi-Family Housing; Ava Hope & Northwoods

Administrator Schmelzer presented the single proposal received in response to the village's RFP for multi-family housing on the village-owned property at the corner of Ava Hope and Northwoods. The proposal came from Tim Halbrook, who built the apartment complex next door.

Schmelzer outlined Halbrook's proposal, which included three buildings with attached garages containing 21 two-bedroom units, 3 three-bedroom units, 3 one-bedroom units, and 1 handicap unit. She noted that this would exceed the density of 20 units that was specified in the RFP, but that the site plan showed there was still substantial open space even with the higher density.

The proposal included 20% of the units reserved for those earning below 80% of the county median income, and a public park area that would be owned and maintained by the developer.

Chair Bhirdo provided background on how the village acquired the property after a previous developer went bankrupt. She noted that while the village had invested approximately $590,000 in infrastructure, they had recouped $100,000 by selling 10 lots to the housing partnership.

Commission members discussed various aspects of the proposal, including:

- Bell suggested the park area should have better connectivity to the surrounding neighborhood through walking trails
- Champeau recommended more than one handicap unit based on the area's aging population
- Chair Bhirdo expressed concern about parking adequacy, suggesting potentially reducing one building from 9 units to 8 to allow for more parking

The Commission acknowledged that other committees, particularly the Housing Committee, would need to review the proposal and might have additional requirements regarding the affordability component and other details.

Motion by Bhirdo, seconded by Bell, to recommend accepting the proposal contingent on approval by the Housing Committee and Parks Committee. Motion carried - all ayes.

(f) Reconsideration Request; eBike Shed; Waterfront Park

Schmelzer explained that this was a reconsideration of a previous request regarding a storage shed for e-bikes in Waterfront Park. The original request had been denied primarily because the proposed metal shed did not comply with village code. The applicant had now returned with a proposal for a wooden shed. Attachment handout received.

Motion by Bhirdo, seconded by Champeau, to reconsider the request. Motion carried- all ayes.

After reviewing the proposed wooden shed design, commission members had concerns about its height and whether it would be a permanent or temporary structure.

The Commission expressed interest in knowing the exact dimensions of the proposed shed, whether it would be permanent or seasonal, and if so, who would be responsible for maintenance if it became village property after the initial term.

The Commission decided to refer the matter to the Parks Committee for their input before making a final decision.

(g) Fee Schedule Review

Schmelzer presented the fee schedule for review, highlighting items that fall under the Plan Commission's responsibility. She noted that sign permits ($100) and sandwich board sign permits ($50) require significant staff time but raising these fees might discourage people from obtaining permits.

Chair Bhirdo suggested that the festival tent permit fee of $25 might be too low, though Schmelzer indicated it was appropriate given the minimal review needed.

Commissioners discussed potentially researching sign permit fees in other communities to determine if Sister Bay's fees were in line with comparable municipalities.

The Commission asked Schmelzer to research sign permit fees in other Door County communities for comparison before making any recommendations on changes to the fee schedule.

6. Permit Report

Chair Bhirdo inquired about several items on the permit report, including a sign permit for Soul Harbor Jewelry on Old Stage Road. Schmelzer clarified that this was likely a business in Country Walk shops and that the applicant name rather than the business name had been entered in the system.

Chair Bhirdo also asked about the status of Ecology Sports' sign permit, which was showing as pending. Schmelzer indicated she had communicated with the owner and was working on the matter.

Chair Bhirdo noted that she would like to change her approach to reviewing sign permits, preferring to see the entire file in person rather than just receiving information via email. Schmelzer agreed and mentioned plans to also revise the application forms to include space for the Chair's signature.

7. Matters To Be Placed on a Future Agenda or Referred to a Committee, Official or Employee

The Commission identified several topics for future agenda items:

- Historic signage guidelines
- Awnings and signage clarification
- Commercial center definition review
- Multitenant versus commercial center distinctions
- Density requirements and potential increases
- Fee schedule for sign permits and sandwich board signs

8. Next Meeting

The next regular monthly meeting was scheduled for August 26, 2025, at 5:30 P.M. in the large meeting room at the Sister Bay-Liberty Grove Fire Station.

9. Adjournment

Motion by Bhirdo, seconded by Champeau, to adjourn the meeting at 7:59 PM. Motion carried - all ayes.

Respectfully recorded and submitted by Sarah Bertges, Administrative Assistant