



VILLAGE OF SUTTONS BAY
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
Meeting Minutes of November 19, 2025
420 N. Front Street
Suttons Bay, MI 49682

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Chairperson Hetler

Present: Feringa, F. Smith, Hetler, D. Smith, Hylwa
Absent: Campbell, Pontius
Staff present: Kopriva & Patmore
Guests: 35

Approval of Agenda

F. Smith moved, D. Smith seconded, to approve the agenda as presented.
Ayes: 5, No: 0

Conflict of Interest: Hetler disclosed she is a supporter and donor to the Inland Seas and is not sure if there is a conflict. Hylwa indicated he is a donor as well.

Approval of Minutes

S. Feringa moved, D. Smith seconded, CARRIED, to approve the Planning Commission meeting minutes of October 15, 2025 as presented. Ayes: 5, No: 0.

Public Comment/Written Communications

- Larry Mawby, Suttons Bay, Acting independently. Planning Commission should expeditiously find a way to permit this project.
- John Siefeld, Keswick Hills, He is the board chairman of ISEA, spoke on the goals of ISEA to stay in Suttons Bay, ISEA helps community, this is a 6 million dollar investment, please give strong and timely consideration to this project and thanked the commission.
- Lauren, teacher at Suttons Bay Schools, ISEA gives kids access to the water, is excited about expansion, good experience for kids.

- Fred Simpkins, Traverse City, volunteer and crew member of ISEA, benefits of ISEA, they have two schooners that require lots of maintenance, there are benefits with the new building.
- Kathy Schaeffer, Omena, volunteer instructor, project will expand learning experience, needed expansion, fortunate to purchase land next door, supports project, encourage PC to approve.
- Dan Lisuk, Leland, ISEA is a great organization and project will make Suttons Bay a bigger spot on the globe. The proper decision is to allow to expand.
- Jack Scripps, Northport, volunteer, ISEA has given him benefits and expansion is needed.
- M. Piescore, employee of ISEA, honored to be working in Suttons Bay as part of ISEA, they are part of the community.
- Jill Egan, Bingham Township, volunteer, look of the building will complete the waterfront with the marina and the library. ISEA teaches stewardship.
- Kim Eike, Suttons Bay, volunteer, ISEA provides education and stewardship. The number of visitors positively impacts the Village.

Old Business: None

New Business:

Inland Seas Education Association (ISEA) Campus Proposal:

NEW BUSINESS

A. Introduction - Inland Seas Education Association Site Plan Review

Fred Sitkins, ISEA Executive Director, introduced the project. He outlined the following points:

- ISEA programs have 10,000 participants per year.
- ISEA employs 11 full time employees, 7 part-time employees, interns, and has over 100 volunteers.
- The community has played a huge role in the success of ISEA, and they want to stay in Suttons Bay.
- This project is the final piece to complete their plan.
- ISEA has raised 10.2 million dollars towards this project.
- He respectfully asks the Planning Commission to make a timely decision.
- The Millside building is blighted. They want to improve the area.
- This project is not just expanding buildings; it will expand opportunities.

Scott Joswiak, Joswiak Consulting, Engineer for the project outlined the following:

- He has been working with ISEA since 2016.
- He gave an overview of the proposed Site Plan. Removal of a lot of asphalt, re-configure the parking, 26,000 sft of asphalt now – 16,000 sft of asphalt when completed – 10,000 sft less asphalt, remove part of Millside Building, build a new stair tower, new greenspace, new sidewalks, ADA access, trail along the shoreline, multi-purpose building, new stormwater management to expansion of existing constructed wetlands.
- Access is through Dame Street, which was previously deeded to the Village.

Ray Kendra, Environmental Architects, Architect for the project outlined the following:

- The Millside Building is a challenge.
- The building currently houses Suttons Bay Bikes and the ISEA workshop that was approved on the lower level. There are no changes proposed on the lower level.
- The upper level will contain bathrooms, a kitchen, and multi-use area.
- The inland side of the building will keep the Inland Seas building identity – blue paint, red roofs, and current ISEA character.
- The shoreline side of the building will be more open for the views.

Chair Hetler brought the discussion back to the Commission: The Village Planner has brought up some zoning issues with the project in her report in the meeting packet. There may be parts of the project that do not fit with the current zoning ordinance.

Planner Sara Kopriva stated that this meeting is an introduction to the Planning Commission. Her preliminary review of the project identified some concerns. The zoning ordinance does not seem to address nonconforming buildings as it relates to the form-based standards in the ordinance. A variance, interpretation, or appeal from the ZBA may be necessary, or the property could be rezoned to Public or Quasi-Public Land, or a text amendment.

The PC asked about the timing of these options. It would take 30 days to go to the ZBA, and 3-5 months to amend the ordinance or make a text amendment.

The Commission discussed Dame Street. Planner Sara Kopriva stated that Dame Street is considered a Village Street, and noted that it meets the definition of a street in the zoning ordinance. Dame Street is listed on the signed Village ACT 51 certification list, and the Village receives ACT 51 funding for Dame Street.

ISEA Engineer noted the history of Dame Street as an easement then deeded to the Village. He said that the Surveyors disagree that Dame Street merits as a road, as it doesn't meet standards. It was asked if Dame Street could be taken off the certification list – the Village Council controls the street certification.

Engineer Joswiak then approached the Commission about Section 19.5 of the ordinance that addresses non-conformities. He feels that the Millside Building could fall under 19.5. and asked the Commission to look at 19.5.

ZA Patmore reminded the Commission that this was listed as an introductory meeting on the Site Plan, and that the Commission should hear the presentation, ask questions, and identify, but not solve any issues.

The Commission then made individual comments that supported the concept of ISEA expansion into the Millside Building, however, there are issues that need to be resolved. Should any ZBA action happen before or after PC review?

Planner Kopriva noted that ZBA action before the PC approval is preferred.

The PC reviewed the three options: 1) Concurrent review by PC and ZBA, 2) ZBA review first, 3) PC review then ZBA.

The consensus of the Commission is to do reviews concurrently.

Engineer Joswiak requested an interpretation of Section 19.5 as it relates to the Millside Building first. They would send information on this to the Village.

Further discussion and review will occur at the December PC meeting.

Electrical Vehicle Charging Station Language

Sara provided new draft language based on comments received from the previous planning commission meeting. Members, by consensus, recommended setting this matter for a public hearing and to schedule the same for December 17, 2025.

2026 Planning Commission Budget:

The planning commission members reviewed the proposed 2026 planning commission budget. S. Ferina moved, F. Smith seconded, CARRIED to recommend approval of the 2026 Planning Commission budget as presented. Ayes: 5, No. 0.

2026 Planning Commission meeting schedule:

D. Smith moved, F. Smith seconded, CARRIED to approve the 2026 meeting schedule as presented. Ayes: 5, No. 0

Public Comment:

- Larry Mawby, Suttons Bay, has two comments: 1) Thanked the Commission for their work to help ISEA. 2) Would appreciate the Commissions help on getting the rezoning of the Peninsula Housing school property as a priority item.

Planner Kopriva commented that they should be submitting an application for rezoning, and it is not typical for the Village to initiate a rezoning such as this.

- Fred Sitkins, ISEA, Thanked the Commission for their time and efforts. He is disappointed in the engagement and response from the Village.
- Lois Bahle, Suttons Bay, the village could have had a hotel at the Millside Building, and ISEA is a better use.
- Jack Dunn, at the last meeting there was discussion on allowing two-family dwellings for the Congregational Church property. Has there been any progress?

Chair Hetler explained that the Planning Commission needs to work with the Village Council on this discussion. Council member D. Smith noted that she plans on bringing this up at a Village Council meeting.

Planner Kopriva noted that the Church could formally request a text amendment.

Reports

Zoning Administration Report-as presented.

Village Council Report: No comments

Zoning Board of Appeals-Meeting was cancelled in order to have the Village attorney look at the issues.

Next Regular Meeting is December 17, 2025. Gail stated she would not be present.

Agenda Items: EV charging stations public hearing; ISEA Campus Proposal

Motion to Adjourn

F. Smith moved, D. Smith seconded, CARRIED, to adjourn. Ayes: 5, No: 0.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:16 p.m.

Meeting notes submitted by Steve Patmore, Zoning Administrator

Meeting minutes drafted by Dorothy Petroskey, Clerk.