

VILLAGE OF SARANAC
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING/PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES

FEBRUARY 11, 2026

The Planning Commission Regular Meeting & Public Hearing was called to order by Chairperson Shaw at 7:01 p.m. at the Saranac Village Office, 27 N. Bridge Street.

The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Shaw, Tlapek, Trierweiler, Hesche, Day

Absent: None

Guests: Applicant: Mark Schaafsma with Tami & Tanner Schaafsma

Village Residents: Shellie Sage, Mark Tobak, Jocelyn Dawson, Ron Cochrun, Mitchell Grieves, Ethan Karns, Tim Arbour, Steven Karber, Gerald & Connie Kauffman, Tawnya Vreeland, Jason Townes, Steve Dixon, Haden Horvath, Jeff Stuit, Ed & Kristen Lambert, Mitchell Herweyer, James Darby, Sharon Darby (Saranac Village President), Tony Koster (Saranac Village DPW Director)

Other Guests: Teresa McCarty, Josh & Melanie Zalis, Angela Stephens (Saranac Housing Commission Director)

Jeanne Vandersloot (Zoning Administrator), Becky Straubel (Saranac Village Treasurer)

Motion was made by Day, supported by Trierweiler, to approve the Agenda of February 11, 2026. All yeas.

Public Comments

Village resident Stuit, commented that with the technology that is available today, more information such as the Special Use Permit application and related documents for 234 Vosper Street, should be made available prior to the meeting date, without the need to contact the Village Office. Other residents supported Stuit's comment.

Public Hearing on Special Use Permit (SUP) Application

Motion was made by Trierweiler at 7:14 p.m., supported by Hesche, to open the Public Hearing to accept comments on a SUP application submitted by Mark Schaafsma (MSDB LLC), to convert the former school at 234 Vosper Street, Saranac, into apartments (up to 29 units in 3 phases), with open area tenant parking. All yeas.

Tami Schaafsma (spouse of Mark Schaafsma and MSDB LLC co-owner) read aloud the attached prepared speech.

Mark Schaafsma stated that Phase 1 (12 units) will be developed initially, with the potential for Phase 2 (10 units) and Phase 3 (7 units) in the future.

Village resident Karber, commented that the Site Plan does not show 60 parking spots and questioned where the parking spots not indicated on the Site Plan would be located. M. Schaafsma stated that he would be utilizing the existing parking lot which has 60 parking spaces. He acknowledged that the Site Plan cuts off a portion of the parking lot.

Karber asked what kind of tax break M. Schaafsma would be getting and asked how that is fair to village residents. Karber referred to a 20-year tax abatement offered by the Village. S. Darby (Saranac Village President) confirmed that no such tax abatement has been arranged by the Village. M. & T. Schaafsma stated they have applied for a tax break as incentivized by the Michigan Governor Program for property developers, but have not been awarded a tax break, and the details regarding the amount and length of a potential tax break would be set by the state.

Village resident Karns brought up concerns for rising insurance rates due to more potential for crime if bad tenants were allowed to rent the apartments. He is also concerned about the closeness to the school and how it would affect students and/or parents who walk or drive their children to school. Other residents supported similar concerns as it related to traffic during school drop-off and pick-up hours. M. Schaafsma commented on the potential for a traffic study. Karns concluded that he is not in favor of approving the SUP application, regardless of the answers to his concerns.

McCarty stated her desire for the SUP application to be approved as she wishes to move into one of the apartments. She was on the list to acquire one of the condos (second proposed project) from M. Schaafsma, before that project fell through. She enjoyed working with him. She cannot find housing that suits her needs to downsize and not have a yard to maintain. She wants to stay in the Saranac community, which she is accustomed to and where her friends and church are. She also stated that she knows of other people who would also want to secure an apartment at 234 Vosper Street.

Several residents supported the previous model of an independent senior living complex (first proposed project), but some do not support the current apartment model. M. & T. Schaafsma stated that they tried everything they could think of to make the senior living complex a reality, but then COVID hit, material prices went up, and that business model was no longer feasible. The current model of apartments will only work with the MSHDA grant they received, which has specific requirements such as background and credit checks on potential tenants.

Village resident Horvath (owner of Advanced RV Sales & Service at 100 Main Street, Saranac and Trackside Deli at 11 Bridge Street, Saranac), commented on his history with M. Schaafsma prior to moving to Saranac. Horvath has nothing but good things to say about Schaafsma's character. He is community oriented and has invested time and money into the Village of Saranac.

S. Darby agreed, and stated that M. Schaafsma has invested approximately \$675,000 into this project with zero profit to date, but still wishes to invest further, rather than cut his losses and move on.

Village resident Hankis brought up her concerns about sewer infrastructure and how her and her neighbors have had sewer issues, and have had to pay for repair costs. Saranac Village DPW Director Koster, stated that the infrastructure is adequate and the overall infrastructure of the community is in a good state.

Koster also stated that when the property at 234 Vosper Street was a school, the infrastructure easily accommodated roughly 100 children. Koster stated that this project would not put a strain on the current infrastructure, as there would be less people.

Village resident J. Darby, commented that when other apartment complexes were put up in Saranac several years ago, people thought it was going to be the downfall of Saranac, but it wasn't. He also stated his support for growth and the approval of the SUP application.

Motion was made by Day at 8:13 p.m., supported by Trierweiler, to close the Public Hearing. All yeas.

The Planning Commission discussed the various concerns brought up by those in attendance. It was clarified that the Planning Commission does not have the authority to authorize a tax abatement of any kind. Hesche, who is a member of the school board, offered to discuss the 234 Vosper Street project at a school board meeting to see if they have any comments or concerns regarding Schaafsma's project. Hesche and Day also recommend that the Planning Commission understand the MSHDA grant requirements. Additionally, Hesche believes it would be a good idea for a traffic study to be performed.

Tlapek believes the 234 Vosper Street project would be good for the community.

Motion was made by Tlapek to approve the SUP. Motion was unsupported. No vote.

The Planning Commission further discussed the proposed project. Trierweiler stated that an empty building would be more of a target for crime or vandalism than an inhabited apartment complex. It was also discussed that the property was sold by the school to M. Schaafsma knowing his plans for the property. Planning Commission members concluded that the school would have voiced their concerns to the Village if they had any issues with the SUP.

Planning Commission members concurred that 12 units in Phase 1 would not cause traffic issues and would also be a good opportunity to see how the traffic flows prior to Phases 2 & 3, if they occur.

The Planning Commission agreed with Koster's comments that the infrastructure is adequate. The Planning Commission believes that a privacy fence should be added to the north side of the property, due to single family residential homes being located directly north of the property.

Motion was made by Trierweiler, supported by Tlapek, to approve Schaafsma's SUP with the following conditions:

1. Approval is for Phase 1 only; Phases 2 & 3 would require additional review and approval by the Planning Commission prior to execution.
2. A 6' privacy fence or evergreen shrubbery be added north of the parking lot.

All yeas.

The January 13, 2026 Regular Meeting & Public Hearing minutes were not provided at the meeting for review. Approval of the January 13, 2026 Regular Meeting & Public Hearing minutes will be tabled until the next Planning Commission meeting.

New Business – None

Old Business – None

Public Comments – None

The next regular Planning Commission meeting will be held on March 4, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. at the Saranac Village Office unless called off by Chairperson Shaw.

The meeting was adjourned by Shaw at 8:55 p.m.

Steve Trierweiler, Secretary,
Village of Saranac Planning Commission