

**TOWN OF INTERLACHEN
ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT
PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2026 – 7:00 P.M.**

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairperson Jasmine Rivera called the meeting to order at 7:08pm and led the Pledge.

ROLL CALL:

Zoning Board of Adjustment members present were Chairperson Jasmine Rivera, Leo Granger, and Stacy Suarez. Town Clerk, Joni Payne, Deputy Town Clerk, Pam Glover, and Attorney George Young were also present.

BOARD CHAIRPERSON – JASMINE RIVERA

Chairperson Rivera thanked everyone for coming out and asked for Attorney Young's comments.

ATTORNEY COMMENTS:

Attorney Young stated that this is a five-member board but at this time there are only three, which constitutes a quorum. He reminded the Board that they are a quasi-judicial board that must hear competent and substantial evidence in order to make a decision. The staff report is considered competent and substantial evidence other input or testimony by the applicant or community can be considered as long as it is sworn testimony.

Chairperson Rivera reminded everyone that this is an open public hearing to discuss Special Exception Case #2026-1. Special Exception request from James Hanes/Faith Life Fellowship to allow a church in a Public Lands Institutional Zoning District and to allow him to reside in an RV during construction of a church.

Deputy Town Clerk, Pam Glover called for disclosure. All of the Board members stated that they have driven by the property but have not spoken to anyone about the hearing.

Chairperson Rivera opened the Public Hearing at 7:11pm

STAFF REPORT

Town Clerk, Joni Payne presented the staff report as follows:

Special Exception Case #2026-1. Special Exception for parcels 22-10-24-2250-0040-0010 & 22-10-24-2250-0060-0010

A Special Exception was granted for this property in June of 2023 for a church and an accessory use of an RV. The development did not commence in the allotted time; therefore, the Special Exception was terminated.

Request From James Hanes/Faith Life Fellowship to Allow a Church in a Public Lands Institutional Zoning District and to Allow him to Reside in an RV During Construction of a Church.

Staff reviewed the completed application and notified the surrounding property owners by certified mail. The hearing was properly noticed in accordance with Zoning Ordinance 2012-1.

The Special Exception, if granted is non-transferable unless determined otherwise by the ZBOA. Expansion or Extension of the SE beyond the scope of terms is a violation.

The PLI District allows for a church by Special Exception.

The application for the SE includes a request for temporary use of an RV while the church is being built.

Based on the Town's Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance 2012-1, Zoning Ordinance Amendment 2023-8, and review of SE 2023-1, staff does not find a permissible use for an RV as a Special Exception or an Accessory Use.

The Special Exception for a church is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance 2012-1.

The staff review of the sixteen criteria as outlined in Section 3.4.3 of Zoning Ordinance 2012-1 was based solely on the request for a church.

Zoning Ordinance 2012-1 states that the ZBOA shall not grant a Special Exception unless it makes written findings that the Special Exception satisfies the sixteen criteria outlined in Section 3.4.3.

The Town Clerk stated that based on the analysis and applicable review criteria having been met, staff recommends approval of the Special Exemption request for a church only.

APPLICANT COMMENTS:

Mr. Hanes stated that they are here to reinstate the Special exception that was granted in 2023. He understands that the RV may not apply, due to the recent passage of certain ordinances, so he doesn't expect the Board to address that issue.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Attorney Young swore in everyone who wished to comment.

Regina Hartsfield stated that the applicant was granted a nearly identical Special exception in 2023 for a church and to live in an RV during construction. No progress to build a church has been made by the applicant, and his family continues to live in the RV after the expiration of the Special Exception, which is a violation of zoning requirements. Would all legal residents of Interlachen be given the same consideration under these circumstances? Granting a new exception would reward non-compliance and set a precedence that special exceptions can be ignored without consequences. She voiced her concern about residency. The Town requires permanent residency to hold public office. The applicant was appointed mayor while living on this property. The Board has a responsibility to ensure that zoning approvals are not used to create the appearance of residency when none legally exists. The failure to act on the prior special exception, the continued unauthorized use of RV residency, and the lack of good faith compliance, all point to a pattern that doesn't meet Town standards for granting a Special Exception. She asked the Board to deny the Special Exception.

Bill Conrad stated that they moved to the area in 2020, but don't live in the Town. He stated that he joined the Rotary Club, the Volunteer Fire Department, and the High School Advisory. He was interested in running for public office but was told he couldn't because he wasn't a resident. He felt that someone living in a camper shouldn't be able to hold public office.

Randy Stacy asked what is considered residency. He stated that Mr. Hanes is not just the Mayor, he is part of the Rotary, American Legion, and Interlachen Sports Association. He has done a lot for the community. He is trying to get a church built but it takes a long time. He requested that the Special exception be approved.

Attorney Young explained that this is a Zoning Board of Adjustment and their obligation is to consider evidence as to whether or not to grant a Special Exception. This is not the board by which residency is determined, that is determined by the charter.

Chairperson Rivera closed the public comments and opened up for Board discussion.

AGENDAED DISCUSSION:

Discussion, Consideration and Decision on Special exception Case #2026-1.

Board Member Stacy Suarez asked Mr. Hanes the following: (1) Is the RV still on the property, (2) when will the RV be removed, (3) have construction permits been issued since 2023.

After being sworn in by Attorney Young, Mr. Hanes stated that the RV is currently on the property, and he was recently advised that due to ordinance it cannot stay on the property. He plans to move the RV to his property at 202 Lake Shore Drive within the next ninety (90) days.

Mr. Hanes stated that they have been through three (3) contractors. They have been working with the current contractor since March of 2025 and learned through that process that the Special Exception had expired.

Chairperson Jasmine Rivera asked what has happened between 2023 and now. He responded that the first contractor was hired in June of 2023, but due to no progress within six (6) months, they hired another contractor. They then learned that the contractor had been defrauding people, so they released him. They hired Ford's Construction in March of 2025. During the staff's review of the plans, they realized that the Special Exception had expired.

Chairperson Jasmine Rivera asked what his next step is.

Mr. Hanes stated that he has the blueprints and is ready to apply for permits, however, the permits can't be issued until the Special Exception is approved.

Board Member Stacy Suarez voiced her concern regarding the time frame since the Special Exception is good for only twelve (12) months.

Board Member Leo Granger asked if the church has the funds in place to support the project. Mr. Hanes said yes.

Board Member Stacy Suarez stated that based on the criteria outlined in Section 3.4.3 of Zoning Ordinance 2012-1, having been satisfied, I move to approve Special Exception Case #2026-1 for a period of twelve (12) months to allow the construction of a church in a PLI Zoning District at 210 South County Road 315.

Board Member Leo Granger seconded.

As a courtesy Chairperson Jasmine Rivera opened the floor for public comments and Attorney Yonge swore in those speaking.

Bill Conrad stated that in 2023 the applicant was granted a special exception to complete the project in one (1) year. If he had asked for an extension in 2024 he would have been given until 2025. The three (3) years allowed by the code have expired. He didn't think the applicant should be given credit for the three years that he wasn't in compliance.

Barry Crandal stated that he moved here from New York because he thought it was a quiet community, but he was not pleased with this meeting.

Public discussion was closed and the Board proceeded with the vote.

The motion to approve Special Exception Case # 2026-1 passed by a unanimous voice vote of the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

ADOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned at 7:47 pm.