

Minutes of the Todd County Board of Adjustment Meeting

February 27th, 2025

Completed by: Sue Bertrand P&Z Staff

Site Visits conducted by Adam Ossefoort and Danny Peyton on January 15th, 2025.

Meeting attended by board members: Chair Russ Vandenheuvell, Vice Chair Bill Berscheit, Mike Soukup, Danny Payton, alternate, Larry Bebus and Planning Commission Liaison, Ken Hovet.

Staff members: Adam Ossefoort and Sue Bertrand

Other members of the public: Sign-in Sheet is available for viewing upon request.

Russ called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Each board member introduced themselves.

Motion to approve the agenda as written by Ken, seconded by Danny, voice vote, no dissent heard, motion carried.

Danny motioned to have the January 23rd, 2025 meeting minutes approved. Larry seconded the motion. Voice vote, no dissent heard. Motion carried.

Introduction of the meeting process and etiquette by Russ.

AGENDA ITEM 1: Travis Eckel – PID 28-0012803 – Wykeham Township

Request(s):

1. Request to increase the allowed storage containers from two containers per parcel to fifteen containers for this parcel in AF-2 Zoning.

Travis was present as the applicant and introduced himself.

Staff Findings: Adam read the staff report. The staff report is available for viewing upon request in the Planning & Zoning Office.

Proposed Condition(s):

1. Establishment of vegetated screening on the north and east sides of the building site to screen from public roadways.

Eckel confirmed the staff report was accurate.

Dan went over his site visit report. This report may be viewed in full, at the Planning and Zoning office, upon request.

Correspondence received: None.

Public comment: None.

Board discussion:

Bill addressed Ken, as Planning Commission liaison, the ordinance is limited to two storage containers, and wondered why?

Ken stated if he had to guess, it is because of the appearance, and they have both seen where storage containers have gotten out of hand and it looks like a junk yard, and he thinks it is to prevent that, however, other examples, if you go South on Hwy 71, a gentleman is using the storage containers for rent and they look nice. They are all painted and they are lined up nice, the grounds are well kept and he would have no problem with something like that.

Adam agreed it is all based on appearance and is the reasoning for it. He stated he believed his intentions were to develop this into a mini-storage type facility.

Travis confirmed.

Adam explained the mini storage is allowed, pending the CUP process, and approval, and because Travis has chosen cargo containers instead of the traditional mini-storage type units, we required the variance application.

Bill's next question, any documentation to substantiate the Wykeham township's indication for the need of storage units?

Travis presented his signed resolution from Wykeham township board members confirming the shortage of storage facilities in the area and in support of the application.

Adam read the documentation. This may be viewed in full, upon request, at the Planning and Zoning Office. Adam also made a copy for the record.

Russ asked how far from Eagle Bend will this facility be?

Travis stated $\frac{3}{4}$ to a mile, straight out on 22.

Russ, others in the County? He knows of Staples.

Adam named the few he knew, one is just West of Staples, on the outskirts. One South of Long Prairie, and all kinds of more traditional mini-storage units, but thinks there are a couple of these kinds or similar to this. It has always been in our ordinance for a limit of two, but there were some discrepancies in our ordinance between the two statements where it didn't list the same thing in both statements in the same section, so there was a discrepancy on how that will be enforced. We have since amended our ordinance, so, the consistency is there now, and lists cargo containers in both sections, limiting to two.

Russ were you planning on tarring around the area or gravel?

Travis stated Class 5, as the containers weigh nearly 8500 pounds each and pavement is not recommended, especially with the added weight of the truck during installation. Very heavy truck.

Ken several sizes of containers as far as length goes, what size was he going to use?

Travis stated they plan on using the High Cube double end. So, the fifteen units that they have, they will split down the middle, so, they will have a door on both ends. They will be a 40' storage container. They will put a wall in the middle, so there will be two twenty foot with doors on both ends. So, fifteen really makes thirty units. They did the math and figured there was kind of a need for this area. They didn't want to go above that either, as it gets to be a lot. Fifteen is a smaller number and looks nice. Doesn't look excessive. Relating to the units, a stick building is half the price to build, so they are not trying to do it because it is cheaper, as containers are twice the price. The storage containers are water tight as opposed to a stick building with garage doors where water can run in with the snow melt. That was the main concern and with last year's two instances within two weeks 5" to 6" of rain. This isn't even close to the wetland area and they will be sure of that, but it would have been flooded. Just wanted to avoid that going forward.

Russ asked if he will connect them together?

Travis explained they will be butted right next to each other with maybe a two-inch gap between them. A company comes in and they place them in line, all the colors are the same, if not, he and his brother and dad are painters so, they will make sure they look nice.

Danny asked if they will all be the same color and asked that it be an added condition?

Adam stated that was fair, all containers be uniform and earth tone colors or something. That goes in line with the character of the locality.

Travis stated when you buy them they come tan, single use or you can special order colors.

Bill asked if there are any criteria that would apply from the township or the County, during the development of the site? You mentioned a Class-5 base, are we going to do a lift in the immediate area say 6" higher than what is immediately adjacent to it, to significantly limit the impact of water on this site? Looking for direction to address this.

Ken felt they would be found in the building codes, under site prep.

Danny agreed with Ken and added it slopes away from the road, assuming the containers are sitting East and West, with a 4" to 6" difference between the front and back, a little prep work will go a long way to deal with the slope and prevent freezing water in the front, where you can't get a door open. Danny also asked how far away from the edge of the field (current edge of wetland) will the placement be, because you are going to have to put a road back there, too?

Adam showed the wetland image on the overhead.

Travis stated the containers are 40', so they are planning 80' of flat surface, so, you have twenty feet to drive on each side, plus planning on leaving another 20' as they do not want to play close. Make sure they are following rules.

More discussion on placement.

Dan one approach or two?

Travis stated there was an existing approach on the South end and they will add another. New approach and culvert approved by Wykeham twp.

Dan goes back to 2 to 15 at a 650 % increase.

Ken asked if the storage will be enough for a car or a boat?

Travis explained the high cube are typically eight feet wide, so you could get a car in there.

Mike stated 650% jump from the standard, without understanding more how the structure is going to play out as far as how it affects the other property surrounding and will this be increasing the area to more of a business area rather than agricultural? Are we going to open the floodgate for that area to more commercial use? He does understand it will require a CUP.

Russ stated it is a storage unit, there are others in the County that are similar, it will be neat, it's close to town, doesn't have a problem with it. It is something that Wykeham township approved, and this is going to look nice, and be more of a "storage unit" than fifteen containers.

Danny stated this is a business not agriculture. Could we put a stipulation that it has to be moved to commercial?

Adam stated he was not quite sure of the question, but if it were to be rezoned to a commercial use, it would create a spot zone and that does not follow the direction of the comprehensive plan, and secondly, mini-storage is an allowed use in Ag zone, by conditional use.

Ken stated it may be awkward, but he did not think it was distasteful and Travis still has to go through a few more hoops and obtain a CUP.

Russ asked if the need to go through criteria questions was necessary?

Ken suggested we dispense with that.

Motion by Bill to grant the variance request, stating the findings of facts to be:

- *The need for storage in the township substantiated by the signed resolution.

- *Commercial use in ag zone, however this is a small irregularly shaped field which would not be highly valuable to Ag.

*Nothing in the neighborhood would be impacted by this.

seconded by Ken, with the two conditions.

1. Establishment of vegetated screening on the north and east sides of the building site to screen from public roadways.
2. All storage containers shall be kept in uniform, earth-tone colors.

Roll call vote commenced as follows:

Board member	Vote (yes or no)
Larry Bebus	Yes
Mike Soukup	Yes
Danny Payton	No, it is still that 650% increase over our standard, too much of an increase.
Ken Hovet	Yes
Bill Berscheit	Yes
Russell Vandenheuvel	Yes

Russ stated the variance has been granted.

Adam stated he will present a new agenda format for the board for next meeting.

Motion to adjourn by Mike, seconded by Dan, voice vote, no dissent heard, meeting adjourned at 6:40 PM.