

LODI TOWNSHIP BOARD OF APPEALS

Regular Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, October 21, 2025 at 7 pm

Lodi Township Hall
3755 Pleasant Lake Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48103

1. Call to order - Pledge of Allegiance

The regular meeting of October 21, 2025 opened with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:00 pm.

2. Roll Call

Present: Chronis, Dever, Strader, VanKoevering
Absent: Schaible
Others Present: Recording Secretary Michelle Joppeck,
Planning Commissioner Janet Rogers,
Planning Commissioner Brian Sweetland,
Morgan Zelinder and 2 other members of the public

3. Approve 3/18/2025 Minutes

VanKoevering moved to approve the minutes from the 3/18/2025 meeting as presented. Second by Dever. A voice vote was taken. Aye=all, Nay=none, absent=1. Motion carried.

4. Revision / Approval of Agenda

Dever moved to approve the agenda as presented. Second by Strader. A voice vote was taken. Aye=all, Nay=none, absent=1. Motion carried.

5. Request from Brian & Cheryl Sweetland, 6634 W Waters Rd, Ann Arbor, MI 48103, Lodi Township Parcel ID# M-13-05-400-001 to appeal Ordinance #30.101 yard/setback standard-minimum street side in order to tear down the existing farm building in order to use the footprint to build a functional, larger building for storage of farm vehicles and trailer. Existing building Front Yard Setback is 85 feet (15-foot variance).

Chronis moved to open the public hearing at 7:03 pm. Second by Strader. A voice vote was taken. Aye=all, Nay=none, absent=1. Motion carried.

Applicant Brian Sweetland explained the reasoning for the application. There is an existing building built around 1900 which is inadequate for use due to the structure height and size. The cost to alter the structure to make it useable would be similar to the cost to tear it down and build a new building. However, the current building is in violation of the 100-foot front yard setback so any building built in the same location would also be in violation of the front yard setback. Sweetland is asking for a variance to be able to build a new farm building at the same location.

Chronis asked for confirmation that it would be used for storage. Sweetland confirmed that.

Dever asked what kind of items would be stored in the building. Sweetland stated that it would store his farm pickup, farm trailer and skid steer.

Dever asked for confirmation of the plans for the new building and what variance is being requested. Sweetland confirmed that the building will be no closer to the road than the current building and will be expanded in a direction parallel to the road.

Dever asked if the new building would impact neighbors across the road in any way. Sweetland confirmed that the neighbor across the street has no objections to granting the request made in the application as evidenced by their signature on the application.

Strader asked if other locations have been considered. Sweetland stated that he has not really considered any other locations. There is a ditch in the back of the buildings and it is wasted space if the current building is torn down and nothing is put in its place.

Dever moved to close the public hearing at 7:06 pm. Second by Strader. A voice vote was taken. Aye=all, Nay=none, absent=1. Motion carried.

VanKoeving stated that she agrees with Sweetland's assessment that there is not a better place to building a replacement building. When VanKoeving drove by to see if there was a different location to put a replacement building, she discovered that the buildings are already laid out nicely and tightly and it does not seem reasonable to ask Sweetland to move the cows or change the driveways in order to be able to achieve the front yard setback.

Strader stated that for functionality, having the circle driveway by the proposed building would make storing vehicles and trailers easier. Any other locations that a building could be placed would either take up farm field or be located further back which would result in needing to update the driveway which would be expensive. If a different location is requested, the septic field would also need to be considered. Strader stated that she is in favor of granting the variance in order to not disturb any farm land.

Chronis asked Sweetland what the dimensions of the new building will be. Sweetland responded that it would be 24 feet by 44 feet with a 10 feet tall clearance inside. Chronis asked about the locations of the doors. Sweetland said there would be an overhead door on the East end and two smaller doors on the North side towards the West end.

Dever stated that he sees no reason to deny the variance; there is no adverse impact to the neighbors and the Township, it is a unique circumstance, and the location make sense for parking vehicles.

Chronis recommended going through the Findings of Fact as required by Zoning Ordinance 54.08.B Variances, Standards of Review:

Findings of Facts

1. Practical Difficulty: denying the application would deprive the applicant of rights commonly enjoyed by other property owners in the same zoning district.

Yes, similar variances have been granted in the past.

2. Substantial Justice: allowing the variance will provide relief and justice to the applicant similar to other owners in the district.

Yes, for reasons Dever just described.

3. Unique Circumstances: The need for the variance is due to unique circumstances peculiar to the land or structures involved that are not applicable to other land or structures in the same district.

Yes, because the land sets up barriers with farming, livestock and existing buildings.

4. Preservation of Property Rights: the variance is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right possessed by other property owners in the same zoning district.

Yes, because it will improve the property and increase the usefulness of the outbuilding.

5. Public Safety and Welfare: The requested variance can be granted that the spirit of this Ordinance will be observed and public safety and welfare is secured in such a way that a) it will not increase hazard of fire or endanger public safety, b) it will not unreasonably diminish or impair the value of surrounding properties, c) it will not alter the essential character of the area or surrounding properties, d) it will not impair the adequate supply of light and air to surrounding properties.

Yes. There is no potential diminishment of adjacent property owners' views or encroaching on anything other than the existing setback which is already a variance.

6. Not Self-Created

Yes

7. More than Mere Inconvenience: the alleged hardship and practical difficulties that will result from a failure to grant the variance are substantially more than mere inconvenience or an ability to attain a higher financial return. By strict adherence to the ordinance there would be extreme burden to the applicant.

Yes, because it makes the most sense. Placing it elsewhere would be more costly and require more improvements to the site. The proposed location is the best potential building site. Placement behind the existing buildings would potentially be in the septic field, in the livestock area or in farm fields which would be disruptive to the farm.

8. Minimum Necessary Action: for the reasons set forth in the application, the variance is the minimum necessary relief to allow reasonable use of the land and home.

Yes.

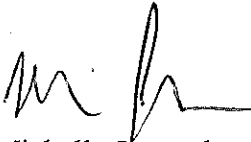
Dever moved to approve the variance as requested based on the Findings of Fact noted above. Second by VanKoevering. A voice vote was taken. Aye=all, Nay=none, absent=1. Motion carried.

6. Adjournment

Strader moved to adjourn at 7:15 pm. Second by VanKoevering. A voice vote was taken. Aye=all, Nay=none, absent=1. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cindy Strader,
Zoning Board of Appeal Secretary



Michelle Joppeck,
Recording Secretary