

**Minutes
of the
Steele County Board of Adjustments
January 14, 2025**

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Schmidt at 7:00 pm. Members present were Schmidt, Ulrich, Jaster, Hansen, Lammers and staff member Oolman.

Agenda:

Motion by Jaster, second by Lammers to approve the agenda as submitted. Motion passed.

Organization:

Motion by Hansen, second by Ulrich to reappoint Brian Schmidt as Chair. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Hansen, second by Ulrich to reappoint Steve Jaster as Vice Chair. Motion passed unanimously.

Minutes:

Motion by Jaster, second by Hansen to approve the October 29th, 2024 minutes as printed. Motion passed 5 to 0.

Public Hearing – Variance #666 Johnson (Septic Setback)

This hearing is to consider a variance request from Andrew Matthes to construct a septic drain field one foot from the west property line, eight feet from the south property line, and 18 feet from the house on property owned by Dennis Johnson and located at 4654 County Rd 45 North. MN Rules require septic systems to be 10 feet from property lines and 20 feet from structures.

Questions & Comments by board members:

- Lammers: Has the system always had a holding tank?
Oolman: The holding tank was installed approximately 15 years ago when Dennis Johnson acquired the property.
- Schmidt: When the property was acquired has it been a rental property?
Susan Johnson: Yes, it was, but it has been empty the last 5 years or so.
- Schmidt: Do we know why the system was never updated from a holding tank?
Oolman: The lot was deemed too small to accommodate a drain field.
- Hansen: Is there enough footage on the property for a drain field now?
Oolman: If the Variance is granted.
- Lammers: Inquired about what type of system will be installed.
Andrew Matthes: It will not be a mound. It will be underground so the water sheds appropriately and doesn't cause problems.
- Johnson: Stated that a system with a drainfield would be a better option then a holding tank.
- Schmidt: If the Variance is granted, will the property still be a rental property?
- *Johnson: That is still unknown.*

The public hearing was opened.

As there were no other comments the public hearing was closed.

The board reviewed the criteria for considering variance request #666

1) Is the variance in harmony with the intent of the comprehensive plan and ordinance?

All Members felt the request met the intent of the comprehensive plan and ordinance.

2) Is the property owner proposing to use the property in a reasonable manner?

All members felt the property owner was using the property in a reasonable manner.

3) The plight of the applicant is due to circumstances unique to the property.

All members felt the uniqueness of the property contributed to the plight of the applicant.

4) Was the plight of the landowner created by someone other than the landowner?

Members, Jaster, Ulrich, and Lammers felt the circumstances were created by someone other than the landowner. Members, Schmidt and Hansen felt the landowner knew the property was small when he bought it.

5) The variance will not alter the essential character of the locality.

Members, Hansen, Jaster, Ulrich, and Lammers felt the character of the locality would remain the same. Member Schmidt felt the character would change as the entire yard would be a septic drain field.

6) Economic considerations alone are not the only practical difficulty?

All members' agreed economics were not the only reason for the request.

Motion by Ulrich, second by Jaster to approve variance request #666 based upon the findings of the board. Motion passed, 3 to 2 with Ulrich, Lammers, and Jaster voting in favor and Schmidt and Hanson voting against.

Public Hearing – Variance #667 Owatonna Township (Front Yard Setback)

This hearing is to consider a variance request from Owatonna Township to construct a new town hall 82 feet from the center of Austin Road on property located in the SE ¼, SE ¼, SE ¼, Section 22, Owatonna Township. The property address is 1334 28th Street SE. Steele County ordinances require structure to be setback 100 feet from road centerlines.

Questions & Comments by board members:

- Schmidt: Have you considered moving the building to the south?
Joe Elbert, Owatonna TWP: Yes, but we are trying to avoid moving the electrical and gas utilities that are located west of the existing building.
- Jaster: I see there is not a propane tank on the property, is it naturel gas?
Elbert: Yes, it is.
- Dave Dietz, Owatonna TWP: Stated why they need to place the building in that particular spot on the property. Moving it further south would require moving the handicap parking spots as well.

The public hearing was opened.

As there were no other comments the public hearing was closed.

The board reviewed the criteria for considering variance request #667

1) Is the variance in harmony with the intent of the comprehensive plan and ordinance?

All members felt the request met the intent of the comprehensive plan and ordinance.

2) Is the property owner proposing to use the property in a reasonable manner?

All members felt the property owner was using the property in a reasonable manner.

3) The plight of the applicant is due to circumstances unique to the property.

All members felt the uniqueness of the property contributed to the plight of the applicant.

4) Was the plight of the landowner created by someone other than the landowner?

All members felt the circumstances were created by someone other than the landowner.

5) The variance will not alter the essential character of the locality.

All members felt the character of the locality would remain the same.

6) Economic considerations alone are not the only practical difficulty?

All members' agreed economics were not the only reason for the request.

Motion by Jaster, second by Lammers to approve variance request #667 based upon the findings of the board. Motion passed, 5 to 0.

Adjournment:

Motion by Hansen, second by Ulrich to adjourn. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 7:40 PM.