

OWATONNA PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES FOR MAY 27, 2025

The Owatonna Planning Commission met in regular session at 5:30 p.m. in the Crandall Center – Chambers with Chairperson Kelly Rooks conducting the meeting. Present at roll call were Commissioners Kelly Rooks, John Eickhoff, Nick Peake, and Dave Effertz. Commissioners Rachel Springer-Gasner and Mark Wilson were absent. Community Development Manager Greg Kruschke and Senior Administrative Technician Kristen Kopp were also present.

A motion was made by Eickhoff and seconded by Effertz to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of May 13, 2025. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion carried.

Variance VAR-20, which is a request by Bob Seykora on behalf of DWTJC Properties, LLC for two variances related to hard surfacing and curbing with a 0' setback for the property located at 1164 Frontage Road West, was presented by Community Development Manager Greg Kruschke. (Refer to report on file.) Public hearing opened at 5:35 pm. Jay Clark, property owner, said this property and lots were put into play in 1980 and that's how long he's owned it. It's hard-surfaced all along the lot. He said it was a valuable parking area, but when Walmart went in, they closed the entrance and they lost their gas customers and ultimately the truck stop failed, so the property was repurposed. Dean's Towing has been in that location forever and the Lion's Den was a new tenant about 18 years ago. The only reason he came in was that Jones, Haugh & Smith said it was common sense to put the curb on the property line. A fence sits on the property line and has been there since 1982. He said he is grandfathered in on that lot and he's not making any improvements that are going to require him to put grass in a parking lot. Next to him is a whole hedge of trees and garbage that the neighbors own. There are no buildings or roads close to that property line. John at Jones, Haugh & Smith said it would be nice to put the curb about two feet off the property line, just to not let the water run next door. It's all woods next door and then grass from the old motel. He said that the planned addition will be cold storage, just to put things the need for the towing business, like brake drums and brake parts, out of the facility where vehicles are repaired. Morton Buildings is putting up the addition. He can withdraw the application and doesn't need to do anything. He just went for this because the engineer recommended it and it made good sense to him. He doesn't usually come in for a variance unless there is common sense involved. He said he believes the engineer is right. There are other options; he could put riprap there. He said there are not two variances—there is not a driveway and it won't be used for parking. He said he only wants the curb to get a little closer to the fence. He would probably be three feet off the property line and he's allowed to put it at five feet. He is not taking the fence down—it will stay. He said that is the decision the Planning Commissioners have to make—common sense or the Zoning regulations. Public hearing closed at 5:41 pm. Eickhoff said that if it's going to be three feet, why not five? Clark said that they want to make sure it can accommodate heavy rainfalls. Eickhoff asked if there was a reason it has to be paved. Clark said no, but concrete doesn't erode. He's sure it will wash down and wants to stay off the neighbor's property with their water. It won't be a 0' setback, he's asking for two more feet, or however much Bob Seykora with Rocon needs to form up the curb. Eickhoff asked if the current lot is gravel. Clark said that the middle is hard-surfaced with concrete. He said that when he bought the property Happy Chef, Phillips gas station, and the motel was all that was on that corner. He purchased the gas station and a lot owned by the Jefferson Bus Company. Eickhoff said that he appreciates the history of it—it's good to know. Effertz asked Clark if he had met with Greg. He said yes, he met with Greg and Troy. He said he can cut back on the amount of concrete, but he would prefer to put the amount he wants to put in. He will replace some of the blacktop with concrete, which is the best thing to do. The trucks tear asphalt up. Eickhoff asked if there was fencing all the way around the property. Clark said there is fencing around the back side of the lot—it is secure storage and camera monitored. It's a chain link fence with screening so you can't see through. They would like to put barbed wire up to keep people out, but they have to rely on cameras and

police since the City won't allow barbed wire. It is well lit. Rooks asked what happens to the water when you get a hard rain. Clark said the whole lot slopes from the south to the north, west, and east. Peake said if you're not going to be driving or walking on the area, what's the difference between rock. Clark said nothing, but he can't guarantee that it won't go onto the neighbor's property without the curbing. He said he still needs something in case they get a torrential downpour. He owns the next two lots. It's the only place in town that you can park trucks and they have a contract with Schneider for the whole side of that lot. He said sometimes common sense has to prevail and he is a pretty common sense person. Rooks asked about the two properties to the east—he's not worried about the water running through because he owns it. Clark said DWTJC has right of refusal on that lot. That partnership will buy out his interest. Rooks asked if they let it go through, what happens to the water. Clark said it soaks in before it gets to the Frontage Road. If it does get to the Frontage Road, there is curb and gutter. Eickhoff said he'd like to see him work with the City to come up with a solution that will meet code. Clark said the only reason he's here is that the engineer at Jones, Haugh & Smith suggested it. Eickhoff asked if this request will go to City Council no matter what the Planning Commission's decision is. Kruschke said it will go to City Council next week with the Planning Commission's formal recommendation. Kruschke stated at this point, we have a difference of opinion. He said we are listening to the City Engineer. When additions go up, code does require that properties come into conformance and that is where the second recommendation comes in. Effertz stated that you can see that the Commission is struggling with this request as City Staff does not recommend denial of the request without having a good reason. Clark stated he will just withdraw the application. Rooks clarified options if the applicant were to withdraw.

Jay Clark withdrew the application VAR-20.

Kruschke said that they are planning to pave the Vine Street parking lot this year.

Community Development Manager Greg Kruschke gave an update on previous items. The Preliminary Plat for Mineral Springs Estates, the Preliminary and Final Plat of KEG, and the final plat of Renneberg Hardwoods were approved by City Council.

There are no requests for the June 10 meeting, so that will be canceled.

By the June 27 meeting we will know who the consultant will be for the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance update.

A motion was made by Eickhoff and seconded by Peake to adjourn the meeting at 6:02 p.m. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Greg Kruschke
Community Development Manager