

**Summary of the
MEEKER COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
July 11, 2023 – MEETING MINUTES**
Audio Available

The Meeker County Planning Commission held a meeting on **July 11, 2023 at 5:00pm** to consider the following Conditional Use permit applications and Rezoning application and other business before the Board. Present was Smith, Turck, Schreiber, Hempel, Jans, Euerle, Salzl and Zoning Administrator Schultz.

5:00pm

Jans calls the meeting to order. There is a quorum.

The Board states their names for voice recognition.

Jans asks the Board if they have any corrections or additions to the June 13, 2023 meeting minutes. None are noted.

Smith makes a motion for approval.

Turck seconds the motion.

Motion carried 7-0.

5:01pm

Jans opens the public hearing for Don Erkens (owner), 74524 320th St, South Haven, MN 55382. Pride & Joy Landscaping (applicant), 12384 Cty Rd 37 NW, Annandale, MN 55302. Property located at 74524 320th St, South Haven, MN 55382. Lot One (1), Block One (1), Hidden Forest, Lake Francis, Kingston Township. An application for a Conditional Use Permit to move more than ten (10) cubic yards of material in the Shore and Bluff Impact Zone and more than fifty (50) cubic yards of material in the Shoreland District in the R-1 Suburban Residential District and within the Shoreland District.

Becky Houle, Don Erkens, Brian Knox and Jay Gaustad are present for this hearing.

Schultz: This property is an approximate 2-acre riparian R-1 zoned Lot 1/Block 1 Hidden Forest, formed in July of 2000 lot with a property address 74524 320th St, South Haven, MN located in Section 12, Township 120, Range 29 in Kingston Township. Lake Francis is considered a General Development Lake.

Currently there is a house and garage on the property built in 2004 with a 30 x 40 shed put on the property in 2020. The property owners are requesting to install 20 feet of additional retaining wall and reposition the already existing retaining wall to stabilize the base of the bluff. Also, pull up the existing rip rap and install filter fabric, reinstall rip rap with 6-20" rock and widen out and reseed existing 7' x 165' lawn level by lake to help stop erosion. Total materials brought on site for the project will be approximately 40 cubic yards of rock for rip-rap, 25 yards of soil and 8 yards of retaining block. Septic system was compliant August 2019, so it will need a compliance check.

Emily Javens, DNR Area Hydrologist, has not yet commented at the time of this meeting.

Smith says that this looks like a good plan. They are trying to restore it.

Jans agrees. They are basically restoring what is there. The rocks will be at a good angle and the retaining blocks will be reused and moved back about two feet. Right now, there is a gap between the bank.

Hempel asks the height of the retaining wall.

Schultz says that it is over 4', but once the project is done, it will be less than 4'.

Erkens states that this year the ice did a beating on his shoreline. He lost some shoreline that washed into the lake.

Knox says he likes to look out at the lake, so if the Board thinks this is a good plan that will better the lake, he is in approval.

Jans says that there is dirt going over the riprap now and it will continue to get worse. So, putting the riprap up and getting grass seeded will be good. Vegetation is all around.

Schultz reads the possible conditions:

1. The total cubic yardage moved and/or brought onto this site shall be a maximum of 90 cubic yards of material.
2. A compliant septic system will need to be verified before the start of this project.
3. The project shall be completed as per the plans submitted with this application.
4. All required additional permits shall be obtained if needed prior to commencing the project or project extends beyond scope submitted.
5. Engineering completed by a licensed structural engineer licensed in the State of Minnesota for any walls that are four feet or taller.
6. Erosion control shall be implemented and maintained on-site until permanent vegetative cover is established to prevent erosion of material into sensitive areas.
7. The applicant and/or property owner shall notify Meeker County Planning & Zoning within seven days of completion of this project.

Erkens asks why a septic compliance is needed.

Schultz tells him that any permit in the shoreland district requires one.

Hempel makes a motion to close the public hearing.

Schreiber seconds the motion.

Motion carried 7-0.

Smith makes a motion for approval with the conditions.

Turck seconds the motion.

Motion carried 7-0.

5:15pm

Jans opens the public hearing for Gemini Storage (owner), PO Box 10, Litchfield, MN 55355 and Michael Hicks (applicant), 830 Capwood Ave, Litchfield, MN 55355 and Daniel Hicks (applicant), 1767 Watertown Rd, Long Lake, MN 55356. Property located at 62189 245th St, Litchfield, MN 55355. That part of Govt Lot 7, more fully described in the application. Section Twenty-Four (24), Township One Hundred Nineteen (119), Range Thirty-One (31), Litchfield Township. An

application to rezone a parcel of property from A-1 General Agriculture to I-1 Industrial Development.

Michael Hicks, Mike Lawrence and Josh Baumgartner are present for this hearing.

Schultz: The property to be rezoned is 3.98 acres -- parcel 14-0294000. This parcel is located in Section 24, Township 119, Range 31 of Litchfield Township between Minnesota Hwy 22 and the Litchfield airport.

Previous to Gemini Storage/Hicks Trucking Co. buying the property, the property was a single residence, which was allowed under the A-1 Agricultural Preservation District. The new owners are intending to use the existing house on the property as a driver lounge for bus drivers and shipping drivers. A new bus garage will be built on the property for buses that are used to transport Litchfield school district children. Per the contract with the Litchfield school district busses used for school district children must be housed in a storage facility. The site will also be used for shipping commercial vehicle storage and a commercial vehicle wash bay for both busses and semis.

The applicants are asking to rezone the current A-1 (Agriculture Preservation District) property to I-1 (General Industrial District) to better fit the new use intended for this property.

Industrial properties according to the Meeker County Comprehensive Land Use Plan are intended to provide a district whose primary purpose is to allow limited industrial development adjacent to existing urban areas or on major transportation routes. The commercial property contiguous to this property to the south is intended to be rezoned to I-1 as well in the near future. Currently there is industrial property to the west approximately 500 feet. The closest residential dwelling to this site is approximately 400 feet. The setback requirement for a dwelling in the I-1 district is 100 feet from Meeker Ordinance 17.04.C&D. As per Meeker County zoning ordinance Sec 17.01.A.11 -permitted uses of this business plan of being in the category of a truck terminal and warehousing is a permitted use allowed within the I-1 General Industry District zone.

Jans states that this property is zoned ag, but he doesn't see any other property zoned ag next to it.

Hempel asks what is the surrounding zoning.

Schultz states that there is commercial to the south, industrial to the west, and a little residential in between. Currently there is a big warehouse in between that will eventually be industrial as well.

Hicks says that they park their surplus trailers in that warehouse as well as loaded semi-trailers, so they don't have to be tarped, etc. Now that Steffes has been purchased, both school bus and truck operations have moved out there.

There were multiple reasons why he wanted to buy it. First is because they always had a driver's lounge for over-the-road drivers. They always had a place to shower, do laundry, a patio for grilling, etc. When we bought Steffes, it was to gain more area for equipment and to service equipment, but it didn't give us room for a driver's lounge. So, Luverne expressed interest in selling.

Also, at the south of the lot they want to keep the school bus storage area within close proximity to the office space as the drivers need to go in in the morning for 'reasonable suspicion' and to get routes. Then after the route, the drivers need to get to the bathroom quickly. This also gave the ability to have south facing doors.

Baumgartner says that his mother and father have the house adjacent to this property, which will eventually be his. His main concern is the traffic—why can't a different road be used. He is also

concerned about the industrial zoning. He questions why it has to be industrial. What is the difference between commercial and industrial.

Hicks says that everything entering the property will go into the existing easement. The school buses will come into the other property, which Joann E Hicks Trust owns, and will go in on the south into the north facing doors.

Hempel asks what the difference is between industrial and commercial zoning.

Schultz explains that if you go commercial, it has the same setbacks, impervious, etc, but industrial allows Hicks and their trucking business to rezone and not have to go through a conditional use permit. Commercial would require one. Industrial allows this kind of use without a conditional use permit.

Hempel asks if Hicks were to get very large and outgrow this location, the zoning would stay with the property, correct? *Yes*. Would that open the door to bigger manufacturers?

Schultz says that they can both have the same manufacturing, it's just the difference with the conditional use permit. Commercial can expand for larger operations and would have to come in front of the Board. With commercial you can bring in things like hotel, motel, and car dealerships, which you can't do with industrial.

Lawrence says he is concerned with the zoning. He feels it isn't consistent with the county. All the industrial have highway frontage—they are junk yards, landfill and compost sites. He doesn't have any concerns with what they are doing, but doesn't seem like it should be industrial. Also, would this trigger a highway turn lane?

Jans says that MN Dot decides that.

Hicks says that the buses leave at different times. They don't all leave at the same time and don't come back at the same time. It is staggered. Traffic should not be any worse than it was before.

Schultz explains that the reason there are so many different zoned properties in this area, is because Meeker County didn't have control of this area until 2019. It was considered "extra territorial" and the City of Litchfield controlled it. The city did that zoning. Most of those properties should have been zoned industrial. As far as the county comprehensive maps--that should have been industrial. The city put that as commercial.

The Board looks over the zoning maps and ordinances.

Hempel feels good about zoning this property 'industrial' now. She reads from the ordinances: *development standards that will not impair the value and enjoyment of surrounding land uses because of air pollution, noise, vibrations, odors, glare, fire and explosion hazards*. It specifically states that it shouldn't do that in the industrial area.

Jans agrees. It looks like I-1 Industry is the appropriate way to go.

Smith makes a motion to close the public hearing.

Schreiber seconds the motion.

Motion carried 7-0.

Schreiber makes a motion for approval.

Euerle seconds the motion.

Motion carried 7-0

5:53pm

Smith makes a motion to adjourn.

Turck seconds the motion.

Motion carried 7-0.