

ISABELLA COUNTY
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

April 15, 2026

A Regular Meeting of the Isabella County Zoning Board of Appeals was held on April 15, 2026 at the Commission on Aging Building, 2200 South Lincoln Street, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jim Wynes, Tom Riley, Brent Duffett, Tom Kromer

MEMBERS ABSENT: Phillip Vogel

SUPPORT STAFF PRESENT: Ray Johnson, Planner/GIS Analyst
Mackenzie Perkins, Administrative Assistant, Recording Secretary

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 9:00 a.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by the Board.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Johnson stated that there was a typo in the date on the agenda.

Mr. Wynes called for a motion to approve the amended agenda.

A motion was made by Mr. Duffett supported by Mr. Riley to approve the agenda.

Yes: Jim Wynes, Tom Riley, Brent Duffett, Tom Kromer

No: None

Motion carried.

PREVIOUS MINUTES

Minutes from the January 26, 2026 organizational meeting were circulated to the Board prior to the meeting for their review.

Mr. Kromer stated there was a typo in the minutes to change "her" too "here".

Mr. Wynes called for a motion to approve the amended January 26, 2026 organizational meeting minutes.

A motion was made by Mr. Duffett supported by Mr. Kromer to approve the amended minutes.

Mr. Wynes called for a vote.

Yes: Jim Wynes, Tom Riley, Brent Duffett, Tom Kromer

No: None

Motion Carried

PUBLIC COMMENT – Opened at 9:03 a.m., Closed at 9:03 a.m.

Variance #26-01 – Paul and Darsha Cole – Nottawa Township

Mr. Johnson reviewed his staff report regarding the variance request made by Paul and Darsha Cole. He stated that the applicants are requesting a variance for a 1,944 sq ft accessory building where a maximum of 864 sq ft is permitted and a lot coverage of 12.2% where a maximum of 10% is permitted.

Mr. Johnson stated that the property is unique in that it has road frontage on three sides. Mr. Johnson also stated that the proposed placement of the building meets all required setbacks. Mr. Johnson explained the Zoning Ordinance requirements for accessory buildings and structures on non-waterfront lots.

Mr. Johnson informed the Board that Mr. and Mrs. Cole's narrative references two (2) accessory buildings larger than 864 sq ft that have been constructed on non-waterfront properties within the last two years. Mr. Johnson noted that the structure located on 4983 W. Jordan Rd is zoned agricultural, where maximum accessory building size is regulated based on lot size

Mr. Johnson gave the Board a brief history of the property. He stated after reviewing the application that it appears to meet all Zoning Ordinance requirements with recommended conditions.

1. The applicant/owner shall apply for and be issued a soil erosion and sedimentation control permit prior to the issuance of the variance.
2. The applicant/owner shall be issued an address for the property.

The Chair invited the applicant to speak.

Paul Cole discussed a plan to live full time on his waterfront lot and the need for a large pole barn for personal storage.

The Chair opened the public hearing at 9:11 a.m.

Pat Schafer, Nottawa Township Board Member, expressed concern with the well and septic on the property. He stated that he believes the addition will add to the crowded lake. Mr. Schafer

stated the Nottawa Township Board had no issues with the proposal but wants to make sure the property can support a well and septic.

Mr. Johnson asked for clarification from Mr. Cole if the proposed building will be a home or have a bedroom where a well and septic installation would be required.

Mr. Cole stated the use of the building would solely be for storage and not require a well or septic.

Hearing no further public comment, the Chair closed the public hearing at 9:12 a.m.

Mr. Duffett stated there would be no need for a variance request if Diane St. had been abandoned making the lot with the home contiguous with this lot. He stated Diane St. is developed more like a driveway.

Mr. Johnson affirmed Mr. Duffett's statement regarding abandonment.

Mr. Duffett stated that this applicant meets all requirements of Section 14.04 (C) and that the building will not be close to any roads and will not have any neighboring site issues.

Mr. Kromer agreed with Mr. Duffett.

Hearing no further discussion, the Chair called for a motion.

A motion was made by Mr. Duffett to approve Variance Number 26-01 (VAR#26-01) as submitted by Paul and Darsha Cole for a 1,944 sq ft (36 ft x 54 ft) accessory building where a maximum of 864 sq ft is permitted and a lot coverage of 12.2% where a maximum of 10% is permitted. The approval shall be conditioned upon the following:

1. The applicant/owner shall apply for and be issued a soil erosion and sedimentation control permit prior to the issuance of the variance.
2. The applicant/owner shall be issued an address for the property.

The motion was supported by Mr. Kromer.

Mr. Wynes called for a roll call vote.

Tom Kromer: Yes

Brent Duffett: Yes

Tom Riley: Yes

Jim Wynes : Yes

Motion carries.

Variance #26-03 – Douglas Welton – Gilmore Township

Mr. Johnson reviewed his staff report regarding the variance request. He indicated the request was made by Douglas Welton. The variance is for a 21 ft rear yard setback where 35 ft is required, for the construction of a 10 ft x 20 ft deck and a 10 ft x 16 ft 3-season room.

Mr. Johnson stated that the applicant is proposing to move the 10 ft x 20 ft deck from its current location to the north along the lake front of the home. The proposed 10 ft x 16 ft 3-seasons room would be constructed once the deck is relocated.

Mr. Johnson informed the Board that Mr. Welton's home was constructed in the current location following the issuance of a variance approval from the Zoning Board in 1994. Mr. Johnson stated that if approved Mr. Welton's rear yard setback (21 ft) would be similar to that of the neighbor to the north who received a variance in 2023.

Mr. Johnson stated that staff received an emailed correspondence from Dave Rowe in favor of Welton's variance request. Mr. Johnson stated if approved, the construction will require a Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control permit.

The Chair invited the applicant to speak.

Doug Welton complimented Mr. Johnson on his great job representing the variance. Mr. Welton stated that he owns the last two lots next to the proposed job location. Mr. Welton also described an aerial view showing various properties in the surrounding area with building and structures with similar distance as the proposed project.

The Chair opened public comment at 9:22 a.m.

Jim Murphy stated he is a neighbor four (4) houses away from Mr. Welton. Mr. Murphy stated that he had a similar request that was approved. Mr. Murphy thinks the addition Mr. Welton is proposing is modest and that he supports this variance.

Mr. Welton distributed a map and addresses for the board to examine.

Mr. Kromer stated that the footprint will have a minimal change and has no concerns.

Hearing no public comment, the Chair closed public comment at 9:25 a.m.

Mr. Duffett stated that the structure is not any closer toward the lake, not disturbing neighbor views, and not detrimental to surrounding properties. Mr. Duffett stated that the variance meets the review criteria of the zoning ordinance.

Hearing no further discussion, the Chair called for a motion.

A motion was made by Mr. Kromer to approve Variance Number 26-03 (VAR#26-03) as submitted by Douglas Welton for a 21 ft rear yard setback where 35 ft is required, for the

construction of a 10 ft x 20 ft deck and a 10 ft x 16 ft 3-season room. The approval shall be conditioned upon the following:

- I. The applicant shall apply for and be issued a soil erosion and sedimentation control permit prior to the issuance of the variance.

The motion was supported by Mr. Riley.

Mr. Wynes called for a roll call vote.

Tom Kromer: Yes

Brent Duffett: Yes

Tom Riley: Yes

Jim Wynes : Yes

Motion carries.

Zoning Ordinance Interpretation Section 5.12 Signs

Mr. Johnson stated that staff is seeking an interpretation of Section 5.12 (A) of the zoning ordinance which provides regulations on signs in the agricultural zoning districts. He indicated that 5.12 (A)(3) permits a freestanding sign or electronic message board, however the ordinance is silent on whether or not a freestanding sign may be illuminated. Mr. Johnson indicated that all other signs in the agricultural districts specifically permit signs to be internally or externally illuminated or are not permitted to be illuminated.

Mr. Johnson noted to the members that an electronic message board, permitted for the same use as a freestanding sign, is internally illuminated by its nature.

Mr. Duffett stated that he wanted to understand the pros and cons of internal and external illumination.

Mr. Kromer asked if glare from an illuminated sign would affect drivers.

Mr. Duffett stated that some signs are bright and distracting, such as if there is motion in an electronic message board.

Mr. Johnson stated that the ordinance requires lighting from any source to remain on the property and glare shall be reduced so as not to affect neighboring properties.

Mr. Kromer asked if there were other ways to internally light a sign.

Mr. Johnson clarified that any light source internally is by definition an illuminated sign.

A motion was made by Mr. Duffett to interpret the intent of Section 5.12 (3) to permit freestanding signs to be illuminated either internally or externally.

The motion was supported by Mr. Kromer.

Mr. Wynes called for a roll call vote.

Tom Kromer: Yes

Brent Duffett: Yes

Tom Riley: Yes

Jim Wynes : Yes

Motion carries

Variance #26-02 – Johnson Sign Company – Vernon Township

Mr. Johnson reviewed his staff report regarding the variance request. He indicated the request was made by Johnson Sign Company. The request is for a 46.7 sq ft freestanding sign where a maximum of 24 sq ft is permitted.

Mr. Duffett asked if the top of the sign was internally illuminated.

Mr. Johnson confirmed that the top of the sign was internally illuminated and the middle portion is an electronic message board.

Mr. Johnson stated that the applicant believes the increase in sign area is needed to provide for readable signage and may improve the economic welfare of the residents of the township. He also states there is no indication there is no detriment to the neighboring property given the ordinance requirements requiring lighting to remain on the property.

The Chair invited the applicant to speak.

Tom Amore from Johnson Sign Co. gave a brief history of the company. Mr. Amore explained that the sign could help to slow traffic along this road for anyone approaching the business.

Danny Aldrich explained his search for the right sign company. He explained the sign would help with the travelers who struggle finding their location and would make drivers slowdown in that area.

Mr. Riley asked the about the location of the sign.

Mr. Johnson stated the sign meets its setback requirements as shown on the submitted site plan.

The Chair opened the public hearing at 9:46 a.m.

The Chair closed the public hearing at 9:46 a.m.

Mr. Duffett stated that the sight is unique with the traffic flow and thinks that sign would help with traffic. Mr. Duffett stated that it wouldn't affect neighbors because it is located in the middle of a lot with a large amount of road frontage.

Mr. Kromer agrees that ordinance requirements are being met.

A motion was made by Mr. Duffett to approve Variance Number 26-02 (VAR#26-02) as submitted by Johnson Sign Co. for a 46.7 sq ft freestanding sign where a maximum of 24 sq ft is permitted.

The motion was supported by Mr. Kromer.

Mr. Wynes called for a roll call vote.

Tom Kromer: Yes

Brent Duffett: Yes

Tom Riley: Yes

Jim Wynes : Yes

Motion carries

Amended Meeting Schedule

Mr. Johnson requested the Board amend the previously approved meeting schedule. He stated the July 15, 2026, meeting date would change to July 22, 2026, due to staff availability. He also stated that the meeting for October 21, 2026, meeting will be moved to October 14, 2026 due to room availability.

A motion was made by Mr. Duffett to approve the proposed amended meeting schedule with all meetings held at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, at the Isabella County Commission on Aging, 2200 S Lincoln St., Mt. Pleasant MI.

The motion was supported by Mr. Kromer.

Mr. Wynes called for a roll call vote.

Tom Kromer: Yes

Brent Duffett: Yes

Tom Riley: Yes

Jim Wynes : Yes

Motion carries

STAFF COMMENTS – None

APPEALS BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS –

Mr. Wynes asked if the Board tables could be set up differently next meeting.

Mr. Johnson stated staff would look into it.

Mr. Kromer asked if the County Building will be rebuilt soon.

Mr. Johnson stated that a timeline for the rebuilding of the existing building has not be communicated to staff at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Wynes adjourned the meeting at 9:52 a.m.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Brent Duffett', is written over a horizontal line.

Brent Duffett, Secretary
Mackenzie Perkins, Recording Secretary