

BOARD OF ADJUSTMENTS

Meeting: December 3rd, 2024

Location: 2147 Hwy 71, Audubon, IA 50025 - Upstairs Conference Room

Board Members Present: Linda Kerkhoff - Vice-Chair
Jeff Glade
Abby Rasmussen

Others Present: Mitch Rydl, Planning & Zoning Administrator
Barbara Page (Grau)
Bob Grau
Dean Grau
Steve Grau
Tyler Thygesen
Jason Rokke
Abe Sandquist
Linda Bills, Secondary Roads Office Manager
Chris Swensen, Audubon County Attorney

The meeting was called to order at 1:07 P.M. by Linda Kerkhoff, Vice-Chair.

It was determined that 3 BOA members were in attendance, therefore a quorum was present.

Kerkhoff reviewed meeting minutes from the April 16th, 2024, meeting. Rasmussen made a motion to approve the minutes. Glade seconded. All in favor.

Rydl gave an overview of the first item to be discussed: Request for variance on lot area for Ann Grau Irrevocable Trust burial plot located at 1341 Bluebird Avenue. The current ordinance sets 2 acres as the smallest lot size. The area surveyed for the burial plot is .51 acres.

Bob Grau explained the remains of his parents are currently buried at the location with a large rock used as a headstone. It is located where the old house used to be. The current driveway will be used as access to the burial plot. The family is unable to record the burial site until the BOA approves the variance.

Rydl referred to the information on the BOA application. Explaining the only item that needed approval was the lot size.

Kerkhoff asked for a motion to approve the variance of the .51-acre plot. Glade motioned to approve variance.

Rasmussen seconded.
All in favor.

Rydl gave an overview of the second item to be discussed: Natural Fertilizer Products, Inc. (Abe Sandquist) special exception use request to build a compost facility at 1341 Heron Avenue.

Sandquist reviewed his background. He indicated he had family ties with Eagle Acres and had previously worked for NRCS. He currently has an animal bedding waste facility. He must maintain strict standards as well as compliance paperwork for the DNR. They are running into the issue of being out of manure. A grant opportunity has arisen to incorporate food waste with the manure to create fertilizer. He gave the example of Lincoln having 96,000 lbs. of food waste which would fertilize over 23,000 acres. This is a USDA project and they along with DNR have strict standards. The location would work well since they would be selling mostly to farmers and the smell and traffic works better in an agricultural environment. This would replace the current Handlos Multi-Pig facility.

Kerkhoff explained the area had several hog barns nearby and the smell wouldn't be any worse than those.

Rasmussen asked how contamination such as plastic in the food waste would be controlled.

Sandquist explained that the current plan is to acquire food waste that has never reached the packaging stage. In the future, the goal is to acquire a \$750,000 machine that automatically separates the packaging from food waste.

Glade asked how much traffic on the gravel roads would this cause?

Sandquist explained it shouldn't be any more than what the feed trucks for the hog facilities create. He estimated 10 loads per day with a significant increase in the fall when the product is in high demand.

Rydl expressed concern for the additional cost of gravel and maintenance this traffic would cause. He requested some type of road use agreement stating Natural Fertilizer Products would be responsible for paying for a portion of the rock/maintenance on that road.

Sandquist explained he was hesitant to sign any type of agreement at this point not knowing the income generating potential this site would have at this time. He also expressed concern over taking the blame for the road's degradation, when potentially it could be the surrounding hog sites contributing as well.

Sandquist reviewed the proposed building site plan and where the buildings, outside compost piles, wastewater pond and area finished product would be stored.

Thygesen, Audubon County Fire Chief, asked if the buildings were open.

Sandquist indicated they were open and would most likely be hoop buildings.

Thygesen questioned fire safety and the possibility of spontaneous combustion from the compost if it created too much heat.

Sandquist explained that the compost temperature and dryness are monitored extremely closely and the moisture in the fertilizer is required to be maintained at a level of 40% to prevent this. Recycled water will be used to maintain the moisture. The DNR also stipulates the waste materials once brought to the facility cannot remain on the premises for longer than 18 months. Sandquist explained he was not planning on keeping a great deal of product onsite.

Swensen reminded the BOA that if they approve this, stipulations and safety guards can be tied to the approval such as road maintenance.

Kerkhoff asked how many loads come and go from Sandquist's current manure facility.

Sandquist estimated 300 loads.

Swensen explained with the facility being taxed as "Commercial", the increased taxes are to offset the impact on taxpayers for the benefit of the facility.

Rydl stated he is still looking for some type of road use agreement. Although having the facility taxed as "Commercial" does provide a higher tax rate, it doesn't in fact cover the cost of maintaining the road. He reviewed the increase in cost for trucking and materials.

Sandquist asked if there were any types of grants that would cover upgrading the road like what was done for Puck Enterprises.

Rydl explained that a RISE grant was able to be obtained for Puck since it created a certain number of new jobs.

Sandquist agreed that his facility would not be creating a huge number of new jobs and wouldn't qualify for that. Sandquist asked about TIF.

Kerkhoff asked what TIF was.

Rydl explained the details about TIF.

Sandquist stated he had trucks that he could provide free trucking of the road materials for a certain number of loads to offset some of the cost of trucking. He said the company is very community oriented and would like to have a positive presence in Audubon County.

Rydl stated that would be a good start.

They agreed the total number of loads and details would be worked out after the site became operational and the impact of the extra traffic was more able to be determined.

Kerkhoff asked for a motion to approve the special exception.

Rasmussen motioned to approve.

Glade seconded.

All in favor.

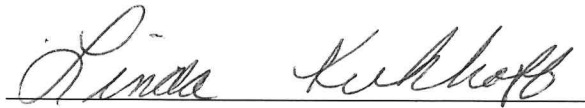
Rydl explained the process now of the two items moving forward to be reviewed by the Board of Supervisors who can't change the rulings but can send them back to the Board of Adjustment to be reviewed again.

Rasmussen motioned to adjourn the meeting.

Glade seconded.

All in favor.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:00 P.M.



BOA Chairperson

Attest by: 
Mitchel J. Rydl, P.E.
Zoning Administrator