POPE COUNTY
MINNESOTA

MEETING MINUTES
POPE COUNTY BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT
Thursday, January 22nd, 2026

The Board of Adjustment convened in regular session on Thursday, January 22nd, 2026 at the Pope County Courthouse, 3rd floor Meeting Room.

Members Present: Roger Isdahl (Chairman), John Messenger, Ted Kannegiesser, Mark Halls and Russell Barkeim.

Other Officials Present: David Green (Director) and Leigh Nelson (Senior Administrative Associate), and Paul Wildman (County Commissioner).

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Director Green at 6:00 p.m.

Annual Organizational Meeting

The first order of business was to seek nominations for Chairperson. Director Green asked for nominations for Chairperson. Member Barkeim nominated Chairman Isdahl for another term. Motion seconded by Member Halls. Director Green asked for other nominations. Hearing no other nominations, the question was called and the motion carried unanimously.

Chairmen Isdahl took over the meeting, and asked for nominations for Vice Chair. Member Kannegiesser nominated Member Halls, and the motion was seconded by Member Barkeim. Chairman Isdahl asked for other nominations. Hearing no other nominations, question was called and the motion carried unanimously.

The next order of business was the selection of Site Team Members. Member Halls made a motion to continue with the current Site Team Members for another term, specifically Members Messenger, Kannegiesser and Barkeim. Member Isdahl seconded the motion. Hearing no dissent, Chair Isdahl asked for a vote, which passed unanimously.

The Board of Adjustment was provided with a copy of the 2026 Meeting Dates. Member Barkeim moved to accept the meeting dates as presented. The motion was seconded by Member Kannegiesser, and the motion passed unanimously.

The Board of Adjustment was provided with a draft copy of the 2026 Bylaws. Director Green explained that Section 9 titled "Protocol for Public Testimony" was added so that the BOA Bylaws now mirror the Planning Advisory Commission Bylaws. It was noted that with this addition, it would change the numbering of the subsequent sections. A motion to accept the Bylaws as presented was made by Member Halls, seconded by Member Kannegiesser, and the motion passed unanimously.

Additions and Corrections to the Agenda

There were no additions or corrections to the agenda. A motion to accept the agenda as prepared was made by Member Messenger and seconded by Member Kannegiesser. Motion carried unanimously.

Review minutes of December 18, 2025 Regular Meeting of the BOA

The minutes of the Board of Adjustment meeting that was held on December 18, 2025 were submitted for approval. Motion to accept the minutes as written was made by Member Barkeim and seconded by Member Halls. Motion carried unanimously.

General Business

Director Green addressed those in attendance, providing a brief overview of the Board of Adjustment's role as a quasi-judicial body that hears applications for variances to the Pope County Land Use Controls Ordinance. He also described standard by which an applicant for a variance is to be judged, known as the Practical Difficulty Test.

Tabled/Old Business

None.

New Business

Variance Request #VAR-25-022, **Bob Lange on behalf of the Minnewaska Baseball Association,** PID #08-0188-007

The applicant is seeking a variance that would allow the construction of a 7,020 square foot accessory structure with 16-foot sidewalls, in Minnewaska Township, at over 600 feet from the Ordinary High Water Level (OHWL) of Lake Minnewaska, a General Development Lake. The size of accessory structures is regulated under Pope County Land Use Controls Ordinance Section 4.6.13. According to the table in Section 4.6.13, in a Shoreland-General Development (S-GD) district, located in the 4th Range from the OHWL, 500+ feet, the accessory structure size is limited to 4000 square feet and 14 foot sidewalls.

Chair Isdahl read the full background from the Staff Report, and invited the Applicant, Bob Lange, to sit at the presentation table.

Director Green presented the applicant's request to build a large accessory structure, and stated that it exceeds the limit of local Land Use Controls Ordinance, thus requiring a variance from the Board of Adjustment. He explained that the proposed structure is larger than nearby structures, with the exception of the high school. Because of the size, Land and Resource Management cannot administratively approve this request. After reviewing Statute regarding a commercial, non-residential structure, the applicant must have building plans prepared by an architect or engineer before a Land Use Permit can be issued. Director Green further stated that after reviewing the applications, local ordinances and state statutes, that staff does not object to the issuance of a variance, with conditions.

Chair Isdahl asked Mr. Lange why a building of this size was needed. Mr. Lange explained that the building will be used for indoor batting & throwing practice during inclement weather, and that the sidewall height requested is needed for pitching.

Chair Isdahl asked Mr. Lange about the land choice. Mr. Lange responded that the property is owned by Dick (Johnson), and is basically a hay field. He stated that after the fiasco of the School Bond issue, he went to Dick & asked if he would sell or donate the property for this building. If this variance is approved, the property would then belong to the School Board.

Chair Isdahl asked the Members if there were any other questions. Member Messenger asked if other teams would be able to use the facility. Mr. Lange responded that as the Minnewaska Baseball Association would own the structure, it would not be solely for the use of the High School.

Member Halls asked if the building would fall under accessibility standard requirements for public use? Director Green stated that yes, it would have to meet accessibility standards. Mr. Lange added that this has been discussed with the architect, and there will be no bathrooms or running water. Member Halls then asked if the facility will be open year-round. Mr. Lange replied that it would, with January through March the highest usage period, mostly for the batting cages.

Chair Isdahl opened the hearing for public comment. Hearing no comments for or against, the public hearing portion was closed at 6:23 p.m.

The Board site team comprised of Board members, Barkeim, Kannegiesser, and Messenger provided comment about their onsite observations. Member Barkeim said that this size is needed for the use, that there would be no access from the highway, and that it wouldn't be a visibility problem for neighbors. Member Kannegiesser said "well done". Member Messenger noted that the building was easily accessible from both (baseball) diamonds, and that it appears to be a good design for the purpose.

Motion:

Chair Isdahl seeks a motion. Member Isdahl made motion to approve the variance request with the conditions as presented in the staff report. This motion was seconded by Member Messenger. With no further discussion, motion carried unanimously, with the findings as follows:

1. **Variance request consistent with purposes and intent of the official controls and the comprehensive plan:**

   Finding: The Minnesota DNR Shoreland Rules Ch 6120 as well as the Pope County Land Use Controls Ordinance regulate the location of accessory structures in shoreland designated areas. The purpose of the requirements is to maintain neighborhood character and aesthetics as well as for the protection of surface water resources and personal property. Providing for residential and recreational development on riparian parcels and recognizing that there are sometimes physical limitations on certain parcels due to topographic and other environmental impediments is not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan provided that official processes and controls are adhered to.

2. **Use of property/structure is a reasonable use:**

   Finding: An accessory structure is a reasonable use in shoreland areas.

3. **Character of locality and detriment to neighboring properties:**

   Finding: The structure is consistent with the school complex to the north of the proposed location; however, it is not consistent with other recreational uses to the south along the shoreline of Lake Minnewaska.

Variance Request #VAR-25-023, **Peter & Kathy Meyer,** PID#02-0623-000 & 02-0370-000

The applicant is seeking a variance that would allow the construction of a detached garage larger than 1000 square foot in size. The proposed location for the structure is less than 200 feet from the Ordinary High Water Level (OHWL) of Lake Amelia, a Recreational Development Lake located in Leven Township. The size of accessory structures is regulated under Pope County Land Use Controls Ordinance Section 4.6.13. According to the table in Section 4.6.13, in a Shoreland-Recreational Development (S-RD) district, located in the 1st Range from the OHWL, 100-199 feet, the accessory structure size is limited to 1000 square feet and 12 foot sidewalls.

Chair Isdahl read the full Background from the Staff Report, and invited the applicants forward.

Director Green presented the applicant's request, noting that Ralph Hanson, Land Use Specialist II, had worked with the applicants regarding some of the property issues. This structure becomes a 1,400 square foot addition to a 750 square foot existing structure, and therefore cannot be administratively approved. He stated that the Pope County Land Use Controls Ordinance was amended (October 2024) to provide for a higher development standard as it relates to the size of accessory structures in a shoreland zoned district and noted that we are supposed to "look" up & down the road to compare the proposed structure with structures on adjacent and nearby properties. We have provided a chart in the Staff Report which shows that there are few structures of this size in the area. There are no other properties nearby that have a detached garage structure of the proposed size so this creates a problem with establishing a practical difficulty.

Director Green stated that Staff does not see that a practical difficulty has been established. However, if the Board of Adjustment does choose to grant a variance to the applicant, that there should be conditions related to the size of the structure.

Chair Isdahl asked the applicants if they would like to provide any additional information. Mr. Meyer explained that their basis for requesting the variance was to avoid cutting down the mature trees on their property. They could have added on this garage to their home without a variance. Chair Isdahl asked if this was a pole shed. Mr. Meyer stated that this structure would match the house, and that they didn't want the expense & impact on the lot for adding on to the house; they didn't need "that size house". There was additional discussion regarding the impervious surface (close, but under) and the existing septic, which keeps them from using one side of the existing garage. Mrs. Meyer added that one of the main reasons that they chose to apply for a variance was to avoid cutting down trees on their property that were over one hundred years old.

Chair Isdahl opened the hearing for public comment. Hearing no comments for or against, the public hearing portion was closed at 6:39 p.m.

The Board site team comprised of Board members, Barkeim, Kannegiesser, and Messenger provided comment about their onsite observations. Member Messenger appreciated the applicants desire not to cut down the trees, and their preference to match their home. He felt that this structure would fit in. Member Kannegiesser liked the idea that they were trying to match the rooflines. Member Barkeim agreed with their choice not to build closer to the lake, and that it would fit in.

Motion:

Chair Isdahl seeks a motion. Member Messenger made motion to approve the variance request. Director Green asked for clarification on the motion that included a size limit because such a condition was not provided in the staff report. He asked the Board to consider this, as otherwise they would be granting a variance with the full ability to build an accessory structure of any size. He recommended proposing a thirty by forty-eight foot structure, as requested on the applicant's drawing.

Discussion continued regarding soffits & overhangs, and how that would impact the overall size of the proposed structure, as overhangs are considered as part of the thirty by forty-eight foot size limit of the structure.

Member Messenger amended his motion to approve the variance request with the conditions outlined in the Staff Report, and that the structure, including the overhangs, is limited to being 30 x 48 as presented in the application, or not to exceed 1440 square feet in area. This motion was seconded by Member Halls. With no further discussion, motion carried with the findings as follows:

1. **Variance request consistent with purposes and intent of the official controls and the comprehensive plan:**

   Finding: The Minnesota DNR Shoreland Rules Ch 6120 as well as the Pope County Land Use Controls Ordinance regulate the location of accessory structures in shoreland designated areas. The purpose of the requirements is to maintain neighborhood character and aesthetics as well as for the protection of surface water resources and personal property. Providing for residential and recreational development on riparian parcels and recognizing that there are sometimes physical limitations on certain parcels due to topographic and other environmental impediments is not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan provided that official processes and controls are adhered to.

2. **Use of property/structure is a reasonable use:**

   Finding: A detached garage is not uncommon in shoreland areas.

3. **Character of locality and detriment to neighboring properties:**

   Finding: The structure is not consistent with other uses and development in the

neighborhood.

No other business.

Adjournment

Motion by Member Kannegiesser to adjourn the Board of Adjustment meeting with a second by Member Barkeim. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Leigh A. Nelson/Senior Administrative Associate
Pope County Land & Resource Management

David Green/Director
Pope County Land & Resource Management