MEETING MINUTES
POPE COUNTY BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT
Thursday, December 18th, 2025

The Board of Adjustment convened in regular session on Thursday, December 18th, 2025 at the Pope County Courthouse, 3rd floor Meeting Room.

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

Other Officials Present: Jessica Hill (Deputy Director/Zoning Administrator) and Leigh Nelson (Senior Administrative Associate), and Paul Wildman (County Commissioner).

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Isdahl at 6:02 p.m.

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 Kannegiesser and seconded by Member Halls. Motion carried unanimously.

Review minutes of November 20, 2025 Regular Meeting of the BOA

The minutes of the Board of Adjustment meeting that was held on November 20, 2025 were submitted for approval. Motion to accept the minutes as written was made by Member Barkeim and seconded by Member Messenger. Motion carried unanimously.

General Business

Deputy Director Hill 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, as well as appeals of administrative decisions.

Tabled/Old Business

None.

New Business

Variance Request #VAR-25-021, **Janis Whittemore and Ruth Smith,** PID #09-0333-000

The applicant is proposing to subdivide a 17.16 acre parcel located in the Northeast Quarter of the Southwest Quarter, Section 18 of Glenwood Township. The parcel is located in the Residential zoning district and is proposed to be subdivided into three lots, a 1.24 acre lot and 1 acre lot as well as a 14.92 acre Outlot (see Attachment 4). As this parcel is located in the Residential zoning district and the proposed parcels are less than 5 acres in size, the subdivision

would be required to be completed by a plat in accordance with MN Statutes 505 and 515B. As the applicant is in a long-term care facility and needs the funds to pay for the care, the family is seeking to subdivide the parcel in a more efficient and cost-effective method, so as to continue funding the long term care that Janice requires. Extras expenses and time associated with the platting process will only serve to reduce available funding for her care and potentially create a time delay as well.

Deputy Director Hill noted that the Applicant, Ruth Smith, and her husband Scott Smith were attending the meeting remotely via Webex, due to inclement weather & reasonable concerns regarding travel to Pope County from the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. Janis Whittemore was not in attendance.

Chair Isdahl read the full background from the Staff Report.

Deputy Director Hill presented the applicant's request to subdivide the property into 3 parcels. The Land Use Controls Ordinance requires platting because of the size of the land. The reasoning in submitting this Variance is to save money and time, as Janice is in a long term care facility. Subdividing by Metes & Bounds will allow for administrative approval, saving the Applicants time and money for Janice's care.

There were no Township comments to report. The Pope County Recorder submitted concerns with the prior subdivision of 09-0333-000 which resulted in four exception clauses. Deputy Director Hill stated that the Recorder's concerns would be addressed in the subdivision process. Staff does not object to the approval of this Variance application.

Chair Isdahl invited the Applicant, Ruth Smith, to add any information & answer questions. Mrs. Smith stated that they have no additional comments, as Deputy Director Hill had summed up their request very well.

Chair Isdahl asked if anything would change if the parcel was divided into 5 acre parcels. Deputy Director Hill stated that through platting, this would cost more time & money, which is what the Applicants are trying to prevent. Mrs. Smith stated that they are trying to maximize the rental of the house & land, and may potentially be selling one of the homes.

Chair Isdahl noted the comment by the Surveyor, questioning the possibility of setting a precedence.

Chair Isdahl opened the hearing for public comment. Hearing no comments for or against, the public hearing portion was closed at 6:15 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 is not a huge change. The houses are already there – the Applicants are just asking to subdivide. Member Messenger stated that this was a technical matter, and that nothing should keep this from happening. Member Kannegiesser agreed, indicating that this looks like a straightforward matter.

There was discussion regarding easements and access, but Deputy Directory Hill reminded the Board that they were just voting on allowing the Variance to subdivide the parcel 09-0333-000 through a minor subdivision, and the Applicant would still be required to go through our office for any other permitting.

Motion:

Chair Isdahl seeks a motion. Member Messenger made motion to approve the variance request. This motion was seconded by Member Halls. 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 intent of the official control is to provide for a variety of land use options that meet the needs of County residents. The County will do this by managing new and existing development and current land uses such that adverse impacts to the environment and the creation of nuisances are minimized. Specific to this particular parcel, the subdivision of this parcel will create three separate parcels with two already having existing residential structures. By subdividing this property, the number of residences, and therefore the use of the parcels, will not change at this time. If the land use does not significantly change, then there is no conflict with the official controls or comprehensive plan. If there is further residential development, then it is appropriate that it conforms with the zoning district designation.

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

   Finding: Allowing this parcel to be subdivided by the alternate methods prescribed in the Land Use Controls Ordinance is reasonable.

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

   Finding: There is no anticipated change in use or densities therefore there is no impact as it relates to neighborhood character. The neighborhood will remain primarily recreational and residential in nature and use.

4. **Plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property and not self-created:**

   Finding: The circumstances contributing to the need for the variance are that the landowner is seeking to subdivide this parcel via more efficient and cost effective methods instead of the required platting requirement as described in the Subdivision Controls Ordinance. This alternate method is being sought due to the landowner's need to split the parcel in order to pay for a long-term care facility.

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 6:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Jessica Hill/Deputy Director
Pope County Land & Resource Management