

Houston County Board of Adjustment
February 26, 2026

Approved March 26, 2026 by Ken Anderson and Dean Happel.

The Houston County Board of Adjustment met at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 26, 2026. A summary of the meeting follows.

The meeting was called to order by Environmental Services Director Amelia Meiners. Roll call was taken. Members present were Ken Anderson, Franklin Hahn, Dean Happel, and David Klinski. Wayne Runnigen was absent. Amelia Meiners and Michelle Burt were present for Environmental Services.

The members present for the Board of Adjustment requested the election of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson for 2026 be postponed until the next meeting to allow all Board members to be present. Chairman Franklin Hahn presided over the meeting.

Ken Anderson made a motion to approve the minutes of December 18, 2025. Dean Happel seconded. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Notice of Public Hearing No. 569 was read for **Edward and Karen Voight**, 16048 Gap Drive, Caledonia, MN 55921.

The petitioners are seeking a variance to reduce setback requirements for a proposed dwelling from an existing feedlot (Section 33.16, Subd. 6) in Caledonia Township.

- This is a 60-acre parcel at the intersection of Gap Drive and State Highway 44 in Caledonia Township. The petitioners are proposing to build a single-family farm dwelling on this existing building site that contains a shed and a well. This site did have a dwelling but it has been gone for over 10 years. Since the dwelling had not been occupied for a period of time it has lost any non-conforming rights and now needs to meet current standards, one of which is a variance to meet the 1,320-foot setback to a registered feedlot. There is a registered feedlot approximately 270 feet to the west of the proposed construction site.

***Dwelling.** A building or portion thereof designed exclusively for residential occupancy; the term does not include hotels, motels, boarding or rooming houses, bed and breakfast, tourist homes, tents, tent trailers, travel trailers or recreational vehicles. For buildings ten years old or older, to be considered a dwelling, a building must have been residentially occupied for eight of the last ten years.*

- There is a registered feedlot 270 feet to the west of the proposed construction site. The feedlot in question belongs to Hendel Farms LLC. The feedlot consists of confinement buildings. The feedlot houses 200 dairy heifers and 30 dairy calves (146 animal units). There is a manure storage structure under the roof on the north end of the free stall barn.
- Below are relevant sections of the Houston County Zoning Ordinance (HCZO):

33.16 GENERAL FEEDLOT LOCATION AND SETBACK STANDARDS

The setback requirements are to be measured from the outermost boundaries of the feedlot structure or fence, to the existing dwelling. In the case of residential lots of record, public parks and incorporated city limits, the measurement will be from the feedlot to the closest property line.

Subdivision 6. Residential Dwelling Setback from Feedlot. *New dwellings and the expansion of existing dwellings, other than the feedlot owner's or family member's dwelling, less than one-fourth ¼ mile from a registered feedlot shall be reviewed by the feedlot advisory committee and shall require the granting of a site specific variance from the board of adjustment.*

SECTION 14 - AGRICULTURAL PROTECTION DISTRICT
14.1 PURPOSE AND PUBLIC NOTICE

Subdivision 1. Purpose. *The purpose of the Agricultural Protection District is to provide a district that will:*

- (1) *Retain, conserve, and enhance agricultural land in the County for agricultural uses.*
- (2) *Protect and preserve natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas.*
- (3) *Restrict scattered non-farm residential development in order to minimize incompatibility between agricultural uses and residential use, and to conserve the expenditure of public funds for new roads, road maintenance, schools, police and fire protection necessary to service scattered residential development.*

Subdivision 2. Public Notice. *Persons choosing to reside in the Agricultural Protection District are hereby notified that the agricultural district is a zoning district in which land is used principally and foremost for agricultural production.*

Subdivision 3. Discomfort Resulting From Agricultural Uses. *Owners, residents, and other users of property in the Agricultural Protection District or neighboring properties may be subjected to inconvenience or discomfort arising from normal and accepted agricultural practices and operation, including but not limited to the following:*

- (1) *Noise, odors, dust, and hours of operation.*
- (2) *The operation of machinery, including aircraft.*
- (3) *The production, storage and land application of animal manure.*
- (4) *The application of fertilizers, soil amendments, herbicides, and pesticides.*

Owners, residents, and users of property in the Agricultural Protection District, or neighboring property should be prepared to accept such inconveniences or discomfort as they occur from agricultural uses and are hereby notified that this declaration may prevent them from obtaining a legal judgment against such agricultural uses.

- Site Characteristics:
 - The SE1/4 SE1/4 of Section 27 is an open quarter-quarter. A farm dwelling can be located on prime agricultural land; however, the petitioners are proposing building on an existing building site within the required setback to an existing registered feedlot, which would minimize the impact of prime agricultural land. There is already one dwelling within the feedlot setback and there is limited growth opportunity here for the feedlot due to property line setbacks. There are no bluff, floodplain, wetland, or shoreland concerns with the dwelling location. The driveway and building site will meet slope standards.
- Caledonia Township and the ten closest property owners were notified. No comments were received.

Edward and Karen Voight were present to answer questions. Chairman Hahn asked the applicants if they had anything to add. Edward Voight described the history of the property. Voight stated that when he applied for the variance the well had not been inspected since then the well has been repaired and is pumping. Voight stated that when he had applied they were not sure if the well would be useable and where to build in proximity to the well. The applicants would like to update their variance request and build the house to the east of the well. Moving the house location increases the distance from the feedlot by about 90 feet. Voight stated that there are currently two driveways for the property and the plan is to utilize both but have their mailbox on Gap Drive. Voight stated that he does not own a lot of acreage and

he needs every acre possible to farm on, so he is taking as little farmland as possible. Voight further explained where the house will face and will include a 3-car garage on the west end.

Franklin Hahn stated that this request is a little bit different since the applicant is a producer. Hahn stated that this type of variance request is generally from people moving out of the city. Hahn asked about the manure hauling and storage for the feedlot.

Dean Happel asked if the feedlot operators mentioned future expansion. Environmental Services Director Amelia Meiners talked to the feedlot owner and they wouldn't have enough room for another building on that feedlot, so expansion does not seem to be a concern.

Dean Happel also asked if the State would have concerns with the driveway on State 44. Amelia Meiners stated that typically if there are two different roads with an option to utilize the secondary road for driveway access. Meiners was not sure if the State would permit a driveway on State 44 especially with the corner at that location. Edward Voight stated that the driveway on State 44 was the only access when they purchased the property, so they created the driveway on Gap Drive. Franklin Hahn asked if there was anything in the Zoning Ordinance that states you can only have one driveway. Meiners stated that it is not a requirement stated in our Zoning Ordinance but they may have something on the highway level in regard to an ordinance. Meiners stated that based on previous conversations with the Highway Engineer it would be custom to use and permit the secondary driveway option. Hahn stated that this is a State Highway so the County would not have anything to say about the driveway. Meiners agreed and stated that unless there is a good reason for the second driveway on State 44 the State typically prefers one driveway. In this case the preferred driveway would be off Gap Drive.

David Klinski asked the applicants if a nitrate test had been done on the well. Edward Voight stated that a nitrate test has not been done yet. Voight feels that there is probably a nitrate issue in this area of the County. Klinski asked if the well does not pan out if they would need additional space for installing new. Voight stated that the building location would not change.

Chairman Hahn asked if there was any public comment. There was none.

Environmental Services Director Amelia Meiners read a comment that was submitted by Dianne Welscher after the comment deadline.

Chairman Hahn asked that the Findings be read being there were no further comments.

12.5 CRITERIA FOR GRANTING VARIANCES

The board of adjustment shall have the exclusive power to order the issuance of variances from the requirements of any official control including restrictions placed on nonconformities. Variances shall only be permitted when they are in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the official control and when the variances are consistent with the comprehensive plan. Variances may be granted when the applicant for the variance establishes that there are practical difficulties in complying with the official control. "Practical difficulties," as used in connection with the granting of a variance, means that the property owner proposes to use the property in a reasonable manner not permitted by an official control; the plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner; and the variance, if granted, will not alter the essential character of the locality. Economic considerations alone do not constitute practical difficulties. Practical difficulties include, but are not limited to, inadequate access to direct sunlight for solar energy systems. Variances shall be granted for earth sheltered construction as defined in section 216C.06, subdivision 14, when in harmony with the official controls. No variance may be granted that would allow any use that is not allowed in the zoning district in which the subject property is located. The board of adjustment may impose conditions in the granting of

variances. A condition must be directly related to and must bear a rough proportionality to the impact created by the variance.

Subdivision 1. Findings Required

1. The variance request is in harmony with the intent and purpose of official controls?

Staff Analysis: This location meets the density control system put in place by the Zoning Ordinance and the Comprehensive Plan encourages development to take place in a manner that minimizes impact to prime agricultural land.

Board Member	Yes	No	Comment
Ken Anderson	X		
Dean Happel	X		
Franklin Hahn	X		
David Klinski	X		

2. There are practical difficulties in complying with the official controls, and the proposed use of the property is reasonable. Economic considerations alone do not constitute practical difficulties.

Staff Analysis: The applicants own over 60 acres in this location, and a dwelling is a permitted use. Most of the property is prime ag crop land. The proposed site is an existing building site and will limit the impacts to prime ag land.

Board Member	Yes	No	Comment
Ken Anderson	X		Agrees with using the existing building site.
Dean Happel	X		
Franklin Hahn	X		
David Klinski	X		

3. The variance request is due to special conditions or circumstances unique to the property and not created by the property owner.

Staff Analysis: This is an area of the County used heavily for agriculture and as a result there are registered feedlots to contend with. The applicants are producers themselves.

Board Member	Yes	No	Comment
Ken Anderson	X		
Dean Happel	X		
Franklin Hahn	X		
David Klinski	X		

4. The variance cannot be alleviated by a reasonable method other than a variance and the minimum variance which would alleviate the practical difficulty is sought.

Staff Analysis: The landowners may be able to move the structure to the Northeast to meet the setback, but the Board of Adjustment may see that using the existing building site will minimize the impact on prime ag land.

Board Member	Yes	No	Comment
Ken Anderson	X		

Dean Happel	X		
Franklin Hahn	X		Likes the idea of the applicants potentially moving the building to the east.
David Klinski	X		

5. The variance will not alter the essential character of the locality nor substantially impair property values, or the public health, safety or welfare in the vicinity.

Staff Analysis: This proposal will allow a farm dwelling, there are a number of farm dwellings in this agriculture community.

Board Member	Yes	No	Comment
Ken Anderson	X		
Dean Happel	X		
Franklin Hahn	X		
David Klinski	X		

6. The request is not a use variance and shall not have the effect of allowing any use that is not allowed in the zoning district, permit a lower degree of flood protection than the regulatory flood protection elevation or permit standards lower than those required by State Law.

Staff Analysis: This is an area variance, and it is not in the vicinity of floodplain.

Board Member	Yes	No	Comment
Ken Anderson	X		
Dean Happel	X		
Franklin Hahn	X		
David Klinski	X		

Chairman Hahn asked for a motion on the findings if there were no additional comments or questions.

Ken Anderson made a motion to accept the findings. Dean Happel seconded. All were in favor. Motion carried.

General discussion was held by the Board before a motion was made to determine an appropriate setback based on the changes the applicants presented.

Chairman Hahn asked for a motion on the variance request if there were no additional comments or questions.

Ken Anderson made a motion to grant a variance of 1,000 feet to meet the required 1,320-foot setback for a dwelling from an existing feedlot.

Dean Happel seconded. A roll call vote was taken. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Ken Anderson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dean Happel seconded. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Submitted by Houston County Board of Adjustment Clerk on February 27, 2026.