

MINUTES
CASCADE CHARTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
MONDAY, December 1, 2025
6:00 pm
2870 JACKSMITH AVE SE

ARTICLE 1. Vice Chair Kraemer called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.
Members Present: Korstange, Kraemer, Rowland, Cribbs, Madiol
Members Absent: Rowland (excused)
Others Present: Andrea Hendrick, Community Planning and Development Director (Director); Leslie Abdoo Legal Counsel, Nick Govan Planning Administrative Assistant; and others listed on the sign-in sheet.

ARTICLE 2. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

ARTICLE 3. Approve the current Agenda

Motion was made by Treasurer Korstange to approve the current agenda. Supported by Member Cribbs. Motion carried unanimously.

ARTICLE 4. Disclose any Conflict of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest.

ARTICLE 5. Approve the Minutes of the November 3, 2025 meeting.

Motion was made by Member Madiol to approve the November 3, 2025 meeting minutes. Supported by Treasurer Korstange. Motion carried unanimously.

ARTICLE 6. Acknowledge visitors and those wishing to speak.

There was no one wishing to speak.

ARTICLE 7. Case #25-3899 – Public Hearing – Tabled

Applicant: Daniel Woods

Property Address: 8300 Cascade Rd. SE

Parcel Number: 41-19-26-126-013

Requested Action: The applicant is requesting a Type I Special Use Permit to build an accessory building over 832 sf.

Director Hendrick presented the application tabled from November 3rd. The applicant requested a 1,500 square foot accessory structure. Following previous suggestions to decrease size, height and relocate, the applicant provided two options: Plan A (barn-style, 27 feet high with 16-foot side walls) and Plan B (lower height, 21 feet high with 14-foot side walls). Both remained 1,500 square feet. She noted that the location of the structure had moved from the northeast front corner to the southwest and rear yard of the property, meeting setback requirements.

Staff analysis of previously approved R-1 Special Use Permits for accessory structures with similar one-acre lots and principal structures of roughly equivalent sizes, showed this structure to be significantly larger. Staff recommended denial based on potential negative impacts on adjacent properties.

Vice Chair Kraemer confirmed with staff that the Special Use Permit was based solely on square footage; staff confirmed this.

Daniel Woods, the applicant, addressed the Commission stating he moved the

building to the backyard as suggested at the previous meeting and provided two options with Plan A being his preference.

Treasurer Korstange sought clarification on square footage, initially thinking the barn structure was 1,800 square feet. Mr. Woods confirmed both options were 1,500 square feet. Treasurer Korstange confirmed the relocation from the east side to the west side of the home, in the back corner, and that the barn-style option was approximately 27 feet high.

Treasurer Korstange asked about road commission approval for the driveway. Mr. Woods confirmed the Road Commission approved his driveway plans and had the site plan.

Member Madiol asked whether neighbors to the west had been made aware of the location change. Mr. Woods indicated he had not spoken with them since the last meeting but could obtain a letter of support from them if it would be helpful.

Motion was made by Treasurer Korstange to open public hearing. Supported by Member Madiol. Motion carried unanimously.

There was no one wishing to speak.

Motion was made by Treasurer Korstange to close public hearing. Supported by Member Cribbs. Motion carried unanimously.

Treasurer Korstange was happier with the new location and lower height option but also recalled discussing a smaller footprint at the previous Planning Commission meeting. Vice Chair Kraemer felt several factors were met, noting the area's character with large pole barns on adjacent properties. He did not find the size difference perceptible at the new location and supported approval.

Treasurer Korstange stated height was a significant factor for her, affecting neighboring sight lines. She felt there was a big difference between a 22-foot building versus a 27-foot building in terms of what neighbors could see. She did not think people generally move to an R-1 district expecting to see a big two-story barn next door. Member Cribbs agreed the new location was acceptable with appropriate height. Member Madiol appreciated the quick turnaround and supported a compromise on the lower height option.

Motion was made by Vice Chair Kraemer to APPROVE Case Number 25-3899, for a Type I Special Use Permit for a 1,500 square foot residential accessory structure at 8300 Cascade Rd SE for the Plan B Building, based on findings in the staff report and as discussed on the record, with the following conditions.

- 1. The building shall not be used for a living space or to operate a business.**
- 2. Outdoor lighting meets the lighting standards of the Cascade Charter Township Zoning Ordinance.**
- 3. An approved driveway permit from the Kent County Road Commission is provided before issuance of a building permit.**

Supported by Member Madiol.

Motion carried 3-1.

Yeas: Kraemer, Madiol, Cribbs

Nays: Korstange

ARTICLE 8.

Case #25-3901 – Public Hearing – Tabled

Applicant: Durk Martin

Property Address: 7890 36th St. SE

Parcel Number: 41-19-22-226-004

Requested Action: The applicant is requesting a Type I Special Use Permit to build an accessory structure in the front yard.

Director Hendrick presented the application tabled from November 3rd. She noted the proposed structure is approximately 20 by 30 feet and does not exceed 832 square feet, so size is not an issue in this case; the primary concern was the requested front yard location. Staff recommended denial based on the opportunity to build in the rear yard, though acknowledged approval standards were difficult to meet given the property constraints. She noted this new plan would remove the backyard pool to allow the building a larger setback from Oak Apple Ave.

Vice Chair Kraemer asked about front yard versus rear yard classification on corner lots. Director Hendrick explained that, with a corner lot, there are two front yards; in this case, the west and north sides are considered front yards, each requiring 35-foot setbacks. The front yard is defined by the front setback for the principal structure on both street-facing sides.

Vice Chair Kraemer clarified the 35-foot measurement was from the property line and confirmed that, if the structure moved back (east) approximately 10 feet, it would be compliant and would not need special approval.

Durk Martin, the applicant, addressed the Commission. He explained that an easement runs through his property. He showed the plan to his neighbors and said they all indicated it was fine and they would not disapprove. He said he also addressed concerns from neighbors across the road, north of 36th St., who initially thought the structure would be in their front yard, but were satisfied upon learning it would be located on Oak Apple Ave.

Mr. Martin explained that, at 70 years old, he did not want to walk down the steep hill on the backside of his property where the structure could be located without a Special Use Permit. He noted alternative locations would require significant tree removal, excavation, and retaining walls. The proposed location would be right where the driveway starts for two neighbors, so they would only see the shed when coming down their driveway, not from their houses.

Vice Chair Kraemer expressed sympathy for the unique character of the property with the easement running through it. He asked how difficult it would be to move the structure 10 feet to the east. Mr. Martin explained that it would place it directly in view of the kitchen and dining room windows where the pool is currently visible, destroying the property flow and impacting resale value.

Motion was made by Member Korstange to open public hearing. Supported by Vice Chair Kraemer. Motion carried unanimously.

There was no public comment received.

Motion was made by Vice Chair Kraemer to close public hearing. Supported by Treasurer Korstange. Motion carried unanimously.

Treasurer Korstange stated she had no problem with the request. She felt the applicant's drain field and topography considerations were significant factors. She

agreed the alternative rear yard location would require extensive grading and tree removal. She believed this would upset neighbors more than the proposed front yard location and was comfortable using the topography and tree removal factors as justification for approval. The structure was below the 832 square foot threshold, on a private street, and would match the home.

Vice Chair Kraemer agreed with Treasurer Korstange's assessment. While topography did not make rear yard placement impossible, it would be highly undesirable. He was comfortable citing the grading and tree removal factors to support approval. He supported productive use of property when factors could be met to fit within the standards.

Motion was made by Treasurer Korstange to APPROVE case number 25-3901 for a Type I Special Use for a residential accessory structure located in the front yard at 7890 36th St SE for the following reasons:

- 1. Due to the topography and drain field location, constructing an accessory building in the rear or side yard of the proposed development would require extensive grading and tree removal which would significantly change the landscape and views of the neighborhood and be detrimental to the natural features of the property.**

And with the following condition:

- 1. A new survey conducted by a licensed surveyor is provided, dated no earlier than 2025, and contains all existing structures, proposed structures, well/septic locations and easements.**
- 2. The accessory building shall not be used as a home occupation.**
- 3. Outdoor lighting must adhere to the Cascade Township standards; shielded or downcast, not creating glare for neighbors.**

Supported by Member Cribbs.

Motion carried unanimously.

ARTICLE 9.

Case #25-3902 – Public Hearing – Tabled

Applicant: Trang Huynh

Property Address: 5138 Thornapple River Dr. SE

Parcel Number: 41-19-28-400-028

Requested Action: The applicant is requesting a Type I Special Use Permit to allow an accessory structure in the front yard.

Director Hendrick presented the application for a 21-foot-tall statue, in the front yard, at 5138 Thornapple River Dr, in the ARC district, on a 2.2-acre property. She noted the existing structure was installed based on previous verbal communications with former staff but never received formal approval. It was noted that, while working with the applicant, questions arose regarding whether the property operated as a religious institution. Staff mentioned the applicant attested that gatherings were under 50 people, below the special use permit threshold. Director Hendrick made sure to point out that the current request focused solely on the front yard accessory structure.

Director Hendrick noted that, in discussion with the applicant, staff proposed moving the statue back approximately 200 feet from the right-of-way. While it could be located in the rear yard, meeting all requirements, the applicant indicated religious reasons for front yard placement.

Staff recommended approval with conditions for landscaping. Director Hendrick believed the large parcel size and 200-foot setback made this

appropriate. Any enforcement issues regarding religious institution operations inconsistent with residential use would continue to be monitored separately.

Treasurer Korstange asked for clarification on whether this was a religious institution. Legal Counsel Abdo explained that religious institutions with gatherings over 50 people must obtain a special use permit in this zoning district. The enforcement of underlying land use was being worked through separately to determine if operations were as a religious institution. The applicant advised they were not operating as a religious institution. Legal Counsel clarified these were separate issues. The current request was simply for the structure, which constituted a fixed monument, requiring approval as an accessory structure. The underlying use was a separate enforcement matter.

Member Madiol asked if this came to the Commission prior to installation. Director Hendrick explained that there was an enforcement issue in 2024, at which point the applicant noted there was a conversation with the previous zoning administrator saying the statue was fine. However, there was no formal approval for a statue of this specific location and 21-foot height.

Vice Chair Kraemer asked Legal Counsel whether religious reasons for front yard placement were relevant considerations under special use permit standards. Legal Counsel Abdo explained that special use factors typically focus on property difficulties such as dimensional constraints or topography. When dealing with religious land uses, RLUIPA (Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act) protects religious institutions and individuals from zoning enforcement that would substantially burden religious practices. The question would be whether placing the statue in the backyard would substantially burden their exercise of religion. This would be relevant if there was a challenge to the Township's decision requiring backyard placement. However, whether this was a factor for special use permit standards was not particularly relevant to the specific approval criteria. Legal Counsel emphasized that the Commission's decision should focus on accessory structure standards, keeping the underlying use question separate.

Ms. Huynh, the applicant, explained that, before ordering the statue, she visited the township to ask for a permit and was told a 21-foot statue in the front yard was acceptable. Based on this informal approval, she, her family, and friends contributed approximately \$100,000 to order and ship the statue from Vietnam. She did not realize she needed to notify the township again before the statue arrived and was installed.

Treasurer Korstange asked why the statue could not be in the backyard.

Ms. Huynh responded that they are Buddhist and would like to have the statue in front of the house for peace and luck according to their religion. Backyard placement would be bad luck according to their religious beliefs. When asked by the township, they agreed to move the statue closer to the house.

Ms. Huynh explained that weekly Sunday gatherings involved six to seven family members for prayer and meditation. Twice yearly, for Mother's Day and Father's Day celebrations, they invite approximately 20 to 30 people.

Motion was made by Treasure Korstange to open public hearing. Supported by Vice Chair Kraemer. Motion carried unanimously.

Amy Riebel (5090 Thornapple River Dr.) confirmed her concern was originally about the height, but after listening to the case so far, it met that standard, so she could not argue about height. She expressed frustration about ongoing property changes that appeared to transform it into a place of worship. On certain Sundays, traffic extended to the road with parking along Thornapple, creating safety hazards. A parking lot suggested gatherings exceeded six or seven people. She could hear excess noise and music from inside her house two houses away. She felt if the property was a house of worship requiring a special use permit, they should obtain one. The statue changed neighborhood character and felt like seeing the back of someone's garage or roof. She felt the backyard would be most appropriate location for the statue, per ordinance, and that ordinances should be applied evenly to all.

Thomas Natale (1995 Forest Shores) explained he owns acreage surrounding the property on northside. He provided context that the house was originally a single-family home with no meeting hall or parking lot. After the 2024 purchase, the applicant installed a double-door entry in the garage to create a meeting hall, later expanding it. He noted the statue went up this year with a two-foot concrete base and questioned if the statue was checked for height compliance. He also noted the parking lot, driveway, and sometimes Thornapple River Dr were full of cars during gatherings. Mr. Natale stated his major concern was sanitation, he runs animals on both sides of the property and with 20-30 people gathering all day, he did not want septic seepage reaching his pastures and exposing his animals.

Motion was made by Treasurer Korstange to close public hearing. Supported by Member Cribbs. Motion carried unanimously.

Director Hendrick provided clarity on enforcement history. In 2023, there was a sign enforcement issue. She described a letter sent by the previous zoning administrator stating that the statue was acceptable, but there were no plans or height referenced. She also noted that it was not a formal approval document. The township had been working through use issues since 2023, including a 2024 building permit application for a house addition. Building permits were requested for various improvements including drainage, parking area, and house additions, but the statue did not have a permit.

Member Madiol asked about the two-foot concrete base and whether total height exceeded the 22-foot limit. Director Hendrick confirmed height is measured from average grade, not from the top of a concrete pad or base, and that this would need verification if approved.

Treasurer Korstange emphasized that the total height remaining within the allowed 22 feet measured from average grade should be a condition of approval.

The Planning Commission deliberated and discussed the addition of evergreen screening between the road and statue, which was agreeable to neighbors that provided public comment previously. Staff noted the Planning Commission could make sufficient landscaping a condition of approval.

Motion was made by Treasurer Korstange to APPROVE Case Number 25-3902 for a Type I Special Use Permit for a residential accessory structure

located in the front yard at 5138 Thornapple River Dr. SE for the following reason:

1. The accessory structure is setback a minimum of two hundred (200') feet from the Right-of-Way and does not significantly change the landscape and views of the neighborhood.

And with the following conditions:

1. A Building Permit shall be obtained from the Cascade Township Building Department, meeting all applicable requirements within the Township's Building Code.
2. Adequate landscaping shall be added to the front yard to screen the structure from the road Right-of-Way.
3. A landscape bond that the Planning Department deems appropriate, be provided to the Township to ensure the landscaping is installed.
4. The maximum height of the structure is 22 feet, measured from grade.

Supported by Vice Chair Kraemer.

Motion carried unanimously.

ARTICLE 10.

Case #25-3906 – Public Hearing

Applicant: Daniel Pinkham

Property Address: 8179 Bolt Dr. SE

Parcel Number: 41-19-11-100-052

Requested Action: The applicant is requesting a Type I Special Use Permit to allow an accessory building over 832 sf.

Director Hendrick presented the application for a 3,200 square foot accessory structure on a 2.2-acre ARC lot with a 2,900 square foot home built in 2022. The proposed structure would house a pickleball court. She noted properties to the south and west consisted of large agricultural lots; properties to the east and north were smaller residential lots around two acres. One letter of opposition was received from the neighbor to the north. Staff recommended denial based on structure size relative to the neighborhood, though the Commission had discretion to determine appropriateness.

Vice Chair Kraemer confirmed with staff that, under proposed zoning, the maximum allowed accessory building size would be 1,500 square feet, making this proposal double that size. Staff confirmed that the proposed zoning ordinance did allow for 1,500 square feet.

Daniel Pinkham, the applicant, explained that an indoor pickleball court requires a minimum of 1,800 square feet. At 3,200 square feet they could also accommodate storage, a basketball hoop, tractor, and lawn mowers. He mentioned that he could work within 2,400 square feet if that addressed concerns of size. He was willing to move the building further west toward the house and add screening trees.

Regarding noise, he noted an indoor, insulated, heated building would sound better than outdoor courts. His northern neighbor was the only true adjacent neighbor; the eastern neighbor was approximately 450 feet away.

Vice Chair Kraemer stated that the aerial image appeared to have significant tree cover, but asked for clarification on if the existing site had tree cover.

Pinkham stated that most trees on the site had been cleared and that there were no true screening trees on the site.

Treasurer Korstange noted a pickleball court is 20 by 44 feet (880 square feet), so 3,200 square feet could accommodate three courts with surrounding space. She questioned whether the proposed zoning ordinance should have the same 1,500 square foot limit for ARC districts as R-1 residential, suggesting ARC should potentially have different accessory structure standards given different the different character of the district.

Pinkham stated that the location of the building on the site was limited to the east side of the property based on the drain field's location.

Motion was made by Treasurer Korstange to open public hearing. Supported by Vice Chair Kraemer. Motion carried unanimously.

There was no public comment received.

Motion was made by Treasurer Korstange to close public hearing. Supported by Member Cribbs. Motion carried unanimously.

Vice Chair Kraemer made mention of the applicant's son and his son being on a rowing team together, in case this could be considered a conflict of interest. Staff and legal counsel confirmed this would not be and that conflicts of interest only relate to monetary relationships.

Treasurer Korstange stated that the accessory building as presented was likely too big, in her opinion. She suggested that this item should be postponed allowing the applicant to come back with a smaller building, located closer to the home to accommodate the neighbor, and provide landscape screening. She asked that the applicant provide a plan for review by the Planning Commission.

Member Madiol agreed with Treasurer Korstange.

Pinkham stated that this process was exploratory for him. He asked the Planning Commission if the plan included a smaller building that addressed the line of site issue and provided screening, would there be a general consensus from the Planning Commission that the plan could move forward.

Treasurer Korstange stated that she would be more comfortable with 2,000ish square feet based on the acreage of the property.

Vice Chair Kraemer stated that he wanted to give clear directions. He stated that Chairman Rowland was not present at the current meeting but speculated that he would likely say the building is too big. Vice Chair Kraemer stated his answer to the applicant's question was yes but stated that the proposed structure should be more consistent with prior approvals to increase the applicant's chance of approval.

Pinkham stated that the list looked challenging to him to get to his desired square footage.

Vice Chair Kraemer asked if there was a more expansive prior approval list.

Director Hendrick clarified that the Planning Commission had two list, one with Agricultural Rural Conservation (ARC) parcels between 2 and 3 acres and another, more expansive list of prior approvals.

Vice Chair Kraemer stated that he appreciated that the applicant is willing to revise his plans to accommodate the Planning Commission feedback.

Member Cribbs discussed the possibility of a 34 by 64 foot structure would create a structure closer to 2,200 sf.

Vice Chair Kraemer stated that it looked great, but he couldn't just approve it because it looks cool.

Treasurer Korstange stated that the Planning Commission choosing to not deny it, was because she wanted to allow the applicant the chance to utilize the approval process of the current Zoning Ordinance.

Vice Chair Kraemer summarized that the Planning Commission's main concerns were the size of the building in relation to the house, lot, and zone district. He requested that the applicant bring the plan closer to the past approvals and address the neighbor concerns.

Pinkham stated that the building would be attractive and match the construction quality of the principal building.

**Motion was made by Vice Chair Kraemer to POSTPONE Case Number 25-3906 until the January 19th, 2026, Planning Commission meeting, to allow the applicant to resubmit materials.
Supported by Treasurer Korstange.
Motion carried unanimously.**

ARTICLE 11. Acknowledge visitors and those wishing to speak.

There was no one wishing to speak.

ARTICLE 12. Other Business

There was no other business to discuss at that time.

ARTICLE 13. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Hendrick, Community Planning and Development Director, Recording Secretary