

Board of Zoning Appeals

Munson Township

Minutes of March 19, 2025

Chair Dennis Pilawa called the meeting to order at 6:30pm with Danielle Konrad, Don Ondrejka, Joe Tomaric, Alternates Roger Simpson and Carol Maver (Ms. Maver to serve), and Secretary Paula Friebertshauser present. Jim O'Neill was absent. Court Reporter Lynn Regovich was present. The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Chair Pilawa explained that the Board of Zoning Appeals is a quasi-judicial Board which acts in the role of judges. A court reporter is present so that anyone wishing to speak for or against the case must be sworn in for the record. The record is made up of testimony and evidence presented. Anyone not in agreement with the decision of the Board could file with the Court of Common Pleas within 30 days after the minutes of the meeting are approved.

Joe Tomaric moved and Don Ondrejka seconded to approve the minutes of February 27, 2025, as written. Motion carried, 4-0. Mr. Tomaric noted that Ms. Leiken mentioned the obstruction of a neighboring mailbox after the meeting.

CASE 25-02: John Benedict of Brilliant Electric Sign Co. for the Geauga County Board of Commissioners, 12450 Merritt Rd., Chardon OH – requests to install 2 additional ground signs 10' high with 48 square foot sign faces; one on the corner of Ravenwood & Ravenna Roads, and the other on the corner of Merritt and Ravenna Roads. Also requesting to install a directional sign with a 12 square foot sign face on Merritt. Violates SEC. 1003.2 (in part) sign height shall not exceed 6 feet; SEC. 1003.5 (in part) Each commercial, industrial, institutional or medical complex may be permitted the following signs on the premises: a. One ground sign which shall have a maximum area of 20 square feet per sign face and shall be no higher than 6 feet; SEC. 1003.8 Directional Signs – Directional signs at points of ingress and egress on private property shall have a maximum area of 6 square feet per sign face.

Chair Dennis Pilawa read the variance request and violations. Zoning Inspector James Herringshaw was sworn in. He informed those present that there will be a total of 10 new signs but only signs #1, #2 and #5 are in Munson. He referred to photos of the large hospital sign that was previously granted a variance and the current county office directional sign; a view looking south from Ravenwood showing the expanse of land between Ravenna and Merritt Roads; adoption sign at the corner of Merritt & Ravenna Roads looking north; proposed site of ground sign #1; and the proposed location of the interior directional sign on Merritt.

John Benedict of Brilliant Electric Sign Co. 4811 Van Epps Road, Cleveland, was sworn in. He explained that the Geauga County Commissioners are looking to provide signage for the Geauga County office building. It is a large campus with the hospital and it can be confusing. He felt it was important to distinguish between the two for safety and visibility.

Mr. Ondrejka questioned if it was the final plan for the location of the ground signs. Mr. Benedict replied it is not, there is survey work to be done for the best location and visibility. Zoning Inspector Herringshaw confirmed that they will still be in compliance with the location. Ms. Maver asked how the sign idea came about. Mr. Benedict explained they are working with an architect because the county requested new signage. Zoning Inspector Herringshaw commented he was contacted last May regarding this issue, Ms. Maver asked how big the hospital sign is. Trustee Bushman thought it was 16 feet high. Inspector Herringshaw mentioned they want to be a bit away from that sign and it needs to be 5 feet from the road right-of-way.

Mr. Tomaric asked if the entrance to the Sheriff's office off Ravenwood was considered the back entrance. Linda Burhenne, Assistant County Administrator, was sworn in. She considered both driveways as equal ingress and egress. Mr. Ondrejka asked where the sign for the Sheriff's office would be. Inspector Herringshaw responded it would be off Merritt. Roger Simpson of 11350 Butternut commented that Sign #1 as marked says the Sheriff's office. He felt it would be confusing to mark both signs. On the drawings, the signs were mismarked for the locations. Mr. Ondrejka asked if they would be lit. Mr. Benedict said there would be no lighting. Mr. Benedict added that generally the offices are open only during the day.

Chair Pilawa stated for the record that nine affected property owners were notified in Case 24-02. Terry Eisler of 13866 Ravenna Road was sworn in. He commented that the Sheriff's vehicles typically come out on Merritt Drive. He asked how close to the stop sign the proposed sign would be. Inspector Herringshaw explained that it must be 30 feet from the centerline and five feet back from that to be out of the road right-of-way; approximately the same area as the Dog Warden sign. Bill Kulisek 13404 Ravenna Road was sworn in. He was more worried about the signs being lit and asked if that could be put into the record. Chair Pilawa explained that the Board is not into horse-trading. Inspector Herringshaw commented that regarding lighting, they could put lights that shine just on the sign from the bottom and not into the roadway. There would be no electronic lighting. When asked about the height, Inspector Herringshaw said they would be 10 feet high. Mr. Kulisek asked for clarification of the appeal period. Chair Pilawa responded it is 30 days from approval of the evening's meeting minutes which is essentially 60 days. He explained that if the signs were to have lighting, he would expect someone to complain to the Board of Trustees and/or the Zoning Inspector.

Don Ondrejka moved and Joe Tomaric seconded that the variance requested in Case 25-02 for John Benedict of Brilliant Electric Sign Co. for the Geauga County Board of Commissioners be approved as written. Chair Pilawa explained that the Board is required to go through certain factors and for an area variance they are not required to give equal weight to all.

- Can there be any beneficial use of the property without a variance? There already is, but maybe not as well and it will provide safety for the community.
- Is the variance substantial? No, especially since the signs will not be lit.
- Will the essential character of the neighborhood be altered? No, some people will not notice.
- Will adjoining properties suffer a detriment? Maybe if they don't comply but right now, no.
- Will the variance adversely affect delivery of government services? No, in fact, the variance will increase the ability to deliver government services.

- Can the predicament be feasibly relieved through some method other than a variance? If the request is for increasing noticeability, we don't see how it could be done without the variance.
- Will the spirit and intent behind the zoning be observed and substantial justice done by granting the variance? Yes, for all the reasons that have been talked about.
- Did the property owner purchase the property with knowledge of the zoning restriction? This is not applicable because we feel the regulations are available online.

Mr. Ondrejka asked for clarification that the Board is doing the variance for the shape and size not the location that is still to be determined. Chair Pilawa confirmed it has nothing to do with placement, just the number of signs and size. Upon the roll call, all members voted unanimously to grant the variance, 5-0, motion carried.

CASE 25-03: Dan Alvord Parcel #21-136601 adjacent to 12241 Ravenna Rd., Chardon OH – requests to construct a 48' x 48' accessory building 6' from the north side property line. Violates SEC. 411 Minimum Dimensional Requirements – minimum side yard setback is 25 feet.

Chair Pilawa read the variance request and violation. Zoning Inspector Herringshaw referred to the site plan and explained that Mr. Alvord has two parcels. He has a driveway extension but has executed an affidavit of fact so that the middle line can be ignored. It is comparable to what is seen in Bass Lake community. He referred to photos taken with a view to the west towards Ravenna Road (Best Sand property); view of the home from Ravenna; and the view north looking at the second parcel and proposed location of the driveway extension and structure.

Dan Alvord of 12241 Ravenna Road was sworn in. He wanted to have a storage barn without impeding the use of the property with his home. They are sitting on five acres and would like it on the neighboring parcel so it is no more towards the middle of their property. When asked about the purpose of the building, Mr. Alvord showed a picture of what the 36' x 48' barn would look like. It would have an enclosed lean-to. His garage is full of stuff and he knows he can fit it in the new structure. He added that he is a mechanic by trade.

Mr. Tomaric commented that the property to the north is owned by Best Sand and asked Mr. Alvord if he has silica sand and if they have approached him. Mr. Alvord responded that when his aunt and uncle passed away their children sold to Best Sand. The house to the north and north of that is his parents' house, then their business. Mr. Ondrejka commented that Best would have to make a lot of purchases in between to get to Mr. Alvord's property.

Chair Pilawa stated for the record that three affected property owners were notified in Case 25-03. There was no public comment.

Don Ondrejka moved and Danielle Konrad seconded that the variance requested in Case 25-03 be granted as written. Discussion following the motion was as follows:

- Mr. Ondrejka thought it was straightforward and the properties would be more useful.
- Can there be any beneficial use of the property without a variance? Yes

- Is the variance substantial? No
- Will the essential character of the neighborhood be altered? No
- Will adjoining properties suffer a detriment? No
- Will the variance adversely affect delivery of government services? No
- Can the predicament be feasibly relieved through some method other than a variance?
Only by putting the applicant through more expense.
- Will the spirit and intent behind the zoning be observed and substantial justice be done
by granting a variance? Yes

Upon the roll call, all members voted unanimously to grant the variance, 5-0, motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:23pm.

	
Dennis Pilawa, Chair	Paula Friebertshauser, Secretary

4/16/2025
Date

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