

Minutes - Woodbury County Board of Adjustment – March 3, 2025

The Board of Adjustment special meeting convened on the 3rd day of March, 2025 at 5:00 PM in the Board of Supervisors' meeting room in the Basement of the Woodbury County Courthouse. The meeting was also made available for public access via teleconference.

Meeting Audio:

For specific content of this meeting, refer to the recorded video on the Woodbury County Board of Adjustment "Committee Page" on the Woodbury County website:

- County Website Link:
 - o https://www.woodburycountyiowa.gov/committees/board_of_adjustment/
 - YouTube Direct Link:
 - o <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bUMgjcFqPSk>
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| BA Members Present: | Daniel Hair, Doyle Turner, Pam Clark, Tom Thiesen, Larry Fillipi |
| County Staff Present: | Dan Priestley |
| Public Present: | Steven Curtis (via teleconference) |

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Daniel Hair called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM on March 3, 2025, noting that all five board members were present.

ROLL CALL

Chair Hair confirmed the presence of all five board members—Daniel Hair, Doyle Turner, Larry Fillipi, Tom Thiesen, and Pam Clark.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Chair Hair opened the floor for public comments on matters not on the agenda. He inquired if there were any comments, including from those on the phone. Dan Priestley noted that Steve Curtis was present via phone/Teams but had no comments unrelated to the agenda. No public comments were received.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the February 3, 2025, meeting were approved. Motion by Clark, second by Turner. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

APPROVAL AND ADOPTION OF RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE WOODBURY COUNTY BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT (ACTION ITEM)

Chair Hair introduced the approval and adoption of the Rules of Procedure for the Woodbury County Board of Adjustment. He asked Dan Priestley if a public hearing was required, to which Priestley responded that no hearings were scheduled or required, as the agenda involved actions and information only. Priestley explained that on February 11, 2025, the Woodbury County Board of Supervisors approved the proposed rules, adjusting the meeting time to 5:00 PM and confirming the location as the courthouse basement. He noted the Supervisors' adoption was from their perspective, and the Board of Adjustment was now in the position to formally adopt the rules via motion and second. Once approved, the Chairperson would sign the document, and it would be placed in the auditor's office as the official procedure. Priestley displayed the revised Section 2, specifying meetings on the first Monday of each month at 5:00 PM in the Board of Supervisors meeting room.

Chair Hair called for a motion.

- **Motion:** Pam Clark moved to accept the adoption of the rules with the changes.
- **Second:** Tom Thiesen seconded the motion.
- **Discussion:** No further discussion occurred.
- **Vote:** All five members voted in favor (Daniel Hair, Doyle Turner, Larry Fillipi, Tom Thiesen, Pam Clark), with no opposition. The motion carried 5-0.

Following the vote, Chair Hair signed multiple copies of the document on the spot, dating them March 3, 2025. Priestley attested the documents.

UPDATE ON NUCLEAR ENERGY FACILITIES DISCUSSION (INFORMATION ITEM)

Chair Hair introduced the informational update on nuclear energy facilities, and confirmed with Dan Priestley that a guest speaker was present. Priestley introduced Steve Curtis, via teleconference, noting the Zoning Commission's ongoing work on nuclear energy. He referenced discussions with the county attorney's office, interpreting existing ordinances that enumerate electrical energy generation (excluding wind) in industrial zones and prohibit it in agricultural zones. Additional language on chemical materials in general industrial areas suggested a potential path for nuclear energy permitting, but the county attorney recommended specific enumeration of nuclear energy. Priestley anticipated a Zoning Commission public hearing later in March to refine this. He highlighted Curtis's recent presentation to the Commission and emphasized the importance of briefing the Board of Adjustment, a quasi-judicial body evaluating permit applications, on nuclear energy developments, despite their lack of direct policy-voting authority. He invited Curtis to provide a background and overview of the nuclear industry's potential.

Steve Curtis's Presentation:

Curtis, with a Master's Degree in Health Physics and 38 years in Las Vegas (15 with the Department of Energy), outlined his experience in nuclear testing, emergency response, and development work. Now in Minnesota, he initiates education on nuclear energy with a few colleagues nationwide. He noted rising interest in nuclear power over the past six months, aiming to clarify misconceptions about "slightly used nuclear fuel" (often called waste) as an energy asset. He described light water reactors (like Iowa's two), explaining uranium enrichment (from 0.7% to 3-4% U-235), fuel assembly, and the fission process yielding 50 million times more energy per atom than coal combustion. After 3-5 years, spent fuel comprises 3% fission products, 1% U-235, 1% minor actinides (e.g., plutonium), and 95% unchanged U-238. This fuel is cooled in water pools for 3-4 years, then air-cooled in dry cask storage, where it remains due to federal inaction on repositories for 45 years.

Curtis proposed using fast reactors to fission U-238, converting it to plutonium-239, yielding 30 times more energy than original use. He cited Iowa's two reactors with spent fuel as a resource for 500 years of state power, plus the U.S.'s 90,000 metric tons equating to 270 years of national power. He highlighted the Nuclear Navy's success with long-lasting reactors and Idaho's safe storage of decommissioned units. Addressing misconceptions, he asserted commercial nuclear power's unmatched safety record, with no injuries from normal operations globally, distinguishing Chernobyl (an outlier) from U.S. designs. He suggested Iowa leverage the \$50 billion Nuclear Waste Fund (with \$25-30 billion needed) to transition fast reactor technology to private enterprise, potentially creating a clean energy hub. Curtis offered to answer questions and return for further discussions.

Questions and Discussion:

- **Daniel Hair:** Asked about the fate of spent fuel after fast reactor use. Curtis explained that fission products decay significantly within 100-300 years (versus a million-year legal requirement), becoming manageable and potentially mineable for rare earth metals after 50-60 years, requiring only concrete shielding.
- **Doyle Turner:** Inquired about repository appearance. Curtis described interim storage facilities (32 acres each, totaling two sites for 90,000 metric tons), mirroring current reactor site setups, with NRC-approved designs facing legal resistance from Texas and New Mexico.
- **Doyle Turner:** Asked about buffer zones. Curtis clarified the 32-acre sites include buffers, citing Connecticut Yankee's compact storage (222 ft x 80 ft) as evidence of minimal space needs.
- **Daniel Hair:** Raised terrorism concerns. Curtis noted reactors' robust containment could withstand plane crashes (e.g., 9/11 terrorists bypassed nearby reactors), arguing the fuel's form and protection make it an unlikely target.
- **Dan Priestley:** Asked how a nuclear project could fit industrially and assure the public. Curtis recommended emphasizing benefits (cheap, clean energy) over risks, citing nuclear's safety (no commercial operation injuries) versus car accidents (40,000 deaths/year). He critiqued Chernobyl's design flaws and media bias, advocating education to shift perceptions and suggesting private-state partnerships.

Curtis concluded, offering ongoing support. Chairperson Hair thanked him, and no further board questions emerged.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA.

Chairperson Hair reopened public comment on non-agenda matters. No comments.

STAFF UPDATE

Dan Priestley provided a staff update, reiterating the Zoning Commission's nuclear energy review and upcoming public hearings. He noted increased attendance at the prior week's meeting. Referencing wind and solar debates,

he highlighted agricultural preservation concerns versus nuclear's smaller footprint (32 acres vs. thousands). He encouraged board engagement with the Commission's work, anticipating ordinance specifics on nuclear energy with county attorney input. Priestley emphasized evaluating risks and benefits (echoing Curtis), preparing for public questions (e.g., Chernobyl), and understanding historical context to assess project fit. He foresaw a 20-year or shorter timeline, driven by technology (e.g., long-distance call cost reductions) and rising energy demand from devices, urging members to stay informed.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT OR INQUIRY

Chair Hair invited board member comments or inquiries. None.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Chair Hair called for a motion to adjourn.

- **Motion:** Tom Thiesen moved to adjourn.
- **Second:** Larry Fillipi seconded the motion.
- **Vote:** All five members voted in favor (Daniel Hair, Doyle Turner, Larry Fillipi, Tom Thiesen, Pam Clark), with no opposition. The motion carried 5-0.

The meeting ended at 6:15 PM