

CARVER COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
Regular Meeting – April 21, 2026
Minutes

Members Present: Matthew Kerber, Scott Wakefield, Scott Hoese, Andy Steinhagen, Joe Polunc, John Fahey

Members Late: None

Members Absent: Greg Grazzini

Staff Present: Jason Mielke, Lauren Whetstone, Donovan Hart, Paul Moline, Kristen Larson

Pursuant to due call and published notice thereof, the April 21, 2026, regular meeting of the Carver County Planning Commission was called to order by Chairman Kerber at 7:00 p.m.

Chairman Kerber acknowledged six board members present with the absence of Greg Grazzini.

Agenda – A motion was made by Hoese to approve the agenda. Steinhagen seconded the motion. Chairman Kerber called for a vote on the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.

Minutes – A motion was made by Wakefield and seconded by Hoese to approve the minutes from the March 17, 2026, regular meeting. All voted aye. Motion carried.

File #PZ20260007 – Brandon Leistiko/MN Topsoil – Chairman Kerber called the public hearing to order at 7:01 p.m. to consider a request by Brandon Leistiko. The purpose of the public hearing was to consider a request for a Public/Quasi-Public Waste Management Facility - Yard Waste Utilization site pursuant to Chapter 152 of the County Zoning Code. The property is in Section 21 of Watertown Township.

The following were present: Brandon Leistiko, Alyssa Leistiko, Keith Eklund

The following items were entered into the record:

Exhibit A – Legal Description

Exhibit B – Proof of Publication of the Hearing Notice

Exhibit C – Proof of Mailing of the Hearing Notice

Exhibit D – Site Plan

Exhibit E – Letter from the applicant dated April 2, 2026

Exhibit F – Staff Report addressed to the Planning Commission and Watertown Township dated April 13, 2026, and all attachments.

Hart stated the applicant, Brandon Leistiko of MN Topsoil, is making a request for a CUP amendment on property owned by Keith Eklund. The parcel is approximately 54.37-acres in Section 22, Watertown Township, improved with a house, several outbuildings and the components of an existing essential service yard waste site. The property was issued a CUP in 2019 which authorized tree and brush

recycling. Mr. Leistiko would like to amend the permit to expand the operational hours and operational area, allow mulch and compost piles of up to 20-feet in height and increase the average daily trips. A 4,000-square foot dry storage area for vehicle and equipment is also proposed. The proposed business hours are Monday-Friday, 7:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., and 8:00 a.m – 12:00 noon on Saturdays. There will still be stump grinding times a few days a month during the operating hours, which is allowed with the current CUP. Hart used an aerial photo of the property illustrating the expanded operational area and dedicated locations for material processing compost and mulch, material drop-off, truck & worker parking, a sign-in station, dry storage area, and four cargo containers for storage. The total operational area is approximately 7.4 acres. Typical equipment used on site would include a tractor, excavator, payloader, skid loader, two soil screeners and a tree chipper/stump grinder. The work vehicles consist of two large semis and three dump trucks. Mr. Eklund has placed a long-term CREP easement over the southern portion of the property which is shown on the aerial photo. Material stockpiles will maintain a 10-foot setback from the easement boundary, which parallels most of the southern boundary of the operational area. Mr. Leistiko reported current processing of approximately 25,000 cubic yards of materials, divided between yard waste and mulch. The amount of mulch processed annually will vary with the occurrence of storms and emerald ash borer infestation. The current CUP allows a maximum of 50,000 cubic yards of mulch and 6,000 cubic yards of compost processed annually. Carver County holds a \$25,000 performance surety to cover potential costs associated with site compliance or site decommissioning, which will remain in place for the duration of the CUP. The site is active all year with most of the activity taking place between May and November. The site averages approximately 20 visitors during spring cleanup and planting season, approximately 30 visitors during fall leaf and yard cleanup and on Saturdays following major summer storms. Access to the property is from County Road 10 North with an approximate 18.6 square-foot sign stating “Minnesota Topsoil” replacing the former Eklund sign. The applicant would maintain the necessary permits for yard and tree disposal with the Mn Pollution Control Agency and Carver County Environmental Services Department. The City of Watertown received the application materials and made no comments. The Carver County Water Management Organization reviewed the application and stated that a sediment and erosion control permit is required for the disturbed soil areas. Drew Pflaumer, Carver County Transportation Planning Manager, had no comments about the traffic volume. Taylor Huinker, DNR Area Hydrologist, had no concerns or comments. The Watertown Township board reviewed the request and recommended approval at their April 9, 2026, meeting stating, “Township OK with the CUP amendment request.” Hart read the proposed conditions for consideration if the request for the CUP amendment is recommended for approval. If the Planning Commission recommends denial of the request, the deficiencies found in Section 152.251 of the County Zoning Code should be clearly referenced.

Chairman Kerber asked the applicant for any additional comments.

Brandon Leistiko, 17455 Kelly Lake Rd, had no additional information or comments to add.

Chairman Kerber asked the applicant if has read and agrees with the proposed conditions.

Mr. Leistiko stated he has read and agrees with the proposed conditions.

Chairman Kerber asked for comments from a Watertown Town Board member.

Scott Hoese, speaking as Watertown Township supervisor, stated the applicant had clearly explained his proposal and he confirmed the Township's recommendation for approval of the request without any further comments.

Chairman Kerber opened the public hearing for public comments.

No one was present for public comments on this request.

A motion was made by Fahey to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Steinhagen. Chairman Kerber called for a vote on the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried. The public hearing was closed at 7:11 p.m.

Wakefield asked the applicant for the difference between the squeeze test and the bucket test.

Mr. Leistiko replied that tests were used to determine the moisture content of material.

Fahey stated the City of Watertown has had some compost issues and asked the applicant if he had any discussions with the City to try and alleviate some of their pressure.

Mr. Leistiko replied that on a trial basis residents of Watertown can bring their materials to his facility. The city dump spot is open a couple times per week with attendant staff. Staff on-site have eliminated the illegal dumping they were experiencing before.

Fahey replied that it was good to hear and asked if there were any concerns expressed by the neighbors.

Leistiko replied that his facility is about 900 feet from the road so some neighbors, who received the public hearing notification came to the property to find out about the operation since they didn't know what his company did at the site.

Wakefield made a motion to **Approve and Adopt Resolution #26-06** incorporating the findings of fact and staff recommendations allowing for a Public/Quasi-Public Waste Management Facility (Yard Waste Utilization Site). Hoese seconded the motion for approval. All voted aye. Motion carried.

File #PZ20260006 – Jennifer & Danny Mielke – Chairman Kerber called the public hearing to order at 7:16 p.m. to consider a request by Jennifer & Danny Mielke. The purpose of the public hearing was to consider a request for a Home Extended Business Accessory Use pursuant to Chapter 152 of the County Zoning Code. The property is in Section 8 of Camden Township.

The following were present: Jennifer Mielke, Danny Mielke, William Devine

The following items were entered into the record:

Exhibit A – Legal Description

Exhibit B – Proof of Publication of the Hearing Notice

Exhibit C – Proof of Mailing of the Hearing Notice

Exhibit D – Site Plan

Exhibit E – Letter from the applicant dated March 26, 2026

Exhibit F – Staff Report addressed to the Planning Commission and Camden Township dated April 10, 2026, and all attachments.

Hart stated Jennifer and Danny Mielke own and reside on an approximately 3.05-acre parcel improved with a single-family dwelling and an approximately 3,200 square-foot, two-level accessory structure. Ms. Mielke is a fitness trainer who is proposing to conduct small training sessions in the accessory structure. She is also trained to assist clients with knee, hip, shoulder and back pain. The request is being processed as an Interim Use Permit limiting the duration of the permit to the current owner. The applicants' business proposal outlines the hours of operation from 5:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. and the number of daily clients with an average of 10 clients per day and a maximum of 17 clients per day. Up to three clients could be trained at one time to be consistent with the Home Extended Business Accessory Use (HEBAU) standards. Ms. Mielke is the sole employee of the business and there is no dedicated work vehicle associated with the business. The maximum number of daily vehicle trips varies from zero to thirty for a full schedule of clients. Hart used an aerial view to illustrate the property and the structure used for personal fitness training and the designated parking area. Nor outdoor storage or signage are proposed for the business. The business size and plan meet the minimum requirements of a HEBAU. Carver County Senior Environmentalist, Lori Brinkman, reviewed the application materials and replied that the bathroom plumbing connection for the accessory structure was completed by a licensed installer in November 2404 and the usage would not exceed the average design flow for the existing mound system. With the proposed business in the accessory structure, a water meter was installed in the accessory structure in February 2026. Water use data was collected over a three week period, which included water use during personal training sessions. Based on the number of residents currently residing in the house and the current average water use associated with the training facility, the current mound system appears to be adequately sized. An increase in the number of occupants in the house plus increased water use within the accessory structure which would increase daily water use to exceed the average design flow for the mound septic system, may require expansion of the mound septic system. The water meter in the accessory structure should remain in place for the property owner to monitor additional water flow to the mound septic system from the home-based business. Carver County Transportation Planning Manager, Drew Pflaumer, reviewed the application and replied, *"Public Works does not have any comments and identified no issues with the proposed use."* Twyla Menth, City Clerk for New Germany stated in an email, *"The new Germany City Council has no issues with the land application/business."* The Camden Township board reviewed the request at their April 9, 2026, meeting and recommended approval without further comment. Hart read the proposed conditions for consideration if the request for a Home Extended Business Accessory Use is recommended for approval as an Interim Use Permit. If the Planning Commission recommends denial of the request, the deficiencies found in Section 152.251 of the County Zoning Code should be clearly referenced.

Chairman Kerber asked the applicants if they read and agree with the proposed conditions of the permit or if they had additional comments.

Ms. Mielke replied that they agreed to the conditions and had no further comments.

William Devine, representing the Camden Township board, confirmed the township board's recommendation for approval.

Chairman Kerber opened the public hearing for public comments.

No one was present for public comments on this request.

A motion was made by Fahey to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Hoesel. Chairman Kerber called for a vote on the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried. The public hearing was closed at 7:25 p.m.

Steinhagen made a motion to **Approve and Adopt Resolution #26-07** incorporating the findings of fact and staff recommendations allowing an Interim Use Permit for a home-extended business accessory use (training facility). Steinhagen seconded the motion for approval. All voted aye. Motion carried.

File #PZ20260008 – Patrick Crowe – Chairman Kerber called the public hearing to order at 7:26 p.m. to consider a request by Patrick Crowe. The purpose of the public hearing was to consider a request for a Personal Use Landing Strip pursuant to Chapter 152 of the County Zoning Code. The property is in Section 36 of Waconia Township.

The following were present: Patrick Crowe, Mark Wichenhauser

The following items were entered into the record:

Exhibit A – Legal Description

Exhibit B – Proof of Publication of the Hearing Notice

Exhibit C – Proof of Mailing of the Hearing Notice

Exhibit D – Site Plan

Exhibit E – Letter from the applicant dated March 27, 2026

Exhibit F – Staff Report addressed to the Planning Commission and Laketown Township dated April 13, 2026, and all attachments.

Exhibit G – Email from MnDOT Office of Aeronautics dated April 20, 2026

Whetstone stated the applicant, Patrick Crowe, is purchasing an approximate 132-acre parcel in Waconia Township consisting primarily of tilled fields, wetlands, shoreland of a protected water course and floodplain area. He is requesting a Conditional Use Permit to construct and operate a personal use landing strip. The property had a CUP issued in 1997 for a temporary farm-related mobile home, which was terminated in 2002, after removal of the mobile home. The applicant plans to construct a house and pole barn on the property for his personal residence. In addition, he proposed to install a turf runway approximately 1,000 feet in length and 75 feet wide for his personal and private use. His letter describes the landing constructed with a grass strip and the proposed east-west oriented runway to align with the prevailing wind conditions. The runway would be used for occasional transportation to and from the property with approximately 10 to 15 takeoffs and landings per week during daylight hours. Whetstone used an aerial photo to illustrate the property and proposed location of the structures and landing strip. No runway lighting is proposed. The applicant intends to keep one aircraft, a Cessna 185, a single-engine, fixed-wing aircraft, suitable for turf runways. The 2040 Comprehensive Plan identifies personal-use landing areas as a potentially appropriate use in the unincorporated areas, provided certain conditions are met. The request meets the applicable requirements of Section 152.080 of the Zoning Code. The nearest dwellings are located one-quarter and one-half mile to the southeast of the proposed landing strip. An Xcel Energy transmission tower and associated lines, approximately 125 to 135 feet in height, are located about 475 feet north of the proposed landing strip. Land Management staff contacted

MnDOT Office of Aeronautics to determine whether these structures could pose an obstacle to the runway. An email from Dmitri Foster, Aviation Representative, received on April 20, 2026, saying the power lines are out of the two imaginary safety surfaces for private airports. He stated that power companies put aerial marker balls on the power lines, but Xcel generally does not install them, so they will impose a restriction on the airfield that all traffic patterns must be done to the south of the airfield and away from the power lines. Land Management staff contacted the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) about the request. Todd Hebert, Airspace Specialist, stated in an email dated April 9, 2026, that the FAA does not have regulatory authority over private-use facilities and transmission line area. The FAA only evaluates potential airspace conflicts, such as when airport traffic patterns may overlap, and does not provide obstruction oversight for private-use facilities. No comments have been received regarding the airspace study. MnDNR and the Carver Soil and Water Conservation District had no comments about the request. Tim Sundby, Carver County Water Resources Supervisor reviewed the request and stated in an email dated March 30, 2206, that no CCWMO permit would be required as this is a vegetated area that sees limited use. No comments were received from either the City of Cologne or Waconia about this request. The Waconia Town Board reviewed the request materials at their March 23, 2026, meeting and recommended approval stating the township had no concerns with granting a CUP. Whetstone read the proposed conditions for consideration if the Planning Commission recommends approval of the request. If the Planning Commission recommends denial of the request, the deficiencies found in Section 152.251 of the County Zoning Code should be clearly referenced.

Chairman Kerber asked the applicant if he had any comments to add to the report.

Patrick Crowe, 4929 East Sunnyslope Rd, Mr. Crowe stated that he would use skis on his plane during the winter and asked about the seasonal hours of the permit.

Whetstone stated the condition language done not lock into specific hours due to the time change and seasonal conditions.

Chairman Kerber asked if the conditions needed to be adjusted to reflect MnDOT's comments.

Mielke said that there was already a condition in the staff report requiring the applicant to adhere to MnDOT's requirements.

Chairman Kerber asked the applicant if he agrees with the proposed conditions of the permit.

Mr. Crowe confirmed he agrees with the conditions.

Scott Wakefield, Waconia Township Treasurer, reported the township recommendation for approval with no issues.

Mark Wickenhauser, 10975 102nd St, stated he is also a member of the Township Board, but wanted to speak as a county resident and mention an issue that was brought to his attention about the landing strip providing a potential avenue for drug transportation or other illegal substance in and out of the County. He stated drugs are a huge social problem. As a county citizen he wanted to bring this awareness to the table and recommended that the CUP for the runway be denied. He felt there are other avenues for someone to house a plane in the county.

Wakefield asked Mr. Wickenhauser to state his position with the aforementioned statements.

Mr. Wickenhauser stated his comments were made as a resident of Waconia Township, taxpayer, and landowner, and not as a representative of the Township Board.

Chairman Kerber asked the applicant if he had any additional comments or cared to respond to any comments made during the public hearing.

Mr. Crowe states that he understands Mr. Wickenhauser's concerns but that he wanted to have a place to store his plane, as he grew up taking flying lessons at Flying Cloud Airport. He stated that he follows rules and that is why he is applying for a Conditional Use Permit.

A motion was made by Steinhagen to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Fahey. Chairman Kerber called for a vote on the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried. The public hearing was closed at 7:38 p.m.

Hoese asked about the signature of Dave Grandy on the Township Recommendation Form.

Wakefield stated Dave Grandy is the Township Chairman.

Mielke further explained the signatures and any description or explanation on the Recommendation Form demonstrated that the Town Board has heard and discussed the applicant's request and made a recommendation to the Planning Commission.

Wakefield asked about the driveway and easement on the southeast corner of this property.

Mielke explained this parcel was formerly owned by Mr. Bitzer, the neighbor to the east. When this portion of the property was sold, he retained access with an easement because of a large wetland located between the building site and County Rd 140.

Fahey asked if Mr. Bitzer's air strip was still active.

Mielke confirmed it is. He noted there are a few locations within the County with air strips. He was not sure of the frequency of use with Mr. Bitzer's airstrip but noted the grass strip is still maintained. He stated the parcel to the south also had an air strip for a short time because his occupation was aviation-related.

Fahey asked if those air strips still had active CUP's for use.

Mielke stated the one to the south is no longer active but thought the Bitzer property may still have some activity. He stated one of the buildings on the property is designed as a hangar for a plane.

Steinhagen asked if there are minimum requirements relating to plane size for needing a CUP for an air strip.

Mielke replied most any type of aircraft that needs space for takeoffs and landings would be subject to this section of the County Code. He mentioned a location in Camden Township used mainly for ultra-light aircraft and parachuting. He stated the activity is a permitted use with a CUP as long as it is a

private strip for personal use. A request for more commercial use would have more involvement from the FAA and State.

Wakefield asked if there could be more restrictions on the permit from the FAA with the results from the air space survey.

Mielke noted the response from Todd Hebert, stating the FAA does not have regulatory authority over private-use facilities and transmission line area.

Fahey asked if it is the responsibility of the applicant to work with Xcel and placing the marker balls on the lines or if that should be required in the permit conditions.

Mielke stated marker balls on the transmission lines is not a requirement and was not put into the conditions because it can be a time-consuming project. It will be the responsibility of the applicant to work with Xcel on the process and procedure for obtaining and placing the marker balls on the lines.

Fahey asked the applicant if he had his VFR and IFR ratings and would not attempt landing in the evenings if there are no lights.

Mr. Crowe replied that he does have his VFR and IFR ratings and would not attempt to land in the evenings but might land during dusk.

Hoeser made a motion to **Approve and Adopt Resolution #26-08** incorporating the findings of fact and staff recommendations allowing for a Personal Use Landing Strip. Steinhagen seconded the motion for approval. All voted aye. Motion carried.

Other Business

Mielke introduced Paul Moline & Kristin Larson who were present to provide an update on the 2050 Comprehensive Plan process through a PowerPoint visual presentation, the timeline, and discussion on the role of the Planning Commission.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Wakefield and seconded by Hoeser to adjourn the meeting. All voted aye. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:26 p.m.