

MINUTES
CITY OF DUBUQUE ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT
REGULAR SESSION

5:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 20, 2025

City Council Chambers, Historic Federal Building

Board Members Present: Chairperson Jonathan McCoy, Board Members Keith Ahlvin, Gwen Kosel, Rena Stierman, and Matt Mauss.

Board Members Excused: None.

Board Members Unexcused: None.

Staff Members Present: Travis Schrobilgen and Jason Duba

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order by Chairperson McCoy at 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES: Motion by Kosel, seconded by Stierman, to approve the minutes of the October 23, 2025 Zoning Board of Adjustment meeting as submitted. Motion carried by the following vote: Aye – Ahlvin, Kosel, Stierman and McCoy; Nay – None; Abstain – Mauss.

DOCKET – 43-25: Application of Joel R. Young, 1735 Asbury Road, to install a 7' high fence in the front yard where 4' high maximum is permitted in an R-1 Single Family Residential zoning district.

Joel Young, 1735 Asbury Road, spoke in favor of the request. He explained that he installed the fence, not thinking it was a problem. He noted that the previous owner had tall hedges, so he assumed the fence would be okay too.

There was no public input.

Staff Member Duba detailed the staff report noting that the code requires fences to be no higher than 4' in front yards for at least two reasons: safety and aesthetics. He said that there isn't a safety concern with the fence, as it does not block visibility for motorists or pedestrians and is not in a visibility triangle. He said the Board may wish to consider whether this fence interrupts the uniform appearance of front yards in this area.

Chairperson McCoy asked if the McGrath sign shown in the photos mounted to the fence was illuminated, and Mr. Young replied no.

Chairperson McCoy asked about the height of the sign on top of the fence, and Staff Member Duba replied that it was over the 7' height of the fence. Chairperson McCoy

suggested that anything above the top of the fence would need to be moved below 7', and Mr. Young was amenable to the suggestion.

Board Member Kosel asked whether Mr. Young is advertising or getting paid for the signs put on the fence, and Mr. Young confirmed that he is not.

Board Member Stierman agreed that no sign should be above the top of the fence.

Board Member Mauss expressed support for the request but said he didn't want to set a precedent for other signs. Staff Member Schrobilgen said that every case is unique, that no precedence would be set.

Chairperson McCoy suggested that approval of the request be conditioned on lowering the signs to be below the top of the fence. Staff Member Duba also said that the speed limit sign on the fence would need to be removed for traffic safety purposes.

Motion by McCoy, seconded by Kosel, to approve the request with the following condition:

1. The fence, and anything adhered to it, may not exceed 7' in height.

Motion carried by the following vote: Aye – Ahlvin, Kosel, Mauss, Stierman, and McCoy; Nay – None.

Board Member Ahlvin recused himself for docket 44-25.

DOCKET – 44-25: Application of Pat Norton, Buesing and Associates, 701 Locust Street, to allow encroachments into four visibility triangles in C-4 Downtown Commercial zoning district.

Pat Norton, Buesing & Associates, 1212 Locust Street, spoke in favor of the request. He explained that the art museum is planning to raze the three buildings on the block other than the childcare center and begin construction next spring of a new museum. He said they are seeking a variance for four locations that encroach into visibility triangles. Two of those are screening walls for the loading dock areas, and two are at corners of the property. He said he doesn't believe there is a safety issue with these encroachments. He noted that the one-way traffic on Locust and Bluff reduces conflicts and the traffic signal at 7th and Locust aids safety.

Chairperson McCoy noted that there are buildings right at property corners in other locations in this area. Mr. Norton pointed to the Locust Street parking ramp as an example.

Chairperson McCoy noted that point D on the plan set is covered by a signalized intersection so it is not a concern.

Mr. Norton walked through the plan set, noting the screening wall at point A in the

northwestern side of the site shows the worst-case scenario between a vehicle and pedestrian and showed template of a car turning immediately onto Bluff Street from the drive. He said that while this could occur it is not a likely scenario because most vehicles would be delivery trucks or semis, which would need to make a wider turn in order to exit. The wider turn would move the truck or semi further south in the exit lane, and this would provide drivers with a larger visibility distance than a lower car. He said that a car exiting that location could possibly have a blocked view of pedestrians on Bluff Street. Chairperson McCoy asked if the wall was at the back of the sidewalk, and Mr. Norton replied yes and noted that some street parking is being eliminated here so there is actually more area for a vehicle to pull out before getting into traffic.

Chairperson McCoy asked about point C, and Staff Member Schrobilgen noted that it is below 2' in height and does not encroach into the visibility triangle. He said that a variance is not required for that location.

Mr. Norton said that points A and B located along the loading dock have walls which encroach into the sight triangle in order to screen deliveries from public view. He said the lower portion of the walls double as retaining walls.

There was no public input.

Staff Member Schrobilgen detailed the staff report noting that this request is a dimensional variance for encroachment height into multiple visibility triangles. He shared a diagram noting that the visibility triangle for point B is at the edge of the wall, but it should be measured from the edge of the driveway. He said it would encroach about 6" to a foot into the visibility triangle which is less than shown. He said point B may conflict with pedestrians more than vehicles but noted that vehicles exiting would be facing south, the direction pedestrians would be coming from. He noted the screening wall at point A is 6' tall. He said point D is a staircase and railing. He said this property is in the Old Town neighborhood, which provides flexibility, but not for visibility triangles. He noted that a letter of support from Hills & Dales was received but that there was no other public input.

Chairperson McCoy referred to the dimensional variance criteria and wondered if this issue was self-created and asked if staff or the city attorney's office had any thoughts on how the criteria should be considered. Staff Member Schrobilgen replied that the Board can discuss how they might want to consider the criteria and noted that the language in the criteria was created by the State and did not come from the City. He reiterated that the applicant noted the site's topography constraints while wanting to keep ADA standards in mind.

Board Member Mauss asked about the elevation change of the driveway and wall height at point A. Mr. Norton replied that the driveway slopes down to the building at point A, and the wall is 6' high at the south end. The Board discussed this noting that there were no concerns with points B and D. They considered the possibility of reducing the length of the wall since vehicles would be accelerating up and out of the driveway. It was discussed that passenger vehicles leaving the site could pose the greatest risk here since

drivers would not be able to see over the wall. The possibility of a semi-transparent wall here was suggested, and a 50% opacity was discussed to be reasonable. Mr. Norton was amenable to the condition.

Motion by McCoy, seconded by Mauss, to approve the request with the following conditions:

1. Points B and D on Exhibit A were approved as submitted.
2. Point A on Exhibit A is approved with the requirement that the portion of the wall encroaching into the visibility triangle must have 50% opacity.

Motion carried by the following vote: Aye – Kosel, Mauss, Stierman, and McCoy; Nay – None.

Board Member Ahlvin returned to the meeting.

ITEMS FROM PUBLIC: None.

ITEMS FROM BOARD: Board Members asked about the status of a replacement member once McCoy steps down. Staff Member Schrobilgen replied that he believed there has been an applicant, and the City Clerk's office is going through their process.

Chairperson McCoy inquired about a potential code violation at 1450 Loras Boulevard. Staff Member Schrobilgen said it's in the enforcement process.

Board Members asked about the signs, such as those on the fence for Docket 43-25, and if they're allowed. Staff Member Duba replied that it's a bit of a gray area because the property owner is not being paid to display the signs, although they are technically signs for businesses, so they function more like decorations in this instance.

ITEMS FROM STAFF: None.

ADJOURNMENT: Motion by McCoy, seconded by Ahlvin, to adjourn the November 20, 2025 Zoning Board of Adjustment meeting. Motion carried by the following vote: Aye – Ahlvin, Kosel, Mauss, Stierman and McCoy; Nay – None

The meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Shena Moon, Associate Planner

December 18, 2025

Adopted