

**CITY OF ELYSIAN
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
JUNE 24, 2025**

The Elysian Planning and Zoning Commission met in special session on Tuesday, June 24, 2025 at City Hall at 6:00 pm.

Present were Chairperson Paul Hunter; Commissioners Kim Denn, Patrick Ely, Dan Engebretson, and Doug Stanke; Zoning Administrator Lorri Kopischke. Absent: None.

On motion by Engebretson, seconded by Ely, all voting in favor, to approve the agenda of the June 24, 2025 special meeting as presented.

Following the discussion at the June 2, 2025 Planning and Zoning Meeting, Mike and Donna Brage considered the recommendations made for revisions to their request for a variance to build a garage at 402 Lake Avenue NW.

One of the suggested revisions was to plant deep rooted native plants / grasses the entire length of the property along the shoreline above the existing rip rap (minus a 6 foot walkway to the dock) at a width of 10 feet landward of the lake. The Brages have measured the grassy area between the house and the lake and have decided that they are not comfortable giving up that much of their lawn to native plantings. They would be willing to plant a two foot strip of deep-rooted shrubs/plants along the rip rap to help filter the run-off into Lake Francis.

The Brages are also not willing to turn a portion of their concrete driveway into a pervious surface. The Brages would like to retain an all-concrete surface driveway.

The Brages have submitted a revised proposal that would reduce the current lot coverage of 7,243 square feet or 56.4% lot coverage to 5,166 square feet or 40.2% lot coverage. This is a reduction in lot coverage of 2,077 or 16.2%.

The garage has been reduced to 34 by 28 feet or 952 square feet. (The original request was for a 30 by 40 foot garage.) The driveway entrance has been reduced to 21 by 15 feet and then widening to 27 feet after the first 15 feet.

The Brages are also including a portion of the deck and the ramp into the pervious surface calculation rather than the impervious surface with the assumption that the ordinance amendment allowing that will be approved by the City Council on July 14, 2025.

This revised proposal is an improvement from the June 2, 2025 suggested revision as that resulted in a 41.1% lot coverage and the current proposal results in a 40.2% lot coverage.

The current proposal is as follows:

The lot size according to Le Sueur County is 12,850 square feet.

Current Lot Coverage:

Description	Measurement	Sq. Ft.
Rip/Rap	63 ½' x 9' 4"	590
Lakeside sidewalk	3' x 40'	120
Lakeside Deck steps / landing	6' x 12'	72
Cement under deck	10' x 12'	120
House excluding deck/ramp		2,136

(Deck: 24 x 16 = 384 sq.ft, Ramp 4' x 30' = 120 sq. ft)

Cement after ramp	7.5' x 4'	30
Rock / Porch	60' x 8'	480
Sidewalk	60' x 4'	240
Rocks east of Drive	55' x 8'	440
Driveway	55' x 57'	<u>3,015</u>
Total		7,243 / 56.4% lot coverage

Proposed Lot Coverage:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Measurement</u>	<u>Sq. Ft.</u>
Rip/Rap	63 ½' x 9' 4"	590
Lakeside sidewalk	3' x 40'	120
Lakeside Deck steps / landing	6' x 12'	72
Cement under deck	10' x 12'	120
House (excl. deck/ramp)		2,136
Porch	10' x 6.5'	66
Walkway to Porch	6' x 6.5'	39
Garage	34' x 28'	952
Driveway	28' x 27'	
	21' x 15'	<u>1,071</u>
Total		5,166 / 40.2% lot coverage

The proposal will result in a 2,077 square foot reduction in lot coverage – a 16.2% reduction.

Engebretson asked if the area under the deck is permeable. Brage stated that part of the area under the deck is permeable. The other area that is concrete is included in the impervious surface area calculation.

Engebretson stated that when considering variances the Commission has to look at three practical difficulties: Reasonableness, Uniqueness, and Essential Character. He suggested that adding a two-story garage in this area will indeed change the essential character of the neighborhood. If you look at the area on a three-dimensional basis or with a straight view down both Lake Avenue NW and Fourth Street NW, there will now be a two-story building there. There are currently no two-story buildings on that block. He suggested that a row of 6 to 10 foot tall arborvitae be planted along the west side of the property between the street and the house to break up the view.

Donna Brage stated that she did not agree with this comment. She noted that she and her husband own the property to the west. They often use the properties together and would prefer not to have a barrier between the two lots. There are evergreens on the other side of the lot to block the view of the town-home residents.

Engebretson agreed that it would not affect the townhome residents. It would affect the people looking at or driving down the street from the west. Adding a two-story building to a block that is predominantly one-story buildings will affect the essential character of the neighborhood.

Hunter agreed and noted that the trees would be to break up the view. He suggested 4 screening trees that are 4 to 6 feet tall.

Engebretson agreed that the planted trees could be 4 to 6 feet but should be 8 to 10 feet tall when mature.

Brage again noted that they often use the lots together. If they did plant trees in that area, they would want to landscape around them. The Commissioners agreed that the trees could be landscaped with a permeable material. Many of the current fabric products are permeable.

Hunter shared an observation that the drainage on the lakeside of the lot runs from east to west and then into the lake. He suggested that rather than place the plantings on the north (lakeside) of the lot, that the plantings be placed on the northeast corner of the lot where the water runs off the property and into the lake, and on the northwest edge of the lot to slow the water that runs across the lot. This will slow the erosion, catch the water, and provide filtration.

On motion by Stanke, seconded by Denn, all voting in favor, to recommend that the City Council approve the variance request from Mike and Donna Brage, 402 Lake Avenue NW, to construct a garage on the property resulting in an impervious surface lot coverage in the amount of 40.2% or 5,166 square feet as described in the attached diagram with the following conditions:

1. That deep rooted native plants / shrubs be planted the entire length of the property along the shoreline above the existing rip rap (minus a 6 foot walkway to the dock) at a width of 2 feet landward of the lake. Or that a combination of deep rooted native plants / shrubs be planted along the rip rap and the northeast corner of the property to slow the run off and provide filtration.
2. That a minimum of (4) four 4-6 foot (maturing to 8-12 foot) screening trees or shrubs be planted along the west property line to provide a break in the view and preserve the essential character of the neighborhood.

This recommendation is made based on the following findings of fact:

1. Reasonableness: This request is reasonable as it improves the existing lot coverage from 7,243 square feet or 56.4% to 5,166 square feet or 40.2%. This is a 16.2% reduction in impervious surface on the lot.
2. Uniqueness: The small size of the lot at 12,850 square feet makes this property unique. This is a unique project in that the end result reduces the impervious lot coverage.
3. Essential Character: The removal of a portion of the concrete driveway, the addition of a garage that is complementary to the home in color scheme, and the addition of grass / landscaping will make the property more appealing and will improve the character of the neighborhood. The planting of screening trees / shrubs along the west property line will preserve the essential character of the neighborhood.

The City Council will consider this recommendation at their meeting on July 14, 2025.

The Planning and Zoning Commission had looked at the Driveway Ordinance and suggested an amendment to that Ordinance Section §153.01 (H). The intention of the amendment was to allow the consideration of the installation of a permeable driveway in the cases where it would help with non-conformity and impervious surface concerns on a lot – especially in the case of variance request. The City Attorney drafted a proposed amendment, Ordinance No. 131/25, and it was considered by the City Council at their June meeting. The amendment read as follows:

§153.01 (H) All driveways and required off-street parking spaces shall be surfaced with concrete, bituminous or pavers, unless otherwise approved by the City Council based non-conformity and impervious surface overage concerns. Any property owner

requesting an exception from the requirements of this section shall apply to the City Administrator for an exception and the City Administrator shall then forward that application on to the City Council for approval. Any exception granted by the City Council shall be duly noted on the permit. All driveways shall be twenty-four (24) feet in width as measured at the curb. All existing non-conforming driveways, shall, within twelve (12) months of any sale or transfer, be compliant with this Ordinance.

The City Council was not comfortable with the last two sentences of the amendment. The requirement that all existing non-conforming driveways, shall, within twelve (12) months of any sale or transfer, be compliant with this Ordinance was onerous to the seller and the buyer. The Council suggested that the compliance issue be linked to a building permit issuance for a major improvement or addition to the property rather than the sale.

Following discussion, it was recommended to propose the following amendment:

§153.01

(H) All driveways and required off-street parking spaces shall be surfaced with concrete, bituminous, or pavers, unless otherwise approved by the City Council. Any property owner requesting an exception from the requirements of this section shall apply to the City Administrator for an exception and the City Administrator shall then forward that application on to the City Council for approval. Any exception granted by the City Council shall be duly noted on the permit.

(I) All existing driveways that are not surfaced with concrete, bituminous, or pavers shall be upgraded to be surfaced "a minimum of 24 feet from the street in conjunction with any new building permit for an existing building addition or an additional building constructed on the property.

(J) All current driveways as of the date of this section are grand-fathered in with regard to width, setbacks and curb cuts.

The proposed amendment will be reviewed by the City Attorney and then considered by the Planning and Zoning Commission at the August 5th meeting.

Commissioners were invited to attend a League of MN Cities webinar: Land Use Decision Making: What are the Facts? being held July 15, 2025 from 10:00 to 11:00 am.

It was noted that National Night Out will be held on August 5, 2025. On motion by Engebretson, seconded by Stanke, all voting in favor, to change the start time of the August 5, 2025 Planning and Zoning Commission meeting to 6:30 pm to allow members to attend the National Night Out Event.

There was no further business to come before the Commission.

On motion by Stanke, seconded by Ely, all voting in favor, the meeting adjourned at 7:05 pm.

Attest:

Paul Hunter, Chairperson

Lorri Kopischke, Zoning Administrator