

Planning Commission Meeting Agenda

Wednesday July 2, 2025 - 6:00 PM
Cologne Community Center, 1211 Village Parkway

Vision Statement

The City of Cologne is a vibrant small town that respects its heritage, embraces its future and offers a high quality of life for all who live, work and visit our community.

Chairperson:	Bernie Shambour
Commissioner:	Shannon Frakie
Commissioner:	Kristy Naegely
Commissioner:	Jayson Read
City Council Liaison:	Carol Szaroletta

NOTE: AGENDA ITEMS ARE APPROXIMATE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE ACCORDING TO LENGTH OF DISCUSSION. TO ENSURE THAT YOU ARE PRESENT FOR ITEMS OF INTEREST, PLEASE ARRIVE AT 6:00 PM.

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER & ROLL CALL
2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
3. ADOPT AGENDA
4. PLANNING COMMISSION NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Approve June 4, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
 - b. Public Hearing: 180 Adams Ave S. Variance related to 1) allow gravel instead of a paved driveway and 2) variance from the 30 ft setback from the south property line.
 - c. Locked Loon Storage Variance requests
5. ADJOURN

Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

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1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Chairperson Shambour called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM with Commissioners Franz, Naegely, Read and Szaroletta present. Also present were City Administrator Michelle Morrison and City Planner Cindy Nash.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ADOPT AGENDA

Commissioner Frakie made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented, second by Commissioner Naegely. Motion carried unanimously.

4. PLANNING COMMISSION NEW BUSINESS

a. Approve March 12, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Read to approve the March 12, 2025 Planning Commission Minutes, second by Commissioner Naegely. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Locked Loon Storage Preliminary Plan Review

Ms. Nash reviewed the Preliminary Plan for Locked Loon Storage. Commissioners discussed multiple topics with the plan including, landscaping and woodland preservation, fencing, impervious surface coverage, and lighting. Austen Adam from Excavate and Elevate Engineering, who is working on the project with the owner, was available to clarify and answer the Commissioners' questions.

The consensus of the commissioners was that they were comfortable with the outdoor storage area being grass but would like to see a maintenance plan for the area. The commissioners would also prefer some woodland preservation. If trees are preserved, those trees could be counted towards the landscape requirements of Ordinance 153.075. They also requested that the same boundary that was used for impervious surface calculation be used.

The planning commission's recommendations were that the owner apply for a variance for paving and the 30-foot setback requirements. And that the property owner draft a proposed maintenance plan for the outdoor storage area for the planning commission's consideration.

5. ADJOURN

Motion by Commissioner Read to adjourn at 7:35 PM, second by Commissioner Frakie. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted:

Attest:

Michelle M Morrison, City Administrator

Bernie Shambour, Chairperson

Collaborative Planning, LLC

Memorandum

Date: June 26, 2025
To: Cologne Planning Commission
From: Cindy Nash, City Planner
RE: Locked Loon – Site Plan

An application has been submitted by Nick Anderson to review a site plan for Locked Loon Storage (formerly known as Freedom Storage). In addition, a variance application has been submitted to request a variance from the requirement to pave the driveway and from the 30-foot side yard setback in the annexed area. A copy of the site plan and proposed building plan for the site is included in your packets, along with two narratives submitted by the owner.

Property Name: Locked Loon Storage
PID: 400135100 (annexed in 2012) and 400132400 and 400134600
Zoning: C-3 General Business with Downtown Overlay

Property Description

The property is being utilized for rental storage and currently consists of a mix of storage within buildings, storage in containers and outside storage of boats and other items that can be exposed to the weather.

The property also contains a railroad spur line and associated railroad usage including gravel driveways serving the railroad spur. Twin Cities and Western (“TC&W”) Railroad own an easement (“TC&W Easement”) over the northern approximately 100 feet of the property, which includes area that is also currently being used for the mini-storage use.

The property is adjoined by the following uses:

- West: Industrial (United Farmers Cooperative)
- North: TC&W Railroad
- East: TC&W Railroad spur
- South: Undeveloped

The TC&W railroad owns and operates on the parcel immediately north of the subject property. It also operates a spur line that exists on the northern edge of the subject property. The subject

parcel and the TC&W parcel are relatively flat, but the elevation rises towards the residential neighborhood north of the TC&W railroad resulting in a difference in roughly 10-16 feet of elevation change. The nearest residences are approximately 250 feet from the portions of the property used for storage (and the railroad is between these residences and the storage uses).

Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan guides the Future Land Use of the Subject Property as “Mixed Use,” which would commercial, residential or a mix of the two types of uses on a parcel. The site is currently used for commercial development, but with its limited size exclusive of the TC&W easement and limited potential for street access it is less likely to be able to redevelop for mixed uses than other properties located within this classification.

Zoning District

The Subject Property is zoned C-3 General Business, and “Rental Storage Buildings (mini-storage)” is a permitted use within that zoning district. It is also located within the Downtown Overlay District.

The Downtown Overlay District provides for the following (emphasis added):

§ 153.045 DO DOWNTOWN OVERLAY DISTRICT.

(A) Purpose. Lot dimensions, lot areas and structure placement on many of the lots in the older portion of the city are inconsistent with current dimensional standards required in this chapter. The C-2 District incorporates relief from traditional dimensional standards; yet, other zoning districts in the older portion of the city have existing lot conditions similar to the C-2 District. In order to preserve the unique character of the older portion of the city and to protect existing public and private investments in property in this area, the Downtown Overlay (DO) District is hereby established. The expressed purpose of the DO District is to permit flexibility in meeting the strict dimensional requirements of this chapter and to avoid widespread nonconformance with performance standards in this unique area.

(B) Permitted uses. The permitted uses in the DO District shall be the same as those permitted in the underlying zoning district.

*(C) Special requirements. **Lots in existence on September 1, 2000 within the DO District shall meet the dimensional standards of the C-2 District. Lots created after September 1, 2000 shall meet the lot area and lot width requirements of underlying zoning districts; except that, average dimensional standards of abutting parcels in the same zoning district may be used to govern new parcel dimensions. Setbacks from Highway 284 shall be governed by the average existing structure or use setback in the block in which a new structure or use is proposed.** Nothing in this section shall be construed as a waiver from easement requirements or from the special conditions applicable within the SO Shoreland Overlay District.*

(Ord. 150, passed 2-22-2000; Ord. passed 3- -2007)

The property consists of three separate PIDs. The eastern portion of the property was annexed to the City in 2012. As such, not all of the property could have been in existence on September 1,

2000 within the Downtown Overlay district as a portion was not in the City on that date. In approximately 2012, the site use as shown on an aerial photograph is as follows:



Dimensional Standards

The C-3 District requires a 30-foot side yard setback, which the southern building is not able to meet. This building is located within the portion of the property that was annexed in 2012.

In the C-3 zoning district, there is a maximum lot coverage of 75%, as may be adjusted for the downtown overlay district. The plans should be revised to show the amount of lot coverage, which would include all buildings, structures, pavement, and gravel areas (areas that are not considered to be pervious surfaces).

Discussion should occur by the Planning Commission related in particular to the portion of the property that is the easternmost PID which includes the addition of new buildings and expansion of outside storage into areas that are currently forested.

Access, Parking and Driveways

Locked Loon receives access from Adams Avenue South, through a property owned by United Farmers Cooperative (shown on the site plan as the westernmost parcel and building). The United Farms Cooperative access is gravel, and based on a review of historical aerial photos, gravel driveways existed through the Subject Property and over the spur line since at least 1937.

Section 153.012 of the Zoning Ordinance requires the following:

“All required ingress/egress points, driveways and parking areas shall be paved with bituminous or concrete surfaces, according to minimum city specifications, in all new residential developments and all new or modified commercial and industrial uses.”

The ordinances would require that the plans be revised to show the driveways and parking areas paved. Instead, the applicants have requested a variance related to the requirement to pave the parking.

Buildings and Containers

The site contains two existing buildings, along with container storage. The container storage consists of approximately 46 units lined up with the sides touching. Approximately 34 of these units are located in the TC&W Easement, while the remaining 12 units are on the south side of the property.

It is proposed to add an additional three buildings to the site. The building closest to the southern property line would not meet the required 30 foot side yard setback. The applicant has applied for a variance related to the side yard setback for the new building, which is proposed to be 11'7" from the property line.

Outside Storage

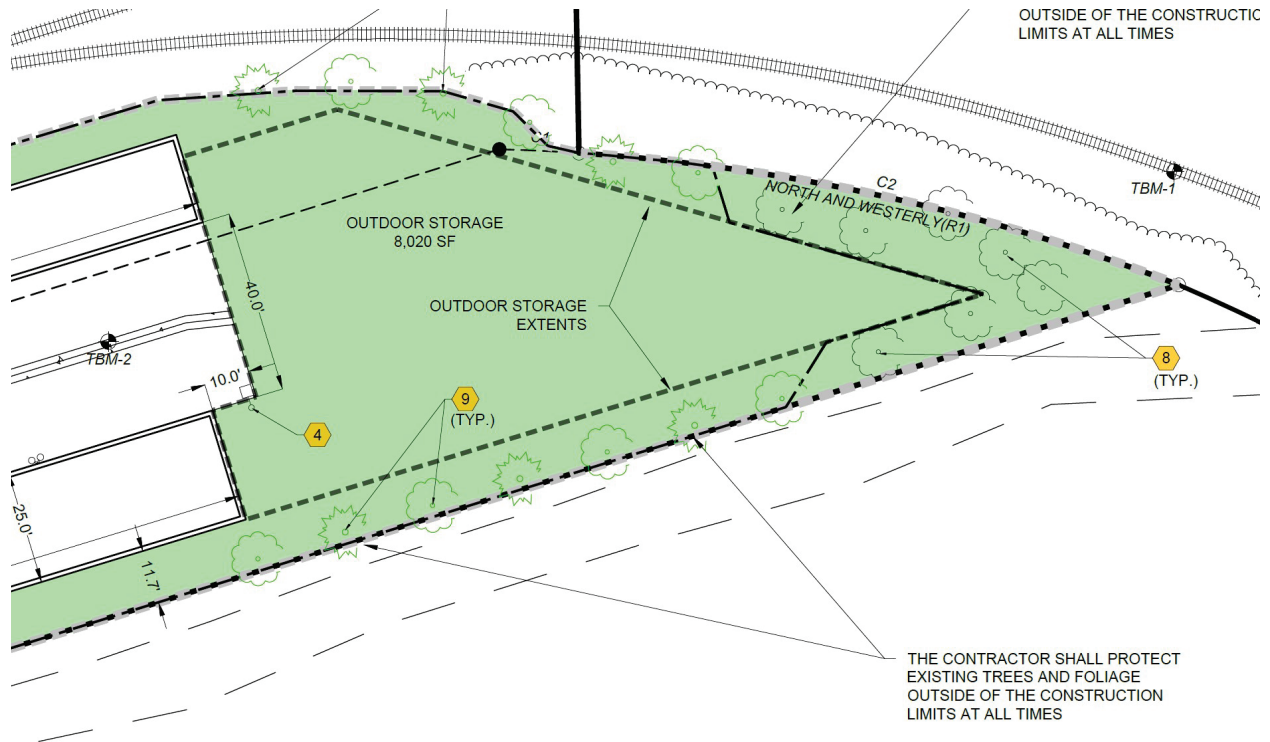
Outside storage of items that do not need to be protected from the weather such as boats, recreational vehicles and other items are frequently provided in conjunction with indoor mini storage in smaller communities. Section 153.069 of the Zoning Ordinance requires that outside storage be completely screened from adjoining properties and rights-of-way.

The southern property line does not have a fence but is bordered by forest that provides complete screening at least until such time as the property to the south develops. Trees in the eastern portion of the site are proposed to be removed which would eliminate screening in that area.

A chain-link fence exists on the northern site for security purposes, but the fence does not provide complete screening. By previous resolution in 2022, it was required that slats be installed in this chain link fence to provide screening. The adjoining property to the north and east is owned by the railroad, which is an industrial use. There is no privacy fencing between the TC&W railroad parcel and the residential properties to the north, but both the railroad and those houses existed by at least 1937.

The surfacing of the outside storage must also be reviewed with a decision related to outside storage. The surfacing of the current outside storage area is gravel. The outside storage items are not frequently moved. Considering much of this location is also subject to TC&W Easement, gravel is an acceptable surfacing material for the outside storage. The proposed new location for the outside storage is in an area that is predominantly currently forested. The trees would be removed and new vegetation is proposed to be established to meet the CCWMO requirements. It is then proposed to be parked on with outside storage.

A separate plan sheet specifically showing the location of the proposed outdoor storage is included in the packet. This outdoor storage is shown the same as proposed at the June meeting and does not appear to be substantively altered from that proposal. An excerpt of that area is shown below:



The Zoning Ordinance contains the following language for the Planning Commission’s consideration (from Section 153.069):

“Storage of products, materials and equipment, excluding rubbish or junk, which is necessary to an approved business operation in a commercial or industrial district, and which is completely screened from adjoining properties and rights-of-way. The site plan review process is required to determine the appropriateness for storage permitted in this section, surfacing required for the storage area and the screening required.”

No separate maintenance plan for the surfacing and management of the outdoor storage area was provided. Sheet C4.1 contains a section on “Vegetation Maintenance”. The owner has indicated that the current clientele for the outdoor storage is for boats, RVs, contractor trailers, snowmobile trailers, and some standalone vehicles.

The Planning Commission should continue its discussion the suitable surfacing material for the outdoor storage area.

Lighting

The lighting on the site is proposed to be relocated. A photometric plan is provided.

Item 1: Variance related to Paving and Side Yard Setback

Public Hearing: July 2, 2025 Planning Commission

Request

The Developer is requesting to be permitted to leave the parking and driveway area in gravel instead of paving it, as well as to construct a new building within the 30-foot side yard setback.

Legal Background on Variances

Minnesota statutes on variances were amended in 2011 to reflect a “practical difficulties” standard, rather than the previously used “undue hardship” standard. "Practical difficulties," as used in connection with the granting of a variance, means that the property owner proposes to use the property in a reasonable manner not permitted by the zoning ordinance; the plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner; and the variance, if granted, will not alter the essential character of the locality. Economic considerations alone do not constitute practical difficulties.

This request is being evaluated based on the “practical difficulties” standard rather than the standard included in the Cologne Code of Ordinances.

Evaluation of Request

In evaluating variance requests, the following questions should be considered:

1. Is the request a reasonable use of the land?

Staff Note: The site is currently served by a gravel driveway from an adjacent property to the west, and this property is not visible from the road, nor would it directly track gravel onto a city road. Surfacing of the site would provide greater distinction between the areas that are required to be maintained in grass versus those areas that are suitable to drive on. If the area remains gravel, then gravel on the site may increase over time into the areas that are to remain in grass. The owner will need to be diligent in ensuring that the areas shown in green on Sheet 3.0 and Sheet 4.1 remain stabilized as turf.

Without the setback variance, there is not room to construct a building on the south side. In that case, it could be anticipated that the owner may want to use that area for outdoor storage instead. A building in that location is preferable to additional outdoor storage, and would blend in with the existing setbacks on the property.

2. Is the plight of the landowner due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner?

Staff Note: The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances created by the landowner and are not unique to the property. The landowner is proposing the construction of three

new buildings and the removal of existing trees and vegetation in order to move the outdoor storage area to another location. There is nothing unique about the property that prevents the Applicant from complying with City ordinances. If a property owner were to construct on a vacant lot they would be required to meet both the performance and use standards of the Zoning Ordinance. The owner has identified cost as the primary factor as to why they cannot pave the parking lot, as well as that it would have an impact on surface water management on the site.

3. Will the variance, if granted, alter the essential character of the locality?

Staff Note: A variance will not significantly alter the essential character of the locality. There is low visibility to the site except for those from properties immediately adjacent and to the north. The property is not visible from the public road.

In order to grant a variance, the Planning Commission and City Council must determine if the request satisfies all three of these criteria listed.

Recommendation

If the Planning Commission recommends approval of the variances, staff would recommend the following conditions:

1. The requirement to pave the site is deferred, subject to the following conditions:
 - a. The Property Owner shall develop the site in substantial conformance with the approved plans.
 - b. The turf (grass) areas on site must be maintained in accordance with the approved plans. Specifically, the areas designated as turf on Sheet 4.1 shall not be altered to gravel, bare soil, or any other surface, and must remain as properly maintained turf that meets the final stabilization requirements.
 - c. This variance related to paving shall expire and paving as may be required under the City of Cologne's ordinances is required under the following circumstances:
 1. Change of use of the site from mini-storage storage to a different use.
 2. Expansion or intensification of the mini-storage or accessory outdoor storage on site.

Item 2: Site Plan Approval

If the variances are approved, then the Planning Commission may recommend approval of the site plan. If the variances are denied, then the Planning Commission should recommend denial of the site plan.

The Planning Commission must make a recommendation as to the suitable surface type for any outdoor storage that it is willing to recommend for approval.

Recommendation

If the Planning Commission recommends approval, potential conditions include:

1. The Property Owner shall develop the site in substantial conformance with the approved plans.
2. Outdoor storage is allowed only in the area identified on the approved plans. The surface material for the storage area shall be _____. Stored items shall be limited to boats, RVs, trailers, and standalone vehicles only. All vehicles stored outdoors must have valid, current licenses. Outdoor storage must be kept in an orderly condition and comply with all applicable City ordinances, including nuisance regulations.
3. No business operations are permitted within any of the storage units or elsewhere on the property, except for the operation of the mini-storage facility itself.
4. The property is subject to easements. It is the property owner's responsibility to verify if the use of the property is in compliance with those easements.
5. The Developer shall be responsible for obtaining and complying with all necessary permits from agencies including but not limited to the Metropolitan Council, Minnesota Department of Health, DNR, Carver County Watershed District, PCA, MnDOT, Carver County Public Works Department and any other governmental agencies.
6. The Developer shall complete construction, site restoration and erosion control in accordance with all permitting agency requirements including but not limited to MPCA-NPDES, CCWMO, and City Standards.
7. The Developer may not commence construction of any improvements on the Subject Property until a building permit has been obtained and the City Engineer has approved both the detailed grading plan and the detailed construction plan and issued written confirmation to the City and the Developer of the approval of such plans.

June 13, 2025

City of Cologne Variance Request

The Locked Loon Storage Expansion project is seeking a variance request for two items within the City of Cologne Zoning Ordinances. Below is information regarding the City Code and our reasoning why the request should be granted.

§ 153.012 DRIVEWAY AND PARKING LOT IMPROVEMENTS

“All required ingress/egress points, driveways and parking areas shall be paved with bituminous or concrete surfaces, according to minimum city specifications, in all new residential developments and all new or modified commercial and industrial uses.”

REASONING

The proposed development plans to leave a vast majority of the site undisturbed. Currently, the site functions properly in regard to drainage and access. The bituminous requirement will cause unnecessary hardship due to the potential drainage issues and financial burden. The topography of the site is very flat and containers/storage buildings surround the gravel area. Water is currently able to slowly sheet drain south around the structures to the ditch and seep through the gravel into the soil below. Bituminous would completely restrict the flow of water into the ground potentially causing standing water due to the sites existing topography. It would also increase the rate at which water flows toward the existing south containers/building potentially causing additional areas for concern. Apart from the potential drainage issues, the cost to pave the entire site with bituminous is high enough where it would make the project unviable from a financial standpoint. Additionally, Locked Loon Storage does not own the entire driveway too the site. The western parcel where the driveway access is would not be able to be paved regardless. If the paving requirement was enforced, it would be a gravel driveway for nearly 175' until it crosses into the Locked Loon Storage property.

§ 153.043 DIMENSIONAL STANDARDS

“C-3 Zoning requires a 30-foot side yard setback.”

REASONING

The site is within the Downtown Overlay District which allows flexibility in regard to site requirements such as setbacks, impervious cover, etc. due to the highly variable and inconsistent dimensions of these lots. This district states that lots in existence prior to September 1, 2000 shall meet the dimensional standards of the C-2 District. However, the lot was annexed into the City in 2012, and it is unclear whether the C-2 dimensions apply. The lot was in existence prior to September 1, 2000 it simply was not part of the City. The 30-foot setback on the southern lot line creates hardship for the site because it would even further hinder the available space left to develop due to the railroad on the north. Additionally, the proposed building is set back further from the southern property line than the existing building and storage containers.

SUMMARY

We are requesting this variance due to the unnecessary hardships that the strict interpretation of the zoning code will cause. We are hopeful that the paving requirement can be waived due to the financial burden it will cause the property owner and potential drainage issues that may arise. This section of the code seems to hinder small business owners from expanding, and we hope you can see the proposed site features will be an overall improvement to the lot and City. We are also hopeful that you can waive the 30-foot side yard setback requirement and take into account the lots peculiar shape, developable area constraints, and existing building setbacks. The entire southern lot line is heavily forested and additional trees are proposed to be planted to create a vegetated buffer along this property line.

May 07, 2025

Locked Loon Storage Expansion – Project Narrative

Project Team

The project team consists of Blew Inc. as the surveyor, Excavate & Elevate Engineering for civil engineering design, KO Construction as the storage facility designer, and Locked Loon Storage as the developer.

Locked Loon Storage is a locally owned, small business operation that aims to provide secure, quality, and reasonably-priced storage options for residents of Cologne and neighboring areas. The facility is owned and operated by Nick Anderson, a local, solo entrepreneur, who finds deep purpose in running his small business to the highest of standards. Currently, there are approximately 60-70 tenants of the existing facility. The facility is 100% full, and ownership often has to turn down local residents with requests for storage. With new housing developments in Cologne often having HOA's that prohibit Boat/RV parking, Locked Loon Storage offers outdoor storage options for these community members. The plans proposed encompass the entirety of any future expansion or future business plans for this location.

Project Summary

Locked Loon Storage and the design team are excited to present the enclosed site plan review application to the City of Cologne for review and approval. The project team is proposing three new self-storage buildings and altered gravel circulation roads. Also included with the project is the reduction of impervious surfaces through their replacement with vegetated areas and light pole alterations/relocations. The project is located in the City of Cologne northeast of the intersection of Paul Ave. S and Mill St. E.

Currently, the property consists of two storage buildings, gravel outdoor storage yards and access roads, light poles, and storage containers. The project team feels the additional storage units will blend in with the existing facilities and create a cohesive self-storage commercial property. It is intended to maintain existing building setbacks and maintain vegetated buffers between property lines.

The project will benefit the City of Cologne and surrounding communities by increasing the capacity of users Locked Loon Storage can provide services for. It will also benefit the City/Watershed by reducing the amount of impervious on site by over 10% providing benefits to stormwater runoff and downstream receiving waters

Cindy Nash
City Planner
City of Cologne

Dear Ms. Nash and the Planning Commission,

Firstly, I'd like to extend my apologies for not being able to be in-person again this month. My family has had a 4th of July vacation booked for many months, and I'm not able to switch around my plans. Regardless of the outcome of this meeting, I'd like to be present for the August meeting to introduce myself and my excitement for the small business we are working to build in Cologne.

Thank you for being receptive to Austen and I's request for variance for this project. We're doing everything we can to design and build a clean, safe, and maintained facility for the community members to utilize. Some of the existing code is entirely cost prohibitive to our ability to complete the project, so I am asking for your consideration in our variance request.

Thank you again for your diligence, and the time spent on this project. I am confident it will be a successful addition to the community.

Sincerely,
Nick Anderson

612-759-0982



Carver County Water Management Organization

Planning and Water Mgmt Dept
Government Center - Administration Building
600 East 4th Street
Chaska, Minnesota 55318
Phone: (952)361-1820
Fax: (952)361-1828
www.co.carver.mn.us/water

Memo

To: Nick Anderson, Lindsey Self Storage Group
Austen Adam, Excavate and Elevate Engineering
From: Abigail Ernst, Carver County Water Management
Date: June 17, 2025
Re: Locked Loon Storage- CCWMO Approval
File: WP20250027

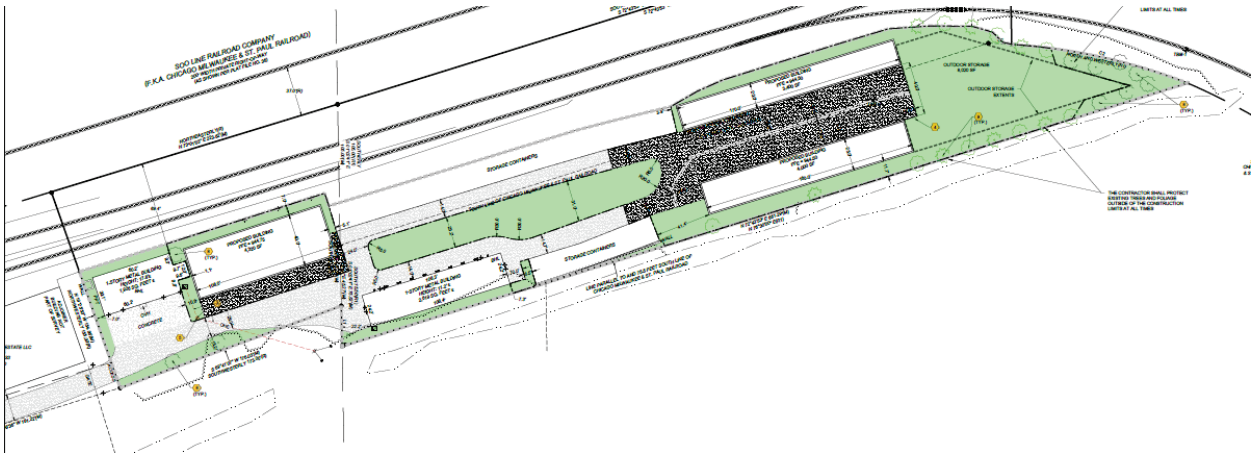
cc: Cynthia Nash, City of Cologne
Tim Sundby, CCWMO
Tom Genelin, Carver SWCD

Enclosures: none

Carver County Water Management Organization received an application submittal for water rules compliance for the Locked Loon Storage expansion project located in the 180 Adamas Ave S, Cologne on May 7, 2025. Additional information was submitted to the CCWMO on May 22 and June 17, 2025. This letter is to inform you that Carver County Water Management is pleased to give **approval** for the project. This permit is valid until December 17, 2026 (18 months from the date of this letter). If the authorized work does not commence within the above time period, or the project specifications have changed, our office must be contacted to determine the need for further approval or re-verification.

General Permit Information

- 1. Overall project description.** The project proposes to reconstruct impervious areas at an existing business known as Locked Loon Storage. It includes the addition of three new storage buildings and associated pavements. The existing site has 1.2ac of impervious area and the proposed site will have 1.08ac of impervious, which is a 10% reduction, thus exempting the site from stormwater treatment. The total proposed removal is 5,451sf. See below for proposed pervious area creation.



2. **Authorized Work.** This permit authorizes the activities described in the Locked Loon Storage Cologne Construction Plan Set ("2025-06-13 Locked Loon Storage). A complete, signed plan set must be available onsite at all times.

Permit Requirements. The following are conditions of approval. Failure to meet these conditions could result in stop work orders or use of the financial security.

1. **SWCD Monitoring.** The Carver SWCD will monitor the site to ensure compliance with Erosion & Sediment Control requirements, County Water Rules, and NPDES requirements. Additional BMPs may be needed as field conditions change.
2. **Stop Work Orders.** Carver County Water Management has the authority to issue Stop Work Orders if it feels that a site is not being properly managed for stormwater protection. Prior to a stop work order, all involved parties will meet to try to resolve the issue. If further violations continue, a Stop Work Order will be enforced until a time that Carver County Water Management feels all stormwater issues have been resolved.
3. **Preconstruction Meeting.** The general contractor for the project should contact Tom Genelin at the Carver SWCD (952.466.5230) to schedule an onsite meeting prior to beginning construction onsite.
4. **Soil Export.** If soil import or export is necessary, haul routes and disposal areas should be discussed with the Carver SWCD 48 hours prior to material being exported offsite. If fill is exported to another site within the Carver County Water Management area, additional permit approvals from the CCWMO may be required. Depending on the destination of the fill, additional permits could take several weeks to secure.
5. **Topsoil Restoration.**

Example 1: Restoration of 6 inches of topsoil and decompaction of 6 inches of subsoil is required as described in the topsoil management plan (Sheet 8 of the above mentioned plan set). The TMP indicates that the Carver County Topsoil Standard will be used (see table below). Stockpiled topsoil must be tested prior to re-spread and must meet the county topsoil standard. If topsoil does not meet the standard, it may need to be amended.