

Village of Elm Grove
Board of Appeals
13600 Juneau Boulevard
Elm Grove, WI 53122

Re: 1900 Highland Dr Shed Variance Request

Dear Board Members,

My wife and I respectfully submit this application for a retroactive variance for the previously constructed shed built on the Southwest corner of my property on 1900 Highland Dr. I personally constructed this shed during the summer of 2023. At the time of its construction, my research led me to believe no permit was required due to its size. I also believed I had met all setback requirements as it is 40 feet from my nearest neighbor's lot line and approximately 55 feet from the nearest roadway.

I received a letter from Ethan Sowl, on behalf of the Village, alerting me to the error of my research, in that I did need to obtain a permit from the Village for the shed and that the location of my shed was subject to the right of way setback, not just a setback from the roadway. In the process of submitting the application for a permit, it was determined the shed was taller than the 10 feet limit and was not built on a concrete slab foundation, as required by the Elm Grove Code of Ordinances. As such, I submit this application, post-construction of the shed, requesting variances to allow the shed to stand as constructed.

Variance Regarding Height of the Shed

The shed on my property is a 12x12 ft square timber-constructed slant-roof shed. The body of the shed is 8 feet tall at the rear, 10 feet tall at the opening/front. However, the roof extends beyond the front of the shed to provide shelter. The roof slants to a height of approximately 11 ½ feet at its highest point. I have included with this letter, a copy of the plans I used to build the shed. I have also included pictures of the completed shed with measurements. All construction was done by me personally.

One change to the plans was substituting 2x6 boards for the roof joists instead of the 2x4's suggested in the plan. As you can see from the photos, I also changed the plans for the front of the shed to include 3 smaller windows for better lighting and aesthetics. I also added the longer extension to the front roofline for better aesthetics and protection from rain/snow.

The installed garage door is a custom-cut, self-contained roll up door ordered directly from Trac-Rite Door, Inc. in Madison, WI.

The color scheme of the shed matches that of our main house. The siding of the shed is a combination of T1-11 siding sheets and ½ inch plywood boards. The plywood was used on the top portions of the shed to give an appearance of natural wood – to mirror the similar wood accented portions of the main house.

The shed was primed and painted with 2 coats of exterior paint (same paint as used on the main house). The wood portions were covered in deck stain (same stain as used on the main house). The shingles are the same shingles that are found on the main house.

The main portion of the shed is 12x12x8-10ft. The only portion taller than the required 10 feet height limit is the elongated roof. I respectfully request this portion of the roof be granted a variance to remain above the 10-foot height limit.

Variance Regarding Lack of Concrete Slab

The land where the shed is constructed slopes, falling away from the road into the nearby creek. The grade creates an approximate 10-12 inch drop from the west side of the shed to the east side. With heavy rains, this area has a lot of run-off from the road to the creek. I decided, for this reason, to use a foundation of framed-in, compacted, crushed granite stone. The stone base was laid over a weed barrier and compacted with Vibrating Plate Compactor rented from Home Depot.

The compacted stone allows for better drainage, while providing a permanent, stable foundation for the shed. The shed is also anchored to a ground anchor set in the center of the crushed rock foundation.

The recent flooding from the "1000-year flood" resulted in significant damage and runoff to multiple areas of my property, including washing away most of the 8"x8" railroad ties used to line the walkways in the area surrounding the shed. Those ties individually weigh more than 100 lbs. The crushed stone foundation was completely undisturbed by the flood.

My concern for putting in a concrete slab was that eventually the slant of the land and corresponding water flow would eventually wash out or erode the earth under the slab creating bigger issues down the road. I researched the pro's and con's for both and found the crushed stone foundation was the better option for this location. For this reason, I respectfully request a variance be granted to allow the crushed stone foundation to remain in place.

Neighbor Signatures for Setback Variance

I have included signatures of my neighbors in the properties most directly adjoining my property. Those properties are as follows:

14825 Jolenta Ln – Erik & Amy Bergman
14755 Ridgemoor Dr. – Tom & Katie Muldoon
14775 Ridgemoor Dr. – Bill & Christina Lundin
14750 Club Dr. – Craig & Jessica Schutta

I have also included signatures of other property owners who live on Ridgemoor Dr., Club Dr., Elm Tree Ct., Highland Dr. and other nearby streets. These neighbors consist of those who would most frequently have occasion to view my shed at its current location.

The area where the shed was constructed was previously an area overgrown by large weeds, invasive blackberry bushes and wildflowers. The only use for this area, previously, was as a place where I would blow the leaves in the fall and park my 8-foot trailer throughout the year.

The purpose of constructing the shed was primarily for two reasons. The first reason was to add an aesthetically pleasing tie-in structure to the main house, thereby providing a purpose for, and cleaning up a previously unused portion of our property. The second reason was to have a place where I could park my trailer to keep it out of the elements and to hide it so it was not just parked in the weeds at the edge of the property. The shed also houses 2 kayaks and yard maintenance tools.

The shed is currently largely hidden from passing vehicles traveling on either Highland or Club Drives. There are trees providing cover from both streets. It should be noted that several of my neighbors who signed the sheet had no idea I even had a shed on my property, due to the cover provided by the trees and the neutral color of the paint.

Aesthetics of the Shed and Surrounding Landscaping

The main goal in building the shed was to build something that tied into our main house in an aesthetically pleasing way. It was a matter of pride for me to, specifically, as I cut every board, screwed every screw and laid every shingle of the shed.

I also transplanted hostas to line the driveway in front of the shed and ferns on the western side of the shed. I built firewood containers for the west side of the shed to break-up the large blank canvas of the west side of the shed. During the holidays, I hang a wreath on the shed, as well (to tie-in to the tree I decorate in the middle of the adjacent circle driveway). All efforts to build a high-quality, aesthetically pleasing shed were taken.

The purpose of the Elm Grove Code of Ordinances is to ensure a high aesthetic standard is met for any construction done within the Village. I have been through the process on two previous occasions for a partial home renovation and re-construction of a garage that was lost in a fire in the fall of 2013 and a smaller home renovation that was completed in the spring of 2024.

My failure to request a permit for this shed was not done as a willful attempt to circumvent the permit process or attempt to build something that fell outside of the standards set by the Village. I believe the attached photos show that a high-quality, aesthetically pleasing shed was built. Those driving by my property will notice a well-constructed shed in an area that was once an overgrown, weedy area where my uncovered trailer was parked.

For these reasons, I respectfully request the Board retroactively approve my request for a variance for the extended height of my shed roof and the use of the crushed granite stone base as the foundation.

I look forward to fielding any questions at the upcoming meeting.

Sincerely,

Geoffrey & Macee Wilber



















