

**CITY OF AMES
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND HOUSING
REPORT TO THE ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT**

REQUEST: Exception for Long Driveway Paving to allow a reduction of the required driveway paving for a property located more than 300 feet from the front property line at 2617 Oakwood Drive.

BACKGROUND:

The applicant, Alex Wickenkamp, owns a property containing a single-family dwelling at 2617 Oakwood Drive (see “Attachment 1 – Location Map”). The property is zoned “RL” (Residential Low Density) and the dwelling was recently constructed. It received a Temporary Certificate of occupancy on March 5, 2025. The property is 11.94 acres and is an interior wooded lot. The property is located on the west edge of the Ames Corporate Limits.

The property contains a gravel driveway that is approximately 950 feet in length from the front property line along Oakwood Road to the garage and dwelling. **The Ames Municipal Code requires that the full length of the driveway be paved and meet City standards.**

The applicant is requesting approval of an Exception for Long Driveways to allow a driveway design that is paved and meets City standards for a minimum of 50 feet, with the remaining 900-foot driveway being a gravel surface. The Municipal Engineer has reviewed the proposal and has accepted the alternate use of gravel for the driveway.

The property is completely wooded and the only development on the 11.94-acre site is the recently constructed single family dwelling. The nearest property is over 200 feet away and buffered by the surrounding woodlands. The property and much of the drive are shielded from nearby properties by the woodlands on site.

Staff received a Driveway Paving Permit from the applicant on August 27, 2025. The permit application may not be approved until an exception has been granted allowing for the alternative use of gravel, or the applicant complies with the paving requirements outlined in the Ames Municipal Code. Once the driveway permit is approved and constructed per the permit requirements, final occupancy may be granted.

Long Driveway Paving Exception

On August 12, 2025, the Ames City Council passed an ordinance to amend the Municipal Code Section 29.1506 to allow for exceptions to paving requirements for long driveways. (see Attachment 3). The applicant’s request is the first such request to be heard by the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

The Ordinance was amended in response to a request from the property owner. Paving of vehicle maneuvering areas has been a long-standing requirement of the Zoning Ordinance. The requirement is intended to promote high-quality site development, reduce dust and noise, and ensure safe, defined travel areas. This is particularly important for high-traffic sites, where unpaved surfaces degrade quickly.

However, it is an unusual circumstance for Ames to have a 1,000-foot plus length driveway for a dwelling. There are some legacy properties annexed to the City and some properties not in modern subdivisions with longer driveways off of former county roads or that may traverse hills and go through woods that could be hundreds of feet in length. Most homes in Ames have driveways of less than 50 feet in length on-site because new subdivision homes are most commonly built at front setback distances of 20-30 feet.

An exception was introduced that requires approval by the Zoning Board of Adjustment. Criteria for the exception include that property is uniquely situated (e.g. rural, wooded lot) and that it will not create nuisance factors for neighboring properties. The exception is only available for single-family dwellings.

A paved approach of at least 50 feet and approval of the alternative paving material by the City Engineer are required.

STATEMENT OF APPLICANT IN SUPPORT OF PROPOSAL:

The applicant's complete application and supporting information accompany this report. These materials include the applicant's responses describing how the proposal meets the standards for an exception for long driveway paving.

APPLICABLE LAW:

Municipal Code Section 29.1506 allows for Exceptions to Long Driveway Paving, Attachment 3.

Chapter 29, Section 1506(4) of the *Municipal Code* states the following:

(4) **When Authorized.** The Zoning Board of Adjustment is authorized to grant the following exceptions:

(h) Single Family Dwelling Long Driveway Paving when the dwelling is more than 300 feet from the right of way and has previously not had a paved driveway.

(5) **Review Criteria.** Before an exception can be granted, the Board of Adjustment shall establish that the following standards have been or shall be satisfied:

(i) Long Driveway Paving. The Board may grant a partial exception of paving when the design includes a paved approach to City standards, paving of at least 50 feet in sure, an approved alternative surface material specification for rock acceptable to the Municipal Engineer, and the site has a unique characteristic that differentiates the parcel from city urban

development patterns by being within a rural, agricultural, or wooded setting. The Board shall find that the exception will provide for a safe and convenient driveway access design and will not have a substantial negative impact upon neighboring properties due to dust, noise, or the lack of a stabilized condition.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION:

Notification of the public hearing was made to all owners of property within 400 feet. In addition, a notice was published in the newspaper and a sign placed in the front yard at 2617 Oakwood Avenue.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. The Zoning Board of Adjustment approves the request for an Exception for Long Driveway Paving to allow the use of a gravel driveway as an alternative to paving for the property located at 2617 Oakwood Road, subject to the conditions that the remaining unpaved length of driveway maintains a minimum gravel depth of 4 inches and the paved approach, including flares, meet City standards as determined through the driveway permit process
2. The Zoning Board of Adjustment denies the request for an Exception for Long Driveway Paving to allow the use of a gravel driveway as an alternative to paving for the property located at 2617 Oakwood Road by adopting findings that the evidence does not support the explicit finding of consistency with all Long Driveway Paving criteria.
3. The Zoning Board of Adjustment may table this request for an Exception for Long Driveway Paving and request additional information from City staff or the applicant.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff finds that the property is uniquely situated as a wooded lot and almost 12 acres in size. The driveway will exceed 300 feet, measuring 950 feet to the new single-family dwelling. Due to the wooded nature of the lot, no nuisance factors are anticipated. The first 50 feet of the driveway will be paved to City standards, and the remainder unpaved as approved by the Municipal Engineer. Thus, the criteria for the exception are met.

Based upon the Findings and Conclusions by staff, it is the recommendation of the Department of Planning and Housing that the Zoning Board of Adjustment act in accordance with Alternative #1, approving an Exception for Long Driveway Paving to allow 2617 Oakwood Road to use gravel as an alternative driveway surface to paving, by adopting the findings of fact and conclusions stated herein.

ADDENDUM

Staff makes the following findings of facts and conclusions for each of the Exception criteria:

Section 29.1506(5)(i). Review Criteria. Before an exception can be granted, the Board of Adjustment shall establish that the following standards have been or shall be satisfied:

- (i) The site contains unique characteristics that differentiate the property from city urban development patterns such that the property is located within a rural, agricultural, or wooded setting.**

FINDINGS:

The single-family property is located on an 11.94-acre site on the west edge of the Ames Corporate Limits. The property is unique in that it is entirely wooded and concealed from nearby properties and the fronting road, except for the drive approach. The property is also buffered from all neighboring dwellings by over 200 feet and existing woodlands.

CONCLUSION:

The property contains unique characteristics that differentiate the property from city urban development patterns. The paved portion of the driveway will be visible from Oakwood Road, while the remaining gravel drive will be screened by the existing woodlands.

- (ii) The long driveway paving exception will provide for a safe and convenient driveway access design and will not have a substantial negative impact upon neighboring properties due to dust, noise, or the lack of a stabilized condition.**

FINDINGS:

There will be no new negative impacts on public health, safety, or general welfare that would result from the granting of this exception. The driveway path is not linear due to the existing topography. Although setbacks are not required for driveways, the drive is located no closer than 5 feet to the nearest property line and remains screened by existing woodlands.

CONCLUSION:

The driveway maintains a setback minimum of 5 feet from the nearest property line and is screened from properties by existing woodlands, minimizing potential negative impacts.

- (iii)The driveway design includes a paved approach to City standards of at least 50 feet on site.**

FINDINGS:

The design includes 50 feet of paved driveway and will meet City standards, see Attachment 2 for details.

The proposed driveway is 15 feet wide with 10-foot flares, or a 35-foot width at the right of way. While the 15-foot driveway width complies with the City code, flares may not exceed 5 feet and would allow for a maximum approach width of 25 feet. The access approach design will be required to meet the requirements of the Ames Municipal Code. The applicant is working through the Driveway Paving Permit with City staff.

CONCLUSION:

A Driveway Paving Permit is currently being reviewed by staff. Approval of the permit to allow a 50-foot paved driveway, with the remaining drive length being gravel, may be approved by staff if the Board grants an exception. The paved approach is required to meet City standards and will be reviewed through this process

- (iv)The alterative driveway surface material is acceptable to the Municipal Engineer.**

FINDINGS:

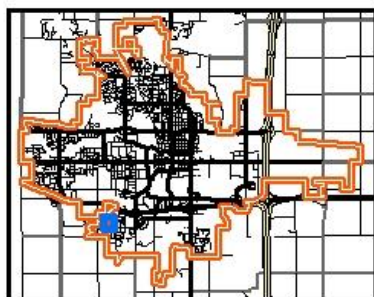
The Municipal Engineer has reviewed the application and approved an alternate surface material of gravel for the remaining length of the driveway. The driveway must maintain a minimum gravel depth of 4 inches along the remaining 900 feet of unpaved driveway.

CONCLUSION:

The Municipal Engineer has approved gravel as an alternative driveway surface material subject to the condition that the driveway maintains a gravel depth of 4 inches.


Attachment 1

Location Map



**Exception for Long Driveway Paving
Zoning Board of Adjustment
2617 Oakwood Road
September 10, 2025**

Legend

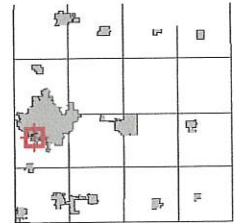
 2617 Oakwood Rd

0 50 100 200 Feet

Attachment 2



Overview



Legend

-  Parcels
-  Lots
-  Townships
-  Corporate Limits
-  Road Centerlines

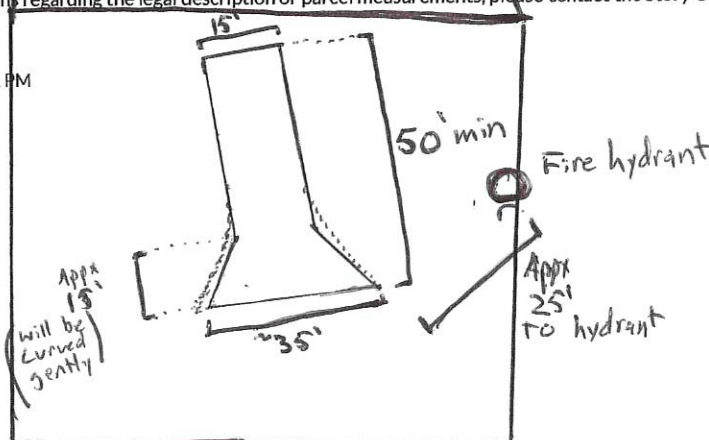
Concerning Assessment Parcels and Platted Lots Within the City of Ames Jurisdiction:

The solid parcel boundary lines represent the legal description as recorded and are not necessarily the official platted lot lines. Dashed lines are official platted lots. If a parcel contains dashed lines, please contact the Ames Planning & Housing Department (515-239-5400) to determine which lines can be recognized for building permit or zoning purposes. If you have questions regarding the legal description or parcel measurements, please contact the Story County Auditor's office (515-382-7210).

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Developed by  **SCHNEIDER**
GEOSPATIAL



Attachment 3

ORDINANCE NO. 4567

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE CITY OF AMES, IOWA, BY AMENDING SECTION 29.1506 THEREOF, FOR THE PURPOSE OF REQUIREMENTS OF EXCEPTION TO LONG DRIVEWAY PAVING REPEALING ANY AND ALL ORDINANCES OR PARTS OF ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT TO THE EXTENT OF SUCH CONFLICT; AND ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

BE IT ENACTED, by the City Council for the City of Ames, Iowa, that:

Section One. The Municipal Code of the City of Ames, Iowa shall be and the same is hereby amended by amending Section 29.1506 as follows:

“Sec. 29.1506. EXCEPTIONS.

(1) **Purpose.** This section is intended to provide for exceptions, pursuant to Sec. 414.12(2) of the Iowa Code, to the terms of the zoning ordinance upon which the Board is required to pass under the ordinance, to provide a set of procedures and establish standards to be met.

* * *

(4) **When Authorized.** The Zoning Board of Adjustment is authorized to grant the following exceptions:

* * *

(h) Single-Family Dwelling Long Driveway Paving when the dwelling is more than 300 feet from the right-of-way and has previously not had a paved driveway.

(5) **Review Criteria.** Before an exception can be granted, the Board of Adjustment shall establish that the following standards have been or shall be satisfied:

* * *

(i) Long Driveway Paving. The Board may grant a partial exception of paving when the design includes a paved approach to City standards, paving of at least 50 feet on site, an approved alternative surface material specification for rock acceptable to the Municipal Engineer, and the site has a unique characteristic that differentiates the parcel from city urban development patterns by being within a rural, agricultural, or wooded setting. The Board shall find that the exception will provide for a safe and convenient driveway access design and will not have a substantial negative impact upon neighboring properties due to dust, noise, or the lack of a stabilized condition.

***”

Section Two. All ordinances, or parts of ordinances, in conflict herewith are hereby repealed to the extent of such conflict, if any.

Section Three. This ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage and publication as required by law.

Passed this 12th day of August, 2025.


Gary M. Watson, Deputy City Clerk


John A. Haila, Mayor

First Reading: July 22, 2025

Second Reading: August 12, 2025

Third Reading: August 12, 2025

Passed on: August 12, 2025

I, Renee Hall, City Clerk of the City of Ames, Iowa, hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a true copy of Ordinance No. 4567, passed by the City Council of said City at the meeting held on August 12, 2025 and signed by the Mayor on August 12, 2025, and published in the Ames Tribune on August 16, 2025.


Renee Hall, City Clerk