

September 15,2023

St Louis County Board of Adjustment

4651 Bern Island Variance

My name is Charles Mack. My address is 207 North Main Street, Wanatah, Indiana and I am the applicant. This is my testimony regarding the variance request for 4651 Berns Island, Orr, MN. I would like to provide the board members some insight into prior actions that have been completed regarding the Berns island septic upgrade.

I purchased the property from the Berns family in July of 2022, with the goal of making this a generational cabin property for my family as the Berns family had done before. My family have enjoyed spending summers on Pelican Lake for over 60 years. As a Public Works Director myself, I understand the need and importance that this septic upgrade will provide for the future health of the lake and use of the island by the next generation. This summer I spoke with Rick Vita of Vita Excavating to coordinate on a septic system design that achieves the island needs and priorities. First and foremost was to address any lake pollution issues. Additionally, the goal is to generate the least disruption to the shoreline and natural landscape of the island as possible. I believe our design will achieve both of these goals. The property has a pressurized lake water and an existing septic system.

In July 2022, the septic system was inspected as required by an approved county inspector/design company. The existing septic system failed to meet the code requirements. The inspector and realtor stated that I would need to escrow the funds required to upgrade the existing septic system in order to complete the land purchase. However, it would also require a county variance since the small footprint of the island could not meet the setback requirements. During the summer, I tried to make arrangements to have the inspector/ designer back on the island to begin the upgraded design for the septic system. Unfortunately, communication/scheduling/ and logistics issues with the inspector/designer were to challenging and we were not able to meet before the island was closed for winter. I spoke with the inspector/designer on September 8, 2022 and he recommended I wait until spring of 2023 as St Louis County was considering an amendment to the ordinance that would waive the variance requirement for island properties with the small footprint. I agreed to wait, but the proposed amendment did fail to pass. At that point with consideration of the communication/logistical difficulties, I decided to seek out another company that could provide a complete service including design/variance/and installation. With references, I hired Vita Excavating, Cook, MN to provide the service. They have done numerous septic installations on Pelican Lake and have the experience to complete this septic upgrade.

I will be traveling from Indiana to attend the Sept 21st meeting and will provide feedback to any questions the board members may have.

Thank You'

Charles Mack