

**SYMMES TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS**

STAFF REPORT

FOR CONSIDERATION BY SYMMES BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS ON DEC. 1, 2025

BZA CASE:

SBZA 2025-13 (CONDITIONAL USE REQUEST)

LOVELAND CASTLE KIOSK

REQUEST: CONDITIONAL USE approval of a museum use in an “C” Residence and “H” Riverfront district

PURPOSE: To replace an existing kiosk building with a new kiosk building located in the existing parking lot of the Loveland Castle property

APPLICANT: Mark Wiley (appellant); Knights of the Golden Trail Inc. (owner)

LOCATION: 12025 Shore Drive; at the terminus of Shore Drive east of Willow Drive (Book 620, Page 611, Parcel 18)

TRACT SIZE: Approximately 1.75 acres (Conditional Use Area); 4.97 acres (total parcel)

ZONE: “C” Residence and “H” Riverfront

SUMMARY OF

RECOMMENDATION: **APPROVAL with Conditions**

HISTORY:

The Historic Loveland Castle & Museum has operated on the site for several decades and there have been three previous BZA approvals on the subject property. In January of 1984, under County Zoning and prior to the adoption of Township Zoning, the Hamilton County BZA authorized the issuance of a Non-Conforming Use Certificate for the Loveland Castle & Museum on the subject property. In December of 1992, the Hamilton County BZA authorized the expansion of the nonconforming use to include commercial uses and the construction of a parking lot. In June of 2000, the Symmes Township BZA approved a modification of the nonconforming use approval for increased commercial activity and additional expansion to the parking area with several conditions relating to maintenance, fees, hours, storage, signage, and parking. The Castle has reclassified itself as a museum, which can now be considered as a conditional use in the “C” and “H” districts.

PROPOSED USE:

The applicant is requesting Conditional Use approval to allow the construction of a 128 square-foot kiosk-style shed that would serve as a check-in point to welcome and register visitors at the entrance of the castle. This new structure would replace the existing kiosk structure in the same location located to the south of the parking lot and north of the main castle building. The existing kiosk is approximately 7 feet tall, 34 square-foot in size, and is constructed out of blocks and canvas. The new kiosk would be 11 feet tall at its highest point with a pitched metal roof. It would be finished with wooden veneer siding, a window to greet visitors and a door for volunteers to use. The appellant stated the proposed kiosk-style shed would be an upgrade to the existing structure with heating and air conditioning for volunteers. The appellant also stated that the new kiosk would extend 8 feet further south towards the Loveland Castle structure.

ANALYSIS:

The existing museum is located in an "C" Residence district and "H" Riverfront district and therefore, any changes or additions to the property located in a residential district and riverfront district shall be reviewed under the Conditional Use sections of the Symmes Township Zoning Resolution.

Article XXXV, Conditional Uses, requires that a property occupied by a museum zoned for residential and riverfront uses be subject to the requirements of Section 385 – General Considerations for Conditional Uses and Section 386 – Specific Criteria Pertaining to Conditional Uses. In approving a Conditional Use, the Board shall make a finding that the proposed development is appropriate in the location proposed based upon the following general considerations and specific criteria.

Compliance with General Considerations as Per Section 385

Spirit and Intent: The proposed use and development shall comply with the spirit and intention of the Zoning Resolution and with district purposes.

Findings: Museum uses are permitted in residential districts through the Conditional Use process, and the existing and proposed use would comply with the spirit and intent of the Zoning Resolution.

No Adverse Effect: The proposed use and development shall not have an adverse effect upon adjacent property or the public health, safety, morals and general welfare.

Findings: Due to its orientation and location within the interior of the site, the proposed kiosk would not likely be visible or have an adverse effect on the adjacent properties. Additionally, the proposed kiosk is replacing the existing kiosk in the same location. The homes located to the north, west, and south of the museum are all located over 400 feet away with mature vegetation buffering the homes from the kiosk. The nearest residence on Cedar Drive would be located approximately 420 feet west of the proposed kiosk. Therefore, staff finds that the proposed kiosk would not have an adverse effect on adjacent properties.

Protection of Public Interests: The proposed use and development should respect, to the greatest extent practicable, the natural, scenic and historic features of significant public interest.

Findings: The subject site abuts the scenic Little Miami River and contains the Historic Loveland Castle & Museum. No changes are being proposed to the structure or the river bank area.

Consistent with Adopted Plans: The proposed use and development shall, as applicable, be consistent with objectives, policies and plans related to land use adopted by the Township Trustees.

Findings: Symmes Township has an adopted Land Use Plan for this area. The existing property is designated as Public/Semi-Public/Institutional, which allows for museums and other related institutional or community uses.

Compliance with Specific Conditional Use Criteria as Per Section 386

Museum uses located in residential and riverfront districts must also be reviewed in relation to the following specific criteria:

Section 386(d) – Any structure (except fences), parking area, or storage area shall be setback at least one hundred (100) feet from every property line.

Findings: The proposed structure would be located approximately 59 feet away from the eastern property line, which would not meet this section. Staff supports a variance to this setback since none of the currently existing structures or parking areas meets this eastern and southern property line setbacks. Further, the proposed kiosk would not be located any closer than the castle building to the eastern property line. Plus, a kiosk already exists in this location. Specifically, the parking area has a setback of 16 feet from the eastern property line, the castle has a setback of approximately 33 from the eastern property line, and an accessory structure to the southwest of the castle has a setback of approximately 77 feet from the southern property line. All the structures and the parking area meet the 100-foot setback for the northern and western property line, where the site more directly abuts residential uses.

Section 386(g) – Use shall have direct access to a collector or arterial street.

Findings: Access to the site would not change. The parking lot for the museum is accessed through Shore Drive, which is not classified as a collector road. Shore Drive is connected to the nearest collector road, Rich Road, through a side street that is Mulberry Street. This is not direct access to a collector street but the entrance and exit of the parking lot is located less than half a mile away from Rich Road.

Section 386(h) – The vehicular use area shall be located and designed so as to minimize impact on the neighborhood.

Findings: *The parking area has been addressed as part of previous cases. The applicant is not proposing any changes to the vehicular use area. However, the parking area is located and designed to minimize impact on the neighborhood.*

Section 386(l) – Measures shall be taken to minimize the impact of potential nuisances such as noise, odor, vibration, and dust on adjacent properties.

Findings: *The applicant has stated that the kiosk would only be utilized during daytime hours. Since the kiosk is replacing the existing kiosk, staff finds that no additional noise, odor, vibration, or dust would occur as a result of the proposed improvement. The overall use is screened from adjacent residents by a heavily wooded hillside to the west and south.*

Section 386(o) – Landscaping shall be installed in accordance with one of the following buffers as described in detail in Article XXXII, Sections 326-331.2, inclusive.

Findings: *There are no changes proposed to the landscaping for this property and as stated previously, the kiosk building would be located within the interior of the site and would not be highly visible from surrounding properties. The site is currently heavily buffered by existing vegetation.*

Section 386(p)(3) – One sign permitted at a maximum of thirty-two (32) square feet.

Findings: *The existing 12-square foot sign located on the premises that identifies the museum at the entrance of the parking lot was approved to remain as part of the previous non-conforming use approval for SBZA case 2000-02. The applicant is not proposing any additional signage.*

Section 386(s) – All exterior lighting shall be directed away from adjacent residential properties and not exceed 0.5 footcandles at the property line when abutting a Residential Use or Residential District.

Findings: *No new lighting has been proposed and any future lighting proposed on site should comply with the Zoning Resolution.*

Section 386(y) – The intensity of the particular use shall be evaluated with regard to the location, size, and configuration of the tract.

Findings: *The replacement of the kiosk with a larger kiosk would not significantly increase the intensity of the use and the proposed kiosk is mainly for ensuring a more comfortable space for volunteers that are greeting and registering guests. No other changes are being proposed to location, size, and configuration. Given the size of the existing use and the location along the river banks, the use is located as far from adjacent residents as possible and the hillside to the west of the castle ensures that expansion of the existing use in the future is unlikely.*

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of BZA case Symmes 2025-13; Loveland Castle Kiosk, a request for Conditional Use approval with the following conditions and variance:

Conditions:

1. That all previously approved conditions of case Symmes 2000-02 shall remain in effect for the site and shall continue to govern the operation of the site.
2. That the kiosk shall be constructed in compliance with the submitted plans.

Variance:

1. Section 386(d) – That the kiosk shall be permitted to have a minimum setback of 59 feet from the eastern property line where a minimum setback of 100 feet is required.

NOTE: Findings in this staff report reflect the opinions of the staff of the Hamilton County Planning and Development Department, but may not necessarily reflect the recommendation of any Board or Commission. This staff report is a technical assessment on the level of compliance with adopted zoning regulations including any required modifications or variances. The final decision of any commission or board may result in findings and conclusions that differ from the staff report.

JPK/BDS

SITE PHOTOS



View of existing kiosk facing southwest within the existing parking lot

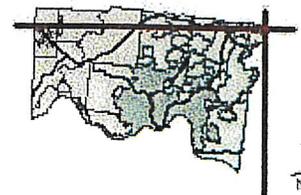


View of existing parking lot facing north



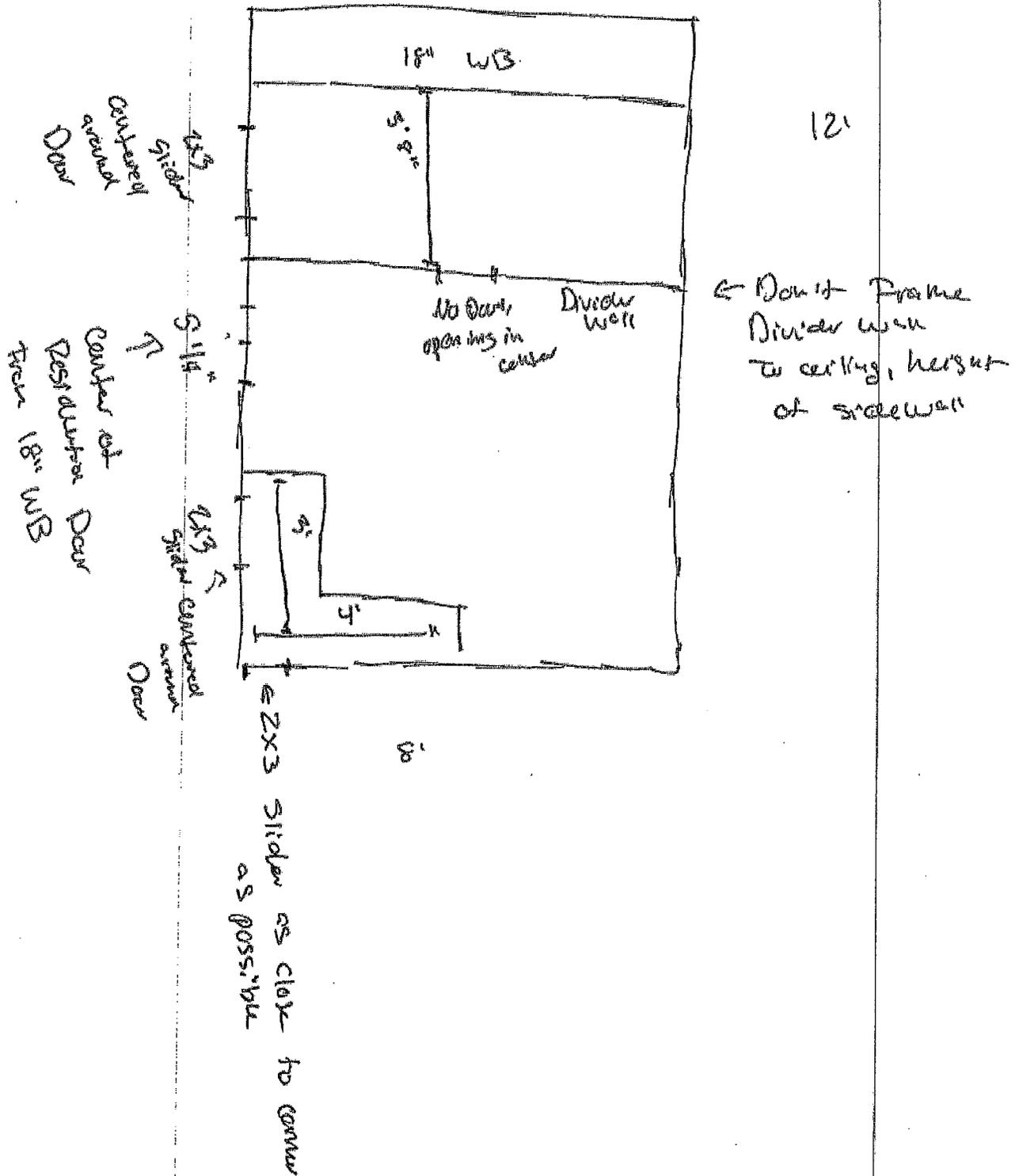
VICINITY MAP

Case: SYMMES 2025-13: LOVELAND CASTLE KIOSK
 Request: CONDITIONAL USE



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PROPOSED FLOOR PLAN



PROPOSED ELEVATION

MAVIN
 DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION
 2025 S.W. 11th Ave.
 SEASON, OHIO 44280

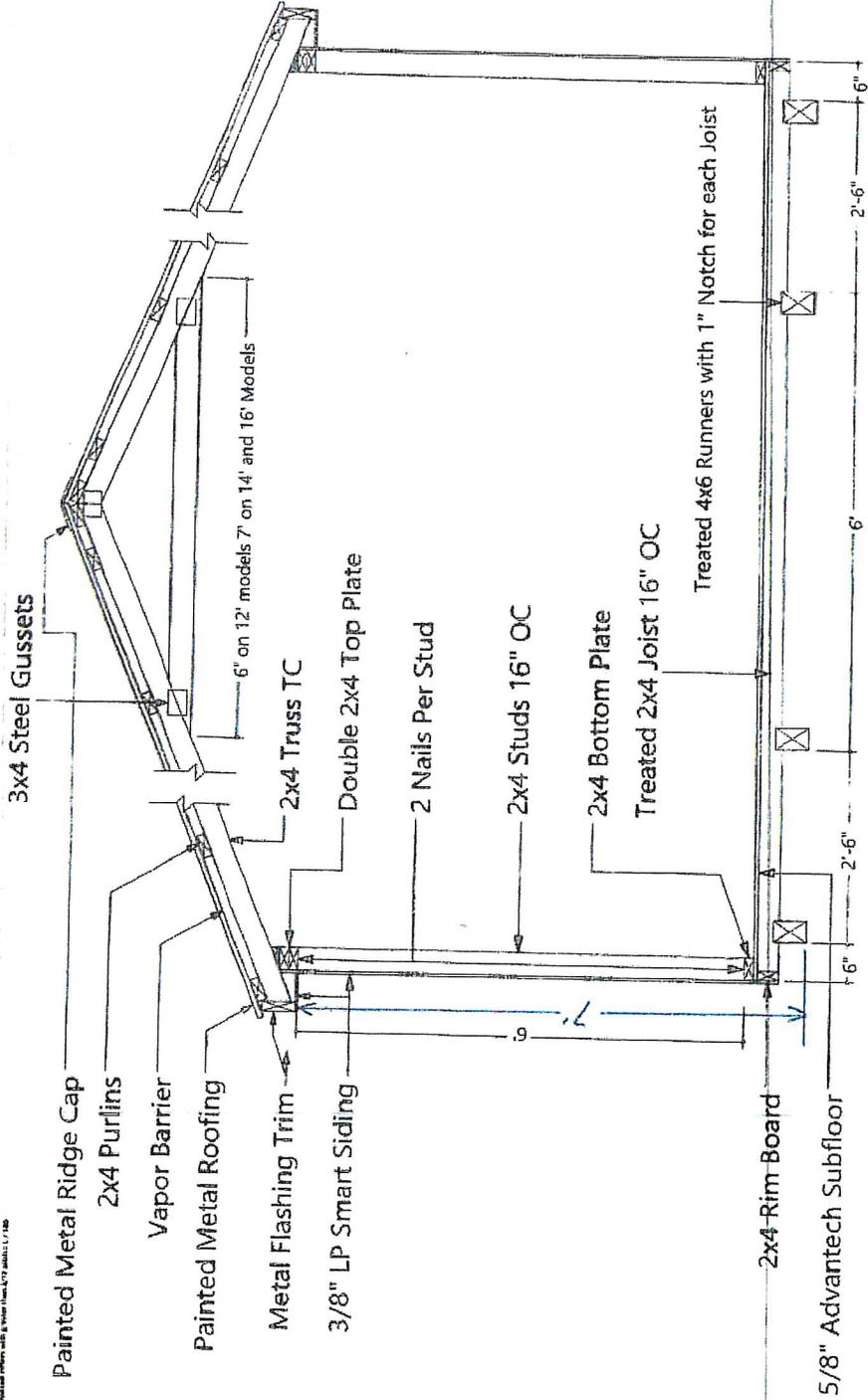
MAVIN TRUSS DESIGN
 2025 S.W. 11th Ave.
 SEASON, OHIO 44280

A Frame Cross Section

Project Name: _____
 Date: _____
 Scale: _____

11' To Peak (9' BUDG. HT.)
 8' wide
 16' Long

GENERAL NOTES
 1. REFER TO DRAWING FOR ALL DIMENSIONS AND NOTES.
 2. ALL MATERIALS TO BE APPROVED BY THE ARCHITECT.
 3. ALL MATERIALS TO BE INSTALLED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE MANUFACTURER'S INSTRUCTIONS.
 4. ALL MATERIALS TO BE INSTALLED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LOCAL BUILDING CODES.
 5. ALL MATERIALS TO BE INSTALLED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LOCAL ZONING ORDINANCES.
 6. ALL MATERIALS TO BE INSTALLED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT REGULATIONS.
 7. ALL MATERIALS TO BE INSTALLED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS.
 8. ALL MATERIALS TO BE INSTALLED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LOCAL FIRE DEPARTMENT REGULATIONS.
 9. ALL MATERIALS TO BE INSTALLED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LOCAL POLICE DEPARTMENT REGULATIONS.
 10. ALL MATERIALS TO BE INSTALLED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LOCAL COURT REGULATIONS.



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APPLICANT LETTER

October 31, 2025

Symmes Township Board of Zoning Appeals
9323 Union Cemetery Road
Symmes Township, OH 45140

To: Board of Zoning Appeals

I am submitting this statement in support of our application for a Conditional Use Permit for the property located at 12025 Shore Drive in Symmes Township, Ohio 45140, which encompasses approximately 8 acres and features a historic castle.

We are proposing the installation of an admittance kiosk-style shed to facilitate the welcoming and registration of visitors. This structure will serve as a check-in point and enhance the overall experience for guests entering the property.

The proposed kiosk is an upgrade to the existing structure, designed to include heating and air conditioning to provide comfort for our volunteers who staff the area. This improvement is intended to support their well-being, especially during extreme weather conditions.

This shed is a modest enhancement to the current setup. It will not generate noise, and all operations conducted at the kiosk will occur exclusively during daytime hours, ensuring minimal impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

We believe this proposal meets the conditions outlined in Section 319.4 of the Symmes Township Zoning Resolution and will not adversely affect public health, safety, or welfare.

The use is compatible with the surrounding area and will not negatively impact adjacent properties. Adequate access, utilities, and infrastructure are already in place to support this minor upgrade.

Thank you for your consideration. We welcome any questions and are happy to provide additional documentation, including the site plan, upon request.

Sincerely,

Mark Wiley
513-300-0932