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Request for making an exception for having a secure metal shipping container on my property for storage



Reasons for using shipping containers for storage:

- 1) **Cost effective** – Much cheaper than building and maintaining a constructed storage unit. Over the long-run it is much cheaper and more convenient than renting a public storage unit.
- 2) **Durable** – Does not wear out, does not rot, or decay like a wood structure.
- 3) **Weatherproof** – They are weather and water tight, do not have to worry about personal items getting wet, moisture and humidity damage, no damage from rodents, and most damaging insects.
- 4) **Secure** – Heavy metal construction, metal doors with up to 4 secure locking bars, cannot be kicked in, pried open, and there are no vulnerable windows for access by intruders.
- 5) **Safe** – Fireproof - cannot be burned down, unlikely to be damage by wind, heavy snow, tornados, hail, or even a falling tree. As a result they make a great storm shelter during a tornado!
- 6) **Transparent** - When painted a neutral, natural, color the container can blend in well with its surroundings.

- 7) **It is Green** - With the green premise growing in popularity across the globe, more and more people are turning to cargo container structures for green alternatives. Because of the balance of trade in the United States, these hefty steel boxes are piling up in ports around the country and posing a storage problem. The reason for this is that it's too expensive to ship empty containers back to their origin. In most cases,



it's just cheaper to buy new containers from Asia. The result is an extremely high surplus of empty shipping containers that are just waiting to become a home, office, apartment, school, dormitory, studio, emergency shelter, storage units, and everything else.

When should a shipping container not be approved?

- 1) Property's lot does not accommodate such a container.
- 2) Container is of a color the contrasts poorly with its surroundings
- 3) Container is visible from multiple views of the property. Because you do not want other property owners thinking that they too can put such a container on their property.
- 4) The container is upsetting to any neighboring property owners.
- 5) The container is in poor condition, rusted, dented, or has unsightly graphic markings or advertising on it.
- 6) Violates any codes that are also subject to any other backyard shed type storage buildings.

Why my storage unit should be approved

Probably 99% of St Paul's city lots would not qualify as an approved site for using shipping container as a storage unit. However, I believe that my lot is an exception and that it is uniquely designed for having such a storage facility on-site.



The backyard of my property naturally drops down over 4 feet down to a lower level flat area. When I bought this property the lower back corner of this flat area was an ugly mess. It appeared to be used as a dumping area for garbage bags, broken old furniture, a discarded window ac unit, miscellaneous wood, discarded brush, twigs, and was covered in weeds.



After I removed the garbage I used the area for storing lumber and landscape blocks I intended to use at a later time.



Lower back corner of property before excavating

I am in desperate need for more storage space. I intend to replace all of the old windows in my house, finish re-siding the garage, and finish off my basement. I have been slowly accumulating these things (used kitchen cabinets, flooring, tile, shower stall, appliances, lighting, etc) and needed to have safe on-site storage. To help with this I built canvas covered temporary car-port in front of my garage. I knew this was not a long term solution (and now the City of St Paul has told me I

need to remove it by August 1st). As a result I need a long term storage solution more than ever.

Last Fall I started to plan how I could use this corner of my property for some type of a storage unit. Upon excavating this area I discovered there was an existing concrete slab underneath it. Apparently, some years ago there was where a garage built on it.



Uncovering the cement slab



Removing the ground from the slab area

Since discovering the slab I have finished removing the soil that covered it and also found a row of foundation blocks.

Behind these foundation blocks I dug a channel for installing a new drain tile system and then built a retaining wall that is roughly 5.5 feet tall and over 30 feet long.



The nearly complete wall after clearing away ground

Since the storage unit is just over 8 feet tall...a major portion of it appears to be below ground.



The storage unit seen from my back yard



My back yard as seen from someone walking along sidewalk

Furthermore, my home sits on a double-wide lot (high taxes paid). It is also a corner lot with a wooded backyard backing up against a city owned watershed.

As a result, the storage unit is nearly invisible to anyone driving or walking alongside the house or when viewed from behind the watershed.



Pictures of my back yard as seen from the watershed



Can you see a shipping container behind these trees and brush?

My only neighbor is Sandy Rice who resides at 1430 Westminster St. She is a good friend of mine and has stated she has no objection of me having such a storage unit in my backyard.



As seen from my only neighbor's back yard



My storage unit is in very good condition. Recently painted a neutral rust brown color with all graphics markings either removed or painted over. This color blends in well with natural surroundings.



To enhance the look of the property I have added over 32 tons of gravel to the driveway.



The lower level parking area as seen by someone walking on sidewalk along Arlington Ave.

I only have a single car garage so having this additional storage is a great help to me. I believe if allowed to keep the storage unit it improve the attractiveness of the property as otherwise I would need to have a number of things sitting outside in the yard and exposed to the elements i.e. items needing storage for winter such as lawn furniture, lawn mowers, bikes, gardening tools, motorcycles, etc.

My property is also a duplex. As a result, I have renters who want to have the ability to have outside storage for their own personal items like bikes, motorcycles, and seasonal storage of their large bulky items.

What exactly is the city's objection?

When I initially appealed to be allowed to keep the storage unit as a permanent fixture on the property I was told that the city code does not approve such containers as it violates the city's fire code. I thought that peculiar since it is constructed of all metal. I was told that it violates the city code because it does not have an alternate egress, such as an approved 2nd door or accessible egress window. This seemed reasonable to me until I thought about it more.

I'd like to pose the question: **What percentage of backyard residential storage sheds have a second door or an egress window in them?**

I cannot think of any shed I have ever seen have a 2nd door or a window large enough to be used as an egress, can you?

I don't know but I would guess almost 20 to 30% of houses have some type of storage shed in their backyard. Many of these sheds are made of plastic, lite-weight metal (aluminum), or more likely wood. It is these wood sheds that are rotting away, go unpainted, have mice and other rodents and insects living in them, and are in constant hazard of being knocked down by wind storms, tornados, or collapsing under the weight of heavy snow. Yet they are apparently approved by the city?

If my storage unit is made of heavy-gauge metal and does not suffer damage from any of the above issues AND, it is not an eye-sore but also nearly invisible to others, AND has not received any neighborhood complaints, it is not reasonable to think that I should be allowed to keep it? Right?

I've invested a lot of time and effort in trying to do this the right way.

Thank you very much for your kind consideration of this proposal. I look forward to meeting you on July 9th at the City Council meeting.

Sincerely,

John Hedlund

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