



City of Plymouth
Zoning Board of Appeals
Regular Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 2, 2025 - 7:00 p.m.

City of Plymouth
201 S. Main
Plymouth, Michigan 48170-1637

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1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Joe Elliott called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Elliott, Vice Chair Jim Burrows, Members Mike Devine, Robert Mengel, and Rebecca Smith

Also present: Planning and Community Development Director Greta Bolhuis

2. CITIZENS COMMENTS

There were no citizen comments.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MEETING MINUTES

Burrows offered a motion, seconded by Mengel, to approve the minutes of the December 5, 2024 meeting.

There was a roll call vote.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

4. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Burrows offered a motion, seconded by Smith, to approve the agenda for the January 2, 2025 meeting.

There was a roll call vote.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

5. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Bolhuis asked for nominations for the office of chair. Burrows nominated Elliott, and Bolhuis asked two more times whether there were any other nominations. There were none, and there was a roll call vote to elect Elliott as chair of the Zoning Board of Appeals for 2025.

Elliott was elected unanimously.

Elliott asked for nominations for the office of vice chair. Devine nominated Burrows, and Elliott asked two more times whether there were any other nominations. There were none, and there was a roll call vote to elect Burrows as vice chair of the Zoning Board of Appeals for 2025.

Burrows was elected unanimously.

6. OLD BUSINESS

a. Z 24-20, 615 S. Harvey, non-use variances for the rear yard setback and floor area ratio.

The applicants described the changes they made since their last submission. They explained their rationale for requesting a rear yard setback variance for a raised deck for the ground floor and a covered deck on the second level, citing concerns about the current patio that requires stairs to access from the home. They also described their request for a floor area ratio (FAR) variance, stating that they would not be adding to the footprint of the house, but creating a usable space above the garage.

Citizen Comments

Mike Byrd, 616 Forest, via Zoom, said he was the back yard neighbor of the applicants and that he opposed the setback variance because the houses were already too close.

Board Member Discussion

The group discussed the setback variance request and the impact the two decks would have on neighboring properties.

Motion

Smith offered a motion, seconded by Mengle, to approve a 12-foot rear yard setback variance at the grade of the first floor without any additional floor area on a second story for the dimension shown in the drawing

Findings of Fact

The grade of the lot and height of the foundation creates an obstacle to enjoying the yard. The property is already non-conforming.

Mengle offered an amendment to restrict the height of the deck to three feet above the grade. Bolhuis said a three-foot-high deck could be built without a variance. Mengel withdrew his amendment.

There was a roll call vote.

YES: Smith

NO: Burrows, Devine, Mengle, Elliott

MOTION FAILED

Board Member Discussion

The group discussed the floor area ratio request. It was stated that the massing of the home would increase under the request, even though the footprint would be the same. The group reviewed the checklist of items required for a variance and agreed that the items were not met.

Citizen Comments

Tom (last name and address unintelligible via Zoom), said he recently built a home in the City of Plymouth and had to follow the FAR, and others should be required to do so as well.

Motion

Devine offered a motion, seconded by Burrows, to deny the FAR variance requested.

There were no findings of fact offered.

There was a roll call vote.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

7. NEW BUSINESS

a. Z25-01, 728 Burroughs: Non-use variances to extend the garage roof into the side yard setback.

The applicant described his request and rationale. He stated that a previous owner built a five-foot extension on the garage, but didn't extend the gabled roof over it.

Devine stated that he worked for the architect and asked whether he should abstain from the discussion and vote. Board members agreed that he could remain impartial.

Citizen Comments

Two neighbors sent emails in support of the variance.

Board Member Discussion

The group discussed the request and there was consensus that extending the roof was acceptable, since the dimensions of the building would not change.

Motion

Devine offered a motion, seconded by Burrows, to approve a variance of 1.33 feet for the side yard setback for the accessory building along the west property line, limited to the roof framing over the front six feet of the existing building.

Findings of Fact

The unique and unconventional roof framing and structure compromises its use.

Elliott requested an additional finding of fact stating that the variance will extend the existing non-conformity but not further encroach into the setback. Devine and Burrows accepted the amendment.

There was a roll call vote.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

8. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Elliott welcomed Mengle as the new member of the ZBA and thanked Mike Pappas for agreeing to serve as an alternate.

9. REPORTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

City Commission Liaison Brock Minton thanked board members for their objectivity and using their best judgment. He said Burrows and Devine would be reappointed to their positions on the ZBA on January 6, and that the City Commission would be meeting to formulate their one-year tasks later in the month.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Burrows offered a motion, seconded by Mengel, to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

There was a roll call vote.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY