



City of Plymouth
Zoning Board of Appeals
Regular Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 4, 2025 - 7:00 p.m.

City of Plymouth
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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, Members Mike Devine, Robert Mengel, Rebecca Smith, and Alternate Mike Pappas.

Absent: Member Jim Burrows

Also present: Planning and Community Development Director Greta Bolhuis

2. CITIZENS COMMENTS

There were no citizen comments.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MEETING MINUTES

Pappas offered a motion, seconded by Mengel, to approve the minutes of the August 7, 2025 meeting.

There was a roll call vote.

YES: Devine, Mengel, Smith, Pappas and Elliott

MOTION PASSED

4. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Pappas offered a motion, seconded by Mengel, to approve the agenda for the September 4, 2025 meeting.

There was a roll call vote.

YES: Pappas, Devine, Mengel, Smith and Elliott

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

6. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

7. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Z 25-07, 550 Forest: Signarama, the applicant, is requesting a non-use variance to install a roof sign. The property is zoned B-2, Central Business District.

Citizen Comments

There were no citizen comments.

Board Member Discussion

During deliberations, the board reviewed the ordinance definition of a roof sign, noting a mansard roof appearance qualifies. They considered the property's unique conditions, including its road setback and unusual architecture. The lighting was also discussed, noting it doesn't face residential areas and existing lighting is present.

Motion

Commissioner Mengel made a motion, seconded by Devine, to approve Z 25-07 for a non-use variance to install a roof sign at the proposed location and size.

Findings of Fact

The sign is consistent with the character of the surrounding properties. Due to the unusually deep setback, it would not be visible from the road. The proposed sign does not extend above the roof peak, and the building's distinct facade lacks sufficient space for a conventional wall sign.

There was a roll call vote.

YES: Pappas, Devine, Mengel, Smith and Elliott

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

- b. **Z 25-08, 933 Church:** Randal Balconi, the owner, is requesting a non-use variance to construct a covered porch in the front yard setback. The property is zoned R-1, Single-Family Residential District.

Motion

Elliott offered a motion, seconded by Smith, to allow Devine to abstain from agenda item Z 25-08.

There was a roll call vote.

YES: Pappas, Devine, Mengel, Smith and Elliott

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Citizen Comments

A neighbor, Tony Schippa from 924 Church Street, spoke in support of the request, stating it would allow for more interaction among neighbors.

Board Member Discussion

Randy Balconi, the owner of 933 Church Street, presented his request for a non-use variance to construct a covered porch in the front yard setback. He explained that the plan had been approved about 4 years ago but was put on hold due to COVID. He noted that the proposed residence would be more conforming than the current one.

The board discussed the possibility of shifting the entire porch to one side to avoid needing a variance. Mr. Balconi acknowledged this was possible but not preferred due to some changes in the interior design.

The board discussed the unusual shape of the lot and noted that the issue was specifically with the covered porch, as an uncovered porch would be allowed to project into the setback. They also considered the city's motivation to have usable front porches for a more walkable community.

Motion

Smith offered a motion, seconded by Pappas, to approve Z 25-08 for a non-use variance of 4.97 feet of front yard setback variance to build a single-story covered front porch.

Findings of Fact

This is an irregularly shaped lot with a non-standard property line, and the distance between the sidewalk and the property line is non-typical.

Condition

The variance is limited to a single-story covered porch.

There was a roll call vote.
YES: Pappas, Mengel, Smith and Elliott
MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

- c. **Z 25-09, 1311 W Ann Arbor Trail:** Jason Lewarne, the applicant, is requesting a non-use variance to construct a driveway greater than 24 feet wide at the property line. The property is zoned R-1, Single-Family Residential District.

Citizen Comments

Mark Malcolm, 1364 Maple, expressed concerns about the timing, precedence, and the unique characteristics of the 4-car garage affecting the neighborhood’s aesthetics.
Sergei Schippa, 924 Church, voiced support and emphasized the safety benefits of the proposed driveway design for maneuvering vehicles.

Board Member Discussion

The board discussed the proposal's timing in relation to the ordinance update, highlighting the applicant’s awareness of it before proceeding. They weighed concerns of a self-imposed hardship, drainage, and setting precedents.

Motion

Devine offered a motion, seconded by Smith, to deny a variance for Z25-09, based on the finding of fact that the hardship is self-created.

Findings of Fact

A self-imposed hardship was recognized with the initially requested driveway width of 42.58 feet, as the board noted this did not comply with ordinance requirements and was created due to the applicant proceeding despite being aware of the ordinance change.

There was a roll call vote.
NO: Pappas, Devine Mengel, Smith and Elliott
MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO DENY MOTION

Second Motion

Smith offered a motion, seconded by Devine to approve a variance for Z25-09, adjusting the maximum driveway width to 30 feet at the property line.

Findings of Fact

The variance allows the driveway to match the maximum allowed curb cut width of 30 feet, as stated in the general code.

There was a roll call vote.
YES: Pappas, Devine Mengel, Smith and Elliott
MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

8. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Commissioner Smith suggested revisiting the driveway width ordinance to consider basing it on the number of garage doors rather than a fixed width. Chair Elliott agreed this could be presented to the planning commission for consideration.

Commissioner Mengel noted that the sign ordinance has also been a frequent issue, particularly in the DDA district, and suggested the planning commission review these rules as well.

9. REPORTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

There were no reports and correspondence to report.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Smith offered a motion, seconded by Pappas, to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 p.m.

There was a roll call vote.

YES: Pappas, Devine, Mengel, Smith and Elliott

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY