



## **Town of Beaufort, NC**

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### **Town of Beaufort Board of Adjustment Regular Meeting 6:00 PM Monday, February 26, 2024 Minutes**

#### **Call to Order**

Chair Oliver called the February 26, 2024 Board of Adjustment regular meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

#### **Roll Call**

Members Present: Wendi Oliver, Cathy Reeve, Ann Carter, Clark Patton, and Bruce Sheldon

Members Absent: Nick Wilson

A quorum was declared with five members present.

Staff Present: Kyle Garner, Town Attorney Jill Quattlebaum, and Laurel Anderson

#### **Agenda Approval**

Chair Oliver asked if there were any changes to the Agenda.

*Member Carter made the motion to approve the Agenda and Vice-Chair Reeve made the second. Chair Oliver took a vote that was unanimous.*

*Voting yea: Chair Oliver, Vice-Chair Reeve, Member Carter, Member Patton, and Alternate Member Sheldon*

#### **Election of Officers**

*Member Carter made the motion to open nominations of officers and Member Patton made the second. Town Attorney Quattlebaum took a vote that was unanimous.*

*Voting yea: Chair Oliver, Vice-Chair Reeve, Member Carter, Member Patton, and Alternate Member Sheldon*

*Member Carter made the motion to nominate Wendi Oliver for Chair and Vice-Chair Reeve made the second. Chair Oliver took a vote that was unanimous.*

*Voting yea: Chair Oliver, Vice-Chair Reeve, Member Carter, Member Patton, and Alternate Member Sheldon*

*Member Carter made the motion to close nominations for Chair and Member Patton made the second. Town Attorney Quattlebaum took a vote that was unanimous.*

*Voting yea: Chair Oliver, Vice-Chair Reeve, Member Carter, Member Patton, and Alternate Member Sheldon*

*Town Attorney Quattlebaum took a vote to approve Wendi Oliver for Chair that was unanimous.*

*Member Patton made the motion to nominate Cathy Reeve for Vice-Chair and Chair Oliver made the second. Town Attorney Quattlebaum took a vote that was unanimous.*

*Voting yea: Chair Oliver, Vice-Chair Reeve, Member Carter, Member Patton, and Alternate Member Sheldon*

*Member Carter made the motion to close nominations for Vice-Chair and Chair Oliver made the second. Town Attorney Quattlebaum took a vote that was unanimous.*

*Voting yea: Chair Oliver, Vice-Chair Reeve, Member Carter, Member Patton, and Alternate Member Sheldon*

*Town Attorney Quattlebaum took a vote to approve Cathy Reeve for Vice-Chair that was unanimous.*

*Member Patton made the motion to nominate Laurel Anderson for Secretary and Chair Oliver made the second. Town Attorney Quattlebaum took a vote that was unanimous.*

*Voting yea: Chair Oliver, Vice-Chair Reeve, Member Carter, Member Patton, and Alternate Member Sheldon*

*Town Attorney Quattlebaum took a vote to approve Laurel Anderson for Secretary that was unanimous.*

*Voting yea: Chair Oliver, Vice-Chair Reeve, Member Carter, Member Patton, and Alternate Member Sheldon*

### **Administration of Oaths**

Chair Oliver read the Quasi-Judicial Statement.

This hearing is a quasi-judicial evidentiary hearing. That means it is like a court hearing. State law sets specific procedures and rules concerning how this board must make its decision. The board must base its decision upon competent, relevant and substantial evidence in the record. It is a decision constrained by the standards in the Ordinance and based on the facts presented. A quasi-judicial decision is not a popularity contest. It is a decision constrained by the standards in the ordinance and based on the facts presented. All applications for variances must be consistent with the Town of Beaufort's Land Development Ordinance. If you will be speaking as a witness, please focus on the facts and standards, not personal preference or opinion. Participation is limited. This meeting is open to the public. Everyone is welcome to watch. Parties with standing have rights to participate fully. Parties may present evidence, call witnesses and make legal arguments. Parties are limited to the applicant, the local government and individuals who can show they will suffer special damages. Other individuals may serve as witnesses when called by the board. For certain

topics, this board may hear opinion testimony from expert witnesses. Individuals providing expert opinion must be qualified as experts and provide factual evidence upon which they base their expert opinion. Witnesses must swear or affirm their testimony.

Secretary Anderson then administered the Oath to Town Planner Michelle Eitner, Christina Colucci of Align Interiors, Structures & Design, and Mike Peters, Business and Operations Manager at the Beaufort Maritime Museum.

### **Quasi-Judicial Proceeding**

#### **1. Variance Request for 307 Front St.**

Town Planner Michelle Eitner gave the Staff Report for the request as follows: Mary Ellen Nixon-Moore, owner of subject property 307 Front Street, has requested a variance from LDO Section 9.A. to build an addition onto the back of the house that maintains the 2 foot 8 inch setback of the existing structure and has a 2 foot 3 inch setback for the newly added section. Mrs. Eitner noted that the existing structure has a 2 foot 8 inch setback, rather than the 2 foot 6 inch setback mistakenly identified in the staff report. The required side setback for this property is 8 feet. Specifically, this is a request of 5 foot 4 inch encroachment for the vertical addition on existing footprint and a 5 foot 9 inch encroachment for the proposed carport. The application materials are included in the agenda packet and the applicant has additional information to provide during their presentation.

Ms. Colucci, designer for the applicant, gave the Board members an application addendum detailing the applicant's Findings of Fact responses and she presented the application.

Member Sheldon asked if the current mechanical units were already encroaching and asked where the new unit would go. Ms. Colucci stated that there were many options for heating and cooling and if the variance was approved they would ensure any new units would not encroach any further. Member Sheldon later noted that the footings for the new apartment could also not encroach further.

Member Carter asked if an additional apartment was being created or was it an expansion and Ms. Colucci stated that it was an expansion of an existing apartment on the second level which would sit on top of an existing apartment that already has the setback. Ms. Colucci further stated that they were essentially asking to build above the existing apartment and it would line up with the apartment below.

Member Patton asked if they were also building further back and Ms. Colucci stated that they were and it was a bump-out.

Member Carter noted that the structure was already nonconforming and the application was requesting increasing nonconformity and also the hardship would be self-created as the increased nonconformity would not be created if the apartment were not built.

Town Attorney Jill Quattlebaum stated that Section 11 of the Land Development Ordinance (LDO) addresses nonconformity; quoting "Nonconforming structures shall not be enlarged and shall not be altered in any way which increases their nonconformity but may be altered to minimize their nonconformity." She noted that two issues for the Board to consider were building straight up on the existing structure and whether that increases the nonconformity, and a new addition which is not in the 8-foot setback required by the LDO. She also directed the Board to "D" of the Findings of Fact standard for a variance which requires the requested variance is consistent with the spirit, purpose and intent of the LDO.

Ms. Colucci gave an overview of the applicant's stated hardships and there was a short discussion.

*Member Reeve gave the motion to close the hearing and Member Patton gave the second. Chair Oliver took a vote:*

*Voting yea: Chair Oliver, Vice-Chair Reeve, Member Carter, Member Patton, and Alternate Member Sheldon*

*Chair Oliver requested a motion and the Board voted on the following Findings of Fact:*

- a. Unnecessary hardship would result from the strict application of this Chapter. It shall not be necessary to demonstrate that, in the absence of the variance, no reasonable use can be made of the property.*

*Member Carter made the motion to deny Finding of Fact #1 as the structure is already in full use, and Member Sheldon made the second. Chair Oliver took a vote that was unanimous:*

*Voting yea: Chair Oliver, Vice-Chair Reeve, Member Carter, Member Patton, and Alternate Member Sheldon*

- b. The hardship results from conditions that are peculiar to the property, such as location, size, or topography. Hardships resulting from personal circumstances, as well as hardships resulting from conditions that are common to the neighborhood or the general public, may not be the basis for granting a variance.*

*Member Carter made the motion to deny Finding of Fact #2 because there are a lot of properties in Beaufort like this one and there is nothing unusual about this one, and Member Sheldon made the second. Chair Oliver took a vote that was unanimous:*

*Voting yea: Chair Oliver, Vice-Chair Reeve, Member Carter, Member Patton, and Alternate Member Sheldon*

- c. The hardship did not result from actions taken by the applicant or the property owner. The act of purchasing property with knowledge that circumstances exist that may justify the granting of a variance shall not be regarded as a self-created hardship.*

*Member Carter made the motion to deny Finding of Fact #3 as the homeowner's actions would result in the hardship, and Member Sheldon made the second. Chair Oliver took a vote that was unanimous:*

*Voting yea: Chair Oliver, Vice-Chair Reeve, Member Carter, Member Patton, and Alternate Member Sheldon*

- d. Based on the neighbors being consulted and testimony of the applicant the spirit of the ordinance was being upheld. The requested variance is consistent with the spirit, purpose, and intent of this Chapter, such that public safety is secured, and substantial justice is achieved.*

*Member Carter made the motion for Finding of Fact #4 because if the variance does not meet the spirit, purpose, and intent of the LDO, and Member Sheldon made the second. Chair Oliver took a vote that was unanimous:*

*Voting yea: Chair Oliver, Vice-Chair Reeve, Member Carter, Member Patton, and Alternate Member Sheldon*

Chair Oliver then asked for a motion for the denial of the variance.

*Member Carter made the motion for the denial of the variance as the application did not meet any of the four criteria granting the variance and Member Sheldon made the second.*

*Chair Oliver took a vote that was unanimous.*

*Voting yea: Chair Oliver, Vice-Chair Reeve, Member Carter, Member Patton, and Alternate Member Sheldon*

**Commission / Board Comments**

There were no Board comments.

**Staff Comments**

There were no Staff comments.

**Adjourn**

Chair Oliver asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

*Vice-Chair Reeve made the motion to adjourn and Member Carter made the second. Chair Oliver took a vote that was unanimous.*

*Voting yea: Chair Oliver, Vice-Chair Reeve, Member Carter, Member Patton, and Alternate Member Sheldon*

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

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**Wendi Oliver, Chair**

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**Laurel Anderson, Board Secretary**