



**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
URBANA ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS**

APPROVED

DATE: July 15, 2026

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

PLACE: Council Chambers, City Building, 400 South Vine Street, Urbana, Illinois

MEMBERS ATTENDING: Joanne Chester, Ashlee McLaughlin, Adam Rusch, Nancy Uchtmann, Harvey Welch, Mark Wenneborg

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Zainab Calcuttawala

STAFF PRESENT: Evan Alvarez, Principal Planner; Kate Himick, Planner I; Aimirou Sy, Planner II; Teri Andel, Administrative Assistant II

OTHERS PRESENT: Philip Grier, Leslie Rodriguez

A. CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL

Chair Welch called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present.

B. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

NOTE: Ms. Uchtmann arrived at 7:03 p.m. Mr. Rusch arrived at 7:04 p.m.

C. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Minutes of April 15, 2026 Regular Meeting

Ms. Uchtmann moved that the Zoning Board of Appeals approves the minutes of the April 15, 2026 regular meeting as written. Mr. Welch seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes as written was passed by unanimous voice vote.

D. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

- Email from Melody Pinks dated July 5, 2026 regarding ZBA-2026-C-01 and ZBA-2026-MIN-01

E. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

F. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

ZBA-2026-C-01 – A request by Philip Grier for a Conditional Use Permit to allow a second principal structure at 1506 South Curtiss Drive in the R-3 (Single and Two Family Residential) Zoning District.

ZBA-2026-MIN-01 – A request by Philip Grier for a Minor Variance for a reduction from five feet to four feet in the required side yard setback at 1506 South Curtiss Drive in the R-3 (Single and Two Family Residential) Zoning District.

Chair Welch opened the public hearings for Case Nos. ZBA-2026-C-01 and ZBA-2026-MIN-01 together since they are related to the same address and project.

Kate Himick, Planner I, presented the two cases to the Zoning Board of Appeals by stating facts from the written staff report. She began by stating the purpose for the Conditional Use Permit and Minor Variance requests. She noted the location, existing land use, zoning, and Place Type of the subject property as well as for the surrounding area.

Ms. Himick talked about the Conditional Use Permit request and reviewed the criteria according to Section VII-2 of the Zoning Ordinance. She summarized staff's Findings of Fact.

Ms. Himick talked about the Minor Variance request and reviewed the criteria according to Section XI-3 of the Zoning Ordinance. She summarized staff's Findings of Fact.

She read the options of the Zoning Board of Appeals and presented staff's recommendations for each case, which are as follows:

Based on the analysis and the Findings of Fact, staff recommend that the Zoning Board of Appeals APPROVE the Conditional Use Permit in Case No. ZBA-2026-C-01 with the following condition:

- 1. That the proposed structure's location and construction generally conform to the site plan and specifications in Exhibit E.*

Based on the Findings of Fact, staff recommends that the Zoning Board of Appeals APPROVE the Minor Variance in Case No. ZBA-2026-MIN-01.

Chair Welch asked if the Zoning Board of Appeals members had any questions for staff.

Ms. Chester asked what would have to be done to the garage to bring it into code. Ms. Himick replied that they will need to have running water, a sink, and plumbing. So, they will need a bathroom and some sort of kitchenette. It would need to meet Building Code for a dwelling unit.

Ms. Chester talked about her experience dealing with garage apartments. Most of the garage apartments were constructed illegally and not built to meet Building Code. She said this neighborhood was originally platted to be single-family homes. Over time, some duplexes and

townhomes were constructed, and many homes became rental properties. Recently, the neighborhood has become more owner-occupied homes again.

She said that she does not object to the proposed conversion of the garage into a dwelling unit.

Ms. Himick added that the applicant will have to go through all permitting processes required through the City's Building Safety Division. A Certificate of Occupancy will be issued once all construction is finished and passes final building inspection.

Mr. Rusch asked if there is any indication that work had started on converting the garage to an apartment or are the Conditional Use Permit and Minor Variance requests being brought to the Zoning Board of Appeals as a plan of desire. Ms. Himick replied that staff have no knowledge that any work has been started. While the applicant has begun to compile application materials for building permits, no building permits have been issued nor have any inspection or monitoring happened.

Ms. Uchtmann asked if parking would be a problem. Ms. Himick replied that the current driveway dimensions on the lot meet the requirements for four (4) parking spaces. Ms. Uchtmann stated that she noticed a fence separating the front parking area from the garage and the back area. She noted that the driveway is gravel. Does this meet standards? Ms. Himick said that the driveway was installed prior to 1991, so the applicant would not be required to pave the driveway unless they construct a new structure, and they are not constructing an entirely new structure.

With there being no other questions for staff, Chair Welch opened the hearing for public input. He invited the applicant to speak.

Philip Grier, applicant, approached the Zoning Board of Appeals to speak. Chair Welch swore in the applicant.

Mr. Grier stated that he and his fiancé have lived in the house for about two years. He said that they would like to convert the garage to an accessory dwelling unit. Their short-term purpose and intentions are to use it for extra space when family comes to visit. He mentioned that his fiancé works for the University of Illinois in the sports department and sometimes moves are necessary with transfers. They would like to have the ability to rent it out potentially down the line.

He addressed some concerns that the Zoning Board members had expressed. With regards to garage apartments generally being low quality, he will go through all the applicable and required permitting steps. He is not planning to cut any corners, because his family will be using the garage apartment. So, he intends to make the apartment nice and comfortable.

He mentioned that he intends to have a kitchenette, a small bathroom, and one bedroom. He said that he has submitted building plans and was told to go through this process first. He noted that there was one electrical upgrade that was completed prior to him submitting requests for a Conditional Use Permit and for a Minor Variance. This is something he wanted to do even if it remains a garage only.

Mr. Grier explained that he has a temporary fence up, because they adopted a dog and need a way to keep the dog inside. His plan is to eventually remove the temporary fence and construct something more aesthetically pleasing.

Lastly, he addressed the concern of the neighbors and community members of previous tenants' behavior. He said that there have been many landlords that have owned the house in the past. He noted that he is not a slumlord. If, in the future, he rents the garage apartment and moves outside of the Champaign-Urbana area, he would hire a property management company and would keep the place in exceptional condition. He wants to contribute to the growth and the upstanding character of the neighborhood.

Leslie Rodriguez approached the Zoning Board of Appeals to speak. Chair Welch swore her in.

Ms. Rodriguez said that she resides behind the subject property. She expressed concern about the history of tenants that rented the house. She does not have an issue with a garage apartment being renovated for family. However, property management companies do not follow through with responding to complaints, so she does not agree with long-term rental.

There was no additional input from the audience, so Chair Welch closed the public input portion of the hearing and opened it for Zoning Board of Appeals' discussion and/or motion(s).

Ms. Chester stated that after 2000 and going past 2010, many of the properties in this neighborhood were bought up by a few landlords who did nothing to them at all. Since then, the neighborhood has changed quite a bit, and many of the properties were sold. When she checked to see who owned each of the properties, she did not see any of those landlords as being the neighbors anymore, and there are more owner-occupied properties now. Ms. Uchtmann added that most of the homes on Curtiss Drive look well cared for.

Mr. Rusch stated that one can never predict the future or how things will be in a year or five years. A neighborhood is going to be successful if people are interested in it and take care of it and invest in it. So, the fact that the applicant has good considerations is a positive sign.

Ms. McLaughlin stated that she agrees with the staff findings. A garage apartment seems like an appropriate use for the property. The variance requested is very minimal. She is generally in favor of more density and believes the City needs renters and owners as well.

Mr. Rusch moved that the Zoning Board of Appeals approve the Conditional Use Permit in Case No. ZBA-2026-C-01 with the condition that it generally conforms with the plans submitted in the application based on the Findings of Fact. Ms. McLaughlin seconded the motion. Roll call on the motion was as follows:

Ms. Chester	-	Yes	Ms. McLaughlin	-	Yes
Mr. Rusch	-	Yes	Ms. Uchtmann	-	Yes
Mr. Welch	-	Yes	Mr. Wenneborg	-	Yes

The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Ms. McLaughlin moved that the Zoning Board of Appeals approve the Minor Variance in Case No. ZBA-2026-MIN-01 based on the findings outlined in the staff memorandum. Ms. Uchtmann seconded the motion. Roll call on the motion was as follows:

Ms. McLaughlin	-	Yes	Mr. Rusch	-	Yes
Ms. Uchtmann	-	Yes	Mr. Welch	-	Yes
Mr. Wenneborg	-	Yes	Ms. Chester	-	Yes

The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

G. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

Ms. Uchtmann inquired about updating the bylaws, particularly relating to absences. Evan Alvarez, Principal Planner, replied that Planning staff is fairly new, but this is something that staff can look into. He asked if there are any concerns in addition to absences. Ms. Uchtmann replied that repeated absences have been somewhat difficult in the past.

Mr. Rusch asked what a reasonable amount of time would be for bylaws review to allow the Zoning Board to review them and have perhaps the City's Legal staff make sure that the bylaws are up to date on what the most appropriate rules of conduct are for this body compared to peer groups and other cities the size of Urbana. How can we get there and get our bylaws into good shape for where we are right now? Mr. Alvarez stated that staff could prepare a preliminary assessment of the bylaws for the next meeting for the Zoning Board of Appeals to review and comment. Following this would be to determine what the final steps would be with the Chair's permission.

Mr. Rusch requested that staff prepare the bylaws for review and comments at the August or no later than September's regular meeting, even if it is the only item on the agenda. He suggested that a Legal staff attend the meeting as well to answer any questions the Board may have. Mr. Alvarez said that staff will make sure that a meeting happens by September and make sure that Legal staff review the bylaws. He would need to check if Legal staff would be available to attend the meeting.

H. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

I. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none.

J. STAFF REPORT

Chair Welch stated that Mark Wenneborg is one of the newest members of the Zoning Board of Appeals. He asked Mr. Wenneborg to introduce himself to the other Board members.

Mr. Wenneborg gave a brief history of his time in the Champaign-Urbana area. He stated that he works for the University of Illinois. He said that he wants to be part of the Board to contribute to local government and improve the well-being of fellow citizens in Urbana.

Mr. Alvarez stated that the other new member is Zainab Calcuttawalla. She was unable to attend this meeting but will be at future meetings.

K. STUDY SESSION

There was none.

L. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Olivia Jovine

Olivia Jovine, Secretary
Zoning Board of Appeals