

ARTICLE 29

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

§29.05: INTENT & PURPOSE

The intent and purpose of this Article is to:

- (A) Create and outline the membership, organization, and procedures of the Zoning Board of Appeals;
- (B) Provide reasonable flexibility from the strict application of the provisions of this Ordinance where a practical difficulty has been determined to exist;
- (C) Establish decision criteria and required findings for developmental-standard variances, appeals of decisions, and interpretations;
- (D) Provide a method for interpretation of this Ordinance and review of actions taken in the administration and enforcement of this Ordinance; and
- (E) Ensure that the intent and purpose of this Ordinance be observed, public safety secured, and substantial justice done.

§29.10: CREATION & MEMBERSHIP

- (A) **Establishment:** A Zoning Board of Appeals, first established by the Zoning Ordinance adopted March 27, 1973, retained by the Zoning Ordinance adopted April 15, 2003, is hereby retained in accordance with MCL 125.3601 et seq, part of Public Act 110 of 2006.
- (B) **Membership:** The Zoning Board of Appeals shall consist of five (5) regular members and two (2) alternate members, as outlined below.
 - (1) *Appointment:* All members shall be appointed by the Township Board.
 - (2) *Planning Commission:* One (1) member shall be a member of the Planning Commission.
 - (3) *Township Board:* One (1) member may be a member of the Township Board, but this member shall not serve as the chairperson or vice-chairperson.
 - (4) *Residents:* All members shall be electors residing within the Township's zoning jurisdiction.
 - (5) *Employees:* The Director of Planning and Zoning and other employees or contractors of the Township Board shall not serve on the Zoning Board of Appeals. For the purposes of this Section, members of the Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Township Board shall not be considered employees or contractors.
- (C) **Alternate Members:** Alternate members may be called, as needed, to sit as regular members of the Zoning Board of Appeals in the absence of a regular member or if a regular member has disqualified themselves for reasons of conflict of interest.
 - (1) *Not Planning Commission:* Alternate members shall not be a member of the Planning Commission.
 - (2) *Follows the Case:* An alternate member shall serve on a case until a final decision is made.

- (3) *Voting Rights:* Alternate members shall have the same voting rights as regular members when seated.
- (D) *Terms of Office:* Members shall be appointed for three (3) year terms, except Planning Commission and Township Board members, whose terms shall expire if that member is no longer seated on the Planning Commission or Township Board.
- (1) *Staggered Terms:* Terms of office shall be staggered.
- (2) *Vacancies:* Vacancies for unexpired terms shall be filled for the remainder of the term.
- (3) *Remain Seated:* Members will remain seated until a replacement has been appointed and qualified, except for Planning Commission or Township Board members no longer seated on those bodies.
- (4) *Reappointment:* Members may be reappointed.
- (E) *Conflict of Interest:* A member shall disqualify himself or herself from a vote in which the member has a conflict of interest. Failure to do so shall constitute malfeasance in office.
- (F) *Voting Twice:* A member who is also a member of the Planning Commission shall not participate in a public hearing on or vote on the same matter that the member voted on as a member of the Planning Commission. However, the member may consider and vote on other unrelated matters involving the same property.
- (G) *Removal:* A member may be removed by the Township Board for misfeasance, malfeasance, or nonfeasance in office upon written charges and after a public hearing by the Township Board.

§29.15: ORGANIZATION

- (A) *Rules of Procedure:* The Zoning Board of Appeals shall adopt rules of procedure for the conduct of its meetings and the implementation of its duties.
- (B) *Officers:* The Zoning Board of Appeals shall annually elect a chairperson, vice-chairperson, and secretary.
- (C) *Meetings & Quorum:* Zoning Board of Appeals meetings shall be held at least annually according to a schedule adopted by the Township Board and at other times as outlined in its Rules of Procedure. At least three (3) members of the Zoning Board of Appeals shall comprise a quorum. The Zoning Board of Appeals shall not conduct official business unless it has a quorum.
- (D) *Open Meetings:* All meetings shall be open to the public and conducted pursuant to the requirements of the Open Meetings Act, except for lawfully-called executive sessions.
- (E) *Oaths & Witnesses:* The chairperson may administer oaths and compel the attendance of any witness in order to ensure a fair and proper hearing.
- (F) *Records:* The minutes of all meetings shall contain the grounds for every determination made by the Zoning Board of Appeals, including all evidence and data considered, all findings of fact and conclusions drawn by the Zoning Board of Appeals for every case, along with the vote of each member, and the final ruling on each case. The Zoning Board of Appeals shall file its minutes with the Township Clerk's office.
- (G) *Legal Counsel:* An attorney for the Township shall act as legal counsel for the Zoning Board of Appeals pursuant to procedures established by the Township Board.

§29.20: JURISDICTION

The Zoning Board of Appeals shall act upon questions as they arise in the administration of this Ordinance. The Zoning Board of Appeals shall perform its duties and exercise its powers as provided in this Ordinance and MCL 125.3601 et seq (Public Act 110 of 2006).

- (A) **Variances:** The Zoning Board of Appeals shall have the power to authorize variances from the standards and provisions of this Ordinance when it determines there is a practical difficulty that prevents a property from complying with the strict letter of this Ordinance, with such conditions and safeguards as it may determine are necessary so that the intent and purpose of this Ordinance is observed, public safety secured, and substantial justice done.
- (B) **Appeals of Decisions:** The Zoning Board of Appeals shall have the authority to hear and decide appeals of decisions where it is alleged by a person aggrieved that there is an error in any order, requirement, permit, decision, action, determination, or refusal made by the Director of Planning and Zoning, any other official, or the Planning Commission in administering or enforcing the provisions of this Ordinance, unless otherwise noted.
- (C) **Interpretations:** The Zoning Board of Appeals shall have the authority to hear and decide the following interpretations:
- (1) **Unclear Language:** The meaning of the text of this Ordinance where the language is not clear or could have multiple meanings;
 - (2) **District Boundaries:** The precise location of the boundary lines between zoning districts where there is dissatisfaction with the administrative decision of the boundary location made by the Director of Planning and Zoning; and
 - (3) **Change of Legally Non-conforming Uses:** The change or substitution of legally non-conforming uses where there is dissatisfaction with the administrative decision made by the Director of Planning and Zoning.
- (D) **Other Duties:** The Zoning Board of Appeals shall have the authority to and shall perform other duties as outlined in state law, this Ordinance, and other Township Ordinances.
- (E) **Use Variance Not Permitted:** The Zoning Board of Appeals shall not have the authority to authorize any use not otherwise permitted within a zoning district.
- (F) **Zoning Map Amendment Not Permitted:** The Zoning Board of Appeals shall not have the authority to alter or change the zoning district classification of any property or to make any change in the terms or intent of this Ordinance.
- (G) **Appeal of Legislative Decision Not Permitted:** The Zoning Board of Appeals shall not have the authority to hear an appeal from a legislative decision of the Township Board.
- (H) **Appeal of Certain Actions Not Permitted:** The Zoning Board of Appeals shall not have the authority to hear an appeal from any decision or order of the Planning Commission with respect to special land uses and planned unit developments.

§29.25: PROCEDURES

- (A) **Application:** The applicant shall submit a complete and accurate application form. The application shall include all relevant materials, as determined by the Director of Planning and Zoning, which may include, but is not limited to, an accurate site plan or plot plan, based on a survey, and building elevations. Submission of an application constitutes a representation that all the information is complete and accurate.
- (B) **Fee:** A fee, as outlined in the adopted Fee Schedule, shall be submitted at the time of application.
- (C) **Scheduling:** Upon receipt of a completed application, the request shall be placed on the next available agenda for the Zoning Board of Appeals. The applicant may request it be placed on a later meeting agenda or may request a special meeting, with payment of a special meeting additional fee, as established by the Township Board.
- (D) **Public Hearing:** Petitions to the Zoning Board of Appeals shall be reviewed at a public hearing, as outlined in §24.40 of this Ordinance.
- (E) **Notice of Hearing:** The Township shall give public notice as outlined in §24.35 of this Ordinance.
- (F) **Applicant's Responsibilities:** The applicant shall post a public notice sign, clearly visible from the front lot line, on the affected property and, in the case of variance applications, mark the extent of the proposed structure and lot corners and lot lines of the affected property within one hundred (100) feet of the proposed structure at least fifteen (15) days before the Zoning Board of Appeals meeting.
- (G) **Contact with Zoning Board of Appeals Members (Ex-parte Contact):** No person shall communicate directly with any member of the Zoning Board of Appeals before a hearing with the intent to influence the member's action or decision. Written comments may be submitted to the Director of Planning and Zoning for distribution to the Zoning Board of Appeals. This shall not prohibit the Director of Planning and Zoning from promulgating staff reports and other related materials to the Zoning Board of Appeals.
- (H) **Decision:** The concurring vote of at least three (3) members of the Zoning Board of Appeals shall be necessary to reverse an order, requirement, decision, or determination of the administrative official or body, or to decide in favor of the applicant on any matter.
- (1) **Timely Decisions:** The Zoning Board of Appeals shall render its decision within forty-five (45) days of the public hearing, unless, in the opinion of the Zoning Board of Appeals, an extension of time is necessary to receive or review information necessary to making the decision.
- (2) **Decisions Final:** Decisions of the Zoning Board of Appeals shall become final upon adoption of minutes or adoption of a resolution, whichever comes first, unless the Zoning Board of Appeals finds the immediate effect of the decision is necessary for the preservation of property or personal rights and shall so certify on the record.
- (I) **Rehearing:** A rehearing shall be processed in the same manner as the original application, as outlined in §24.55 of this Ordinance.
- (J) **Reapplication:** An application for a variance, appeal of decision, interpretation, or other decision, which has been denied wholly or in part by the Zoning Board of Appeals, shall not be resubmitted for reconsideration, excepted as permitted in §24.60 of this Ordinance.

- (K) **Revocation:** A variance, appeal of decision, interpretation, or other decision may be revoked, following a duly-noticed public hearing, as outlined below.
- (1) **Variance:** A variance may be terminated by the Zoning Board of Appeals, as outlined in §24.70 of this Ordinance.
 - (2) **Other Decisions:** An appeal of decision, interpretation, or other decision may be revoked if the Zoning Board of Appeals determines the following to be true:
 - a. The appeal of decision, interpretation, or other decision was the result of fraud or misrepresentation of facts.
 - (3) **Review Limitations:** A variance, appeal of decision, interpretation, or other decision shall not be reviewed for revocation for the same cause more than once in any one (1) year period.

§29.30: VARIANCES

- (A) **Limitations:** Variances shall only be granted when the applicant demonstrates and the Zoning Board of Appeals determines that a practical difficulty would result from a failure to grant the requested variance.
- (B) **Stay of Proceedings:** Filing of a completed variance application shall stay all proceedings related to the variance unless the Director of Planning and Zoning certifies to the Zoning Board of Appeals, after a variance application has been filed, that, by reason of facts, a stay would cause imminent peril to life or property, in which case, the proceedings shall only be stayed by a restraining order granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals or a court of record.
- (C) **Decision Criteria:** The Zoning Board of Appeals shall have the power to authorize specific variances from the developmental standards of this Ordinance if it finds, following a public hearing, that all of the following are true:
- (1) **Practical Difficulty:** The strict application of the terms of this Ordinance would constitute a practical difficulty;
 - (2) **Peculiar Physical Condition:** The practical difficulty is due to some physical condition peculiar to the property involved;
 - (3) **Self-created:** The practical difficulty is not self-created;
 - (4) **Reasonable Amount:** The variance is a reasonable amount necessary to mitigate the practical difficulty;
 - (5) **Health, Safety, & Welfare:** Approval of the variance will not be injurious to the public health, safety, and welfare;
 - (6) **Adjacent Properties:** Approval of the variance will not affect the use or value of the adjacent properties or the area in a substantially adverse manner; and
 - (7) **Intent & Purpose:** Approval of the variance is consistent with the intent and purpose of this Ordinance.
- (D) **Conditions:** The Zoning Board of Appeals may place conditions and safeguards on variance approvals, as outlined in §24.45 of this Ordinance, as it determines necessary to observe the intent and purpose of this Ordinance, secure public safety, and do substantial justice. Violations of such conditions and safeguards, that are made a part of the terms under which the variance is granted, shall be deemed a violation of this Ordinance and shall automatically invalidate the variance and any zoning permit issued based on that variance.

- (E) **Variance Runs with Land:** Variances shall run with the land, unless otherwise noted. Future owners shall enjoy the benefits of and be obliged to follow and comply with the approval and any conditions placed on the approval.
- (F) **Recording:** The Township shall prepare the approved notice of variance and conditions, which shall be recorded with the Register of Deeds at the applicant's expense.
- (G) **Amendment:** The Zoning Board of Appeals may amend an approved variance or conditions of an approved variance upon request of the applicant and following a public hearing if it determines the amendment would continue to meet the decision criteria for granting the original variance. Granting of an amendment shall not extend the period of approval beyond the original period, unless an extension is granted.
- (H) **Expiration:** A variance shall be good for one (1) year from the date of final decision. A completed application for a zoning permit must be submitted within this period or the variance shall expire, unless an extension is granted.
- (I) **Extension:** The Zoning Board of Appeals may grant a single extension for a variance approval of up to one (1) year if it finds all of the following are true:
- (1) **Submission Date:** The application for extension has been submitted before expiration;
 - (2) **Good-faith Effort:** The project has been diligently pursued or conditions have prevented such action; and
 - (3) **No Changes in Conditions:** Conditions in the area have not changed, including zoning text and zoning map amendments, that affect the original reasons for approval.
- (J) **Right to Enter Property:** Filing of a variance application shall constitute permission for the Township to access the property to complete an onsite investigation for purposes of administering this Article.
- (K) **Zoning Permit Necessary:** Zoning permits shall be required, as outlined in **Article 25** of this Ordinance, and shall not be issued until the decision becomes final. If a zoning permit is issued and construction begins before the deadline for filing a judicial appeal of the Zoning Board of Appeals decision has passed, the applicant must sign an acknowledgement that all work must stop if an appeal has been filed with the court of jurisdiction and that any work completed may need to be removed at the applicant's expense.
- (L) **Site Plan Approval Necessary:** Site plan approval by the Planning Commission shall be required, as outlined in **Article 27** of this Ordinance, for those uses requiring site plan approval. **Site plan approval may be granted before or after a variance is granted, but the approved site plan must be consistent with the Zoning Board of Appeals decision.**
- (M) **Decision Final:** The decision of the Zoning Board of Appeals shall be final. However, appeals may be made from the Zoning Board of Appeals decision to an appropriate court of record, as outlined in state law.

§29.35: APPEALS OF DECISION

- (A) **Standing:** An appeal of decision may be made by any person, firm, or corporation or by any office, department, board, or bureau aggrieved by a decision of or action by the Director of Planning and Zoning, any other official, or the Planning Commission in administering or enforcing the provisions of this Ordinance, unless otherwise noted.
- (B) **Filing Deadline:** An appeal of decision application shall be filed within thirty (30) days of the decision or action being appealed, unless otherwise noted in this Ordinance.
- (C) **Stay of Proceedings:** Filing of a completed appeal of decision application shall stay all proceedings related to the decision or action being appealed unless the Director of Planning and Zoning certifies to the Zoning Board of Appeals, after an appeal of decision application has been filed, that, by reason of facts, a stay would cause imminent peril to life or property, in which case, the proceedings shall only be stayed by a restraining order granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals or a court of record.
- (D) **Authority:** The Zoning Board of Appeals may reverse, affirm, or modify, in whole or in part, the order, requirement, decision, determination, or action and may issue or direct the issuance of a zoning permit.
- (E) **Decision Criteria:** The Zoning Board of Appeals shall review the record and decision or action being appealed and determine whether the record supports the decision that was made, in light of the standards of this Ordinance. The Zoning Board of Appeals shall uphold the original decision or action unless the record clearly shows that one or more of the following is true:
- (1) **Arbitrary or Capricious:** The original decision or action was arbitrary or capricious;
 - (2) **Erroneous Fact:** The original decision or action was based on an erroneous finding of material fact;
 - (3) **Abuse of Discretion:** The original decision or action constituted an abuse of discretion; or
 - (4) **Erroneous Interpretation:** The original decision or action was based on an erroneous interpretation of this Ordinance or zoning law.
- (F) **Right to Enter Property:** Filing of an appeal of decision application shall constitute permission for the Township to access the property to complete an onsite investigation for purposes of administering this Section.
- (G) **Decision Final:** The decision of the Zoning Board of Appeals shall be final. However, appeals may be made from the Zoning Board of Appeals decision to an appropriate court of record, as outlined in state law.
- (H) **Refund:** If the decision or action being appealed is fully reversed, the applicant shall be refunded the application fees.

§29.40: INTERPRETATIONS

- (A) **Zoning District Boundaries:** The Zoning Board of Appeals shall determine the precise location of the boundary lines between zoning districts when there is dissatisfaction with a decision made by the Director of Planning and Zoning. When interpreting zoning district boundaries, the Zoning Board of Appeals shall apply the standards outlined in §3.15 of this Ordinance.
- (B) **Ordinance Text:** The Zoning Board of Appeals shall interpret the provisions of this Ordinance when it is alleged that certain provisions are not clear or that they could have more than one meaning. In deciding upon such request, the Zoning Board of Appeals shall ensure that its interpretation is consistent with the intent and purpose of this Ordinance, the Article in which the language in question is contained, and all other relevant provisions in this Ordinance.
- (C) **Change or Substitution of Legally Non-conforming Use:** The Zoning Board of Appeals shall review changes or substitutions of non-conforming uses when there is dissatisfaction with a decision made by the Director of Planning and Zoning. When reviewing a change or substitution of a non-conforming use, the Zoning Board of Appeals shall apply the standards outlined in §32.20(F) of this Ordinance.
- (D) **Decision Final:** The decision of the Zoning Board of Appeals shall be final. However, appeals may be made from the Zoning Board of Appeals decision to an appropriate court of record, as outlined in state law.
- (E) **Refund:** If the interpretation is fully reversed, the applicant shall be refunded the application fees.

End of Article 29.

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