CITY OF Bloomington ILLINOIS

MEETING MINUTES
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS - REGULAR SESSION
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2025, 4:00 PM

The Zoning Board of Appeals convened in regular session at 4:01 PM, January 15, 2025. Chair Straza called the meeting to order.

Roll Call

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Terry Ballantini	Vice Board Chair	Present
Victoria Harris	Board Member	Present
John Poling	Board Member	Present
Matt Steinkoenig	Board Member	Absent
Michael Straza	Board Chair	Present
Nikki Williams	Board Member	Present
Zachary Zwaga	Board Member	Present

City Staff present included Jon Branham, City Planner; Alissa Pemberton, City Planner; John Myers, Assistant City Planner, Kelly Pfeifer, Director of Development Services, and Laura Keeran, Stevenson Fellow

Public Comment
No public comment was provided.

Consent Agenda
Items listed on the Consent Agenda are approved with one motion; Items pulled from the Consent Agenda for discussion are listed and voted on separately.

Board Member Poling made a motion, seconded by Board Member Harris, to approve the consent agenda as presented.
Roll call.
AYES: Board Chair Straza; Vice Board Chair Ballantini; Board Member Harris, Board Member Poling, Board Member Zwaga, Board Member Williams
Motion passed.

<u>Item 4.A. Review and approval of the minutes of the December 18, 2024, regular meeting of the Bloomington Zoning Board of Appeals.</u>

Regular Agenda

The following item was presented:

Item 5.A. V-01-25 - Public hearing, review, and action on a request submitted by Joshua Jett, for approval of a Variance to allow a sidewalk/driveway less than three (3) feet from the side lot line for the property located at 2 Cedar Court. PIN: 21-17-102-015.

Mr. Branham presented the staff report with a recommendation for approval. He reviewed the surrounding zoning and land uses. He described the nature of the variance request. He reviewed the potential conflict with the Homeowner's Association (HOA) and the staff recommendation. He also reviewed the standards as outlined in the staff report.

Board Chair Straza opened the public hearing.

Joshua Jett (Applicant) provided further background on the project and explained the reason for the request. He stated the project had been completed. He stated the HOA had not met recently but he would address the item with them. He did not believe it would be an issue. He stated the adjacent neighbor most affected by the project supported the request. He stated stormwater had been redirected appropriately.

Vice Board Chair Ballantini inquired if the HOA did not approve, would he be willing to modify the layout. Mr. Jett confirmed.

Mr. Branham stated the motion could be altered to meet the Applicant's original request if the Board agreed and if stormwater was appropriately addressed.

Board Chair Straza closed the public hearing.

Board Member Harris made a motion, seconded by Vice Board Chair Ballantini, to establish findings of fact that the standards for approval of a Variance are met, that carrying out the strict letter of the Code does create a practical difficulty or particular hardship for the petitioner, and to approve the Variance to allow the sidewalk/driveway to extend to the side property line with a zero-foot setback, subject to meeting drainage requirements.
Roll call.
AYES: Board Chair Straza; Vice Board Chair Ballantini; Board Member Harris, Board Member Poling, Board Member Steinkoenig, Board Member Williams
Motion passed.

The following item was presented:

Item 5.B. SP-01-25 - Public hearing, review, and action on a request submitted by Christian Kazanowski, for a Special use Permit for Multi-Family Dwellings in the R-2 (Mixed Residence) District, for the property located at 707 E. Empire Street. PIN: 21-04-227-004.

Mr. Branham presented the staff report with a recommendation for approval. He reviewed the surrounding zoning and land uses. He described the nature of the request. He reviewed aspects of the property history. He noted the Applicant had purchased the property as a three-unit building almost three years ago and was seeking to come into compliance with the Special Use Permit. He also reviewed the standards as outlined in the staff report.

Board Chair Straza opened the public hearing.

Ashlee Minder (402 Kingsly Street, Normal, IL, representing Applicant) provided further background on the request and explained the reason for the request.

Joe Strano (2 White Place) provided a history of the property and highlighted the multiple uses over the years. He identified the property was formerly denied a Special Use Permit for a three-unit building. He also identified parking issues in the immediate area and past code enforcement issues.

Lane Norton (709 E. Empire Street) stated there was not enough parking in the area and there had been safety issues with some drivers. He referenced the decision to deny the three-unit operation several years ago but noted the current owner had operated it as a three-unit for past few years.

Marty Seigel (615 E. Chestnut Street) stated she disagreed with the staff recommendations. She noted there could be property value and assessment impact if allowed to continue to operate as a three-unit. She stated a duplex at the location would be better for the City. She expressed concern regarding an out-of-state owner and the impacts higher density could have on the neighborhood. She also provided a written statement outlining her opposition to the application.

Greg Zavitz (304 N. Hershey Road, representing Applicant) stated he disagreed with the previous public comments. He stated he was not aware of any issues at the property. He noted there was a detached garage that could be utilized for parking. He stated property values would not be impacted. He recommended approval of the item.

Tricia Desmond (709 E. Empire Street) stated she agreed there were parking and driving issues at the property and they had approached the residents directly in the past.

Christian Kazanowski (615 Fulton Street E, Grand Rapids, MI, Applicant, participating virtually) stated he purchased the property three years ago and it was configured as a three-unit. He stated the property is not structured as a duplex. He noted a significant amount of investment had been made to update the property. He said any reduction in the occupancy would significantly decrease the value. He stated he had never been contacted regarding any parking issues. He added there was sufficient parking at the property. He stated the property had operated as a three-unit for a significant time prior to his involvement.

Vice Board Chair Ballantini inquired about Mr. Kazanowski's current residence and the status of the detached garage at the property. Mr. Kazanowski stated he resided in Michigan. He stated the detached garage was not currently available for residents and was primarily utilized for storage. He added he could allow tenants to use the garage if needed.

Board Member Harris asked for further clarification regarding parking at the property. Mr. Kazanowski stated this was the first time he had heard of any parking issues. He stated if it had brought to his attention, he would have addressed it.

Board Chair Straza closed the public hearing.

Ms. Pemberton provided additional context regarding the property history. She stated the City had required a former owner to cease renting the third unit around 2007 and effectively operate as a duplex. She noted the property had operated as a three-unit apartment prior to 2007 for an extended time.

Vice Board Chair Ballantini inquired about staff's view of parking at the property. Ms. Pemberton stated it currently does not meet standards, and it would be helpful to have parking spaces identified on the site plan. Mr. Branham noted there should be enough space to create additional parking spaces.

Chair Straza noted the Board could create a condition to confirm the parking plan.

Vice Chair Ballantini stated he would like to see the plan prior to any recommendation. He stated he appreciated the applicant attempting to come into compliance.

Mr. Branham stated they could make a motion to continue the meeting to a date certain and include an updated parking plan.

Board Member Poling made a motion, seconded by Board Member Harris, to continue the item to the next regularly scheduled meeting date and to include a parking plan.
Roll call.
AYES: Board Chair Straza; Vice Board Chair Ballantini; Board Member Harris, Board Member Poling, Board Member Zwaga, Board Member Williams
Motion passed.

The following item was presented:
Item 5.C. SP-02-25 - Public hearing, review, and action on a request submitted by Holladay Property Service Midwest, Inc., (owner Group of Five Investments II, LLC), for a Special use Permit for Multi-Family Dwellings in the C-1 (Office) District, for the property located at 1312 E. Empire Street. PIN: 14-34-480-080.

Mr. Branham presented the staff report with a recommendation for approval. He reviewed the surrounding zoning and land uses. He described the nature of the request, outlining that Multi-Family Dwellings require a Special Use Permit in the C-1 (Office) District. He reviewed the C-1 District purpose statement. He noted details of the proposed development, including 180 total units, site access, and other amenities. He also reviewed the standards as outlined in the staff report.

Vice Chair Ballantini inquired if all Special Use Permit standards had been met as determined by staff. Mr. Branham confirmed.

Board Chair Straza opened the public hearing.

Mike Doyle (Applicant) provided further background on the project and explained additional details regarding the history of the site and the proposed development. He highlighted similar development projects his company had completed in recent years. He stated they were excited for this opportunity in Bloomington.

Chris Walsh (Applicant's Architect) provided additional background and noted details of the proposed elevations and building materials.

Vice Chair Ballantini inquired if there was a set price point for the units. Mr. Doyle responded that they would expect units to be priced around $1,200/per month but it would ultimately depend on market conditions when the project was completed.

Vice Chair Ballantini inquired if the project would be a full circle project. Mr. Doyle stated they have a sister construction company, but they would be involved throughout the project and expect to manage the property following project completion.

Chair Straza inquired about the building materials. Mr. Walsh explained typical materials and that they would be locally sourced.

Vice Chair Ballantini inquired about the expecting timing of the project. Mr. Doyle stated the expectation would be to break ground in September of this year and that it would be a 24-month project.

Vice Chair Ballantini noted some recent past projects have been unfulfilled and inquired if the Applicant expected to see the project come to fruition. Mr. Doyle stated his belief that a combination of factors, including experience and existing relationships, would allow them to meet expectations.

Neil Finlen (Applicant's Engineer) provided additional background. He thanked staff and stated his support for the development team. He noted this would be a significant infill project for the community. He highlighted some site details including abundance of parking and landscaping.

Chair Straza inquired about site access and existing infrastructure. Mr. Finlen stated there were no issues expected with site access and needed infrastructure was in place.

Robbie Osenga (216 E. Grove Street), stated as a local real estate professional he supported the project and advocated for approval. He noted the credentials of the development team.

Board Chair Straza closed the public hearing.

Vice Board Chair Ballantini made a motion, seconded by Board Member Zwaga, to establish findings of fact that the standards for approval of a Special Use Permit are met, and to recommend approval of the request for a Special Use Permit for Multi-Family Dwellings in the C-1 (Office) District, for the property located at 1312 E. Empire Street, as submitted.

Roll call.
AYES: Board Chair Straza; Vice Board Chair Ballantini; Board Member Harris, Board Member Poling, Board Member Zwaga, Board Member Williams
Motion passed.

New Business

There was no new business reported.

Adjournment

Board Member Harris made a motion, seconded by Board Member Williams, to adjourn the meeting.
AYES: Board Chair Straza; Vice Board Chair Ballantini; Board Member Harris, Board Member Poling, Board Member Zwaga, Board Member Williams
Motion passed.

The Meeting Adjourned at 5:15PM

CITY OF BLOOMINGTON

Michael Straza

Michael Straza, Board Chair

Jon Branham

Jon Branham, Staff Liaison