



Chatham County Zoning Board of Appeals

Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room
January 24, 2023 - 9:00 A.M.
Meeting Minutes

JANUARY 24, 2023 CHATHAM COUNTY ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Members Present: James Coursey, Chairman
Robert Vinyard, Vice Chairman
Kewaan Drayton
Ashley Field
Benjamin Polote
Coren Ross
Meredith Stone

Others Present: Pamela Everette, Esq., Assistant Executive Director
Marcus Lotson, Development Services Director
Julie Yawn, Systems Analyst
Mary E Mitchell, Administrative Assistant

Chatham County Staff Present: Jefferson Kirkland, Environmental Program Manager

I. Call to Order and Welcome

[1. Call to Order and Welcome](#)

Mr. Coursey called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. He explained that this is a quasi-judicial proceeding. All those wishing to give testimony during these proceedings will please sign in. Witnesses will be sworn-in prior to giving testimony. All proceedings of the Chatham County Zoning Board of Appeals are recorded. Decisions of the Chatham County Zoning Board of Appeals are final. Challenges to the decisions of the Chatham County Zoning Board of Appeals must be filed through the Superior Court of Chatham County.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

[2. Pledge of Allegiance](#)

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited in unison.

III. Notices, Proclamations and Acknowledgements

IV. Petitions Ready for Hearing

V. Approval of Minutes

[3. Approval of the Meeting Minutes of December 20, 2022](#)

📎 [December 20, 2022 Meeting Minutes.pdf](#)

Mr. Coursey thanked the staff for transcribing the minutes. He knew it was a burden, but the minutes were very helpful.

Motion

The Chatham County Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby approve the Meeting Minutes of December 20, 2022.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Robert Vinyard

Second: Kewaan Drayton

James Coursey	- Aye
Coren Ross	- Aye
Meredith Stone	- Aye
Robert Vinyard	- Aye
Benjamin Polote, Jr.	- Aye
Kewaan Drayton	- Aye
Ashley Field	- Aye

VI. Item(s) Requested to be Removed from the Final Agenda

[4. 164 Laurel Green Court | Side yard setback variance request | ZBA-1222 - 000340](#)

Mr. Lotson reported that the petitioner chose to withdraw this item. They will revise their plan in lieu of requesting a variance.

Motion

The Chatham County Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby approve to remove this item from the Final Agenda as requested.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Robert Vinyard

Second: Coren Ross

James Coursey	- Aye
Coren Ross	- Aye
Meredith Stone	- Aye
Robert Vinyard	- Aye
Benjamin Polote, Jr.	- Aye
Kewaan Drayton	- Aye
Ashley Field	- Aye

VII. Consent Agenda

VIII. Old Business

IX. Regular Agenda

[5. 225 Stonebridge Drive | Rear yard setback variance request | ZBA -1222-000340](#)

[📎 Staff Report .pdf](#)

📎 [225 Stonebridge Permit Set 102622.pdf](#)

📎 [Photos.pdf](#)

Mr. Marcus Lotson gave the staff report. The petitioner is requesting a variance to allow a 15-foot reduction of the required 25-foot rear yard setback. This request is pursuant to an addition on the rear of an existing single-family residence.

Mr. Lotson explained that:

1. The subject property is approximately one-third of an acre in size and is located at the intersection of Stonebridge Drive and Landward Way in the Battery Point Subdivision. The property is within the PUD-M-B zoning district. The applicant is proposing to construct an addition onto a new single-family residence.
2. The subject property is an irregularly shaped lot in Phase 4 of the Battery Point Subdivision. The phase was developed primarily in the mid-1990s. A unique feature of the properties in this phase is that the property lines extend into an adjacent retention pond. Typically, a stormwater feature such as this would be platted as common area, owned, and maintained by the developer of the Homeowners Association.
3. The proposed renovation includes an office and above grade deck to be constructed on the rear of a single-family residence, replacing an existing above grade porch. The office is proposed to be 334 square feet in size and the deck (with garage below) is proposed to be 389 square feet in size. Per the Chatham County property record, the residence is 1,597 square feet in size and the existing porch is 10 feet by 10 feet.
4. The side property lines begin to converge to a point past the rear facade of the home narrowing the rear yard setback. The closest residence to the subject property is to the north and has approximately 45 feet of separation from the subject home as it exists today. That distance would be reduced by approximately 50% based on the proposed addition.

Mr. Lotson reported that based on the findings in the staff report and the variance criteria, staff recommends denial of the requested rear yard setback variance for the subject property at 225 Stonebridge Drive. He entertained comments from the Board.

Ms. Ross asked if staff received any calls or comments regarding this request.

Mr. Lotson explained that staff did not receive any calls or comments from neighbors, but the applicant provided on yesterday a list [he believes the petitioner had the list with him today] showing about five neighbors are in support of the application.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Mr. Jeff and Mrs. Amanda Barnes came forward. They were sworn-in by Mr. Coursey. Ms. Barnes stated that they have nine signatures from their surrounding neighbors that are in favor of their request. Since the sign was put in their yard, they have had multiple people stop by asking what the signs were for. After they explained what the signs were for, everyone is in favor of what they are trying to do. The neighbors have told other neighbors what their intention is for. The neighbors have said that this is awesome, and they are hopeful that their request is approved.

Mrs. Barnes stated that they have been open and forthcoming with anyone who has stopped and asked questions. They have really gotten awesome feedback from the neighborhood.

Mr. Barnes said he believed that his wife has summed up their request.

Mr. Lotson passed the surrounding neighbors' list to the Board.

Mr. Coursey asked the Board if they had questions for the petitioners.

Ms. Ross stated that the surrounding neighbors list had not gotten to her yet, but she was wondering if the list included their rear neighbors.

Mr. Barnes, in an answer to Ms. Ross's question, said yes. He believed the rear neighbor's address is 223 Stonebridge Drive and he is on the list. The list contains neighbors on the front, back, left, and across the street. Anybody that has visual of the addition, has signed the list.

Ms. Ross asked the Barnes that when they had conversations with their neighbors, did they show them the plans?

Mr. Barnes answered that the ones who asked to see the plans, they showed them the plans and explained exactly what they wanted to do.

Mrs. Barnes explained that the neighbors who stopped by, they talked with them.

Ms. Ross said the deck will be quite tall.

Mr. Barnes said it will be the same height as the house. The roof will come straight out and be even.

Ms. Ross asked if it would be ten feet from the neighbor.

Mr. Barnes answered it would be ten feet off of their property line.

Mrs. Barnes said they have had a conversation with the neighbor that lives directly behind them. The neighbors have not had any issues with this.

Ms. Stone said she was just curious. She asked what influenced the sizing of what they have planned for. She believes that staff's concern is that they are asking for a bit more variance than what is typically allowed. Did you consider making it a bit smaller and recessed?

Mr. Barnes stated that a laundry room will be in there as well. This is shown on the drawings, too. So, they allotted for that. He said they have three children, and their two boys shared a room. The middle son decided that he did not want to share a room any longer, so they took their bonus room and turned it into a bedroom for him with a closet. They built a new wall. Mrs. Barnes works from home; and he works from home half of the day. They were trying to decide where they would put their computer. Where will they put his wife's desk as she has to be on camera during her entire workday? Their laundry room is in a closet.

Mrs. Barnes said their home was built in the 1990s and the laundry rooms are much smaller. She said being a family of five, they need the XL washer and dryer that do not fit in the footprint of a 1996 home. She explained that while they were building onto their home, this is their one chance, and they are putting all their eggs into one basket to do one build on. They plan to live in this residence until they both pass off the face of the earth. However, they do need to accommodate a laundry room that will house the washer and dryer for five people.

Mr. Coursey asked, "have you considered more living space rather than deck space?"

Mrs. Barnes answered that when they met with the architect to draw their plans, this is how it came out. They currently have a large deck.

Ms. Ross said she was wondering also why the deck is so large. It is really a big deck!

Mrs. Barnes stated that they currently have a big deck, and they spend a lot of time out there as a family year-round. They have the pond view where they feed the turtles and watch the fish. As they spend a lot of time on their deck, they wanted a bigger deck to replace the big deck that they would be demolishing.

Ms. Ross said it appears that the new deck is larger than the old deck.

Mr. Barnes explained that it should not be larger than the old deck because the deck they have now takes up the entire space where the addition is.

Mr. Coursey asked that the photos be shown again.

Mr. Lotson showed an aerial view of the existing deck. He said it is down to grade.

Ms. Field asked how far the setback is.

Mr. Coursey asked if this is the new stairs or the existing stairs.

Mr. Lotson stated that he does not believe that the measurements were provided for the existing stairs.

Ms. Ross said things might be okay with the Barnes' present neighbors but may not be with the next person who just might move here. It looks like the Barnes' neighbors have a tiny window; therefore, they will not affect their enjoyment so much, but she was just trying to protect them going into the future. Ms. Ross said she believes the Barnes would get more use out of a square deck rather than a rectangular deck if they look at the space.

Ms. Barnes stated that if it is five feet off the decking, she believes they would be willing to cut that piece off.

Mr. Barnes concurred with Ms. Barnes.

Ms. Field asked if the footprint of the home office could be swank from the footprint of the home office a little. But she sees what the Barnes are trying to accomplish.

Ms. Ross said if they push the deck back even with the home office and then with the deck somewhat protruding out, they will not lose much of the deck square footage. She believes it would set better with the neighborhood. In looking at the aerial map, a lot of the houses are close.

Mr. Vinyard asked Mr. Lotson that if the Barnes added the space on the right-hand side, and take it off the rear, how close can they be to their lot line on this side? Do they have room over there?

Mr. Lotson answered that he believes there is some room. He would have to verify this, but there may be a 5-foot side yard setback. But it would have to be determined as to how much room they have to work with in terms of a redesign. Staff did not consider this when they were reviewing this petition. However, this option does exist.

Ms. Ross believes that five feet is here.

Mr. Lotson stated that as they have this discussion, he believes the Board needs to get to either a decision on today's request or allow the petitioners the opportunity to consider a redesign at a future meeting.

Ms. Ross said that she could not speak for the Board, but this would be her recommendation; continue this petition.

Mr. Coursey wanted to hear from the petitioners regarding continuing the petition to a later date.

Mrs. Barnes said she was willing to cut off the back of the deck and not expand it any further and keep it as it is. She said cut off the back and keep it flush with the building if they do not have to come back. They are already eight months into this between contractors and being denied a permit. They will eat the square foot and deal with it if they can just get it approved. She wants to get it where she can do her job effectively where her income does not affect her family.

Mr. Coursey asked Mr. Lotson, "where does this leave the Board?"

Mr. Lotson pulled up the aerial view and pointed out the two areas of encroachment. Therefore, they are

still talking about the same variance amount in terms of what the petitioners are requesting today because of this angled rear property setback line. The Board could move to allow a variance with the condition related to the depth of the deck. This is within the Board's purview.

Mr. Coursey stated, therefore, they would leave the uppermost corner of the living area space. As he understood, there is no suggestion that this be moved. So, the suggestion is that they move the deck back even with the living area. Are there any other questions? He asked if anyone was online.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

BOARD DISCUSSION

The Board was in agreement to approve the encroachment of the home office subject to encroachment of the deck be used so that the northern quarter of the deck is parallel with the northern border of the home office addition.

Motion

The Chatham County Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby approve the request for rear yard setback variance at 225 Stonebridge Drive with the following condition: The proposed deck shall be redesigned so that the northern edge is parallel with the northern edge of the proposed enclosed addition.

This decision is limited to the development plan submitted and reviewed by the Chatham County Zoning Board of Appeals.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Coren Ross

Second: Ashley Field

James Coursey	- Aye
Coren Ross	- Aye
Meredith Stone	- Aye
Robert Vinyard	- Aye
Benjamin Polote, Jr.	- Aye
Kewaan Drayton	- Aye
Ashley Field	- Aye

X. Other Business

6. 2023 Nomination of Officers

Mr. Lotson explained that Mr. Coursey could open the floor for nominations; or someone could make a motion for a slate of officers for chair and vice chair.

Mr. Coursey opened the floor for discussion of nominations.

Ms. Ross offered as a new slate, the current slate. Mr. Coursey, Chair and Mr. Vinyard, Vice Chair.

Motion

The Chatham County Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby approve the following slate of Officers for 2023:

Mr. James Coursey, Jr., Chair and Mr. Robert Vinyard, Vice Chair.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Coren Ross

Second: Benjamin Polote, Jr.

James Coursey	- Aye
Coren Ross	- Aye
Meredith Stone	- Aye
Robert Vinyard	- Aye
Benjamin Polote, Jr.	- Aye
Kewaan Drayton	- Aye
Ashley Field	- Aye

XI. Adjournment

[7. Adjourned](#)

There being no further business to come before the Board, Mr. Coursey adjourned the meeting at approximately 10:45 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcus Lotson
Development Services Director

ML:mem

The Chatham County - Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission provides meeting summary minutes which are adopted by the respective Board. Verbatim transcripts of minutes are the responsibility of the interested party.