



City of Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals

Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room
November 30, 2023 - 10:00 A. M.
Meeting Minutes

NOVEMBER 30, 2023 SAVANNAH ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Members Present: Stephen Merriman, Jr., Chair
Karen Jarrett
Betty Jones
Stephen Plunk
Armand Turner

Member Absent: Michael Condon, Vice Chair

MPC Staff Present: Edward Morrow, Development Services Director
Anna McQuarrie, Special Projects and Transportation Planner
Nykobe Richardson, Development Services Tech
Mary E. Mitchell, Administrative Assistant
Hind Patel, IT Helpdesk & Support

Virtual Attendance: Pamela Everett, Esq., Assistant Executive Director, Compliance & Operations

City of Savannah: John Anagnost, Zoning Plans Examiner

I. Call to Order and Welcome

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

NOTE: The Chair, Mr. Stephen Merriman, Jr., does not vote unless there is a tie.

Mr. Merriman called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. He explained that this is a quasi-judicial proceeding. All those wishing to give testimony during these proceedings were asked to please sign in. They were sworn in by Mr. Merriman. He explained that all proceedings of the Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals are recorded. Decisions of the Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals are final. Challenges to the decisions of the Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals must be filed through the Superior Court of Chatham County.

II. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

[2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance](#)

Mr. Merriman gave the Invocation.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited in unison.

III. Notices, Proclamations and Acknowledgements

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

[3. Parking Variance | 1401 Paulsen St | 23-005664-ZBA](#)

Motion

The Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby continue this petition to the next meeting of December 14, 2023; to permit Staff to collect additional information.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Betty Jones

Second: Armand Turner

Stephen Merriman, Jr. - Abstain

Karen Jarrett - Aye

Michael Condon - Not Present

Larry Evans - Not Present

Stephen Plunk - Aye

Betty Jones - Aye

Armand Turner - Aye

V. Item(s) Requested to be Withdrawn

VI. Approval of Minutes

[4. Approve October 26, 2023 Meeting Minutes](#)

[📎 October 26, 2023 Meeting Minutes.pdf](#)

Motion

The Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby approve the Meeting Minutes of October 26, 2023.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Stephen Plunk

Second: Betty Jones

Stephen Merriman, Jr. - Abstain

Karen Jarrett - Abstain

Michael Condon - Not Present

Larry Evans - Not Present

Stephen Plunk - Aye

Betty Jones - Aye

Armand Turner - Aye

VII. Approval of Final Agenda

[5. Approve the Final Agenda](#)

Motion

The Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby approve the Final Agenda.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Armand Turner

Second: Betty Jones

Stephen Merriman, Jr. - Abstain

Karen Jarrett - Aye

Michael Condon - Not Present

Larry Evans - Not Present

Stephen Plunk - Aye

Betty Jones - Aye

Armand Turner - Aye

VIII. Consent Agenda

[6. 2024 Meeting Calendar](#)

[📎 City Zoning Board of Appeals 2024 Meeting Calendar.pdf](#)

Motion

The Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby approve their 2024 Meeting Calendar.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Betty Jones

Second: Armand Turner

Stephen Merriman, Jr. - Abstain

Karen Jarrett - Aye

Michael Condon - Not Present

Larry Evans - Not Present

Stephen Plunk - Aye

Betty Jones - Aye

Armand Turner - Aye

IX. Old Business

X. Regular Agenda

[7. 202 East Gwinnett Street | Variance to the 700 square feet maximum size for an ADU | 23-005673-ZBA](#)

[📎 APPLICATION1.pdf](#)

[📎 HDBR PACKAGE REDUCED1.pdf](#)

[📎 STAFF REPORT.pdf](#)

Mr. Edward Morrow presented the Staff report. The Petitioner is requesting a variance to the Accessory Dwelling Unit Ordinance at 202 East Gwinnett Street. It is more than the 700-foot square foot maximum or 40% of the building footprint. The subject property is within the Landmark History District and the principal dwelling is a contributing structure. However, the structure that is proposed to be built is not contributing. It

was constructed sometime in the 1990s or 2000. Mr. Morrow explained that the issue before the Board today is a request to permit only the accessory dwelling unit to exceed the 700 square foot that is allowed by the Ordinance.

Mr. Morrow explained that the Historic District Board of Review has reviewed this request, issued a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA), and sent it to this Board with a recommendation for approval. He said that the MPC Staff recommends approval of the request as well. He entertained questions from the Board.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Mr. Christian Sottile, Petitioner, came forward and stated that he had nothing to add. He appreciated the Staff’s review and the review of the Historic District Board of Review. He thanked both Boards for their recommendation of approvals. Mr. Sottile thanked the Board for reviewing their request today.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

BOARD DISCUSSION

None.

Mr. Merriman entertained a motion.

Motion

The Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby approve the requested variance to the maximum 700 square feet size requirement for an ADU to construct a second-floor addition to the existing garage into an accessory dwelling unit at 202 East Gwinnett Street.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Karen Jarrett

Second: Betty Jones

Stephen Merriman, Jr.	- Abstain
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Michael Condon	- Not Present
Larry Evans	- Not Present
Stephen Plunk	- Aye
Betty Jones	- Aye
Armand Turner	- Aye

[8. 100 General McIntosh Boulevard | Variance to the 400 feet separation requirement for two monument signs | 23-005545-ZBA](#)

[Application.pdf](#)

[STAFF REPORT.pdf](#)

Mr. Edward Morrow presented the Staff report. The Petitioner is requesting a variance to the 400-foot separation requirement between monument signs at 100 General McIntosh Boulevard. The site is the Savannah Riverfront Hotel. It is a currently developed site within Savannah’s Downtown Waterfront Zoning District. Section 9 requires that monument signs be separated by 400 feet at a minimum. The Petitioner has one existing sign, and they are requesting to locate a second ground sign that is less than 400 feet from the existing sign. The Petitioner is requesting a little more than 100 feet.

Mr. Morrow displayed on the screen the location of the first ground sign. The Petitioner is requesting to place the second sign at the entrance, which would not exceed what is permitted. They want to have three ground signs here. This requested sign will be the second sign.

Mr. Morrow reported that Staff recommends approval of the requested sign. He entertained questions from the Board.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Mr. Mike Bailey came forward and stated that he did not have anything to add. Mr. Bailey said the Staff has already made their report. He entertained questions from the Board.

Ms. Jarrett asked Mr. Bailey if there was a reason why they cannot move the existing sign to the new location?

Mr. Bailey explained that the existing sign comes from the east to west. The new sign will come from the west to the east. A sign is on the building now but is blocked by the parking garage that goes up to the west of them.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Jim Goodlett asked if the sign is permanent or is it an LED sign that changes the information.

Mr. Bailey answered that it is a permanent sign.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Mr. Merriman entertained a motion.

Motion

The Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby approve the requested variance to the minimum 400-foot separation allowed to construct a second ground sign from the first ground sign at 100 General McIntosh Boulevard.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Betty Jones

Second: Stephen Plunk

Stephen Merriman, Jr.	- Abstain
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Michael Condon	- Not Present
Larry Evans	- Not Present
Stephen Plunk	- Aye
Betty Jones	- Aye
Armand Turner	- Aye

[9. Lot Width Variances | 3001 Uruguay St | 23-004910-ZBA](#)

[2023-11-20-Staff Report - 0 E 60th St aka 3001 Uruguay St - Copy.pdf](#)

[AERIAL_SITE MAP 23-004910-ZBA.pdf](#)

[Recombination Plat.pdf](#)

Ms. Anna McQuarrie gave the Staff report. The Petitioner is requesting a variance to the minimum lot width of 60 feet in an RSF-6 zoning district to 55 feet. They are proposing to divide the property into two 8,800 square foot lots. There is no access from 0 East 60th Street requiring the lots face east/west with access to Uruguay Street when all the surrounding parcels face north/south. Ms. McQuarrie side the parcel displayed in yellow on the screen would be east/west. The background findings revealed that the parcel was previously divided into four lots. The Petitioner purchased the lots after they were combined. An accessory structure/shed exists in the middle of the lot. This is where the lots will be split. Therefore, the structure/shed would have to be moved. The RSF-6 zoning district has a lot area of 6,000 square feet and the lots will meet this size. However, it will not meet the lot width of 60 feet because it would need to be 55 feet in width. Ms. McQuarrie said East 60th Street and East 59th Lane right-of-way are unopened. Therefore, no street access exists. The only access is from Uruguay Street.

Ms. McQuarrie said the Petitioner attended the November 16, 2023, Holly Heights Neighborhood Association meeting to discuss the variance and answer questions. Ms. McQuarrie said she also attended the meeting. The members of the neighborhood stated their concerns about more development coming into their area due to ongoing flooding issues. The property is in an AE Flood Zone (low-lying area with a high risk). There are several FEMA properties in the neighborhood, with one along East 60th Street. She said she explained to the neighborhood members that the development could still be done on this lot even if the variance was not approved.

Ms. McQuarrie showed the Board a photo displaying the single lots in purple. The flooding is of concern. Staff received a letter of support for this application. Staff did not receive any letters of opposition other than what was taken up at the meeting. The proposal is inconsistent with the development pattern. As they know this will be east/west instead of north/south orientation. There is no road access along East 60th Street to the parcels, preventing the north/south configuration now. This request is necessitated by the Petitioner's chosen designs. The lots will be used in their existing shape. She said that while this request may not be purely financial in nature, there are financial benefits associated with the requested variance. The literal interpretation would not deprive the Petitioner of rights and would not result in unnecessary and undue hardship.

Ms. McQuarrie said as the Board can see there are multiple lots here that do not have street access. If this variance is granted, it would set a precedent for allowing other parcels in the same aera and zoning district to be divided east/west instead of following the development pattern of north/south.

Ms. McQuarrie reported that the MPC Staff recommends denial of the requested variance to minimum lot width. Should the Board be inclined to approve the variance request, Staff recommends the following condition.

1. Evidence of the removal of the existing accessory structure on the parcel be provided prior to issuance of any development permits.

Ms. McQuarrie entertained questions from the Board.

Ms. Jarrett said what they have here is a dedicated right-of-way without a road. There are a lot of parcels, and it looks like they could be developed residentially if there was a road here. The fact that there is a FEMA issue here as well as a concern about the ongoing flooding issues. If they put in a little drive that would be within the fire department's access requirements, then they could split the other way. Is this correct?

Ms. McQuarrie said she would defer Ms. Jarrett's question to Mr. Morrow.

Mt. John Anagnost, Zoning Plans Examiner of the City of the City of Savannah, answered Ms. Jarrett's question, stating that the general policy of the City's Transportation Department is that a developer needs to construct the full street to the City's standards; this would require curb and gutter and at least 20 feet of pavement width.

Ms. Jarrett asked; if the Petitioner would have to build a full street to build two houses.

Mr. Anagnost explained that if the street is built along the east/west frontage, they could technically have four lots if they were returned to the previous configuration. However, essentially this is the typical scenario with lots such as this where you have a platted street that is unbuilt. The burden is on the

property owner and developer to construct the City Street.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Mr. Bob Isaacson, property owner, confirmed that they met with the Holly Heights Neighborhood Association. They did not have any opposition but knew there were some concerns about the flooding. It was designated as a wetland. So, they hired a resource land company to do a wetland delineation. They found that there were no wetlands on the property. They hired Ted Bruer to do a topographic survey. The height of the property is much higher than the properties here. Therefore, he does not believe they have a flooding concern. As the Staff mentioned, the property was previously four lots. But what they want to do is make the property two lots. Once it is subdivided, they will still have 8,800 square feet. Consequently, there is plenty of room. The requirement is 6,000 square feet. Therefore, he believes they will be 45% higher than what the lot size is required to be. If the Board looks at all the lots to the east, he believes that 14 lots in the block next door average size is 6,200 square feet. If it is the City's desire to promote infill development, this satisfies that and takes care of the overgrowth that is here. They have the floodplain report, and the result was good. They have no problem removing the shed. This is something that they would do anyway. There is no access to the street because it is not built. On 60th Street, the driveway would be from Uruguay Street.

Mr. Isaacson said he really was not prepared to address the direction of the houses. He did not believe that the direction of the houses was in front of the Board today. He believed before the Board was only reviewing the lot width variance request. However, he does not believe there is any way to develop those lots unless you had the driveway coming off Uruguay Street. There is 110 feet of frontage here. So, there is plenty of room to do this. Mr. Isaacson said they believe that this would be an enhancement to the neighborhood, and it will not create any problems. They have done a lot of work on the lot to ensure that there are no flooding issues. He entertained questions from the Board.

Ms. Jarrett asked Staff about a comment that was made that if the Petitioner builds the road, there would be four lots that he could develop. But, if he built the road, each of those lots would be under 6,000 square feet and in this case, the Petitioner would be required to get a variance for this as well.

Mr. Anagnost stated if the Petitioner has 6,000 square feet before the lots are recombined, the original four lots would be nonconforming, you could not get a variance for that either. You are not allowed to apply for a variance that has less than the minimum lot area per unit. He explained that if the recombination has been completed, then you could not return to the original four lots.

Mr. Isaacson said they could not afford to build a street here anyway.

Public Comments

None

BOARD DISUSSION

Ms. Jarrett said she understood the Staff's point of view, but it is a shame not to be able to build a couple of houses in an area that could probably use the houses.

Mr. Merriman agreed with Ms. Jarrett.

Mr. Plunk said he did not see the letter of support. Who was the letter of support from? What is the content of the letter?

Ms. McQuarrie explained that the letter of support stated that it was consistent with the Comprehensive Plan to add infill housing. However, the address attached to the letter was in Chatham County and not the City of Savannah.

Mr. Merriman entertained further comments from the Board.

Mr. Plunk stated that he shares the same feelings as Ms. Jarrett. It is a shame not to be able to develop this, however, he understood the flooding issues.

Mr. Merriman asked the Board if they had any further discussion. There was none. He entertained a motion.

Motion

The Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby approve the variance to the minimum lot width of 60 feet in RSF-6 (Residential Single-Family-6) zoning District to 55 feet at 0 East 60th Street aka 3001 Uruguay Street

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Armand Turner

Second: Stephen Plunk

Stephen Merriman, Jr.	- Abstain
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Michael Condon	- Not Present
Larry Evans	- Not Present
Stephen Plunk	- Aye
Betty Jones	- Aye
Armand Turner	- Aye

[10. ADU Minimum Lot Area Variance | 209 E DeRenne Ave | 23-005539-ZBA](#)

- [Staff Report- 209 E DeRenne Ave-abm.pdf](#)
- [Rendering and ADU Floor Plan.pdf](#)
- [AERIAL-SITE MAP 23-005539-ZBA.pdf](#)

Ms. Anna McQuarrie presented the Staff report. The Petitioner is requesting a variance to reduce the required Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) lot area of 12,500 by 1,305 Square feet in the Residential Single-Family-10 (RSF-10) zoning district. The minimum ADU lot size is at least 125% of the minimum lot area required by the zoning district. The RSF-10 minimum lot size is 10,000 square feet. Therefore, the minimum lot size for ADUs is 12,500 square feet and the lot size is only 11,195 square feet. The lot and the proposed ADU meet all the other requirements for the RSF-10 zoning district.

Ms. McQuarrie displayed the aerial map of the property and explained that the lot meets all the requirements for ADUs. The principal structure and the ADU meet all setback requirements. The proposed ADU will be attached to the principal structure by a covered walkway and the entrance to the unit will be located along the side of the building that is connected to the principal structure. She displayed the renderings of the proposed ADU/accessory structure on the screen. She stated that the variance was consistent with the intent of the Ordinance and that there are no special conditions or circumstances that are peculiar to the land, buildings or structures involved. The request is not purely financial in nature and the variance will allow the Petitioner to use more of their lot while still following all other zoning district requirements. The adjacent lots range in size from 12,000 square feet to more than 15,000 square feet on either side of the property.

Ms. McQuarrie reported that Staff recommends approval of the requested variance to reduce the ADU lot area of 12,500 feet by 1,305 square feet. She entertained questions from the Board.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Ms. Tiffany Bannerman Holt, Petitioner, came forward. Ms. Holt said Staff has said everything that needs to be said. She had nothing to add.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

BOARD DISCUSSION

The Board had no discussion.

Mr. Merriman entertained a motion.

Motion

The Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby approve the variance to reduce the required Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) lot area of 12,500 square feet by 1,305 square feet in the Residential Single-Family-10 (RSF-10) zoning district.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Armand Turner

Second: Stephen Plunk

Stephen Merriman, Jr. - Abstain

Karen Jarrett - Aye

Michael Condon - Not Present

Larry Evans - Not Present

Stephen Plunk - Aye

Betty Jones - Aye

Armand Turner - Aye

[11. ADU Rear Setback Variance | 203 E 45th St | 23-005659-ZBA](#)

[📎 Staff Report - 203 East 45th Street.pdf](#)

[📎 Site Floor Plan_Page_1.jpg](#)

[📎 Site Floor Plan_Page_2.jpg](#)

[📎 Site Floor Plan_Page_3.jpg](#)

[📎 AERIAL-SITE MAP 23-005659-ZBA.pdf](#)

[📎 Opposition Letters from Ms. Woods \(003\).pdf](#)

Ms. Anna McQuarrie presented the Staff report. The Petitioner is requesting a variance of the 5-foot rear setback requirement for an existing nonconforming legal accessory structure to allow for a second story addition above the structure. The parcel is about 0.17 acres and is in a Residential Single-Family-6 (RSF-6) zoning district. The required setbacks for accessory structures are 5 feet on the side interior or rear property lines. Buildings that are used to house vehicles that are accessed from the lane should be located at least 5 feet from the right-of-way. However, this may be reduced to 3 feet.

Ms. McQuarrie explained that the accessory structure is a one-story 432 square feet building with white wood siding originally built in 1920 and the effective year of building is 1975. The Petitioner is requesting the variance to add a second story for an office/bonus room, closet, and bathroom. The first story will become a garage with an opening to the west facing Habersham Street. The landscaping and sidewalk in the right-of-way along Habersham Street will be replaced with a concrete slab with brick border inlay.

Ms. McQuarrie displayed the aerial map on the screen. The structure is in the Ardsley Park-Chatham Crescent Conservation District (CD-I). She explained that this is an accessory structure as opposed to an accessory dwelling unit. The setbacks are 20 feet in the front yard, 5 feet in the interior yard, and 10

feet in the yard; 20 feet rear yard, 5 feet from the access easement for the main building. The Petitioner meets the lot minimum requirements and the maximum building coverage. The Petitioner contacted the Historic Preservation Staff in April 2023 to discuss whether a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) was required to determine if the structure was contributing. The Staff informed the Petitioner that the structure was likely noncontributing, and a COA was not required based on the scope of work submitted at the time.

Ms. McQuarrie said a partial demolition of the accessory structure is planned. If the structure is deemed to be a contributing building in a Conservation "District, and demolition of 50% or more of the building, plans will need to be reviewed by the City of Savannah's Historic Preservation Officer prior to the issuance of a demolition permit. Ms. McQuarrie stated that she has been in contact with the Petitioner about future demolition here and she was told that the existing footprint will remain, first level walls are to remain and receive new brick finish to match the main house structure in lieu of siding, a new garage door at the first floor and the roof will be removed for the second-floor addition. The estimation of the scope is roughly 25% to 30% of the existing structure to be demolished considering the roof and wall portion for the garage door. She showed the Board the site plan. The principal and accessory structure were both originally constructed in 1920. Therefore, the current setback requirements did not exist. The special conditions and/or circumstances are not purely financial in nature. However, this may benefit the homeowner. Properties along Habersham Street have garages with driveways extending into the right of way, including the property adjacent to 203 East 45th Street. Most accessory structures in the surrounding area appear to be one-story. Accessory structures along East 45th Lane appear to be on or over the property line. Literal interpretation would deprive the Petitioner of a right commonly enjoyed by other properties in the same zoning district.

Ms. McQuarrie reported that Staff recommends approval of the requested variance of 5 feet to the rear accessory structure setback requirement within the RSF-6 zoning district on the follow condition:

1. The Petitioner shall apply for a COA to officially determine the contributing status of the structure in the Ardsley Park-Chatham Crescent Conservation District.

Ms. Jarrett asked if ADUs are allowed in Ardsley Park - Chatham Crescent Conservation District.

Ms. McQuarrie answered yes.

Mr. John Anagnost wanted to make it clear that this is not proposed as an ADU.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

The Petitioner did not come forward. Mr. Merriman asked Staff if the Petitioner was to be present today.

Ms. McQuarrie said the Petitioner sent an email yesterday confirming that the meeting was scheduled today.

Mr. Merriman stated that maybe an unforeseen circumstance arose. He explained that the Petitioner is not present and, therefore, would not be able to abut public comments.

Mr. Plunk said he would be fine hearing public comments. Staff has recommended approval. He believes that if there is a consensus for approval, he does not have an issue of approving this without the Petitioner being present. If the Board has a concern during their discussion, in this case he would recommend that it be continued; but only in the case if it seems as if there is a concern that the request be denied.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mrs. Ardis Wood came forward and introduced herself. She is a resident of Ardsley Park. The basics of Ardsley Park have somewhat copied the plan of Downtown with lanes, grid patterns, parks, etc. Ms. Wood said she sent several pictures. She is new to the technology, but she has pictures that she wanted to exhibit. She has three pictures that she wanted the Board to see. Can the Board see the pictures now? If not, she has them on her cell phone.

Mr. Morrow said Ms. Wood sent in several photos for two petitions today. The Staff had a little bit of back and forth with her regarding the appropriate format for submitting pictures and inserting comments into the record. The comment should be submitted in a letter format that can easily be inserted. The photos that Ms. Wood sent were individual photos. He apologized that photos are not posted, but her emails are listed.

Ms. Wood said she would show the Board the three photos she has for this petition. This will help the Board understand what she is asking. She is not saying pro or con, but interested in using lanes as they are designed in the pattern language of this neighborhood which is a part of a group that has been on the National Register since 1985.

Ms. Jarrett stated that there is an attachment that shows an opposition letter from Ms. Wood. Does this have pictures?

Mr. Morrow answered no.

Ms. Wood stated she believes this is the structure that she believes has no entrance. What is here now does not show how you enter the garage.

Ms. Jarrett asked if this is an existing building.

Ms. Wood confirmed that it is an existing building. The second building she wanted to show the Board, and this is important. It is a garage that is in Ardsley Park. The entrance is from the lane. When you have the entrance from the lane, you don't have all the curb cuts and this is critical, not just to this site, but to all the sites. If you start curb cutting, then you take away the opportunity for tree lawns and the general pattern that they have. Therefore, this is very important. The last picture shows a garage apartment with curb cuts on the sidewalk. They can see how unattractive this is. It is somewhat like having a missing tooth there. Ms. Wood said she was not sure that they were aware of this when they looked at the creation of garages. The entrance should be from the lane. She further stated she was not questioning what will be placed here, but it is important to have the entrance to the garage from the lane. **Ms. Jarrett** said she would not disagree with Ms. Wood, but in an existing structure, it does not seem appropriate to ask the owner to tear down what he has and rebuild completely.

Ms. Wood said there is no entrance to the present structure that is here. She believes that the only way you can get into the structure is from the backyard.

Ms. McQuarrie showed the Board a picture of the structure as it currently is. She pointed out that the lane, the adjacent property does have a driveway to the lane.

Ms. Wood injected that they are losing all the growth. The landscape is being taken away. They are putting concrete here; they are cutting out the curb, no chance for a tree here. Is it a double car garage? It is breaking the theme which is terribly important.

Mr. Merriman asked Mrs. Wood to please wrap up her comments.

Ms. Wood had no further comments.

Mr. Merriman asked if anyone else wanted to make any public comments.

Ms. Adrian Wilkes, Property owner, was online. Ms. Wilkes stated that she lives at this residence. The curb is already cut. It was previously a garage. All the landscaping has already been removed. The slab is broken.

Mr. Merriman stated that since Ms. Wilkes spoke after the public comments, he guesses this was her rebuttal.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Ms. Jarrett said she understood Ms. Wood's argument, but if there was an existing garage door there in the past, tearing down the wall and rebuilding the wall to provide a garage door at the rear of the property

along the lane would be expensive. At that point, they would be demolishing more than 25% to 30%.

Mr. Plunk said he agrees with Ms. Jarrett in principle, but it sounds as if it has already been cut. Therefore, it is not relevant as it has already been done.

Mr. Merriman said the landscape has already been removed. He entertained more discussion from the Board. There was none. He entertained a motion.

Motion

The Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby approve the variance of the 5 feet rear setback requirement for an existing nonconforming legal accessory structure in the Residential Single-Family-6 (RSF-6) zoning District with the condition:

- 1) The Petitioner shall apply for a COA to officially determine the contributing status of the structure in the Ardsley Park-Chatham Crescent Conservation District.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Stephen Plunk

Second: Betty Jones

Stephen Merriman, Jr. - Abstain

Karen Jarrett - Aye

Michael Condon - Not Present

Larry Evans - Not Present

Stephen Plunk - Aye

Betty Jones - Aye

Armand Turner - Aye

[12. Billboard Height Variance | 11511 & 11515 Abercorn St | 23-005598-ZBA](#)

📎 [AERIAL-SITE MAP 23-005598-ZBA.pdf](#)

📎 [Exhibits and Lamar Lease.pdf](#)

📎 [NewZO_Sec 9.9.15_Billboards.pdf](#)

📎 [A Woods.pdf](#)

📎 [opposition from Ms. Woods.pdf](#)

📎 [Staff Report.pdf](#)

Mr. Edward Morrow gave the Staff report. The Petitioner is requesting a variance for the maximum permissible height of a billboard. The subject parcels are at 11511 and 11515 Abercorn Street. He explained that this is on Abercorn Street near Largo Drive. The billboard is at maximum height now which is 53 feet; and the request before the Board is to increase the height of this billboard to approximately 70 feet which is consistent with what is currently permitted for billboards that adjoins interstate highways.

Mr. Morrow stated that this request is outside the scale of what is permitted for billboards. It is for a different type of street. Basically, the photo being displayed is intended to give the impression that right now someone passing by this location would have a view of this billboard that is partially obstructed by a tree. He said significantly to note is that prior to coming to this Board, the Petitioner attempted to work with the City of Savannah Park and Tree Department. They requested that they be permitted to relocate the trees. However, because of conditions on this site, there was nowhere that the trees could be

relocated. So, today is somewhat a last effort to not lose the opportunity to fully utilize the billboard which, although would not be permitted today, was duly permitted at the time it was built sometime during the mid-1970s.

Mr. Morrow said as the Board looks at the subject parcel, it is located approximately 400 feet from the nearest residential zoned parcel. The parcel is currently located within a "Protected Corridor" that came into play during the adoption of NewZO. He explained that in essence, this would not be permitted now. However, this is not a new billboard; it is an existing billboard that has been here since the 1970s.

Mr. Merriman asked Mr. Morrow if he was saying that the billboard itself would not be permitted.

Mr. Morrow explained if a new application to construct a billboard at this location was submitted today, it would not be allowed to be constructed at this location.

Mr. Merriman asked Mr. Morrow if he had more information to present to the Board.

Mr. Morrow answered yes. However, if there were no issues, he believes it is important that they look at the variance criteria. With regards to general consistency, the variance is consistent with current development standards. However, the standards were adopted many years after the construction of the sign. In the interest of preserving existing mature trees, the height is requested to be increased for this billboard. Mr. Morrow stated that if the request is granted, it is not likely to be injurious to public health, and it would not create hazardous situations for nearby users' property. Regarding special conditions, the sign predates the trees, which are now regarded as significant on the site. He showed the Board another view of the area. The request to relocate the trees was denied by the City's Park and Tree Department. Also, regarding special conditions, he does not believe professionally that this has a financial motive. As stated, this sign has existed for many years. Because of the growth of the trees, this necessitated the present variance request. Mr. Morrow said regarding the literal interpretation, because the sign existed, he believes that the Petitioner would lose rights that would commonly be enjoyed by others, who today if they apply to construct a billboard at a particular location. The expectation is that it continued use would be a reasonable expectation and for this reason, he believes that the literal interpretation would be injurious to the Petitioner.

Mr. Morrow said it is left to this Board to determine whether 70 feet is an appropriate request. However, he wanted the Board to be aware that it is consistent with another similar standard obviously for a different type of roadway. Nonetheless, this Board can determine what type of relief would be most appropriate in this circumstance. He said finally that special privilege would not be conveyed, then all the improvements would be upon the Petitioner. They constructed the sign; and now, they would at their own expense increase its height.

Mr. Morrow reported that the Staff recommends approval of the variance request as they believe that the public benefit likely outweighs any adverse impact. He entertained questions from the Board.

Mr. Merriman asked Staff if the City said that there is nowhere to relocate the trees. What about cutting the trees down or cutting the tops?

Mr. Morrow said the City of Savannah's Arborist determines which trees are regarded as significant. The City has a Tree and Landscape Ordinance. To meet the tree quality points and requirements of that Ordinance, the City has a department that is charged with determining the number of right landscaping components that must be added and the ones that are required to be preserved. The trees here were determined to be significant and could not be removed.

Mr. Merriman asked Mr. Morrow if he could tell him why the trees are significant. What is significant about two random trees? It is better to leave those trees than to add 20 feet to a billboard.

Mr. Morrow explained that as a non-arborist, he understands the term significant to mean the growth of the tree itself. The growth is significant.

Mr. Merriman said significant in size, but not necessarily significant and important to quality of life for the City.

Mr. Morrow said that is correct.

Ms. McQuarrie said that is incorrect.

Mr. Merriman said that would be incorrect.

Ms. McQuarrie came forward and explained that she has an ecological background. She explained that trees are great carbon sinks. Trees hold NCO-2 emissions. She did not speak with the Arborist specifically on this, but when a tree is larger, it can retain more carbon dioxide. Therefore, creating cleaner air for us to breathe enhances the quality of life. The City of Savannah has higher rates of health issues. For example, with asthma, trees improve our air quality so we can breathe better. Therefore, when you have a large tree that has been there for a very long time, it is really hard to plant something and maybe you take 100 years (she said she was not familiar with these specific trees), but as an example, you have a tree that is 100 years old and if they plant one more tree, they would need to wait 100 years to get those benefits. In a warm climate, it is harder for the trees to adapt. Therefore, commercial interest generally is not high in quality of life or cleaner air but produces carbon dioxide emissions as a plant would.

Ms. Jones wanted more information regarding pruning the trees.

Mr. Merriman injected the that the trees are cut for power lines.

Ms. Jones said even if the signs are raised, the trees will grow. Savannah has tall trees.

Mr. Morrow said these are relevant questions. He would need to consult with the City's Park and Tree Department to get the most appropriate answers. Mr. Morrow said he is aware that certain species have an expected height and certain other characteristics. They could determine whether they would be expected to encroach again into the view of the sign.

Mr. Merriman asked if it could be assumed that the Board has the authority to approve the raising of the billboard, but not to make the City top the trees or cut them down completely.

Mr. Morrow explained that the scope of the present request is to increase the height of the billboard. Therefore, the Board would not have the ability at this juncture to say that the trees need to be removed. The Board can say either the billboard needs to stay at its current height or if can be increased in height.

Mr. Merriman stated that without the presence of some quantitative metric that tells him how many asthmatics these two trees are helping here in the city, he does see why they don't just get rid of the trees.

Ms. Jarrett asked that the height the trees are being raised, is it the level that you would see on a freeway?

Mr. Morrow answered yes.

Ms. Jarrett said she understands that sometime Abercorn Street seems like a freeway, but it is a local road. It is an arterial. Today, this billboard would not be permitted to be constructed in its location.

Mr. Morrow said that's correct.

Ms. Jarrett said whereas the trees would be allowed to grow at this location.

Mr. Morrow said that's correct.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Mr. Alex Voss of Lamar Advertising stated that the only thing he would like to add that was not in the packet, is a Google Street view of November 2007 to show what the trees looked like prior to now.

Mr. Merriman stated he wanted to see the Google Street view.

Mr. Voss stated for the record, their preference would have been to remove the trees; not to raise the height of the billboard. They are before the Board today because they were told that they could not trim or remove the trees.

Mr. Merriman stated the trees shown on Google Street in 2007 have grown a lot.

Ms. Jarrett asked if this view was taken in 2007.

Mr. Voss answered yes. The date is in the upper top right-hand corner. It is from the Google Street,

Mr. Merriman asked the Board if they wanted to ask Mr. Voss questions.

Mr. Plunk asked Mr. Voss if he was the owner of the billboard.

Mr. Voss answered that his company owns the billboard.

Mr. Plunk asked Mr. Voss how long the company has owned the billboard. Was it since it was constructed in 1970s?

Mr. Voss answered no. It would have been through an acquisition of the company. Whatever company it was that built it in 1975, they bought subsequently after that.

Mr. Plunk asked Mr. Voss when his company started the process of applying for the trees. How long has this been?

Mr. Voss answered that he has been working on this for two years.

Mr. Merriman asked Mr. Morrow what he wanted to add to this.

Mr. Morrow said for Ms. Wood, he just wanted to say that several photos were taken by Ms. Wood. He put the pictures on Power Point to demonstrate how the Staff expects to receive the photos. The photos are included in the packet.

Mr. Merriman asked if the sign was electronic.

Mr. Voss answered yes.

Ms. Jones said once it is approved for the Petitioner to raise the sign, what happens when the trees grow taller.

Mr. Voss said their understanding is that the trees are mature. If they go to the height that they are requesting, they will be fine.

Mr. Merriman said it seems as if there is some common ground. He said topping the trees a little would be a win for everybody.

Ms. Jones stated that the City needs to keep the trees pruned to a certain height.

Ms. Jarrett said if the sign was taken down and moved somewhere else, they could use it. Correct?

Mr. Voss said the digital board, yes, they could use it somewhere else. The number of digitals is capped in the City of Savannah so you could never have more digitals than there are now, but you do have the ability to move them around to other conforming spots. He said, however, to his knowledge there is not a lot of conforming spots left.

Mr. Merriman said this is a sign, but it is an ongoing business that has been here since 1975. You cannot say to a business, take your business and move it to another spot because the trees are too big.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Brad Clement resides at 12 Birchwood Court. He lives directly behind the sign. His background is in city and regional planning. Therefore, he wanted to make this simple and plain in the reading of the Ordinance. As has been discussed, this is a nonconforming use. This Board should not be looking to alter or improve a nonconforming use, trees immaterial and height immaterial. Mr. Clement said the Staff has determined that this is not pecuniary in nature. He said he had to look up the word “pecuniary” to be sure he was using it the same way. This basically means for profit. Given the nature and purpose of this structure leased between the two parcels in question, he struggled to find a motive other than profit for the stated business of this billboard. It would, in fact, give the Petitioner an advantage because as mentioned, no other landowner along this protected corridor may erect a sign at the current height or any other height. The owner of this sign cannot relocate it in this corridor, or they would have sought to do so. So, without prolonging this, it really is just that simple. To alter it, which they can agree, raising it 20 feet would be an alteration. To improve it or of a pecuniary nature, it is for this Board to decide.

Mrs. Ardis Wood, Chair of Scenic Chatham, which is an affiliate of Scenic America, came forth and asked Staff if they have the other pictures she sent.

Mr. Morrow answered yes. He put the pictures in Power Point and Ms. Wood may show them to the Board. He informed Mrs. Wood that for future notice, this is how the pictures need to be submitted to Staff so that just one item would be attached.

Mrs. Wood said that they are looking at one direction of this sign. They are looking at the side where it would not be seen. Mrs. Wood showed the Board several pictures of the sign taken from different views. She said that Ms. McQuarrie is a wonderful example of the future. They know a lot more about health, climate problems, etc. She thanked Ms. McQuarrie and said she gives her great hope. Mrs. Wood said she approaches this from a visual element. Anybody that she tells she lives in Savannah, what she hears is probably what everybody hears, “what a beautiful city.” She said this is scenic place USA. They do not want to get rid of trees and thanks God there was a cap on it or there would be more of these digital billboards, especially along I-16. She said for the elegance of quality of life, health, beauty, and for the protection of our economics business maybe one billboard gets a little more money for one person, but this is not the direction we need to go. Mrs. Wood thanked Mr. Clement for pointing out that maybe it is not even legal to do this, putting on one bad thing after another.

Mr. Merriman invited Mr. Vos to make his rebuttal to public comments.

Mr. Voss said he believes that the Board realized that the photos were taken from the parking lot. He explained that the intent of a billboard is to be seen by traffic. The digital billboards are also used for public service. During the recent hurricane, there were Chatham County EMS messages running on this billboard as well as every other billboard that they had in market. They have thousands of local customers that use these billboards to drive business to their stores.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Ms. Jarrett said she has some concerns about what the first public speaker brought up. The Petitioner could not get a permit to build here today, but this Board can grant him a variance to change the sign.

Mr. Morrow said this is indeed the purpose of this Board.

Mr. Merriman said the Board does this all the time.

Mr. Plunk said there are some concerns about the height being freeway height. Is this the minimum height raise necessary to stay clear of the trees? Is there a middle ground that would be more acceptable to some of the members on the Board? Could there be less height?

Mr. Morrow said it is within the discretion of the Board to decide the height.

Mr. Plunk asked the Petitioner what their input to ask for this height.

Mr. Voss explained that if the Board go back and look at the photo where the yellow color is up in the air,

billboard height is 10 feet. So, if they come down 10 feet from the bottom of this, it would be the bottom of the billboard. He, therefore, believes that this would leave maybe 7 feet to 8 feet; somewhere between 5 feet and 8 feet from the top of the trees to the billboard. This allows them a little bit of variance if the trees were to grow. They do not want billboards to be super high because they are harder to reach. They want them to be lower. A project such as this would cost them a couple hundred thousand dollars for the engineering, etc. This is just the maximum they asked for to just have a little bit of wiggle room.

Ms. Jarrett asked Staff that in the Alcohol Overlay Zone, did they close businesses to enforce that zone?

Mr. Morrow explained that the Alcohol Overlays are the City's jurisdiction. They are not within the Zoning Ordinance.

Ms. Jarrett said she understood this but were alcohol selling establishments closed or converted to nonalcoholic selling establishments after the passage of the Alcohol Overlay Zone.

Ms. Jones said she would answer Ms. Jarrett's question since this was done in her neighborhood. She explained that they were "grandfathered" in. But, if they lost their license later, they could not reopen.

Ms. Jarrett asked that they could not go from beer and wine to spirit after-the-fact.

Ms. Jones answered no.

Mr. Merriman asked the board if they had more discussion. There was none. He entertained a motion.

Motion

The Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby deny the variance request for the maximum permissible height of a billboard to 70 feet at 11511 and 11515 Abercorn Street.

Vote Results (Rejected)

Motion: Karen Jarrett

Second: Armand Turner

Stephen Merriman, Jr. - Nay

Karen Jarrett - Aye

Michael Condon - Not Present

Larry Evans - Not Present

Stephen Plunk - Nay

Betty Jones - Nay

Armand Turner - Aye

Motion

The Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby approve the variance request for the maximum permissible height of a billboard to 70 feet at 11511 and 11515 Abercorn Street.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Betty Jones

Second: Stephen Plunk

Stephen Merriman, Jr. - Aye

Karen Jarrett - Nay

Michael Condon - Not Present

Larry Evans	- Not Present
Stephen Plunk	- Aye
Betty Jones	- Aye
Armand Turner	- Nay

[13. Reestablishment of a Nonconforming Use | 1201 E 56th Street | 23-005658-ZBA](#)

[☞ Staff Report-1201 E 56th St-abm.pdf](#)

[☞ AERIAL-SITE MAP 23-005658-ZBA.pdf](#)

[☞ Opposition Letter - Ms. Smith.docx](#)

Mr. Edward Morrow presented the Staff report. The Petitioner is requesting to reestablish a nonconforming lawncare business that was previously in operation at 1201 East 56th Street. The subject property is zoned RSF-5 Residential -Single Family -5. Which permits in essence only detached residential uses aside from some other obnoxious community-type uses. He explained that basically this is a zoning district only for a single-family detached use. The Petitioner is requesting to reestablish a nonconforming business use that was in operation since 1981. There are several nonconforming structures that are on the property as well that was constructed in support of this lawncare business. Some storage sheds and things of this nature in addition to the dwelling of the house that was converted for business use.

Mr. Morrow explained that the request to this Board is to permit the continuation of this use because of the lapse that begin around November 2021 and continued until approximately February 2023. Now, the improvements to the structure and a new tenant have been identified, the Petitioner is requesting to reestablish this use.

Mr. Morrow added that what the Board sees on the screen is a zoning map, there are TC-2 zoned properties that are close by in the area. He believes a church is across the street. Therefore, there is a mixture at this location. The option to reestablish this nonconforming use is preferential to the idea of rezoning. The subject property is developed at this point and no further development would be appropriate here, but the reestablishment of the existing use would likely be most appropriate. He showed the Board some pictures of the area.

Mr. Morrow reported that Staff recommends approval of the request. He entertained questions from the Board.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Mr. Anthony Wayne Noha came forward. He explained that Mr. Bowen was medically home bound. The buildings were here prior to Mr. Bowen buying the property in 1992. This was a plumbing company that originated in 1981. This was a continual use until Hostess City Services vacated in the property in October-November 2021.

Mr. Noha said he does not know if anyone on the Board has tried to hire someone to come in and paint and do repair work, but it took more than a year to get the repairs done. This is where the lapse came in. They knew that it was a timeframe of one year to not have this problem. They would have rented it to someone to continue the use. However, it was strictly getting the people here to work. They listed the place, and a young lady went to get her business license, but because it had been a year, they gave her a conditional use. She has been using the property since February. Everything seems to be fine. He informed the Board that he had photos of the property. They have not gotten any complaints from the neighbors.

Ms. Jarrett asked if the property has ever been zoned commercial.

Mr. Noha answered no.

Ms. Jarrett asked Mr. Noha that to the best of his knowledge, it has been used somewhat as a sort of commercial use.

Mr. Noha said it has been used as a commercial use since 1981.

Ms. Jarrett asked if there are any neighborhood comments regarding this petition.

Mr. Merriman stated that there is a letter of opposition.

Mr. Morrow confirmed that a letter of opposition was received from Ms. Janice Smith, who resides at 1207 East 57th Street. Ms. Smith is in opposition because the landscaping business would be detrimental to safety, reduce environmental quality and personal happiness. The neighborhood does not need another business.

Mr. Merriman asked Mr. Naho if he said a company has been here for years.

Mr. Naho answered yes. In 1981 John Mock Plumbing was here. He is sure that it was a house in 1981.

Mr. Merriman asked Mr. Noha if the property was ever zoned for a business.

M. Noha answered no.

Mr. Merriman asked how a business was here and it was not zoned for business.

Mr. Noha explained that a business license was here for John Mock Plumbing from 1981 to 1982; Boeing Mechanical, which is his godfather, from 1992 to 1996. Boeing then moved to 52nd Street and rented the house to Hostess City Services from 1996 to 2021.

Ms. Jarrett asked Mr. Noha if he knows what type of business Hostess City Services had here.

Mr. Noha said they had a janitorial service.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

Mr. Morrow informed the Board earlier of Ms. Janice Smith's letter of opposition.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Mr. Merriman entertained a motion as the Board had no further discussion.

Motion

The Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby approve the variance request to reestablish a nonconforming use at 1201 East 56th Street.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion:	Stephen Plunk
Second:	Armand Turner
Stephen Merriman, Jr.	- Abstain
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Michael Condon	- Not Present
Larry Evans	- Not Present
Stephen Plunk	- Aye
Betty Jones	- Aye
Armand Turner	- Aye

[14. 2026 Brogdon Street | Variance - Side Yard Setback and Lot Area | 23-005670-ZBA](#)

📎 [2026 Brogdon Street Street View.png](#)

📎 [SAGIS_Parcels_2026BrogdonSt.jpg](#)

- 📎 [SAGIS_Parcels_2026BrogdonSt_edit.jpg](#)
- 📎 [Supporting Documentation_Page_2.jpg](#)
- 📎 [Supporting Documentation_Page_3.jpg](#)
- 📎 [Sign Posting.jpg](#)
- 📎 [Staff Report-2026 Brogdon St-abm.pdf](#)

Ms. Anna McQuarrie presented the Staff report. The Petitioner is requesting two variances. One variance is to reduce the required accessory dwelling unit (ADU) lot area of 12, 500 square feet by 2, 096 square feet and a second variance for a side (interior) yard setback reduction from 7 feet to 3 feet in the Residential Single-Family 10 (RSF-10) zoning district. The minimum ADU lot size is at least 125% of the minimum lot area required by the zoning district. The RSF-10 minimum lot size is 10,000 square feet, therefore, the minimum lot size for ADUs is 12,500 square feet and the lot is only 10,404 square feet.

Ms. McQuarrie displayed the aerial map. She said there are quite a few structures close to lot one. The historical zoning was residential 6 with the minimum lot width of 60 feet and different sizes. This is why most of the lot widths are much smaller than what you would normally have for an RSF-10 in this area. With NewZO obviously things have changed. The principal structure does not meet the side (interior) yard setback on the west side of the property line and the accessory structure currently does not meet on the eastside of the property. The height of the accessory structure does not exceed the height of the principal structure.

Ms. McQuarrie displayed a photo of the property line. She pointed out the accessory structure that they are talking about. This is the renovation that the Petitioner is planning to do. The renovation will transform the structure from an accessory structure to an ADU with one bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, and living area.

Ms. McQuarrie explained that the Petitioner wishes to renovate his existing structure into an ADU. Therefore, these special conditions are not purely financial in nature. The literal interpretation could deprive the Petitioner of rights commonly enjoyed by other properties in the same zoning district. The reduction of the required ADU lot by 2,096 square feet and side (interior) reduction will make possible the update to an existing structure to become an ADU. The garage can still be used as a garage.

Ms. McQuarrie reported that Staff recommends approval of the requested variances to reduce the required Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) lot area of 12,500 square feet by 2,096 square feet and side (interior) yard setback reduction from 7 feet to 3 feet. She entertained questions from the Board.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Mr. Michael O’Sullivan, Petitioner, came forward. Mr. O’Sullivan said he has gotten a lot of support from his adjoining neighbors and a couple of neighbors across the street.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

BOARD DISCUSSION

None.

Mr. Merriman entertained a motion.

Motion

The Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby approve the variance to reduce the required ADU lot area of 12,500 square feet by 2,096 square feet and reduce a side (interior) yard setback from 7 feet to 3 feet in the Residential Single-Family-10 (RSF-10) zoning district.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Armand Turner

Second: Betty Jones

Stephen Merriman, Jr. - Abstain

Karen Jarrett - Aye

Michael Condon - Not Present

Larry Evans - Not Present

Stephen Plunk - Aye

Betty Jones - Aye

Armand Turner - Aye

XI. Other Business

XII. Adjournment

15. Adjourned

Mr. Morrow introduced the new Staff member, Mr. Nykobe Richardson, Development Services Tech to the Board.

There being no further business to come before the Board, Mr. Merriman adjourned the meeting at 11:23 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Edward Morrow
Development Services Director

EM:mem

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