



Chatham County Zoning Board of Appeals

Minutes
July 22, 2025, 9:00 am

July 22, 2025, Chatham County Zoning Board of Appeals

Members Present: Robert Vineyard, Chair
Meredith Stone
Benjamin Polote
Jenna Watkins

Member Absent: Kewaan Drayton

Others Present: Edward Morrow, Current Planning/Development Services Director
Sally Helm, Administrative Assistant II, Development Services/Current Planning
Hind Patel, IT Helpdesk & Support
Jefferson Kirkland, Chatham County

I. Call to Order and Welcome

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Notices, Proclamations and Acknowledgements

IV. Petitions Ready for Hearing

V. Approval of Minutes

[1. Approval of the December 17, 2024, CZBA Meeting Minutes](#)

[@ december-17-2024-chatham-county-zoning-board-of-appeals-minutes.pdf](#)

Motion

Approval of the December 17, 2024, CZBA Meeting Minutes.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Meredith Stone

Second: Benjamin Polote, Jr.

James Coursey - Not Present

Meredith Stone - Aye

Robert Vinyard - Aye

Benjamin Polote, Jr. - Aye

Kewaan Drayton - Not Present

Jenna Watkins	- Aye
Tia Acker-Moore	- Not Present

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

VII. Consent Agenda

VIII. Old Business

IX. Regular Agenda

[2. 1 Adams Point Cross | Variance for reduction of the Marsh Buffer | ZBA-0625-000559](#)

- 📎 [Application.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Drawings and Site plan.pdf](#)
- 📎 [FloodZones_1AdamsPt.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Staff Report_ZBA-0625-000559.pdf](#)
- 📎 [SLR_1AdamsPt.pdf](#)

Mr. Edward Morrow, Director of Development Services/Current Planning, presented the Staff Report. **Mr. Morrow** stated the Petitioner is requesting a variance from Chatham County’s 35-foot Riparian buffer required by the Environmental Overlay zoning district to expand an existing rear deck that currently encroaches into the marsh buffer setback. The property is 1 acre and located within the PUD/EO (Planned Unit Development - Environmental Overlay) zoning district within the Landings Planned Community. For all properties built near marshland, a 25-foot riparian buffer is required by state law and an additional 10 feet are required as part of the Chatham County EO Zoning District for a total buffer of 35-feet. The Petitioner, Joye Reno, on behalf of the property owners, David and Carolyn Montague, requested to increase the extent of their rear deck’s encroachment into the additional 10-foot buffer required by Chatham County. According to documentation from Chatham County Engineering dated 9 June 2025, the proposed project does not require a variance from the State Waters Buffer.

Per the Chatham County Tax Assessor, the residence on the subject property was constructed in or about 1996 and contains 7,708 square feet of living area. The Assessor indicates the present deck as 522 square feet in area. The parcel lies within Flood Zones VE and AE. A VE designation indicates the potential to experience high-velocity flow and waves in association with storm events. AE indicates that a base flood elevation has been established for the property.

These are dynamic areas that can be expected to be impacted by sea level rise. There are no extraordinary or exceptional conditions pertain to this piece of property in size, shape, or topography. The application of this chapter does not create an unnecessary hardship. The Landings is a PUD, and homes are subject to a distinct set of architectural design and development guidelines. Staff believe that modifications can be made while respecting the EO buffer requirements. There are approximately 228 square miles of wetlands in Chatham County. This is not a unique or special hardship. This variance would go against the intent of the Chatham County Zoning Ordinance. The purpose of the Environmental Overlay District is to, “to establish supplemental standards to bolster those currently in the Chatham County Zoning Ordinance in order to, a) protect and enhance community character; b) provide for safe and orderly development; and c) protect environmental quality, especially the estuarine system that surrounds the community”. Protecting the function and value of coastal marshlands is part of the public interest. The parcel abuts to saltmarshes that provide valuable protection against flooding on Skidaway Island. If the variance is granted, wetlands will be less likely to protect the parcel, and those around it, from environmental hazards.

Based on the EO ordinance and variance criteria, MPC Staff recommends **denial** of the request for a variance to further encroach into Chatham County’s 10-foot required EO riparian buffer to expand an existing rear deck.

Mr. Vineyard, Chairman, asked how much of a variance is the Petitioner requesting.

Mr. Morrow said the proposal would expand the deck approximately 200 square feet. The Petitioners' architect is present to better answer the question.

Ms. Joye Rhino, Architect for the Petitioner, said the owners are requesting the variance for the deck they are rebuilding. The deck is old and in disrepair. They are removing the existing hot tub and leveling the existing deck to create a space for a new spa, pool, and outdoor dining. The existing multi-level deck is not adequate for the new spa pool. The existing deck as it stands, encroaches within the twenty-five foot and thirty five-foot buffer zone. The home is extraordinary with amazing views. The existing deck will have a new surface put on it. There are two flights of stairs now, one will be removed and the other will be redone. There will be a portion of the deck that will be filled in. The drawing shown shows the areas being removed and the area where the six feet of deck will be added to balance the upper area making it symmetrical. The pads that are being added are within the existing footprint. The only area being encroached upon is where the new addition is being added.

Ms. Stone, Board Member, asked about the foundations on the left side of the deck. Are the ones being shown new and outside of the footprint that exists?

Ms. Rhino said yes.

Ms. Stone asked if the intention was for the design esthetic, to make is symmetrical.

Ms. Rhino said to make is symmetrical and provides more outdoor living space. This is the only space they have outside. This is all outdoor living elevated.

Mr. Vineyard, Chairman, asked which section of the Landings this was. Is this sitting on the Marsh, deepwater, the river, or what?

Ms. Rhino said it looks like the creek.

Mr. Vineyard, Chairman, asked for exact numbers of the variance being requested.

Ms. Rhino said it is six feet by twenty-four feet.

Ms. Watkins, Board Member, asked how many footings the deck currently has.

Ms. Rhino said the deck is currently enclosed with concrete block. It is not piles or piers.

Ms. Stone, Board Member, asked if the new stairwell being built was in the current footprint.

Ms. Rhino said it was existing they just needed to redo the treads.

No Public Comment

Motion

Denial of the request for a variance to further encroach into Chatham County's 10-foot required EO riparian buffer to expand an existing rear deck.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Benjamin Polote, Jr.

Second: Jenna Watkins

James Coursey	- Not Present
Meredith Stone	- Aye
Robert Vinyard	- Aye

Benjamin Polote, Jr.	- Aye
Kewaan Drayton	- Not Present
Jenna Watkins	- Aye
Tia Acker-Moore	- Not Present

X. Other Business

XI. Adjournment

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.