



C I T Y O F S A V A N N A H  
Z O N I N G B O A R D O F A P P E A L S

Arthur Mendonsa Hearing Room  
112 East State Street, 2:30 P.M.  
Minutes

**March 27, 2012 Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting**

**Members Present:** Brian Reese, Vice Chairman  
Eli P. Karatassos  
Sidney J. Johnson  
William Ronning

**Members Not Present:** Timothy Mackey, Chairman

**Staff Present:** Jack Butler, Assistant Secretary  
Constance Morgan, Administrative Assistant

**Advisory Staff Present:** Tiras Petrea, City Zoning Inspector

**I. Call to Order and Welcome**

1. [Call to Order](#)

Vice Chairman Brian Reese called the March 27, 2012 SZBA meeting to order. He explained the agenda for the benefit of those in attendance for the first time.

**II. Notices, Proclamations and Acknowledgements**

**III. Approval of Minutes**

2. [Approval of the February 28, 2012 SZBA Meeting Minutes](#)

Attachment: [February28.pdf](#)

**Board Action:**

Approval of the February 28, 2012 Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting Minutes as submitted. - PASS

**Vote Results**

Motion: Eli Karatassos  
Second: Sidney J Johnson  
Sidney J Johnson - Aye  
Timothy Mackey - Not Present  
Brian Reese - Aye  
William Ronning - Aye  
Eli Karatassos - Aye

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

3. [Reactivation of Non-Conforming Use - 1301 Waters Ave - 55440](#)

Attachment: [Staff Report-55440.pdf](#)  
Attachment: [Southview.pdf](#)  
Attachment: [Ortho-Zoning-Imagery.pdf](#)  
Attachment: [Eastview.pdf](#)

**Board Action:**

Petitioner requested to withdraw this petition. - PASS

**Vote Results**

Motion: Eli Karatassos  
Second: William Ronning  
Sidney J Johnson - Aye  
Eli Karatassos - Aye  
Timothy Mackey - Not Present  
Brian Reese - Aye  
William Ronning - Aye

**The Consent Agenda consists of items for which the applicant is in agreement with the staff recommendation and for which no known objections have been identified nor anticipated by staff. Any objections raised at the meeting will result in the item being moved to the Regular Agenda.**

**V. Consent Agenda**

**VI. Old Business**

**VII. Regular Agenda**

4. [Appeal of Administrative Ruling - 111 E. 34th St. -56446](#)

Attachment: [Staff Report -56446.pdf](#)  
Attachment: [Ortho-Zoning-Imagery.pdf](#)  
Attachment: [Northview.pdf](#)  
Attachment: [Southview.pdf](#)

Attachment: [COA \(Denied\).pdf](#)

Attachment: [Neighbor Comment.pdf](#)

Present for the petition was: Brian Robin, Agent

Mr. Butler gave the following summary:

The petitioner, Brian Robin (agent for Betsy Freeman), is requesting approval of an appeal of a ruling by the Design Administrator for the Thomas Square/Mid-City Zoning District that a tile roof may not be replaced with a metal roof on a contributing structure. The subject property is a designated historic structure located at 111 E. 34th Street, between Drayton and Abercorn streets. The property is zoned TC-1 (Traditional Commercial, Thomas Square/Mid-City Zoning). The residence, which was built in 1909 in the Mission Revival style, is in the Thomas Square Streetcar National Register Historic District. The structure has a roof of red terracotta clay barrel tiles. Mr. Robin requested approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for a replacement roof system that used asphalt-coated metal panels. He presented examples of the material.

Ms. Sarah Ward, Design Administrator, denied the use of the metal roofing material, on February 9, 2012. Ms. Ward cited the standard that "all repair or renovation of a contributing structure shall occur so as to retain all character defining elements." Under the Thomas Square/Mid-City Zoning Ordinance, section 4.3.1, changing the exterior appearance of a principal structure in the TC-1 district requires a Certificate of Appropriateness. The Historic Preservation Officer, acting as the Design Administrator, must review proposed construction for Visual Compatibility, including roof shapes and materials, under the standards established in section 7.1 (Neighborhood Design Standards) and provide approval. The petitioner's agent ordered the asphalt-covered metal roof system prior to receiving approval, and is seeking a reversal of the denial on the grounds of financial hardship. Financial hardship is not a permitted basis for overturning the ordinance standard or the ruling of the Historic Preservation Officer/Design Administrator. Staff recommends **denial** of the requested appeal.

Mr. Karatassos asked if the work has been completed.

Mr. Butler answered that it had not. However, each panel has to be formed and cut to the roof. This was done prior to receiving the Certificate of Appropriateness.

Speaking on the petition: Mr. Robin explained the reasons for bringing this petition before the board. He stated that he had filed a permit for a roof replacement and that it was at this time that he was made aware that he would have to receive approval from the Historic Review Board. He added that he was unaware that this property was in the Mid-City Historic District. The property owner would only like to return the subject property to its original design. He also added this would be a financial hardship on his client, since the material has been pre-ordered and paid for in advance. He stated that the material has the same appearance as the original design but at less cost. It would be very difficult for the lay person to tell the difference in the materials. It is a metal, lifetime, green product. He continued that his product was not a cheap product but in fact made to recreate the same look as a terracotta roof.

Vice Chairman Reese asked Mr. Butler why the roofing material is not appropriate.

Mr. Butler stated that there is a fundamental difference between an imitation product and an

actual product. Hardy Board, for instance, which looks like actual wood is not permitted for the replacement of siding in this District or in the Landmark Historic District. It may look the same, but it is not the same. He explained that in Disney World, there are houses that look a lot like the houses in Savannah, but they are made of fiberglass. The ordinance is in place to prevent Savannah from becoming a Disney World version of itself.

Mr. Reese questioned if the proposed material chosen by the petitioner was an inferior material.

Mr. Butler replied that it was not. He added that it is an excellent roofing material and it will do a great job of keeping the weather out probably for the life of the project. He added that the question here is not if it is a good material; the question here is is it an appropriate material for a historic structure.

Vice Chairman Reese questioned what would the petitioner have to do in order to replace the roof. He asked if he would have to use the exact material as the original roof.

Mr. Butler stated that the material would have to be as close as could be obtained from modern sources.

Shannon Lancaster, friend of the petitioner, stated that she was in favor of the roofing material. She added that she has a background in architecture and understood the point of replacing the clay with the closest material source. However, she felt that the owner had a great product.

Mr. Robin stated that he was not requesting forgiveness for the material that he had ordered prior to receiving an approval. He stated that he was requesting approval on the type of material that will be used on the project.

Sarah Ward, Historic Preservation Officer, stated that the cotta tile that is on the structure's roof is a character-defining feature of the Mission Style building on this property. The preservation standard in the Ordinance states "that all character defining features should be retained and preserved". Replacing it with an alternate material that is metal coated with asphalt is not retaining the terracotta style.

**Board Action:**

Staff recommends **denial** of the requested appeal. - PASS

**Vote Results**

Motion: Eli Karatassos

Second: Sidney J Johnson

Sidney J Johnson	- Aye
Eli Karatassos	- Aye
Timothy Mackey	- Not Present
Brian Reese	- Aye
William Ronning	- Aye

5. [Setback Variances - 4101 Raybun Street -57873](#)

Attachment: [Staff Report -57873.pdf](#)  
Attachment: [Ortho-Zoning-Imagery.pdf](#)  
Attachment: [Southview.pdf](#)  
Attachment: [Northview.pdf](#)  
Attachment: [Site Plan.pdf](#)

Present for the petition was: Gloria Johnson and Natalie Johnson, Petitioners

Mr. Jack Butler gave the following summary:

The petitioner, Gloria Marie Johnson, is requesting approval of a 9.53-foot variance from the required 15-foot side yard setback and a 12-foot variance from the required 25-foot rear yard setback in order to construct a house on a vacant lot. The petitioner built an addition onto her existing house to the south of the subject property. The addition lies over the property line separating the two lots (which both have the address of 4101 Raybun Street). The remaining buildable area of the corner lot was affected by the petitioner's actions in the past, effectively treating the two lots as a single parcel by using the corner lot for the addition to their residence. Staff recommends **denial** of the requested variances.

**Speaking on the petition:** Gloria Marie Johnson, property owner, stated that the property can be grandfathered. She explained her plans for the property. She stated that the properties are shared with her children and they want to build on the lot. The children will reside on the property.

Vice Chairman Reese explained to the petitioner a few options she had with the recombination of the lots.

Natalie Johnson, neighboring property owner, explained her concerns regarding parking on the lot.

Ernestine Jones, President of the Liberty City Neighborhood Association, complimented the family for their improvements to the subject property. She informed that some neighbors are opposed to new construction on the existing property. She explained that the Association has been fighting for over ten years to have standard size lots. She stated that the residents would like to maintain the structure of the neighborhood and improve its appearance. She asked that the petition be denied.

Mr. Chisholm, neighboring resident, stated that the lot sizes were originally 40x100. The lots were split and made into 60x100. The lots were made for single family houses. He explained that the petitioner did not have enough land to add another house or to expand on the existing house without creating an eyesore in the neighborhood. He asked that the petition be denied.

Mr. Wesley Williams, neighboring property owner, stated that he was in support of the petitioner. He stated that he has taken an overview of the neighborhood and found that the only consistency in the neighborhood was its inconsistency; there is no conformity. This project will allow a large family to live in a larger house. It will not be multifamily dwelling. He asked that the petition be approved as submitted.

**Board Action:**

Staff recommends **denial** of the requested variances. - PASS

**Vote Results**

Motion: Eli Karatassos  
Second: William Ronning  
Sidney J Johnson - Aye  
Eli Karatassos - Aye  
Timothy Mackey - Not Present  
Brian Reese - Aye  
William Ronning - Aye

6. [Appeal of Administrative Ruling - 1955 E. Victory Drive - 57209](#)

- Attachment: [Staff Report -57209.pdf](#)
- Attachment: [Ortho-Zoning-Imagery.pdf](#)
- Attachment: [Southview.pdf](#)
- Attachment: [Northview.pdf](#)
- Attachment: [Site Plan.pdf](#)
- Attachment: [Renderings.pdf](#)
- Attachment: [Distance from Intersection.pdf](#)

Present for the petition: William Snider

Jack Butler gave the following summary:

The petitioner, William Snider, is requesting approval of an appeal of a decision by the Zoning Administrator to disallow a billboard (separate use sign). Examination of the area shows that there are three separate use signs in the Southwest Quadrant of the intersection of Skidaway Road and Victory Drive. The Zoning Administrator was correct in his ruling. Staff recommends **denial** of the appeal.

**Speaking on the petition:** William Snider, petitioner explained the reason he was before the Board was to try to understand a "quadrant". He stated that at the previous meetings with the City Zoning staff, it could not be determined where the measurements started or ended. He also stated that the billboard on the corner of Skidaway and Victory Drive is not considered a legal billboard by the State of Georgia. The City of Savannah however, did permit a fourth sign where there were three signs erected already. He stated that he did not understand how this was allowed and the City of Savannah is now contradicting itself.

Mr. Butler stated that this is true and was permitted in September 2004. This petition, however, dealt with the separation requirements. Under the ordinance there is also a provision that requires separate use signs (billboards) to be separated by 500 feet. This billboard is within 315 feet of the nearest billboard. This is the variance that was granted as

a separation; not for an additional billboard. He concluded that if this sign is illegal, then it should be removed leaving only two signs and allowing room for the petitioner's sign. This is not the case now. There are now three signs and this would make a fourth. He concluded that, 1) the third sign was permitted eight years ago; 2) it did not violate the limitation on the number of signs in the quadrant. They did install a sign that was too close to another free-standing sign.

John (inaudible) stated that he was not saying that he was either opposed or in favor of the petition, but that the ordinance does clearly say that the point is measured from the right of way.

**Board Action:**

The Zoning Administrator was correct in his ruling. Staff recommends denial of the appeal. - PASS

**Vote Results**

Motion: Sidney J Johnson

Second: Eli Karatassos

Sidney J Johnson - Aye

Eli Karatassos - Aye

Timothy Mackey - Not Present

Brian Reese - Aye

William Ronning - Aye

**VIII. Other Business**

**IX. Adjournment**

7. Submittal

There being no other business to come before the board, the Vice Chairman declared the March 27, 2012 SZBA meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack Butler, Secretary

/cbm

*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.*