



City of Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals

Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room
April 28, 2022 10:00 A. M.
Meeting Minutes

April 28, 2022 City of Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals

Members Present: Stephen Merriman, Jr., Chair
Michael Condon, Vice Chair
Larry Evans
Hunter Hall
Karen Jarrett
Stephen M. Plunk

Members Absent: Betty Jones

Others Present: Pamela Everett, Esq., Assistant Executive Director
Marcus Lotson, Development Services Director
Nirva Gandhi, Development Services Planner and Historic Preservation Planner
Jacqualle Johnson, Development Services Planner Technician
Melissa Paul-Leto, Development Services Planner
Julie Yawn, Systems Analyst
Mary Mitchell, Administrative Assistant

I. Call to Order and Welcome

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

Mr. Merriman called the meeting to order at 10:00 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 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. 5500 Abercorn Street - Sign Variance - 22-001538](#)

Motion

The Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby approve to remove 5500 Abercorn Street from the Agenda as requested.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Stephen Plunk

Second: Michael Condon

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

V. Item(s) Requested to be Withdrawn

VI. Approval of Minutes

[4. Approval of March 24, 2022 Meeting Minutes](#)

📎 [March 24, 2022 Meeting Minutes.pdf](#)

Motion

The Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby approve the March 24, 2022 Meeting Minutes.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Stephen Plunk

Second: Michael Condon

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

VII. Approval of Final Agenda

VIII. Consent Agenda

IX. Old Business

[5. 712-714 West 39th Street - Variances to the maximum lot coverage and minimum rear yard setback requirements to reconstruct two \(2\) duplex residences - 22-000908-ZBA](#)

📎 [site_visit_3_15_22.pdf](#)

📎 [Application.pdf](#)

📎 [MAP.pdf](#)

📎 [1916 SANBORN MAP - SHEET 135.pdf](#)

📎 [1955 SANBORN MAP - SHEET 135.pdf](#)

📎 [Staff Report.pdf](#)

Ms. Melissa Paul-Leto gave the staff report. The petitioner, Chris Hunkele, is requesting variances for maximum building coverage, and the minimum rear yard setback requirements. The subject property, 712-714 West 39th Street, is located on the north side of West 39th Street between Harden and Florence Streets. The requested variances are pursuant to the renovation and reconstruction of the existing contributing resources. The parcel is located within the Cuyler-Brownville Historic District, as well as the Traditional Residential (TR-1) zoning district. The property has a total lot area of 5,000 square feet with an average depth of approximately 50 feet, an average width of 100 feet, and consists of two (2) detached duplex rowhouses. The rowhouses were constructed in 1903 and are a contributing resource within the National Register Cuyler-Brownville Historic District and the local Cuyler-Brownville Historic District.

Ms. Paul-Leto explained that the petitioner is seeking variances to Section 5.9.5 – Development Standards for Permitted Uses. In the TR-1 zoning district, the maximum building coverage for Two-Family, Three and Four-Family is 40% and the maximum rear yard setback for all other housing types and uses are a minimum of twenty (20) feet. The petitioner is proposing to demolish the existing non-contributing rear additions from the two (2) detached contributing duplex rowhouses and reconstruct the rear additions within the existing configuration, with building coverage at 77.4%, or 3,870 square feet, and a rear yard setback at 8 feet.

Ms. Paul-Leto explained that on March 31, 2022, the Savannah Historic Preservation Commission approved a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of the non-historic additions and the rehabilitation of the rowhouses located at 712-714 West 39th Street.

Ms. Paul-Leto reported that based on the variance criteria, staff recommends approval of the requested variance for 712-714 West 39th Street. Ms. :Paul-Leto entertained questions from the Board.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Mr. Chris Hunkele of Terminus Design Group, Inc. was present on behalf of the petition. He thanked the Board for hearing their petition and thanked the staff for the recommendation to approve the variances. Mr. Hunkele explained that the property was previously owned by the Historic Savannah Foundation (HSF). They have been working on the property for several months. As the photos show, the building is badly deteriorated and presently uninhabitable. As the new coverage, etc. will put them over the maximum building coverage, they are asking for the property to be classified as nonconforming. They will rehabilitate the units, so they will become rental apartment units. He entertained questions from the Board.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Ryan Arvay of Historic Savannah Foundation [HSF] said they wanted to go on record as supporting this request. This property will not only restore a very dilapidated historic building, but also provide much needed affordable housing for the area. As the applicant has already stated, this is just basically putting back historic portions of the building on the same footprint.

BOARD DISCUSSION

The Board was in agreement with the staff recommendation.

Motion

The Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby approve the maximum building coverage from 40% to 77.4%, or 3,870 square feet and, the maximum rear yard setback of twenty (20) feet to eight (8) feet to

renovate and reconstruct two (2) duplexes at 712-714 West 39th Street.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Michael Condon

Second: Larry Evans

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

X. Regular Agenda

[6. 655 East 34th Street - Variance to the Minimum Lot Area - 22-001597-ZBA](#)

📎 [TND - WB 25 - KURANI - PLANS - 04-12-22.pdf](#)

📎 [Sanborn Map 1955 - Sheet130.pdf](#)

📎 [Sanborn Map 1916 - Sheet 130.pdf](#)

📎 [Application.pdf](#)

📎 [MAP.pdf](#)

📎 [Letter of Support #1.pdf](#)

📎 [Staff Report.pdf](#)

Ms. Melissa Paul-Leto gave the staff report. The applicant is requesting a variance of 590 square feet to the minimum lot area requirement of 4,500 square feet for property located within the Traditional Residential (TR-1) zoning district to construct a two-family residence. The existing 3,910 square foot lot area does not meet the required minimum lot area of 4,500 square feet

Ms. Paul-Leto explained that the subject property is located on the south side of East 34th Street, with East 34th Lane on the northside, in the Midtown Neighborhood within the TR-1 (Traditional Residential) zoning district). Ms. Paul-Leto said that 655 East 34th Street is a 3,910 square foot existing vacant lot. The petitioner is proposing to construct a two-family residence. The minimum lot area for a duplex in the TR-1 district is 4,500 square feet. The vacant lot would be 590 square feet short of the required 4,500 square foot lot area. There are two duplexes within the subject block. The closest duplex is located within 50 feet of the subject property, across East 34th Lane at 1813 & 1815 Atlantic Avenue with a lot area of 5,520 square feet. The second closest duplex is located at 1714 #A and 1714 #B LeGrand Street with a lot area of 4,848 square feet. Both properties exceed the minimum lot area of 4,500 square feet for a duplex.

Ms. Paul-Leto reported that based upon the variance criteria, staff recommends denial of the variance request for 655 East 34th Street. Ms. Paul-Leto entertained questions from the Board.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Mr. John Sumner was present on behalf of the petition. Mr. Sumner explained that duplexes are scattered throughout this area. A new house is being constructed on LeGrand Street He believed that another duplex would be beneficial to this neighborhood. He explained that he bought the property when it was subdivided by the owner on the east. When he purchased the lot, he did not know about the ordinance of 4,500 square feet. This is why he is now asking for the variance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Eddie Jones, property owner of 625 East 34th Street, emailed a letter of support to staff. The letter of support is attached to today's agenda. No other public comments were made.

BOARD DISCUSSION

The Board was in agreement with the staff recommendation to deny the variance request .

Motion

The Savannah Zoning Board of Appeal does hereby deny the minimum lot size variance to construct a duplex at 655 East 35th Street.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Karen Jarrett

Second: Michael Condon

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

[7. 622 West 37th Street - Variance to re-establish a non-conforming use - 22-001316-ZBA](#)

[📎 Submittal Packet.pdf](#)

[📎 Staff Report.pdf](#)

[📎 MAP.pdf](#)

Ms. Melissa Paul-Leto gave the staff report. The applicants [Josh and Sarah Ward] are requesting a variance to re-establish a non-conforming use to a contributing accessory building into two dwelling units. The subject property is located on the north side of West 37th Street, with West 36th Lane on the south side, in the Cuyler Brownville Neighborhood within the TR-1 (Traditional Residential) zoning district. The property originally was a two-story, single family residence, but now it has become a duplex. The property owner lives on the first floor and the second floor is rented. The subject property is 4,690 square feet in lot area and includes the following buildings:

- A two-story duplex facing West 37th Street with addresses 622 #A and 622 #B West 37th Street.
- A one-story concrete block accessory structure with no roof located to the rear of the property.
- A one-story wood framed accessory building that faces West 36th Lane.

Ms. Paul-Leto explained that on the alley, you will see the other two accessory buildings. These buildings have been on the same building map since 1916. They are contributing buildings. They were duplexes, but the applicants are requesting to reestablish the non-forming use. Presently, only one carriage house is allowed per dwelling unit. Now, they are requesting that the concrete block structure have one dwelling unit. They are also requesting that the contributing wood frame structure have one dwelling unit in it.

Mr. Merriman asked if both of the units have been here since 1916?

Ms. Paul-Leto answered yes..

Mr. Merriman asked if the block structure is that old?

Ms. Paul-Leto answered that the blue color structure does not have a roof on it. It looks like a concrete maze, with walls. But, it has been there since 1916. She explained that this item is very unique. The Board is not looking at the various criteria to establish approval or denial. They are doing it through the criteria for the re-establishment of a nonconforming use. Therefore, when she went through the criteria, she saw the establishment of three structures on the property; a principal duplex on 37th Street; a one-story concrete block accessory structure, and the one-story wood framed accessory building facing 36 Street Lane.

Ms. Paul-Leto reported that staff is recommending denial of the variance request to re-establish a non-conforming use to reconstruct two accessory dwelling units at 622 West 37th Street. Ms. Paul-Leto entertained questions from the Board.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Mr. Josh Ward of Ward Architecture was present on behalf of the petition. Mr. Ward thanked the staff for review of their project. He said they understand that this is a difficult site. However, they feel that it is beneficial to restore both of these historic buildings on this property, in order to create more affordable housing for this neighborhood. He said, regarding the site issues, they recognize that it is not easy to get parking here. However, he believes the benefits outweigh the negative aspects. Mr. Ward entertained questions from the Board.

Ms. Jarrett asked Mr. Ward to please define "affordable."

Mr. Ward answered that "affordable" is housing that is below the median income range.

Ms. Jarrett asked Mr. Ward if this is what he intends to do?

Mr. Ward answered that this is the intent. There will not be high residential buildings here.

Ms. Jarrett asked Mr. Ward if he has a price range now?

Mr. Ward answered no.

Mr. Plunk said he guessed the parking would be on-street. He asked Mr. Ward if they have done any research on the area to see if this is feasible. Is there a lot of on-street parking in this area?

Mr. Ward answered that some on-street parking is on 37th Street. To the west is Florence Street and it has street parking as well.

Ms. Paul-Leto reminded the Board that this specific criteria for re-establishing a non-conforming use is different than the variance criteria, in a sense that every single criteria needs to be approved in order for the approval of this request.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Ms. Jarrett said the parking seems as if it will be a nightmare.

Mr. Condon agreed with the parking situation. This particular section of 37th Street is not amendable to parking.

Motion

The Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby deny the variance request to re-establish a nonconforming use to reconstruct two accessory buildings for two dwelling units at 622 West 37th Street.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Karen Jarrett

Second: Hunter Hall

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

[8. 219 East 32nd Street - Variance to the Minimum Building Frontage - 22-000403-ZBA](#)

📎 [MAP.pdf](#)

📎 [Submittal Packet.pdf](#)

📎 [HPC Decision.pdf](#)

📎 [Staff Report.pdf](#)

Ms. Melissa Paul-Leto gave the staff report. The petitioner, Jonathan Leonard of Sawyer Design, is requesting a 10% variance to the 70% minimum building frontage requirement to construct a two-story, single-family residence in the Traditional Neighborhood – 2 (TN-2) zoning district at 219 East 32nd Street.

Ms. Paul-Leto stated that on November 22, 2021, the Savannah Historic Preservation Commission approved a Certificate of Appropriateness [COA] for the proposed new construction for a two-story, single-family dwelling for the vacant parcel located at 219 East 32nd Street in the Streetcar Historic District. The parcel does not have access to a lane; therefore, the required parking is accessed from East 32nd Street. To accommodate the required parking on site, and to be consistent with the building width of contributing single-family buildings on the block face, the frontage of 60% is being proposed. The Historic Preservation Commission recommended approval for the variance from the standard. Ms. Paul Leto showed the Board the proposed site plan.

Ms. Paul-Leto said the petitioner will be able to meet the 70% building frontage requirement. However, a parking variance would be required to meet the off-street parking requirements. Therefore, staff has found that a 101% reduction of the building frontage is a minimal request.

Ms. Paul-Leto said based on the variance criteria, staff recommends approval of the variance request for 219 East 32nd Street. She entertained questions from the Board.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Mr. Jon Leonard of Sawyer Design said he was representing the owners of this project. Mr. Leonard thanked the staff for reviewing the project. He entertained questions from the Board.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Katie Jones wanted to know if the petitioner was moving the house further to the sidewalk .

Ms. Paul-Leto answered that there is a section in the Code for a certain width of a building to be constructed in the Historic District. The petitioner would need a requirement of 70% of the width. In order to do this for this applicant, they would have to dismiss a driveway since parking is required for new

construction. This is why the applicant is asking for the 10% reduction, in order to supply the parking spaces.

BOARD DISCUSSION

The Board was in agreement with the staff recommendation.

Motion

The Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby approve the maximum building frontage from 70% to 60% to construct a two-story single family residence at 219 East 32nd Street.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Michael Condon

Second: Stephen Plunk

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

9. 2309 Burroughs Street - Rear yard Setback and Lot coverage Variance Requests - 22-001158

📎 [SIGNED Board_Decision 22-000067-COA_2309_Burroughs_Street.pdf](#)

📎 [Staff Report.pdf](#)

📎 [Map.pdf](#)

📎 [Photos of Property.pdf](#)

📎 [Site Plan with Setbacks.pdf](#)

📎 [Sanborn Maps.pdf](#)

📎 [Topographic Map.pdf](#)

Mr. Jacqualle Johnson gave the staff report. The petitioner, Charles Sells of PIP-Group, LLC, is requesting the following variances:

-A variance for a 6-foot reduction to the minimum 20-foot rear yard setback requirement for a single-family detached dwelling unit.

-A variance for a 5% increase in lot coverage to the maximum 50% lot coverage for a single-family detached dwelling unit.

Mr. Johnson said the property is located in the Cuyler-Brownville Historic District. The applicant intends to rehabilitate the dilapidated structure and has received approval from the Historic Preservation Commission (22-000067-COA). The subject property currently has a total lot area of 2,160 square feet and an average depth of approximately 60 feet with an average width of 36 feet.

Mr. Johnson explained that the petitioner is planning to increase the lot coverage and reduce the rear yard set-back. He said the petitioner is proposing a fourteen-foot and two-inch (14'-2") rear yard set-back for the existing single-story house on 2309 Burroughs Street, where twenty (20) feet is the minimum requirement. " Section 5.9.5 states that single-family detached dwelling units shall have a maximum of

fifty (50) percent lot coverage." The petitioner is proposing a five (5) percent lot coverage increase.

Mr. Johnson reported that based upon the review criteria, staff recommends approval of the requested variance for 2309 Burroughs Street. He entertained questions from the Board.

Mr. Condon stated the petitioner is not asking to expand the footprint of the current building, but just that the building is not in compliance. Is this the situation?

Mr. Johnson answered yes.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Mr. Steve Lieberman came forward and stated that he was representing the owner. A lot of damage is here and they want to bring the property back as it was originally. They are asking for the 14 feet, two inches setback for the new addition that conforms to what was previously here. This means setting back one foot from what is left of the historic portion of the house. In accordance with the MPC instructions, they will highlight that this is an addition and new to this structure.

Mr. Lieberman explained that an existing garage is here with a roof on it. Therefore, parking is here. The lot coverage is minimum and they are taking it back to what was previously existing.

Ms. Jarett asked the petitioner if the Historic Preservation Commission has already approved this variance..

Mr. Lieberman answered yes.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Mr. Hall asked staff to please show the petitioner's request again.

The Board was in agreement with the staff recommendation.

Motion

The Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby approve the rear yard setback and lot coverage variance request for 2309 Burroughs Street.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Stephen Plunk

Second: Karen Jarrett

Stephen Merriman, Jr. - Abstain

Karen Jarrett - Aye

Hunter Hall - Aye

Michael Condon - Aye

Larry Evans - Aye

Stephen Plunk - Aye

Betty Jones - Not Present

📎 [MAP.pdf](#)

📎 [Staff Report.pdf](#)

Mr. Nirav Gandhi gave the staff report. The subject property is in the TN-2 Zoning District, which requires a minimum lot size of 1,750 square feet per unit for a single-family attached dwelling. The applicant intends to split the lot in half, leaving each dwelling unit in the existing duplex on its own lot. The southernmost lot has space for off-street parking in the back of the house. However, the northernmost lot will have no room for an off-street parking site. The total size of the current lot is 2,640 square feet; after subdividing, each lot would be 1,320 square feet.

Mr. Gandhi explained that the owner, Byron Stiles, is requesting the following variances:

-A variance for a 430 square feet reduction from the minimum lot size (1,750 square feet) for the TN-2 district requirement for single-family attached dwelling unit.

-A variance for one off-street parking space.

Mr. Gandhi explained that the subject property at 1508 & 1510 Barnard St currently contains one duplex. The owner intends to subdivide the property in half, giving ownership of each of the units in the duplex and the land around it to separate owners. There are 11 duplexes in a one-block radius that have the same setup as the proposed subdivision, with a subdivision line through the center of the building. Five of them are of a similar lot size to the subject property. This property is in the Streetcar Historic District, but as no changes are being made to the structure, it does not need to undergo review by the HPC.

Mr. Gandhi reported that based upon staff's findings, staff recommends approval of the requested variances for 1508 & 1510 Barnard Street.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Mr. Bryon Stiles came forward and stated that he is the owner of the property. His intention is to sell the property. When he bought the property, he believed it was two separate properties and that there were two Property Identification Numbers [PIN]. But, he has found out that there is only one PIN. As Mr. Gandhi has stated, there are properties all around this property with the exact same footprint with two separate PINs. Consequently, he is requesting two separate PINs.

Mr. Stiles stated that one tree in the backyard was removed to allow for one parking space. But, it is not feasible for him to create another parking space. He has had the property for 12 years and, historically, there are no parking spaces. His tenants have always parked on their front street [Barnard Street], right in front of the house. Therefore, he does not believe that this will be an impediment to the neighborhood. Mr. Stiles entertained questions from the Board.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

BOARD DISCUSSION

The Board was in agreement with staff recommendation.

Motion

The Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals does hereby approve the lot size and parking variance for 1508 and 1510 Barnard Street as follows:

A variance for a 430-square feet reduction from the minimum lot size (1,750 square feet) for the TN-2 district requirement for a single-family attached dwelling unit, and a variance for one off-street parking space.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Stephen Plunk

Second: Larry Evans

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

XI. Other Business

XII. Adjournment

11. Adjourned

Mr. Hall asked the Board if they would be interested in having the staff's written report in front of them when they are making their presentation. .

Mr. Merriman said it would be nice to have their mouse back so they can stroll through the items as they want. He believes this is something they need to discuss with Mrs. Wilson.

Mr. Lotson said he will address the Board's concern with the MPC Executive Team and see what can be done in order to provide the Board some technology.

Mr. Merriman said the mouses have been missed for quite some time.

Mr. Hall said they don't need all the maps printed, but just the two-page staff report for each of the specifics would be helpful.

Mr. Merriman said he would prefer that the Board be given the mouses back. He and another Board member were talking about this before the meeting.

Mr. Lotson stated again that he will bring this request to the appropriate person's attention.

There being no further business to come before the Board, Mr. Merriman adjourned the meeting at 10:55 a. m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcus Lotson
Development Services Director

ML: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.