

MINUTES OF THE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

A regular meeting of the Plainfield Charter Township Zoning Board of Appeals was held at Township Hall on February 21, 2006.

Members present were Dave Ridout Chair; Vic Matthews, Secretary; Bret Emerson and Bill Parris. Also present was Peter Elam, Assistant Planner. Mr. Wynalda was absent.

Chair Ridout called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and read the Plainfield Charter Township Zoning Board of Appeals Guidelines, and the four-point test, "Statement of Practical Difficulty/Unnecessary Hardship".

1. Approve Minutes of January 17, 2006

Mr. Emerson, supported by Mr. Ridout, moved to approve the Minutes of January 17, 2006 as written.

Motion carried unanimously.

**2. Tony Dexterhouse, 2689 House Street NE
Section 3.17 (A) Outdoor Storage**

Chair Ridout requested that Secretary Matthews read the application submitted by the applicant and owner of the property, Mr. Tony Dexterhouse of 2689 House Street NE, Belmont, Michigan. Mr. Dexterhouse has submitted an application requesting a variance to allow the storage/parking of a camping trailer in the front yard where prohibited by the zoning ordinance under Section 3.17 (A) Outdoor Storage of the Plainfield Charter Township Zoning Ordinance.

Chair Ridout asked Mr. Dexterhouse if he would like to come forward and explain further his position regarding the proposed variance. His wife, Ms. Dexterhouse presented a letter from Shane Benit, 2770 House Street, and a petition signed by neighbors in support of the variance.

Mr. Dexterhouse indicated that the variance was necessary because of the low power lines next to the house and because there is no other level ground on the property.

Chair Ridout opened the public hearing and finding on one who wanted to speak on the issue, closed the public hearing and returned discussion to the Board.

Mr. Emerson and Mr. Matthews led discussion about having the electrical wires beside the house raised to accommodate the trailer height. Mr. Dexterhouse shared that he had contacted Consumers Energy several weeks ago but they had not gotten back to him. It was confirmed by several Board members that an independent, electrical company could do the work necessary to raise the mast. The electrical contractor would be able to take out the proper permits and contact Consumer Energy to reconnect the wires once the work was completed. The applicant should be without power for a short duration. An electrical contractor, after investigating the situation, should be able to inform the applicant how much time it would take to raise the mast for the electrical lines and provide an estimate on the cost factor. If the line were to be raised or relocated, the trees in the immediate area should be noted in case the line were to fall during a storm.

Discussion pursued in regards to the slightly hilly terrain, the location of the septic system, well and swimming pool. Various locations for placement of the trailer were suggested including using a bulldozer and flattening out an area for the trailer behind the home. It was suggested that a driveway could be provided to go to the rear of the property. It was confirmed that the property consisted of approximately 3 acres with an unattached accessory building in the front yard. There was sufficient land in the rear of the property for the trailer but getting to the rear area would be challenging and require some expense.

Mr. Bruce Yowitz, adjacent neighbor participated in the discussion even though the public hearing was closed. He saw no reason why Mr. Dexterhouse could not continue to park his trailer where it had been parked for a long time. The trees and landscaping made it almost impossible for the trailer to be seen during spring, summer and fall and backing a trailer up a steep hill to the rear property was difficult. The trailer was not an eyesore and the neighbors were a long way away because the area is Rural Estate Zoned, which means the lots are usually 60,000 square feet in size (1 1/2 acres) or larger.

Chair Ridout recognized Mr. Elam who explained that Mr. Dexterhouse had submitted an application requesting a variance to allow the storage/parking of a camping trailer in the front yard where prohibited.

Mr. Elam shared background information, the applicant was sent a code enforcement letter regarding improper storage of a travel trailer, a white Raptor trailer, two snowmobiles on a trailer near an accessory building and a red and gray unlicensed Chevrolet Silverado, all located in the front yard as the result of a citizen complaint. In regards to the camper, the applicant was given the option of removing the camper, relocating the camper or making an appeal to the Zoning Board of Appeals. Mr. Dexterhouse is proposing to keep the camper stored in the front yard approximately 100 feet from the front property line and 21 feet from the side property line.

Staff has reviewed the application and had an opportunity today to visit the site. Mr. Elam pointed out the fact that the Board had a difficult task when asked to approve a variance that would stay with the property forever. The Board shall grant such variances only upon finding from reasonable evidence that the variance meets the Four Point Test which was read earlier. In this case, the applicant does not qualify and Mr. Elam could not support the request as there were other remedies available allowing for proper parking of the camper.

Chair Ridout stated that as he drove to the meeting this evening, even on Belmont Road, he observed several areas where zoning enforcement was not being maintained. He observed, campers, snowmobile trailers, all types of stuff parked along the road and in front of homes. That does not make it right and it is hopeful that the situation will be changed as the Ordinance Enforcement Officer proceeds. There are many reasons for the ordinances and one of them is to keep blight out of the Township. The storage of vehicles in the front yard is generally detrimental to property values and can be considered a blighting factor upon adjacent properties.

Chair Ridout suggested alternative locations for parking the camper and alternative solutions to the problem. He reconfirmed that once a variance is approved it is good for the life of the property unless special conditions are placed upon it.

