

S T A T E O F N E W Y O R K
COUNTY OF JEFFERSON

-----x
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

PUBLIC HEARING

#603

Area variance to increase the allowed sign
surface area.

-----x
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

PUBLIC HEARING

#604

Use variance to allow a multiunit dwelling
in a residential district.

-----x
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PUBLIC HEARING

#605

Area variance to increase the maximum
unbuilt frontage.

-----x
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

PUBLIC HEARING

#606

Area variance to reduce the required façade
transparency.

-----x

S T A T E O F N E W Y O R K
COUNTY OF JEFFERSON

-----x
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

PUBLIC HEARING

#607

Area variance to increase the maximum allowed
footprint of an accessory structure in a
residential district.
-----x

245 Washington Street
Watertown, New York 13601
Wednesday, June 11, 2025

B E F O R E:

Chairperson: Samuel S. Thomas

Board Members: Adam Ruppe
James Corriveau
Molly Farrell

Senior Planner: Geoffrey Urda

City Planner: Joseph Albinus

City Attorney: (Not present)

REPORTED BY: Tiffany-Jo Ponce, RPR
Court Reporter

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1 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: I'd like to call the
2 zoning board of appeals meeting to order.

3 We'll first begin with attendance.

4 Mr. James Corriveau?

5 MR. CORRIVEAU: Here.

6 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Mrs. Molly Farrell?

7 MS. FARRELL: Here.

8 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Mr. Adam Ruppe?

9 MR. RUPPE: Here.

10 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: I, Samuel Thomas,
11 Chairperson, is present, and we have Geoffrey Urda,
12 senior planner, with the planning department, and
13 Joseph Albinus is also here with the planning
14 department.

15 And first on the agenda, as you -- we
16 have an area variance to increase the allowed sign
17 surface area: Location, 1283 Arsenal Street;
18 applicant, Serianni Signs.

19 There is a notice of public hearing for
20 our fifth applicant, which I -- I will --

21 You may begin. I think it's -- we can --

22 MR. SERIANNI: Good evening. My name's
23 Paul Serianni. I represent Serianni Signs in
24 Frankfort, New York, and also Burlington for the
25 Watertown location that you just mentioned. Back

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1 again.

2 I believe we did propose some reduction
3 in the square footage on the plan there. And I
4 know that I did hear them discussing some different
5 aspects of how to view the square footage, and I
6 wasn't sure exactly what the outcome of that was.

7 So, yeah, just wondering where we're at
8 with this. How we looking?

9 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Well, first, I
10 guess, we received your revised application --
11 excuse me -- from 207 -- 267.5 square feet and
12 reduced it down to 248.5 square feet; correct?

13 MR. SERIANNI: Yes, sir.

14 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: And the overage was
15 from 33 percent to 24.25 percent; correct?
16 That's --

17 MR. SERIANNI: That's correct, sir.

18 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Are there questions
19 by colleagues?

20 MR. RUPPE: Well, the last time, I was
21 wondering if you could go smaller yet and still be
22 seen from 81. Is this really the best you can do
23 or ...

24 MR. SERIANNI: Well, we believe, again,
25 it's the fair viewing distance in the -- in the --

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1 there is a national impact viewing distance for
2 letters and such.

3 And, as stated before, if we went with
4 the actual allowance of the square footage compared
5 to the building, it would look very odd. Very odd
6 because it would just be so small compared to this
7 huge, white pallet that's there. Obviously, I
8 think it would look odd and it wouldn't be the
9 impact that they're looking for, as I say, you
10 know, the -- the fair-across-the-board-type thing.

11 And, you know, the competitiveness with
12 the retailers, they feel it's an honest and fair
13 and modest proposal compared -- you know, we have
14 many examples that they show there that had just as
15 much or more. So we're just trying to -- trying to
16 make it fair across the board.

17 MR. RUPPE: Thank you.

18 MS. FARRELL: And Burlington was okay
19 with removing the extra branding?

20 MR. SERIANNI: Excuse me?

21 MS. FARRELL: Burlington was okay with
22 removing the extra branding, the --

23 MR. SERIANNI: Yes, ma'am.

24 MS. FARRELL: Okay.

25 MR. CORRIVEAU: I have a question as much

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1 for the staff as yourself here. It seems the way
2 the square footage is calculated, it's a little
3 different than what I've seen in the past here;
4 wherein, it appears that the individual letters are
5 boxed out, and that square footage is then summed
6 up across the totality of the sign opposed to a
7 single parameter drawn all the way around the
8 symbology that's in the sign, which is what the
9 zoning code speaks to that, I presume, lines up
10 with the sign ordinance, and I don't know how that
11 came to pass, but ...

12 MR. SERIANNI: I'm not sure exactly. I
13 know there's been some communications between
14 Burlington and Planning and such, and I -- I wasn't
15 directly involved in that final decision, to be
16 honest with you.

17 It's appreciated. It's -- it could be
18 odd -- like, they chose this large heart for
19 Burlington and, you know, maybe the L and the dot
20 to the "I" and come up. But if you look at all
21 that space, that's considered negative space, which
22 is important for signage, just as important as the
23 actual signage itself. But there's got to be a
24 good ratio there; otherwise, it could look odd and
25 strange and unprofessional, in my opinion.

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1 So, yeah, they're unfortunate in regards
2 to choosing that large heart for the "B" because it
3 does take up some height to the letters and such in
4 the logo, so ...

5 MR. URDA: I'll speak to Mr. Corriveau a
6 little bit more directly.

7 And this predates your time here
8 (indicating).

9 Our -- our code enforcement department on
10 a sign like this has made it clear to us that their
11 interpretation of a sign like this is that the
12 negative space, you know, essentially what I'm
13 circling on my cursor between the B, the L, and the
14 I, and the -- over to here, they do not count that
15 negative space toward their calculations
16 (indicating).

17 The code enforcement supervisor is in
18 charge of administering the sign code, and he has
19 communicated to me, this is how they are enforcing
20 it, and this is how they're doing their
21 calculations. So I don't know how to be any more
22 direct.

23 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: What I've -- and I
24 know we cannot comment on the color of the sign,
25 but --

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1 MR. SERIANNI: Mm-hmm.

2 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: -- it always
3 appears -- and I remember this since -- in the
4 city, there was some businesses that were in
5 compliance and they were using red lettering. It
6 just -- it's amazing how that choice of color can
7 create what appears to be actually a larger sign
8 that is -- you know --

9 MR. SERIANNI: Yeah.

10 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: -- is in compliance.

11 MR. SERIANNI: Yeah. It's bold. It's
12 bold and vibrant and very eye-catching.

13 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Yeah, it is. It
14 comes right at you.

15 MR. SERIANNI: Yeah. I didn't design the
16 logo. I wish I did. I'd probably be richer today,
17 but ...

18 But it is a good logo and the colors, so
19 very professional. And I think, like you said last
20 time, so far, so good. They make a good presence.
21 The signs and the property there, I know, are very
22 odd -- oddly placed. The pylon sign, we talked
23 about that as well. I know that's a past thing,
24 but, again, just -- we tried to reduce and -- a
25 little bit. I know they fought the whole amount,

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1 but they did make a reduction in hope that you
2 folks would pass it through this time and move
3 forward with just -- just their presence. They
4 want people to know that they're there and -- from
5 that opposite side, you know, of the -- of
6 Thruway -- or 81, forgive me.

7 MR. CORRIVEAU: Let me just continue on
8 with that same train of thought. The two signs
9 that are labeled as existing -- and they are
10 existing -- I presume, were permitted at some
11 point. And the ones on the front of the store --

12 If you can bring that one up, yeah.

13 MR. ALBINUS: I think that one is ...

14 MR. CORRIVEAU: Nope.

15 MS. FARRELL: Keep going.

16 MR. SERIANNI: There you go.

17 MR. CORRIVEAU: Scroll down a bit so we
18 can see the dimensions there and all that, yeah.

19 You know, that calculation there, I
20 believe, is derived by drawing three separate
21 perimeters around "Burlington," for one, "deals,"
22 maybe "brands," a separate one, and certainly "wow"
23 is separate, and some together.

24 That's not what the language in the
25 zoning says. It says one continuous parameter.

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1 And I hear what you're saying about the code folks
2 can make their own interpretations on how they read
3 things and what they want to do, and I guess that's
4 their prerogative.

5 And I like the sign. Don't get me wrong.
6 I'm just trying to understand how to apply what's
7 in the black and white here. And I guess I'll just
8 shut up on that story.

9 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: But you have
10 eliminated "deals, brand" and the word "wow"?

11 MR. ALBINUS: For the --

12 AUDIENCE MEMBER: On the backside.

13 MS. FARRELL: On the backside.

14 MR. SERIANNI: On the backside. On the
15 backside, yeah. Sorry.

16 MS. FARRELL: I, for one, appreciate
17 Burlington's willingness to compromise. I think,
18 personally, that's a good compromise to get rid of
19 the extra branding and keep it a little cleaner.

20 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Yeah. There's a lot
21 of signage pollution when you're driving down 81 --

22 MR. SERIANNI: Yeah. You mentioned that
23 to me last time.

24 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: -- Watertown Center
25 to Arsenal Street. And, to me, it's not -- it

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1 doesn't represent what I would say in a -- well,
2 I'm going to -- I'm going to leave my thoughts to
3 myself, but it looks -- I mean, it looks terrible
4 when you're driving and then you have these giant
5 billboards and --

6 MR. SERIANNI: Unfortunately --
7 unfortunately, in today's era --

8 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: And it's not just in
9 the City of Watertown. It's every town.

10 MR. SERIANNI: Yeah. In the today's era,
11 the competitiveness of retail is -- is getting
12 more -- I believe, because of internet sales,
13 they're -- they're trying to -- I think there's a
14 meeting where they're trying to stay open. They're
15 trying to keep retail stores open. It's -- as you
16 know, today, there's a lot of companies that are
17 going out of business. And it's based on the
18 competitiveness, I'm sure, and the cost of doing
19 business and such or lack of traffic to the stores
20 themselves.

21 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Mm-hmm.

22 MR. SERIANNI: So the internet sales take
23 away from those walk-in sales, but I believe
24 they're trying to get people to come in more and,
25 obviously, they need something to entice them to do

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1 that, and they're trying to do some signage, of
2 course.

3 So it is tough, you know. It's a fight,
4 I think, for -- between municipalities and the
5 people that are out there trying to make a living
6 and doing everything they can to expose themselves
7 to the fullest and also keep people employed. If
8 you think about the employment aspect of it, we
9 don't know many things, but keeping people
10 employed, keeping stores open, and to do that, they
11 need to know that people see them.

12 Thank you very much.

13 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Yeah. That's quite
14 different from -- I remember 20 years ago --

15 MR. SERIANNI: Oh, gosh.

16 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: -- when all of those
17 plazas were -- people would buy them for space.

18 You know, at the same time, I would like
19 to comment that you moved from the Town of
20 Watertown into the city, and I believe that's an
21 advantage for the city in a lot of ways, certainly
22 here in these times.

23 Okay. Further comments, questions from
24 fellow board members?

25 MR. CORRIVEAU: Not so much a question

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1 for you, but for you guys (indicating).

2 I'd really like to get something in
3 writing from the codes folks as to how they see
4 this language and the sign ordinance on this issue
5 or any others they have differing interpretations
6 from what the plain language says in English so we
7 can do our job more intelligently going forward.

8 MR. URDA: I will communicate that
9 request in the morning.

10 MR. CORRIVEAU: Okay. Thanks.

11 MR. URDA: You're welcome.

12 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Before we close the
13 public hearing, were there any responses from
14 letters that were sent out regarding this variance
15 request?

16 MR. ALBINUS: There was just a couple
17 calls here and there that -- well, from -- not from
18 this one, but from the previous one where one of
19 the persons from the GetNow Urgent Care, he
20 thought, like, the Exxon was looking for something
21 that was going on his own building, I believe. But
22 once I explained it to him, he was all right.

23 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: All right. Thank
24 you.

25 City's position?

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1 MR. ALBINUS: We take no position.

2 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Okay. Thank you.

3 I need a motion to close the public
4 hearing, and then we're going to go on. We have to
5 do the short Part 2 SEQR.

6 MR. CORRIVEAU: I'll make the motion to
7 close the hearing.

8 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: May I have a second
9 on that motion?

10 MS. FARRELL: I'll second it.

11 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: All in favor?

12 MR. CORRIVEAU: Aye.

13 MS. FARRELL: Aye.

14 MR. RUPPE: Aye.

15 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Okay. Very good.

16 Just please answer no and -- the choices
17 are no or small impact may occur or moderate to
18 large impact may occur. Then if it is large, we
19 would have to justify that.

20 Will the proposed action create a
21 material conflict with the adopted land use plan or
22 zoning regulations? No or moderate?

23 MS. FARRELL: No.

24 MR. CORRIVEAU: No.

25 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Will the proposed

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1 action result in the change in the use or intensity
2 of use of land? No.

3 MS. FARRELL: No.

4 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Will the proposed
5 action impair the character or quality of the
6 existing community?

7 MS. FARRELL: No.

8 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: No.

9 Will the proposed action have an impact
10 on the environmental characteristics that cause the
11 establishment of a critical environmental area,
12 (CEA)?

13 MR. CORRIVEAU: No.

14 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: No.

15 Will the proposed action result in the
16 adverse change in the existing level of traffic or
17 affect existing infrastructure for mass transit,
18 biking, or walkway?

19 MS. FARRELL: No.

20 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: No.

21 MR. CORRIVEAU: No.

22 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Will the proposed
23 action cause an increase in the use of energy and
24 it fails to incorporate reasonably available energy
25 conservation or renewable energy opportunities?

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1 No.

2 Will the proposed action impact existing,
3 A, public/private water supplies?

4 MR. CORRIVEAU: No.

5 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: No.

6 MS. FARRELL: No.

7 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Public/private
8 wastewater treatment utilities?

9 MS. FARRELL: No.

10 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: No.

11 Will the proposed action impair the
12 character or quality of important historic,
13 archeological, architectural, or aesthetic
14 resources?

15 MS. FARRELL: No.

16 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: No.

17 Will the proposed action result in an
18 adverse change to natural resources? Example,
19 wetlands, waterbodies, groundwater, air quality,
20 flora and fauna?

21 MS. FARRELL: No.

22 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: No.

23 Will the proposed action result in an
24 increase in the potential for erosion, flooding, or
25 draining -- drainage problems? No.

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1 MR. CORRIVEAU: No.

2 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Will the proposed
3 action create a hazardous to environmental
4 resources or human health?

5 MR. CORRIVEAU: No.

6 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: I move that we adopt
7 the resolution finding that the proposed variance
8 will have no significant adverse effects or
9 environmental impacts.

10 MR. RUPPE: Second.

11 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: All in favor?

12 MR. RUPPE: Aye.

13 MS. FARRELL: Aye.

14 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Very good.

15 Now we'll begin with the voting process.

16 The applicant -- I'll begin and we'll
17 just go around.

18 The applicant has reduced the amount of
19 signage from 267 square feet to 245 -- 248.5 square
20 feet from an overage of 33 percent to 2.25 percent.
21 Although the requested signage of current signage
22 is substantial, I do not feel it will have an
23 adverse impact on the neighborhood, which mostly
24 consists of businesses, nor are there any
25 environmental impacts.

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1 I do feel the benefit to the applicant
2 can still be achieved by adhering to the
3 requirements of the zoning law. The applicant of
4 Burlington is the first business in view when
5 entering the Price Chopper plaza, and the
6 double-face sign can be seen when exiting Route 81
7 and onto Arsenal Street. Therefore, I do view this
8 is a self-created hardship. However, the signage
9 has been reduced.

10 Most importantly, it does not have, I
11 feel, a negative impact on the neighborhood.
12 Therefore, I vote yes to the requested variance.

13 Mr. Ruppe?

14 MR. RUPPE: I pretty much concur with
15 that. Because it's on the back of the building,
16 it's not creating any additional billboard-type
17 obstructions of view. So I think that limits the
18 impact to the neighborhood. And I agree with
19 everything all just said. I will vote yes, too.

20 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Thank you.

21 Mr. Corriveau?

22 MR. CORRIVEAU: It's fortuitous that the
23 building sits where it does and has that big wall
24 in the back to put the sign on right adjacent to
25 the exit ramp off 81. And the fact it's

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1 illuminated, it's really illuminating the billboard
2 and building there in some ways, and I'm going to
3 vote yes.

4 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Ms. Farrell?

5 MS. FARRELL: I appreciate the fact that
6 Burlington was willing to compromise and take down
7 their branding. I think that makes the sign a lot
8 more tolerable, and I -- I agree with what
9 everybody else said about it being on the back of
10 the building and it's in a good position facing 81.
11 I mean, I don't think it's going to negatively
12 impact the aesthetics of the area, so I also vote
13 yes.

14 MR. SERIANNI: Thank you so much.

15 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: So you have four yes
16 votes. Your variance is granted. Congratulations,
17 and Mr. Albinus will communicate with you on --

18 MR. SERIANNI: Great.

19 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: -- where you go with
20 granting that permit.

21 MR. SERIANNI: Great. Well, thank you so
22 much. I appreciate your time.

23 I just want to say that you guys have the
24 best maintained building, clean building I've -- I
25 think I've ever been in. It's beautiful in here.

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1 I mean that with all my heart. It's
2 well-maintained.

3 MR. URDA: I'll pass that on to our
4 buildings and grounds crew.

5 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: We need some
6 positive comments about our city.

7 MR. SERIANNI: Yeah. This building is
8 beautiful. I mean, everywhere you go, it's
9 spotless and it's just well-maintained, so thumbs
10 up.

11 MS. FARRELL: Thank you.

12 MR. SERIANNI: Thank you so much.
13 Everyone have a good night. Drive home safe.

14 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Now, we have a
15 variance request -- use variance request
16 Number 604, Number 605, Number 606, and that's to
17 remain tabled until July 16th.

18 And I do need to read the notice of
19 public hearing for the last one, area variance to
20 increase maximum allowed footprint of an accessory
21 structure in a residential neighborhood; location,
22 181 Cedar Street; applicant, Tia Allen.

23 Notice is hereby given that the Zoning
24 Board of Appeals of the City of Watertown,
25 New York, will meet on Wednesday, June 11, 2025, at

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1 7:00 p.m. in City Council Chambers on the Third
2 Floor of City Hall for the purpose of hearing one
3 variance request.

4 Variance Request Number 607 is for the
5 property located at 181 Cedar Street, being Parcel
6 Number 7-14-135.210, submitted by Tia Allen for an
7 increase in the allowed square footage of an
8 accessory structure in a residential district.

9 This hearing may be adjourned if
10 necessary. The meeting is open to the public.
11 Copies of the above request are available for
12 public inspection by contacting the planning
13 department at the phone number given in this notice
14 or by email, which is planning@watertown-ny.gov,
15 dated May 23, 2025, Joseph Albinus, Planner, is the
16 author of that.

17 If you would please approach the
18 microphone, state your name, your address for the
19 record, and your request.

20 MS. ALLEN: My name is Tia Allen. I live
21 at 181 Cedar Street, and I'm requesting to build a
22 bigger garage than the 1,200 square foot -- or
23 900 square feet?

24 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Well, 900 square
25 feet is what's allowed --

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1 MS. ALLEN: Right. And then mine is
2 1,250.

3 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: -- which that
4 discrepancy would require that area variance.

5 MS. ALLEN: Yep.

6 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Now, there's a pad
7 extending out from that for patio?

8 MS. ALLEN: Yep. We're just going to add
9 an extra -- since we would have the trucks there
10 pouring it, we were hoping to add a pad to the
11 back.

12 MR. ALBINUS: The pad only counts toward
13 the lot area coverage, but not the square footage
14 of an accessory structure.

15 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Okay. So that's
16 what I ...

17 I drove by your structure a few times.
18 It's very lovely, but it would be nice if we could
19 see that plan because, you know, you're driving by
20 and you're so -- yeah, that's helpful. Okay.

21 MS. ALLEN: The garage right next -- or
22 right neighboring it, 611, is the same size that
23 mine would be, but mine would be up a little bit
24 more towards my house, but it's the exact same size
25 garage.

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1 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Now, that's to house
2 vehicles and maintenance -- lawn maintenance
3 equipment and --

4 MS. ALLEN: Yep. It'll be two vehicles
5 that can drive in because it will go the same way.
6 The neighboring garage has three doors that -- or
7 three garage doors. Mine would just have one big
8 one in the front, and then we can store the lawn
9 mower and things like that in the back, because we
10 have two pretty big vehicles.

11 MS. FARRELL: I know in your written
12 description, it talked about taking down two of
13 those spruce trees.

14 MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

15 MS. FARRELL: Are you going to add any
16 additional vegetation, just because you have a fair
17 amount of impervious surface between all your
18 driveway and then the garage and the patio. Are
19 you worried about increasing your runoff?

20 MS. ALLEN: So that line of trees was
21 created for a barrier. I used to not own that
22 piece of land. We've acquired those -- the back
23 two pieces, so those trees are almost a hindrance
24 to enjoying the whole backyard. I think the
25 garage, with that patio piece, will be really nice

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1 to enjoy the beautiful backyard.

2 And, yes, my husband has been looking
3 into doing something with more trees. We just
4 planted a bunch of grapevines, and we have new
5 plants out front, but we don't know what vegetation
6 we're going to put there until the garage the
7 finalized.

8 MR. RUPPE: Yeah. You said you were
9 going to relocate the trees. Do you know where?

10 MS. ALLEN: We've called a lot of the
11 companies that could possibly do that for us, and
12 they're trying to talk us out of it. They're
13 saying it would be a waste of money, and that the
14 trees wouldn't survive. They're massive trees, and
15 they're beautiful, but it wasn't something that we
16 started.

17 But we are hoping, if we can pull them
18 out with a tire and not have to use a company, that
19 we can replant them over into that bigger area, but
20 we don't really know.

21 We also have apple trees that don't
22 really show up on that picture, but they're on that
23 left-hand side.

24 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Would you move the
25 trees closer? That must be the western end of the

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1 property line.

2 If you can put the cursor ...

3 MS. ALLEN: Yeah. My idea was to put
4 them in the other side -- like in the back
5 property. Similar to what my neighbor had done to
6 me, I wanted to move them back over there.

7 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Yeah. I'd caution
8 you on some of these blue spruce trees, because I
9 know they look lovely, but then what happens, after
10 about 20 years, they get canker and they just --

11 MS. ALLEN: Really?

12 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Yeah, they do. I
13 have some --

14 MS. ALLEN: Yeah. These are 15 years
15 old.

16 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: After about 15 or
17 20 years, they start looking raggedy.

18 MS. ALLEN: Oh.

19 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Just -- I was
20 reading that, and I was thinking about that,
21 knowing that I've been down that road, and probably
22 like Norway spruces are better choices --

23 MS. ALLEN: These are --

24 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: -- into the
25 evergreens.

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1 MS. ALLEN: These are supposed to be mini
2 spruces, and they're not.

3 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: No.

4 MS. ALLEN: They're giants.

5 MS. FARRELL: Pine trees generally lose
6 their lower branches as they age. Norway spruces
7 are not native to the area. I would pick a tree
8 that's native to the area.

9 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Oh, they are.
10 They're all over the --

11 MS. FARRELL: They're all over the place,
12 but they're not native trees.

13 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Yeah, but they
14 survive better than a -- blues do not survive.

15 MS. FARRELL: But Tree Watertown might be
16 able to help you pick a tree species, if you're
17 looking for recommendations for a native --

18 MS. ALLEN: Who did you ask for that?

19 MS. FARRELL: The people who run Tree
20 Watertown.

21 MS. ALLEN: Okay.

22 MS. FARRELL: I don't know the name of
23 the person who runs Tree Watertown.

24 MR. URDA: Bill Christopherson is the
25 president.

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1 MS. FARRELL: Yeah.

2 MS. ALLEN: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: I founded the group,
4 so ...

5 Okay. So getting back to your variance
6 request, how long has -- now, I noticed in one of
7 the applications that you had an address that was
8 filled out. I think it was Dimmick Street.

9 MS. ALLEN: That's my contractor's house.

10 MR. RESCH: That's mine.

11 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Oh, okay. But
12 you're residing obviously on Cedar.

13 MS. ALLEN: Yes. This is our house. He
14 started the whole process for me. And then when we
15 had to do this portion of it, I started working on
16 it and filling out all the paperwork.

17 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: How long have you
18 resided in that home?

19 MS. ALLEN: It's -- 14 or 15 years, I've
20 been there. I have a new son, and my husband has
21 to travel for work, so we just, like, need a garage
22 to cover the cars. So we've been working really
23 hard to save money, and we're ready to bite the
24 bullet, I guess, on building the structure.

25 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Not to throw a

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1 wrench into the works, but we've had these -- I
2 know you have a circular driveway. It's like a --
3 or semi. You know, are they allowed in the city?
4 Because I see them all over, and we have this front
5 yard ordinance that one cannot park a car in the
6 front yard.

7 Does that create ...

8 MR. URDA: Do you want to take a stab at
9 it first and then I'll --

10 MR. ALBINUS: Off the top of my head, I'm
11 not sure if it is allowed, but if it isn't, it will
12 be grandfathered in.

13 MR. URDA: I'll jump in.

14 MR. ALBINUS: Sorry.

15 MR. URDA: That's okay.

16 So parking is not allowed in a front yard
17 unless it is in front of a garage. You couldn't
18 just pave a front yard in front of your living room
19 and park a car there. That would be subject to
20 citation.

21 Regarding the horseshoe driveway and curb
22 cut, the city engineering department has the
23 purview -- because I know this is the second time
24 in this meeting I've referred to another
25 department. The city engineering department has

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1 the purview to award curb cut permits. So that --
2 the two curb cuts are a separate issue from the
3 parking in the front yard.

4 If this were -- if this alignment were
5 proposed today, you know, we would note there would
6 be no parking here, unless it was in front of a
7 garage (indicating). But this condition is
8 existing and existed before the adoption of this
9 code.

10 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Mm-hmm. Okay.
11 Thank you.

12 MR. RUPPE: For the City, could you
13 explain why there's a 900 square foot limit on
14 these buildings? What public good was intended by
15 the zoning law?

16 MR. URDA: Can you repeat that question
17 for us, Mr. Ruppe?

18 MR. RUPPE: Yeah. What was the intention
19 behind the 900 square foot limit?

20 MR. URDA: So recalling the zoning
21 rewrite steering committee as best I can, the
22 intent is that an accessory structure is supposed
23 to be subordinate in size and nature to a primary
24 structure on a parcel.

25 Square footage-wise and footprint-wise,

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1 1,000 feet, 1,100 square feet is where some smaller
2 houses started in where you get some smaller
3 footprint cape cods. The intent of 900 is to keep
4 it subordinate in size and nature to a primary
5 structure.

6 MR. RUPPE: Okay. Do we know the
7 square -- the square footage footprint of the house
8 here?

9 MR. RESCH: Like, 1,498, I believe.
10 Don't hold me to that, but I believe it's 1,498.

11 MR. URDA: 1776. Very patriotic.

12 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Square footage of
13 the house.

14 When you're driving by, that's a
15 large-appearing home. It truly is. It's nice that
16 you built within the city.

17 MS. ALLEN: Yeah. We love it there. We
18 really do. We just need to have a place to put our
19 cars in the winter.

20 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Mr. Corriveau, do
21 you have a question?

22 MR. CORRIVEAU: Yeah, just a couple
23 things. Just curious, is that a shared driveway
24 going to your neighbor's garage?

25 MS. ALLEN: Yes. That's my parents'

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1 house.

2 MR. CORRIVEAU: Okay.

3 MS. FARRELL: I was wondering.

4 MS. ALLEN: This used to be a parking lot
5 where my house is situated, and my dad bought it to
6 keep that right-of-way. And then my cousins bought
7 a piece of property and we moved this -- it's a
8 modular. We moved it from this side of town over
9 to Cedar Street, and that's how that all happened.

10 So my dad's still able to use that as a
11 drive-through, I guess. And it works well for his
12 grandson because he just sprints down it all the
13 time to get to his grandparents' house, so ...

14 MR. CORRIVEAU: There was also a little
15 inconsistency with the documentation of the sketch
16 of the site plan.

17 MS. ALLEN: That was the first one I've
18 ever done.

19 MR. CORRIVEAU: Yeah. The garage's
20 dimension is 40 by 30, which would be 1,200 square
21 feet even. Elsewhere, it's 32 leading to 1,280.

22 MS. ALLEN: I guess that -- yeah. That
23 would have been my mistake.

24 MR. CORRIVEAU: Okay.

25 MS. ALLEN: 32, I believe, is the size of

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1 the normal --

2 MR. RESCH: Right.

3 MS. ALLEN: Or the size of a
4 prefabricated width.

5 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Okay. 32 feet would
6 be the width and 40, the length?

7 MS. ALLEN: Yeah. So I must have messed
8 that up. My apologies.

9 MR. CORRIVEAU: Can you go back to the
10 aerial view, too?

11 Nothing to do with your application, but
12 pop's garage there, the ridge line runs parallel to
13 the property line. If you build yours 5 feet off
14 of that property line and have a setback that you
15 intend and put a ridge line the same way, you could
16 have two roofs draining into a relatively narrow
17 space, and I would be cautious of that. Maybe
18 separate it a little more, build your garage a
19 little further from your dad's, if that's the way
20 your roof is going to drain. Just a thought.
21 Thanks.

22 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Will there be
23 rain -- like rain gutters on your structure so it
24 will carry the water over the opposite way?

25 MS. ALLEN: Yeah. And his has that, too.

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1 MS. FARRELL: Yeah. That was what I was
2 going to ask. I was going to follow up and ask if
3 there was going to be gutters, too.

4 Just out of sheer curiosity, so your lot
5 used to be a parking lot. Was there a business
6 there? Like, why was the parking lot there?

7 MS. ALLEN: Morgia's restaurant was on
8 the corner way back in the 70s, and then that --
9 and the parking lot to the restaurant is where my
10 house is.

11 MS. FARRELL: Okay.

12 MS. ALLEN: Yeah. So that's why it was a
13 parking lot.

14 And then those -- when my father
15 purchased that piece, he didn't purchase all -- the
16 whole property that I now have, so over the last
17 couple years, we've been buying it from our
18 neighbors, the other two pieces of property, and
19 now it's one big one, which is beautiful and we
20 love it and we're very thankful. Yeah.

21 MR. CORRIVEAU: I just wanted to comment,
22 you and your dad have a couple of the nicest places
23 on the sand flats that I've ever seen.

24 MS. ALLEN: Thanks.

25 MR. CORRIVEAU: Nicest piece of real

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1 estate.

2 MS. ALLEN: I grew up there. I love
3 living there now, too.

4 MR. CORRIVEAU: It shows.

5 MS. FARRELL: To be honest, one of the
6 things I like about Watertown is that there's large
7 lots. Like for a city, like, that's a large lot
8 for a house that's within the city limits.

9 MS. ALLEN: Yeah. You don't really feel
10 like you're in the city when you're on my deck in
11 the back.

12 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: There's a lot of new
13 construction on the west -- on that west end, I've
14 noticed.

15 MS. ALLEN: Really?

16 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Well, I mean, newer
17 homes that have gone up over the past decade --

18 MS. ALLEN: Oh, yeah. A couple.

19 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: -- which is nice to
20 see that. And knowing a few of the people that
21 live there, they want to remain, you know, within
22 that neighborhood.

23 MS. ALLEN: Mm-hmm.

24 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Understood.

25 Okay. Other questions? Does the board

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1 feel they're prepared to vote this evening?
2 Before -- we'll have to do another SEQR -- is that
3 correct? -- and it will close that hearing.

4 But beforehand, are -- City's position?

5 MR. ALBINUS: We take no position.

6 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Okay. Have you
7 received any phone calls?

8 MR. ALBINUS: Nope.

9 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Okay.

10 MR. ALBINUS: No phone calls, no texts.

11 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: No comments?

12 Questions? Okay. Very good.

13 MR. ALBINUS: Nope.

14 MR. RUPPE: Does anybody else want to
15 speak before we close the meeting?

16 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: You're welcome to
17 state comments.

18 MR. RESCH: Hi. I'm Matthew Resch. I'm
19 her general contractor. We're really going to do a
20 really nice job. This is going to look very nice.
21 And trying to keep people in the city is really a
22 priority we're trying to do. I live in the city.
23 I love this city. We're getting ready to buy more
24 properties in the city. But it's going to look
25 really nice when it's done, and we're going to do a

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1 really proper job on it, too.

2 Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Thank you very much.

4 Any further comments or questions?

5 Okay. I'd like to make a motion to close
6 the public hearing.

7 MS. FARRELL: I'll make the motion.

8 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: I'll second.

9 MR. RUPPE: I'll second.

10 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: All in favor?

11 MS. FARRELL: Aye.

12 MR. RUPPE: Aye.

13 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Okay. Very good.
14 We'll begin the SEQR process.

15 Again, as I said before, please indicate
16 no or if there is a moderate to large impact, we
17 need to agree on that.

18 Okay. Will the proposed action create a
19 material conflict with an adopted land use plan or
20 zoning regulations? No.

21 MS. FARRELL: No.

22 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Will the proposed
23 action result in a change or in the use of
24 intensity -- I'm sorry -- or intensity of use of
25 land? No.

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1 MR. CORRIVEAU: No.

2 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Will the proposed
3 action impair the character or quality of the
4 existing community? No.

5 Will the proposed action have an impact
6 on the environmental characteristics that cause the
7 establishment of a critical environmental area
8 (CEA)? No.

9 MR. CORRIVEAU: No.

10 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Will the proposed
11 action result in an adverse change in the existing
12 level of traffic or affect existing infrastructure
13 for mass transit, biking, or walkway?

14 MS. FARRELL: No.

15 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: No.

16 Will the proposed action cause an
17 increase in the use of energy and it fails to
18 incorporate reasonably available energy,
19 conservation, or renewal energy opportunities?

20 MR. RUPPE: No.

21 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: No.

22 MS. FARRELL: No.

23 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Will the proposed
24 action impact existing, A, public/private water
25 supplies? No.

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1 B, public/private wastewater treatment
2 utilities?

3 MS. FARRELL: No.

4 MR. CORRIVEAU: No.

5 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Will the proposed
6 action impair the character or quality of important
7 historic, archeological, architectural, or
8 aesthetic resources?

9 MR. CORRIVEAU: No.

10 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: No.

11 Will the proposed action result in an
12 adverse change to natural resources? Example,
13 wetlands, waterbodies, groundwater, air quality,
14 flora and fauna?

15 MS. FARRELL: No.

16 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: No.

17 Will the proposed action result in
18 increase for the potential of erosion, flooding, or
19 drainage problems?

20 MR. CORRIVEAU: No.

21 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: No. It's my
22 understanding that rain gutters will be installed
23 on this proposed structure.

24 Will the proposed action create a hazard
25 to environmental resources or human health? No.

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1 MR. CORRIVEAU: No.

2 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: I move that we adopt
3 a resolution finding that the proposed variance
4 will have no significant adverse effects or
5 environmental impacts.

6 May I have --

7 MR. CORRIVEAU: I'll second.

8 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Okay. And all in
9 favor?

10 MS. FARRELL: Aye.

11 MR. CORRIVEAU: Aye.

12 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Okay. Very good.
13 Now we'll go to voting.

14 The applicant wishes to construct a
15 garage, which will house two cars and maintenance
16 equipment. The total -- the total footage of the
17 structure is 1,200 square feet -- am I correct? --
18 at which is in excess of 300 square feet of what is
19 allowed in the current zoning ordinance.

20 It would be difficult for the applicant
21 to achieve the desired benefits by reducing the
22 square footage of the structure. Although the
23 accessory structure is significantly larger than
24 what is allowed in the zoning ordinance, it will
25 not have an adverse impact on the neighborhood or

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1 nearby structures. In fact, the proposed accessory
2 building avoids -- it also -- it avoids the need to
3 build smaller buildings to house maintenance
4 equipment. Therefore, that's why they are allowing
5 this larger piece.

6 There are no environmental impacts. Rain
7 gutters will be installed on the building to
8 redirect water away from housing next door and into
9 the yard. In fact, the applicant has -- is also
10 thinking about relocating some established trees so
11 that the privacy is maintained.

12 It also meets all setbacks for area of
13 the yard and for side and -- or side and backyard
14 setbacks.

15 I do not perceive any problems with this.
16 I vote yes to the requested structure at 181 Cedar
17 Street.

18 MR. RESCH: Can I add something? Just to
19 clarify, it's 1,280 square foot. It's 32 by 40.

20 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Oh, okay.

21 MR. RESCH: I just want to make that very
22 clear.

23 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: You know, I left
24 that blank. I should have put that in there.
25 Okay. Thank you.

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1 Mr. Ruppe?

2 MR. RUPPE: Yeah. I agree with what you
3 said. It is a somewhat substantial number, but it
4 fits inside the sphere of the zoning ordinance and
5 what it's trying to achieve. And it achieves your
6 goal of staying here long term, which I think is
7 good for the neighborhood, so I also vote yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Mr. Corriveau?

9 MR. CORRIVEAU: I vote yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Mrs. Farrell?

11 MS. FARRELL: I also vote yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Well, your variance
13 has been granted; four yes votes. We're a
14 four-member vote presently. We might get to five.
15 And the prepare of your application, Mr. Albinus
16 will assist you in granting the necessary permits
17 and so forth.

18 MS. ALLEN: Great. Awesome. We really
19 appreciate your time.

20 MS. FARRELL: Thank you.

21 MR. RESCH: Thank you so much.

22 MS. ALLEN: Have a good night.

23 MR. ALBINUS: Thanks.

24 MR. RESCH: I'll call you or I'll see you
25 in a couple days?

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1 MR. ALBINUS: Yeah. Or vice versa.

2 MR. RESCH: Okay. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Okay. We're going
4 to adjourn the meeting. May I have a motion on
5 that?

6 MS. FARRELL: I'll make the motion.

7 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Oh, my God. I must
8 date myself. I was thinking that was where that
9 old restaurant was located.

10 MS. FARRELL: Oh.

11 MR. URDA: Nobody has seconded the motion
12 to adjourn. It is not adjourned yet.

13 MR. CORRIVEAU: I'll second it.

14 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: So, you know, I was
15 thinking about that. We were just having a
16 conversation about --

17 MR. URDA: Guys, you still haven't voted.
18 You have a motion and a second, but no vote --

19 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Okay. Let's just
20 vote on that.

21 MR. URDA: -- to adjourn.

22 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: All in favor?

23 MR. RUPPE: Aye.

24 MR. CORRIVEAU: Aye.

25 MS. FARRELL: Aye.

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1 CHAIRPERSON THOMAS: Okay. We adjourned
2 the meeting.

3 *(Proceedings concluded.)*
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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE


I, TIFFANY-JO K. PONCE, RPR, Senior Court Reporter and Notary Public in and for the State of New York, do hereby certify:

That the sworn testimony and/or proceedings, a transcript of which is attached, was given before me at the time and place stated therein; that the witness was duly sworn or affirmed to testify to the truth; that the testimony and/or proceedings were stenographically recorded by me and transcribed under my supervision.

That the foregoing transcript contains a full, true, and accurate record of all the testimony and/or proceedings held on June 11, 2025.

That I am in no way related to any party to the matter, nor to any counsel, nor do I have any financial interest in the event of the cause.

WITNESS MY HAND this 8 day of July, 2025.



TIFFANY-JO K. PONCE, RPR
Senior Court Reporter