

Biron L. Bedard <sup>1</sup>  
Lucas Burke <sup>2</sup>  
Bridget M. Denzer <sup>1</sup>  
Jack D. Hepburn  
Meaghan A. Jepsen <sup>2</sup>  
Paul H. MacDonald <sup>3</sup>  
Thomas N. Masland  
Jeffrey A. Rabinowitz  
John C. Ransmeier  
Nelson A. Raust <sup>2</sup>

**Ransmeier  
& Spellman** P.C.  
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

One Capitol Street • PO Box 600  
Concord, NH 03302-0600  
tel 603.228.0477 • fax 603.224.2780  
toll free 800.367.0477

2 Continental Boulevard  
Rochester, NH 03866

*\* Please direct all mail and telephone calls to the  
Concord office \**

[www.ranspell.com](http://www.ranspell.com)

December 7, 2021

Mr. Brian Arsenault  
Town of Allenstown  
16 School Street  
Allenstown, NH 03275

**RE: Variance Application of Paul Stauffacher**

Dear Mr. Arsenault:

Please find enclosed 7 copies of the Application for Variance (for ZBA members), together with envelopes and Certified Mail labels for mailing to abutters.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Jack D. Hepburn

E-mail: [jhepburn@ranspell.com](mailto:jhepburn@ranspell.com)

JDH:gjb  
Enclosures

Joseph S. Ransmeier  
1915-2010  
Lawrence E. Spellman  
1924-2001

Ronald E. Cook  
1947-2021

Daniel J. Mullen  
1953-2021

<sup>1</sup> Also admitted  
in Maine

<sup>2</sup> Also admitted  
in Massachusetts

<sup>3</sup> Also admitted  
in Vermont



Do Not Write in this Space.

Date Filed: \_\_\_\_\_

Case No.: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPLICATION FOR VARIANCE  
ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT  
TOWN OF ALLENSTOWN**

Name(s) of Applicant/Agent: Attorney Jack D. Hepburn, Agent

Address: 1 Capitol Street, Concord, NH 03301

Telephone Number: (603) 228-0477      Email: jhepburn@ranspell.com

Owner(s) of Property concerned: Paul R. Stauffacher

Address: 730 Borough Road, Pembroke, NH 03275

Telephone Number: (603) 340-5709

Street Location of Property: 91 Pinewood Road, Allenstown, NH 03275

Tax Map # **105** Lot # **3** Zone **C/LI**

Description of Property: Property contains 36 acres, more or less, and has frontage on Pinewood Road.

Size of Property: 36 acres

The undersigned hereby requests a variance of  USE or  AREA to the terms of **Article V, § 504** and **Article X, § 1001**, and asks that said terms be waived to: **permit Applicant to construct a residence on the Property, in accordance with the approved site plan filed herewith.**

## **APPLICATION FOR A VARIANCE**

### **Property Involved with Application for a Variance**

The subject property consists of 36 acres of undeveloped land, situated on Pinewood Road in Allenstown, NH (hereinafter the "Property"). The Property is identified as Lot 3 on Tax Map 105. The current owner of the Property, Paul R. Stauffacher, acquired title from Dan and Pamela Stauffacher by deed dated April 23, 2021 and recorded April 27, 2021 at Book 3735, Page 2330 of the Merrimack County Registry of Deeds.

### **Proposal**

The Applicant wishes to construct a residence on the Property, despite the fact that the Property is zoned Commercial/Light Industrial (sometimes hereinafter abbreviated as "CLI"). The Applicant encloses a septic plan for the proposed residence, entitled "Plan of Site Development and Effluent Disposal System" prepared by Richard J. Kohler, dated March 29, 2021. Said plan is attached hereto as "Exhibit A."

### **Abutting Properties**

See attached abutter list.

### **Zoning Issues**

The zoning ordinance provisions at issue here are Article V, § 504, and Article X, § 1001 of the Town of Allenstown Zoning Ordinance ("Ordinance"). §504 provides, "Any use which is not expressly permitted in a zone shall be deemed forbidden in the zone." Article X sets out the uses that are permitted in the Commercial/Light Industrial Zone. § 1001 does not expressly permit the construction of a residence in the zone.

Accordingly, the Applicant is requesting a variance from the prohibition of constructing a residence in the Commercial/Light Industrial Zone in order to permit him to do so.

### **Criteria for Granting a Variance**

The criteria that must be met in order to obtain a variance are set forth in RSA 674:33-1(b). This statute allows the Zoning Board of Adjustment to grant a variance if:

1. The variance will not be contrary to the public interest;
2. The spirit of the ordinance is observed;

3. Substantial justice is done;
4. The values of the surrounding properties are not diminished; and
5. Literal enforcement of the provisions of the ordinance will result in an unnecessary hardship. The statute defines “unnecessary hardship” as follows:

“unnecessary hardship” means that, owing to special conditions of the Property that distinguish it from other properties in the area:

- (i) No fair and substantial relationship exists between the general public purposes of the ordinance provision and the specific application of that provision to the Property; and
- (ii) The proposed use is a reasonable one.

**Facts to support this request:**

**1. and 2. Granting the Variance is Not Contrary to the Public Interest and is Consistent with the Spirit of the Ordinance**

The requirement that the variance not be contrary to the public interest is related to the requirement that it be consistent with the spirit of the ordinance. Farrar v. City of Keene, 158 N.H. 684 (2009). Accordingly, these factors are considered together in this application.

The spirit and intent of § 504 and Article X, while not explicitly stated, can be presumed to center on the desire to segregate different uses in different parts of the community. Article X, § 1003, which lays out “uses not permitted” in the Commercial/Light Industrial Zone, establishes that no land, building, or premises may be introduced into the zone for a purpose that is “injurious, noxious or offensive to the neighborhood by reason of emission of odor, fumes, dust, smoke, vibration, noise or other cause.” The Ordinance seeks to promote the safety and well-being of the community while avoiding inconsistent Property uses that are likely to lead to community issues such as traffic, noise, pollution, and disputes between landowners.

To be contrary to the public interest or injurious to the public rights of others, the variance must unduly and in a marked degree conflict with the ordinance such that it violates the ordinance’s basic zoning objectives. Id. See also Chester Rod and Gun Club, Inc. v. Town of Chester, 152 NH 577 (2005). In determining whether the grant of a variance would violate basic zoning objectives, it is appropriate to examine whether it would alter the essential character of the locality or threaten the public health, safety or welfare. Id.

In this particular case, the Applicant proposes to construct a residence on his Property in accordance with all of the dimensional, frontage, and setback requirements of the Ordinance (see Article X, § 1003). Granting the variance would not alter the essential character of the locality, as several of the abutting parcels of land contain residences, despite similarly being located in the CLI Zone. Further, the public’s health, safety and welfare will not be threatened as a result of the

residential construction. In almost all respects, a residential use of the Property will have a net positive on the community when considering public health, safety and welfare. Additionally, a residential construction will not pose issues that are sometimes associated with commercial developments, such as added traffic, noise, and pollution.

The construction of a residence will cause none of the negative consequences that Article X attempts to protect against (uses that are injurious, noxious or offensive to the neighborhood by reason of emission of odor, fumes, dust, smoke, vibration, noise or other cause – see § 1003). Accordingly, the variance in this particular case is justified because it is not contrary to the public interest, and granting the variance is consistent with the spirit of the ordinance.

All variances violate the strict terms of the Ordinance. By saying that a variance request fails the “public interest” and “spirit of the ordinance” criteria simply because the proposed use is prohibited by the Ordinance would be a tautology, and a misinterpretation of these criteria. Using that logic, no variances could ever be granted, as these criteria would never be satisfied. Instead, the Board must ask whether the requested variance is consistent with the *spirit*, and not the letter, of the Ordinance.

### **3. Substantial Justice Would be Done by Granting the Variance**

The guiding rule for this factor is that any loss to the individual that is not outweighed by a gain to the general public is an injustice. Harborside Associates LP v. Parade Residents Hotel LLC, 162 N.H. 508 (2011). In evaluating this standard, the Zoning Board must look at whether the Applicant’s proposal is consistent with the area’s present use.

The area’s present use is a mixture of commercial and residential properties. Nine abutting parcels contain residences. Accordingly, there is no gain to the general public in preventing the Applicant’s proposed residential construction as there will be no change to the area’s present use. The loss to the Applicant in preventing him from constructing a residence on his land is substantial, and therefore outweighs the non-existent gain to the general public.

Additionally, the Applicant plans to run his general contractor business through the Property. The Applicant intends to construct a shop on the Property that will house stock for various construction projects, and use the Property as a de facto “headquarters” of the business. It is reasonable and commonplace for an individual to run a business out of their home. When considering this proposal from the public’s perspective, it will be in the public’s interest to allow both a residence and commercial activities on Applicant’s Property in the Commercial/Light Industrial Zone, rather than the Applicant attempting to run his business out of a home in a residential zone. While both of the aforementioned scenarios would require a variance, siting a residence in the CLI Zone will result in no harm to the public.

Precluding the Applicant from making one of the only viable uses of his Property (constructing a residence), in an area where nine abutting parcels already contain residences, would be an injustice.

#### **4. There Will be No Diminution of the Value of Surrounding Properties**

The only change in the neighborhood resulting from the Applicant obtaining the requested variance will be the introduction of a single family home on a 36 acre parcel of land. Nine abutting parcels already contain residential homes despite being located in either the CLI or Industrial Zone. Siting a single family residence on the Property is consistent with the uses enjoyed by several lots in the immediate area. The Applicant's proposed construction is not contrary to the public interest and does not alter the essential character of the locality or threaten the public health, safety or welfare, as further explained herein. Applicant's property will still be zoned Commercial/Light Industrial, and Applicant therefore will retain the ability to attempt to develop the property commercially in the future. Accordingly, the building of a residence will not, in any way, negatively impact the value of surrounding properties.

#### **5. Literal Enforcement of the Provision of the Ordinance Will Result in an Unnecessary Hardship**

Pursuant to RSA 674:33-1(b), "unnecessary hardship" means that, owing to special conditions of the property that distinguish it from other properties in the area:

- (i) No fair and substantial relationship exists between the general public purposes of the ordinance provision and the specific application of that provision to the property; and
- (ii) The proposed use is a reasonable one.

There is no substantial relationship between the general public purpose of the Ordinance and the specific application of the Ordinance to the Property here involved because any purported purpose of the prohibition of residences in the Commercial/Light Industrial Zone has already been undermined by the fact that there are several residences already allowed in the zone. Of the parcels that abut the Applicant's Property, nine of them contain residences. Accordingly, preventing the Applicant from constructing a residence on his Property would result in an unnecessary hardship in light of the Town's allowance of his neighbors to do the same.

One additional residence will not trigger the harms addressed by the Ordinance, and will in no way, as previously discussed, alter the character of the neighborhood. Accordingly, there exists no fair and substantial relationship between the general public purposes of the Ordinance provision at hand and the specific application of that provision to the Applicant's Property. In light of the foregoing, it is appropriate to grant the variance because doing so would be "more considerate of the [Applicant's] constitutional right to enjoy property." Simplex Technologies, Inc. v. Town of Newington, 145 N.H. 727 (2001).

Furthermore, the Applicant's proposed use is a reasonable one. As previously discussed, there are residences on nine abutting parcels, none of which, to the Applicant's knowledge, have created issues with neighbors or the Town. The Applicant's proposed residence will comply with all of the dimensional requirements applicable to the CLI Zone (see § 1004), and will result in none of the community issues prohibited in § 1003. The Applicant's proposed use, therefore, is reasonable.

The specific conditions of the Applicant's Property further strengthen the argument that literal enforcement of the Ordinance would result in an unnecessary hardship. The topography and layout of the parcel (specifically the quantity and location of wetlands and the floodplain on a portion of the Property), make the Property not viable from a commercial perspective. As the wetlands are dispersed throughout the parcel, it is a hardship to the Applicant to forbid him from enjoying a use that the land will allow, especially considering that the proposed use is consistent with the surrounding properties and will cause none of the issues that the Ordinance aims to prevent.


Summary With Respect to Variance Request

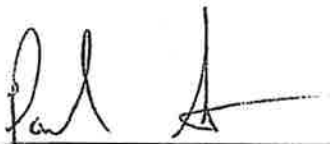
The Applicant meets the requirements for the granting of a variance with respect to the construction of a residence on the Property as described in the above narrative. Permitting the residence to be built as requested by the Applicant on his Property is reasonable. Granting the variance would not alter the essential character of the locality. The area's present use is a mixture of commercial and residential properties. Additionally, the public's health, safety and welfare will not be threatened as a result of the proposed residential construction.

Additionally, the Applicant is willing to accept a condition that only one residence be permitted on the Property, so as to maintain the Property's (limited) commercial potential.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul R. Stauffacher

  
By Jack D. Hepburn, His Attorney

  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Applicant/Property Owner

7-13-2021

Date



### Abutter List

The following is a list of the Tax Maps and Lots of the parcels that abut Mr. Stauffacher's property (Tax Map 105, Lot 3):

- Subject Property: Tax Map 105, Lot 3. Current Owner: Paul R. Stauffacher, 730 Borough Road, Pembroke, NH 03275.
- Tax Map 105, Lot 4. Current Owner: MRF RE Holdings, LLC, 11519 Kingston Pike, Suite 305, Knoxville, TN 37934.
- Tax Map 105, Lot 38. Current Owner: Casella Waste Management, Inc., c/o Harding & Carbone, Inc., 1235 North Loop West, Suite 20, Houston, TX 77008.
- Tax Map 105, Lot 39. Current Owner: Elizabeth A. Keniston, Trustee of the Elizabeth A. Keniston Trust, 106 River Road, Allenstown, NH 03275.
- Tax Map 105, Lot 40. Current Owner: Robert H. Marier, Jr., 120 River Road, Allenstown, NH 03275.
- Tax Map 105, Lot 41. Current Owner: Phillip B. and Lynn M. Plourde, Trustees of the Phillip B. and Lynn M. Plourde Revocable Family Trust, P.O. Box 96, Suncook, NH 03275.
- Tax Map 410, Lot 1. Current Owner: Paul and Pamela Vezina, 124 River Road, Allenstown, NH 03275.
- Tax Map 410, Lot 2. Current Owner: Todd D. and Jacquelyn D. Fredriksen, 126 River Road, Allenstown, NH 03275.
- Tax Map 410, Lot 3. Current Owner: Catholic Bishop of Manchester, c/o Diocese of Manchester, 153 Ash Street, Manchester, NH 03104.
- Tax Map 410, Lot 19. Current Owner: Hunter Judd, 109 River Road, Allenstown, NH 03275.
- Tax Map 104, Lot 1: Bobcat Realty Trust c/o Suncook River Family Camp, 147 Middle Road, Deerfield, NH 03037.
- Tax Map 104, Lot 3. Current Owner: Town of Allenstown, 16 School Street, Allenstown, NH 03275
- Tax Map 104, Lot 5. Current Owner: Jessica R. Caputo and Christopher A. Betts, 15 Fanny Drive, Pembroke, NH 03275.
- Tax Map 104, Lot 7. Current Owner: Debra L. and Christopher W. Gagnon, 11 Fanny Drive, Pembroke, NH 03275.
- Tax Map 104, Lot 8. Current Owner: Thomas A. Gagnon, 92 Pinewood Road, Allenstown, NH 03275.

## **EXHIBIT A**



Pembroke

N  
↑ BC



Docket Number: 202100010858  
Recorded in Merrimack County, NH  
Susan Cragin, Register  
BK: 3735 PG: 2330. 4/27/2021 1:47 PM  
LCHIP \$25.00 RECORDING \$18.00  
SURCHARGE \$2.00

①

Return to:  
Ransmeier & Spellman, P.C.  
One Capitol Street, P.O. Box 600  
Concord, NH 03302-0600

**WARRANTY DEED**

18-55  
2-22  
25-

**DAN G. STAUFFACHER AND PAMELA A. STAUFFACHER**, with a mailing address of 16 Sherwood Meadows, Pembroke, New Hampshire 03275, (the "Grantors"), for good and valuable consideration, grant to **PAUL R. STAUFFACHER**, with a mailing address of 730 Borough Road, Pembroke, New Hampshire 03275, (the "Grantee"), **WITH WARRANTY COVENANTS**, all of their right, title and interest in and to:

All that certain tract or parcel of land with any buildings thereon situated in Allenstown, County of Merrimack and State of New Hampshire and bounded and described as follows:

Beginning on the southerly line of the right-of-way of New Hampshire Route #28 as shown on a Plan of Allenstown-Pembroke F-023-1 (1) P-2416 project, recorded in Merrimack County Registry of Deeds, at the northwesterly corner of the premises hereby described and at the northeasterly corner of land now or formerly of Stephen A. Bates near Station 58 and 35 on said Plan; thence

(1) easterly by the southerly line of said right-of-way to an iron pipe at land now or formerly of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Manchester near Station 77 and 60 on said Plan; thence

(2) southerly by said Bishop's land to a stone post at the end of a chain link fence; thence

(3) westerly by said fence and said Bishop's land ninety-four (94) feet, more or less, to a corner in said fence at the northeasterly corner of land of Frank Fleury; thence

(4) continuing westerly on the same course by said Fleury land to the northerly end of a stone wall at the northwesterly corner of said Fleury land; thence

(5) southerly by said wall and said Fleury land to the River Road, so-called, thence

(6) westerly by said road one (1) rod to land formerly of Lyman Clark; thence

(7) northerly by said Clark land on a line parallel to and one (1) rod distant from the westerly line of said Fleury land to a stone post at the northeasterly corner of said Clark land; thence

(8) westerly by said Clark land to said Bates land; thence

(9) northerly by said Bates land to the point of beginning.

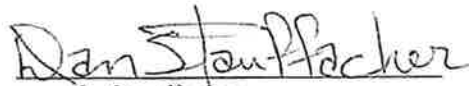
The above-described premises are further subject to current use assessment, and this conveyance is made subject to the lien in favor of the Town of Allenstown for the Land Use Change Tax. The Grantee herein, by acceptance of this deed and as part of the consideration therefore, accepts full responsibility for the Land Use Change Tax and agrees to identify and hold harmless the Grantors from any liability with respect to said tax. This provision is binding upon the heirs, administrators and assigns of the parties hereto.

MEANING AND INTENDING to describe and convey all and the same premises conveyed by deed of Suncook Business Park, Inc. to the within Grantors dated August 31, 2007 and recorded September 5, 2007 in the Merrimack County Registry of Deeds at Book 3016, Page 1167.

The property conveyed herein is not homestead property of the Grantors.

The within conveyance is exempt from New Hampshire real estate transfer tax pursuant to RSA 78-B:2, IX.

Dated this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of April, 2021.

  
Dan G. Stauffacher

  
Pamela A. Stauffacher

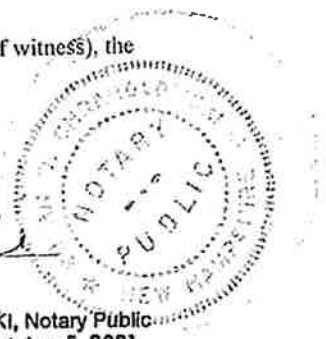
STATE OF New Hampshire  
COUNTY OF Merrimack

On this 23rd day of April, 2021, before me the undersigned officer, personally appeared **Dan G. Stauffacher**, as his voluntary act and deed for the purposes therein contained. The identity of the subscribing party was determined by (check box that applies and complete blank line, if any):

- My personal knowledge of the identity of said person OR
- The oath or affirmation of a credible witness, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of witness), the witness being personally known to me OR
- The following identification documents: (driver's license, passport, other \_\_\_\_\_).

Susan W. Chrabolowski

Notary Public/Justice of the Peace  
My Commission Expires: SUSAN W. CHRABOLOWSKI, Notary Public  
My Commission Expires October 5, 2021



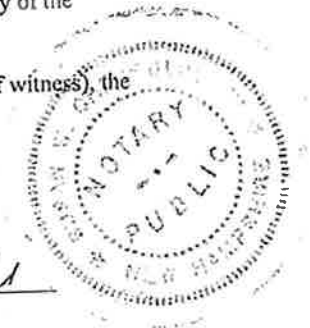
STATE OF New Hampshire  
COUNTY OF Merrimack

On this 23rd day of April, 2021, before me the undersigned officer, personally appeared **Pamela A. Stauffacher**, as her voluntary act and deed for the purposes therein contained. The identity of the subscribing party was determined by (check box that applies and complete blank line, if any):

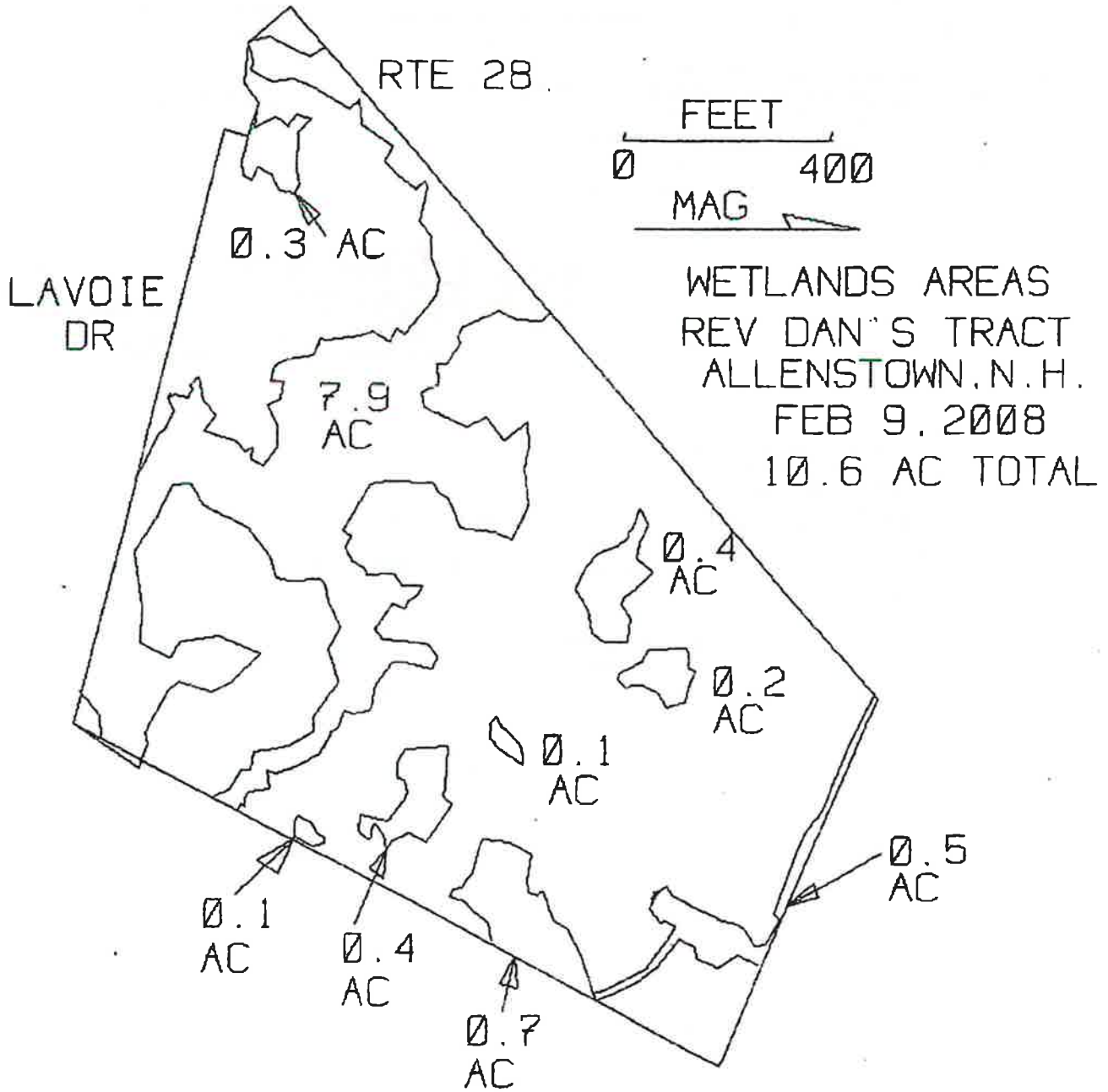
- My personal knowledge of the identity of said person OR
- The oath or affirmation of a credible witness, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of witness), the witness being personally known to me OR
- The following identification documents: (driver's license, passport, other \_\_\_\_\_).

Susan W. Chrabolowski

Notary Public/Justice of the Peace  
My Commission Expires: SUSAN W. CHRABOLOWSKI, Notary Public  
My Commission Expires October 5, 2021



*Note: This deed was prepared by Ransmeier & Spellman P.C. at the request of the Grantors and for their benefit. It was based solely on information provided by the Grantors. In the course of preparing the deed, no examination of title was requested and none was performed. Consequently, the said Ransmeier & Spellman P.C. makes no representations as to any matters concerning title.*







CELEBRATING OVER 35 YEARS OF SERVICE TO OUR CLIENTS

ELIZABETH H. MACDONALD  
JOHN F. RAZZA  
DENISE A. POLYAK  
ROBERT M. PROCTOR  
CHRISTOPHER L. ROBERT  
SEARON C. DINA-SOUSA  
DOUGLAS M. MULLER  
KATHERINE M. MULLER  
CHRISTOPHER T. HENSON  
HIDEKI BARRETT KIMURA  
RUPESH BASAV  
EMILY MAHER  
CHRISTOPHER D. HAYWARD  
BRENDAN A. O'DONNELL  
BLAINE L. JOHNSON  
WILLIAM E. WARDEN

RETIREE  
MICHAEL L. DONAHUE  
CHARLES TUCKER  
ROBERT D. CIANDELLA  
NICHOLAS R. AVENUELMAN

July 1, 2021

Jack D. Hepburn, Esq.  
Ransmeier & Spellman, P.C.  
One Capital Street  
P.O. Box 600  
Concord, NH 03302

**Re: Town Zoning Board of Adjustment’s June 23, 2021 Decision to Grant a Variance to Paul R. Stauffacher regarding 91 Pinewood Road**

Dear Attorney Hepburn:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that the Zoning Board of Adjustment’s (“ZBA”) decision to grant a variance to your clients was unfortunately invalid and not effective because all abutters were not properly notified as required by statute. As a result, the ZBA must schedule and notice a new hearing to hear your variance request. This letter follows my previous attempts to reach you to discuss this issue.

Background:

Your client, Paul R. Stauffacher, owns property located on 91 Pinewood Road in Allentown, further identified as Town Tax Map 105, Lot 003. Mr. Stauffacher applied to the ZBA for a variance to construct a residence on their Property. The Town ultimately sent notice to the Applicant and to the owners of twelve abutting parcels. On June 23, 2021, the ZBA granted a variance.

Statutory Requirement to Notify Abutters:

By statute, the ZBA must schedule a hearing on all applications for variances. The applicant and “every abutter shall be notified” regarding such hearing, in accordance with RSA 676:7, I. The

DONAHUE, TUCKER & CIANDELLA, PLLC  
16 Acadia Lane, P.O. Box 636, Exeter, NH 03833  
111 Maplewood Avenue, Suite D, Portsmouth, NH 03801  
Towle House, Unit 2, 164 NH Route 25, Meredith, NH 03253  
83 Clinton Street, Concord, NH 03301

Jack D. Hepburn, Esq.  
July 1, 2021  
Page 2

requirement that every abutter receive statutory notice is a matter of jurisdiction. In other words, if every abutter did not receive notice, then the ZBA lacked jurisdiction to consider the request for a variance. See Hussey v. Barrington, 135 N.H. 227, 232 (1992).

RSA 672:3 defines “abutter” to mean: “any person whose property is located in New Hampshire and adjoins or is directly across the street or stream from the land under consideration by the local land use board.” Significantly, a person whose land is directly across the street from a parcel constitutes an abutter.

The Supreme Court has ruled that the failure to provide notice to every abutter renders a variance “invalid and of no effect,” and therefore the purported variance “confer[s] no rights” upon the applicant.

Failure to Notify all Abutters:

Here, the property for which you sought a variance is 91 Pinewood Road, further identified as Tax Map 105 Lot 003 (the “Property”). Notice was given to the applicant and well as 12 additional abutters:

105-003	91 Pinewood Road
410-001	122 River Road
410-002	126 River Road
410-003	138 River Road
104-040	120 River Road
105-039	106 River Road
105-038	104 River Road
105-004	65 Pinewood Road
105-001	80 Pinewood Road
104-008	92 Pinewood Road
104-007	11 Fanny Drive
104-005	15 Fanny Drive
104-003	19 Fanny Drive

However, notice was not provided to the owner of 109 River Road (Map 410-019), nor to the owner of 103 River Road (Map 105-041). These properties are each located directly across a street from the 91 River Road Property.

Therefore, because notice was not provided to every abutter, the ZBA lacked jurisdiction to grant the Property a variance, and the variance the ZBA granted is invalid and of no effect. Accordingly, the ZBA will be scheduling and noticing a new hearing to hear your variance request. In considering your application at this new hearing, the ZBA cannot and will not consider any evidence or arguments that were presented at the first, improperly noticed hearing.

Jack D. Hepburn, Esq.  
July 1, 2021  
Page 3

As a result, you must present anew all evidence and arguments that you wish the ZBA to consider.

Please let me know if you have any questions,

Very truly yours,  
DONAHUE, TUCKER & CIANDELLA, PLLC

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sharon Cuddy Somers".

Sharon Cuddy Somers  
[ssomers@dtclawyers.com](mailto:ssomers@dtclawyers.com)

cc:  
Client  
Brendan O'Donnell, Esq.

S:\AA-AL\Allentown, Town of\general\Zoning-91 Pinewood Road\2021 07 12 Ltr to Stauffacher re ZBA Variance for 91 Pinewood Road.docx

**TOWN OF ALLENSTOWN  
Zoning Board of Adjustment  
Allenstown Town Hall –16 School Street  
Allenstown, New Hampshire 03275  
June 23, 2021**

**Call to Order**

The Allenstown Zoning Board of Adjustment Meeting of June 23, 2021 was called to order at 6:35 PM by Chair Klawes.

Chair Klawes called for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Roll Call**

Present on the Board: Dawna Baxter, Keith Klawes, Matt Pitaro, Steve LaPorte

Excused: Matt L'Heureux

Allenstown Staff: Derik Goodine, Town Administrator

Also present: Brian Arsenault, Code Enforcement Officer (virtually), Paul Stauffacher (Applicant), Jack D. Hepburn, Esq. (Agent for Applicant), Scott McDonald, Economic Development Committee member

**Correspondence & Other Business**

- **ZBA to vote in a new Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary**

Mr. Pitaro made a Motion to nominate Keith Klawes as Chair of the Zoning Board of Adjustment. Ms. Baxter seconded the Motion.

Roll call vote was taken.

Keith Klawes- Aye

Dawna Baxter- Aye

Steve LaPorte –Aye

Matt Pitaro-Aye

Motion was passed unanimously.

Chair Klawes made a Motion to nominate Matt Pitaro as Secretary of the Zoning Board of Adjustment. Ms. Baxter seconded the Motion.

Roll call vote was taken.

Keith Klawes- Aye  
Dawna Baxter- Aye  
Steve LaPorte –Aye  
Matt Pitaro-Aye

Motion was passed unanimously.

Chair Klawes said they are looking for more members of the Planning Board, including alternates.

### **Old Business**

- **Receipt of Applications & Public Hearings**

None.

### **New Business - Receipt of Applications & Public Hearings –**

- **ZBA Case #2021-01- 91 Pinewood Road (Lot#105-map #003)**

Mr. Hepburn requested to put a single family residence on 36 acres of a property that is zoned commercial and industrial. He said one the main reasons he thinks this is justified is because of the character of the surrounding neighborhood currently. He asked if the abutting residences were granted a variance or whether they were constructed before the zoning took place. He said one of the main things to consider when thinking about variance is the essential character of the neighborhood, and since it is currently mixed use now with both commercial and residential, putting a single home will not change that very much.

Mr. Hepburn said the next thing to consider in addition to putting in a single family residence, the Applicant also hopes to run his general contractor business out of his home and this would add a commercial aspect to it. He said the topography of the property with the prevalence of wetlands seems to have made it not commercially viable.

Chair Klawes asked that he go through each criteria on the application.

Mr. Hepburn said the first and second criteria, that it will not be contrary to public interest and the spirit of the ordinance is observed should be considered together. He said based on what he was saying previously, the ordinance seems to segregate residential and commercial because of issues with mixing them, such as traffic and noise. He said in this case, because the property as it stands is already mixed, the spirit of the ordinance and what it is trying to accomplish isn't applicable.

Chair Klawes says that he is asking them to read the application and then they will ask questions afterward. He said they look at every Applicant individually.

Mr. Stauffacher reads the following:

The subject property consists of 36 acres of undeveloped land on Pinewood Road in Allenstown, NH . The property is identified as Lot 3 on Tax Map 105. The current owner of the Property, Paul R. Stauffacher, acquired title from Dan and Pamela Stauffacher by deed dated April 23, 2021 and recorded April 27, 2021 at Book 3735, Page 2330 of the Merrimack County Registry of Deeds.

He proposed that he wishes to:

[C]onstruct a residence on the property despite that it is zoned Commercial/Light Industrial. The Applicant proposes to construct the residence in accordance with a certain site plan and proposed septic plan which the State has approved and is prepared by Richard J. Kohler, dated March 29, 2021.

He said with regard to zoning issues:

The zoning ordinance provisions at issue here are Article V, § 504, and Article X, § 1001 of the Town of Allenstown Zoning Ordinance. § 504 provides, "Any use which is not expressly permitted in a zone shall be deemed forbidden in the zone." Article X sets out the uses that are permitted in the Commercial /Light Industrial Zone. § 1001 does not expressly permit the construction of a residence in that zone.

With regard to criteria for granting a variance,

The criteria that must be met in order to obtain a variance are set forth in RSA 674:33-1(b). This statute allows the Zoning Board of Adjustment to grant a variance if:

1. The variance will not be contrary to the public interest;
2. The spirit of the ordinance is observed;
3. Substantial justice is done;
4. The values of the surrounding properties are not diminished; and
5. Literal enforcement of the provisions of the ordinance will result in an unnecessary hardship. The statute defines "unnecessary hardship" as follows:

"unnecessary hardship" means that, owing to special conditions of the Property that distinguish it from other properties in the area:

- (i) No fair and substantial relationship exists between the general public purposes of the ordinance provision and the specific application of that provision to the Property; and
- (ii) The proposed use is a reasonable one.

Mr. Stauffacher said the facts that will support this:

The only change in the neighborhood resulting from the Applicant obtaining the requested variance will be the introduction of a single family home on a 36 acre parcel of land. Three abutting parcels (Tax Map 410, Lots 1 and 2, and Tax Map 105, Lot 40) already contain residential homes despite being located in the CLI Zone. Siting in a single family residence on the Property is consistent with the uses enjoyed by several lots in the immediate area. The Applicant's proposed construction is not contrary to the public interest and does not alter the essential character of the locality of threaten the public health, safety or welfare as further explained below. Accordingly, the building of such a residence will not, in any way, negatively impact the value of surrounding properties.

Chair Klawes said that they will have to make a Motion that they do not need to read the list of abutting properties.

Mr. Stauffacher said the abutting parcels that zoned Commercial/ Light Industrial are Tax Map 410, Lots 1 and 2; and Tax Map 105, Lot 40.

Mr. Stauffacher said if you go up River Road, those next three parcels of land that contain residences are zone C/LI and he is sure they are grandfathered in.

Mr. Pitaro made a Motion to confirm that the listed Abutting Properties in the Application should be entered into the record. Mr. Klawes seconded the Motion.

Roll call vote was taken.

Keith Klawes- Aye

Dawna Baxter- Aye

Steve LaPorte –Aye

Matt Pitaro-Aye

Motion was passed unanimously.

Mr. Stauffacher said granting the variance is not contrary to the public interest and is consistent with the spirit of the ordinance. He read:

The requirement that the variance not be contrary to the public interest is related to the requirement that it be consistent with the spirit of the ordinance.

Mr. Klawes said that he doesn't have to read the legal cases.

He further read:

The spirit and intent of § 504 and Article X, while not explicitly stated, can be presumed to center on the desire to segregate different uses in different parts of the community. Article X, § 1003, which lays out "uses not permitted" in the Commercial/Light Industrial Zone, establishes that no land, building, or premises may be introduced into the zone for a purpose that is

"injurious, noxious or offensive to the neighborhood by reason of emission of odor, fumes, dust, smoke, vibration, noise or other cause." The Ordinance seeks to promote the safety and well-being of the community while avoiding inconsistent Property uses that are likely to lead to community issues such as traffic, noise, pollution, and disputes between landowners.

The first step in analyzing whether the granting of a variance will be contrary to the public interest is to examine the applicable ordinance. To be contrary to the public interest or injurious to the public rights of others, the variance must unduly and in a marked degree conflict with the ordinance such that it violates the ordinance's basic zoning objectives. In determining whether the grant of a variance would violate basic zoning objectives, it is appropriate to examine whether it would alter the essential character of the locality or threaten the public health, safety or welfare. It is also appropriate to consider whether the locus is especially suited for the proposed use.

In this particular case, the Applicant proposes to construct a residence on his Property in accordance with all of the dimensional, frontage, and setback requirements of the Ordinance (see Article X, § 1003). Granting the variance would not alter the essential character of the locality, as several of the abutting parcels of land contain residences, despite similarly being located in the CLI Zone. Further, the public's health, safety and welfare will not be threatened as a result of the residential construction. In almost all respects, a residential use of the Property will have a net positive on the community when considering public health, safety and welfare. Additionally, a residential construction will not pose issues that are sometimes associated with commercial developments, such as added traffic, noise, and pollution.

The construction of a residence will cause none of the negative consequences that Article X attempts to protect against (uses that are injurious, noxious or offensive to the neighborhood by reason of emission of odor, fumes, dust, smoke, vibration, noise or other cause — see § 1003). Accordingly, the variance in this particular case is justified because it is not contrary to the public interest, and granting the variance is consistent with the spirit of the ordinance.

He said with regard to the "literal enforcement of the provision of the Ordinance will result in an unnecessary hardship":

Pursuant to RSA 674:33-1(b), "unnecessary hardship" means that, owing to special conditions of the property that distinguish it from other properties in the area:

- (i) No fair and substantial relationship exists between the general public purposes of the ordinance provision and the specific application of that provision to the property; and
- (ii) The proposed use is a reasonable one.

There is no substantial relationship between the general public purpose of the Ordinance and the specific application of the Ordinance to the Property here involved because any purported



purpose of the prohibition of residences in the Commercial/Light Industrial Zone has already been undermined by the fact that there are several residences already allowed in the zone. Of the seven parcels that abut the Applicant's Property in the CLI Zone, three of them contain residences. Accordingly, preventing the Applicant from constructing a residence on his Property would result in an unnecessary hardship in light of the Town's allowance of his neighbors to do the same.

One additional residence will not trigger the harms addressed by the Ordinance, and will in no way, as previously discussed alter the character of the neighborhood. Accordingly, there exists no fair and substantial relationship between the general public purposes of the Ordinance provision at hand and the specific application of that provision to the Applicant's Property. In light of the foregoing, it is appropriate to grant the variance because doing so would be "more considerate of the [Applicant's] constitutional right to enjoy property."

Furthermore, the Applicant's proposed use is a reasonable one. As previously discussed, there are several residences on abutting parcels, all of which are considered reasonable uses by the Town. The Applicant's proposed residence will comply with all of the dimensional requirements applicable to the CLI Zone (see § 1004), and will result in none of the community issues prohibited in § 1003. The Applicant's proposed use, therefore, is reasonable.

The specific conditions of the Applicant's Property further strengthen the argument that literal enforcement of the Ordinance would result in an unnecessary hardship. The topography and layout of the parcel (specifically the location of wetlands and the floodplain on a portion of the Property), seem to indicate that there will not be overwhelming demand for commercial property on this lot. This fact, combined with the character of the neighborhood being a mixture of residential and commercial properties, favors the granting of the Applicant's variance application.

Mr. Stauffacher said before he took over sole ownership of the land, they put the land on the market as a favor and it sat for a year and a half, and then Allenstown approached them about the new school, there was a back and forth and they weren't quite sold on it. He said then Thibeault Construction made them an offer on the land, and they agreed to the offer. Mr. Stauffacher said Thibeault Construction had it surveyed and to them, the cost to mitigate the wetlands was too much money and they could no longer do it at that price.

Mr. Arsenault said the order of the Application criteria is confusing in the way it is numbered.

Mr. Arsenault said that wetlands can be moved, or consolidated. He said he did not see the plans with Thibeault Construction plans but did find the 2008 survey that was done along with an attachment from Army Corps showing the wetlands. He said the location of the residential home is shown on the plan, and doesn't indicate where it is on the overall parcel, and whether there are wetlands where the proposed house is, or where the driveway will be in relation to the wetlands. Mr. Stauffacher provided the 2020 Thibeault survey with a basic overlay, and he can show where the driveway, septic, etc. is on the current survey.

Mr. Stauffacher said that with regard to "Substantial justice would be done by granting the variance":

The guiding rule for this factor is that any loss to the individual that is not outweighed by a gain to the general public is an injustice. In evaluating this standard, the Zoning Board must look at whether the Applicant's proposal is consistent with the area's present use.

The area's present use is a mixture of commercial and residential properties. Of the seven parcels that abut the Applicant's parcel, four parcels are commercial and three are residential. Accordingly, there is no gain to the general public in preventing the Applicant's proposed residential construction as there will be no change to the area's present use. The loss to the Applicant in preventing him from constructing a residence on his land is substantial, and therefore outweighs the non-existent gain to the general public.

Additionally, the Applicant plans to run his general contractor business through the Property. The Applicant intends to construct a shop on the Property that will house stock for various construction projects, and use the Property as a de facto "headquarters" of the business. It is reasonable and commonplace for an individual to run a business out of their home. When considering this proposal from the public's perspective, it will be in the public's interest to allow both a residence and commercial activities on Applicant's Property in the Commercial/Light Industrial Zone, rather than the Applicant attempting to run his business out of a home in a residential zone. While both of the aforementioned scenarios would require a variance, siting a residence in the CLI Zone will result in no harm to the public.

He said in summary with respect to the variance requests:

The Applicant meets the requirements for the granting of a variance with respect to the construction of a residence on the Property as described in the above narrative. Permitting the residence to be built as requested by the Applicant on his Property is reasonable. Granting the variance would not alter the essential character of the locality. The area's present use is a mixture of commercial and residential properties. Additionally, the public's health, safety and welfare will not be threatened as a result of the proposed residential construction.

Mr. Arsenault said that the Planning Board would have to approve if the Zoning Board grants the variance. He said that running his business on the residential property would need to be explained before the Planning Board. Mr. Stauffacher said he would eventually like to build a two or three garage to store scrap material in.

Chair Klawes asked how much of the 36 acres is usable. Mr. Stauffacher said approximately 8 acres is wetlands spread out, and 28 acres of dryland.

Chair Klawes said the property will stay Commercial/ Light Industrial.

Chair Klawes asked Mr. Arsenault what his concerns are. Mr. Arsenault said it was that Residential is not allowed on a Commercial /Light Industrial. He said if he is trying to build on the wetlands, that is a State issue.

Chair Klawes asked Mr. Arsenault if there are requirements regarding the garage that will be built with an office, such as a bathroom. Mr. Arsenault said no, but if it turned into a sales office, then it becomes retail or warehouse space and you have to reconfigure the septic system.

Chair Klawes said it is his experience is that you never can anticipate what could come up in the future and he said they want to make the right decision for both the Town and the owner. Mr. Stauffacher said that further development of the land is not his intent on any level.

Scott McDonald is there to represent the Economic Development Committee. He recommended against granting the variance. He said looking at the topography of the Town and where the water and sewer goes in the future, there is very limited space to develop Commercial and Industrial. Mr. Stauffacher says as a land owner, he has zero interest in selling that land under any circumstance. He said building a residential home on the property will net the Town more money than they are getting right now with nothing on it.

Chair Klawes said that the Zoning Board doesn't take tax implications into consideration when making their decision.

Mr. Goodine said looking at the Maps and plans, he would like to know where the home would be built. Mr. Goodine said he is concerned that of all the areas on the property, that you will put a residential home right in the middle of it which changes what the property is going to be in the future.

There was discussion between Mr. Stauffacher and the Board regarding the right-of-way and access to the property.

Chair Klawes asked how long the property was for sale. Mr. Stauffacher said two years and he only had a few inquiries.

Mr. Stauffacher said that he just wants this to be as simple as possible and that he wants to put down roots in the community.

Mr. Arsenault would like to reiterate testimony that Thibeault is still interested in the property, the easement coming off River Road is a great spot to put a water main on this commercial property, and also it is not difficult to build a building that is not on utilities. He wanted the Board to consider that information.

Mr. Pitaro made a Motion to end the hearing portion of the meeting and enter deliberations. Ms. Baxter seconded the Motion.

Roll call vote was taken.

Keith Klawes- Aye

Dawna Baxter- Aye

Steve LaPorte-Aye

Matt Pitaro-Aye

Motion was passed unanimously.

Chair Klawes asked for comments relating to whether it would “Diminish the Value of the Surrounding Property.” Ms. Baxter said the argument that was made was there were other properties that had homes already on them. Mr. Pitaro he does not think there will be a diminution. Chair Klawes said he doesn’t know if they can answer the question from a commercial standpoint, by having another parcel that has a house on it that is zoned Commercial/Light Industrial. Mr. Pitaro is not sure that he agreed with Chair Klawes fully. Chair Klawes said there could be a diminish to the properties around it because you are changing the landscape of it. Mr. Pitaro said he is not sure it would diminish or increase if he put the house on it.

With regard to the next criteria, “Granting the Variance is not Contrary to the Public Interest,” Chair Klawes said he does not know if it was or not. Mr. Pitaro said the Applicant’s family has been enjoying the property as it were, and whatever they have been doing has not been obstructive. He said the other homes that are abutting it, does not seem to cause a contradiction to the interest of the public. Chair Klawes said that with regard to the other homes, we do not know what came first. Ms. Baxter said some of the homes were built a long time ago. She said that no one had asked for a variance to build those homes, so the zone changed afterwards.

Mr. Arsenault said the “term” grandfathered is often misunderstood, He said the homes existed prior to the zoning, and it’s a bonus for them, because they could remove their residential home and build a small machine shop.

With regard to “Spirit of the Ordinance” and “Literal Enforcement of the Provision of the Ordinance Will Result in an Unnecessary Hardship,” Mr. Pitaro said someone did point out that the single family home would be in the middle of the plot of land where the access road is located. He said the Applicant did seem like they got approval for a septic, and that it is a very good application, but his only pause for thought is putting the house there. Chair Klawes said regardless of where the house gets located, do they need a variance because it is a hardship on the family. Mr. Pitaro said it is a hardship, because he is applying to build a home and there is a roadblock in the form of zoning.

Mr. Arsenault said you really have to think about the word “hardship.” He said the zoning has been in place since 1978.

Mr. Pitaro said that the Applicant’s testimony satisfied this criteria between figuring out what to do, putting in on the market, etc. Chair Klawes disagreed and does not think it is a hardship. He said there were offers made on the property that the Applicant’s did not accept. Ms. Baxter said he doesn’t have a full 36 acres because of the wetlands and part of that wetland affects the good land, and it limits the commercial space and makes it extremely expensive to do. She said if it were not for the wetlands, she would agree there was no hardship.

Ms. Baxter said the cost to move the wetlands would offset what the land is valued at. Chair Klawes said that we don’t know why Thibeault came in with such a low offer. She asked what would keep him from subdividing down the road if he builds this house, because there still will be some land left over. Mr. Pitaro said in terms of the wetlands, if they grant the variance, they still need to go before the Planning Board as well.

Chair Klawes asked how long did Mr. Stauffacher's family own it. He said they have owned it for 12 years and they knew it was zoned Commercial/ Light Industrial when they bought it. Chair Klawes said he does not know how that creates a hardship because they knew at the time of purchase how it was zoned. Ms. Baxter said it has changed zones several times.

Chair asked if there were any comments regarding "Substantial Justice Would be Done by Granting the Variance."

Chair Klawes asked if they had any no's on any of the criteria. Mr. Pitaro said he does not. Ms. Baxter said she does not. Mr. LaPorte said he does not. Chair Klawes is not convinced that he has met all five criteria at all. He does not think he met any of the criteria.

Mr. LaPorte made a Motion to exit deliberations. Ms. Baxter seconded the Motion.

Roll call vote was taken.

Keith Klawes- Aye

Dawna Baxter- Aye

Steve LaPorte-Aye

Matt Pitaro-Aye

Motion was passed unanimously.

Mr. Pitaro made the Motion to approve the application from Paul Stauffacher to grant a variance to build a single family home on 91 Pinewood Road, Allenstown, NH. Mr. seconded the Motion.

Chair Klawes made an Amendment to the Motion to add the words "as presented" and "no further residential structures" are allowed. Mr. Pitaro and Ms. Baxter agreed with this. Ms. Baxter seconded the Motion.

Chair Klawes said it should be worded to grant ZBA case 2021-01-91 Pinewood Road, Tax Map #103, Lot 3 to allow the application to go forward as presented and allow no further residential structures on the property.

Roll call vote was taken on the Amendment.

Keith Klawes- Aye

Dawna Baxter- Aye

Steve LaPorte-Aye

Matt Pitaro-Aye

Motion was passed 4-0.

Roll call vote was taken on the Motion as amended.

Keith Klawes- No

Dawna Baxter- Aye

Steve LaPorte–Aye

Matt Pitaro-Aye

Motion was passed 3-1.

Mr. Stauffacher asked if this will prevent him from building a garage for his cars. The Board said no.

Mr. Arsenault said within 30 days, anyone who has standing in the community can request a rehearing on the variance, including Zoning Board members.

#### Unapproved Minutes & Unsigned Minutes

- o **December 9, 2020**

Ms. Baxter made a Motion to approve the minutes from December 9, 2020. Mr. Pitaro seconded the Motion.

Roll call vote was taken on the Motion as amended.

Keith Klawes- Aye

Dawna Baxter- Aye

Steve LaPorte–Abstained

Matt Pitaro-Aye

The Motion was passed.

#### Staff Update

None.

#### Adjourn

Mr. Pitaro a motion to adjourn meeting which was seconded by Ms. Baxter at 9:00 PM. Roll call vote was taken.

Keith Klawes- Aye

Dawna Baxter- Aye

Steve LaPorte–Aye

Matt Pitaro-Aye

Motion was passed 4-0.

**Zoning Board of Adjustment  
SIGNATURE PAGE  
June 23, 2021**

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<b>SIGNATURE</b>	<b>MEMBER</b>	<b>DATE</b>
_____	Keith Klawes, Chairman	
_____	Dawna Baxter, Member	
_____	Steve LaPorte, Member	
_____	Matt Pitaro, Secretary	
_____	Matt L'Heureux, Member	



**Town of Allenstown**  
Code Enforcement Officer  
16 School Street  
Allenstown, NH 03275  
603-485-4276 ext. 125  
barsenault@allenstownnh.gov

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**Letter of Denial for ZBA Variance Application on 06/07/2021**

Date: June 8, 2021

Name of Applicant: Attorney Jack D. Hepburn, Agent  
Phone: 603-228-0477  
Address of Applicant: 1 Capital Street  
Concord, NH 03301  
Email of Applicant: [jhepburn@ranspell.com](mailto:jhepburn@ranspell.com)

Name of Owner: Paul R. Stauffacher  
Phone: 603-340-5709  
Address of Owner: 730 Borough Road  
Pembroke, NH 03275

Location of Property ID: 105-003  
Zoning: Commercial Light Industrial  
Street Address of Property: 91 Pinewood Road

**Dear Applicant:** You have been denied permission to allow construction of a new residential single family dwelling (SFD) on a Commercial/Light Industrial zone property, where a SFD is not an allowed use.

Denial is for the following reason(s): **Article V; Section 504 and Article X; Section 1001**

You have the right to appeal this decision or request a variance from the Zoning Board of Adjustment where you will be assigned a hearing.

Denied by: Brian Arsenault – Code Enforcement Officer

Attachments: Property Card  
Zoning Ordinance References





**Town of Allenstown**  
**Code Enforcement Officer**  
16 School Street  
Allenstown, NH 03275  
603-485-4276 ext. 125  
barsenault@allenstownnh.gov

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**Letter of Denial for ZBA Variance Application on 08/12/2021**

Date: September 2, 2021

Name of Applicant: Attorney Jack D. Hepburn, Agent  
Phone: 603-228-0477  
Address of Applicant: 1 Capital Street  
Concord, NH 03301  
Email of Applicant: [jhepburn@ranspell.com](mailto:jhepburn@ranspell.com)

Name of Owner: Paul R. Stauffacher  
Phone: 603-340-5709  
Address of Owner: 730 Borough Road  
Pembroke, NH 03275

**Location of Property ID: 105-003**  
**Zoning: Commercial Light Industrial**  
**Street Address of Property: 91 Pinewood Road**

**Dear Applicant:** You have been denied permission to allow construction of a new residential single family dwelling (SFD) on a Commercial/Light Industrial zone property, where a SFD is not an allowed use.

Denial is for the following reason(s): **Article V; Section 504 and Article X; Section 1001**

You have the right to appeal this decision or request a variance from the Zoning Board of Adjustment where you will be assigned a hearing.

Denied by: Brian Arsenault – Code Enforcement Officer





**Town of Allenstown**  
Zoning Board of Adjustment  
16 School Street, Allenstown, NH 03275  
603-485-4276 ext. 125  
planning@allenstownnh.gov

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**Notice of Decision**  
**Application for Variance**

**ZBA Case # 2021-02:**  
**Lot#105 Map#003**  
**Applicant - Attorney Jack D. Hepburn**  
**Owner - Paul Stauffacher**  
**Location - 91 Pinewood Road**  
**Zoning District - CLI-Commercial/Light Industrial**

Variance relief is requested to allow construction of a new residential single family dwelling (SFD)

**At the September 22, 2021 meeting, the Allenstown Zoning Board of Adjustment voted 3-1 to DENY variance relief as requested from Article V; Section 504 and Article X; Section 1001 to allow construction of a new residential single family dwelling (SFD) on a 36-acre parcel of Commercial/Light Industrial zone property, where a SFD is not an allowed use, per plan provided and dated March 29, 2021 with no revisions.**

**The reasons for denial was because one or more board member(s) believed the following criteria were not proven: The variance will not be contrary to the public interest. The spirit of the ordinance is observed. Substantial justice is done. Literal enforcement of the provisions of the ordinance would result in an unnecessary hardship.**

Any person affected directly by this decision has a right to appeal this decision to the Zoning Board of Adjustment. If you wish to appeal, you must act within thirty days of the date following the date of the Board vote. See New Hampshire Statutes, RSA Chapter 677 (Rehearing & Appeal Procedures) for more details.

Any variance or special exception granted by the Board of Adjustment shall be terminated two (2) years from its issuance by the Board of Adjustment unless the variance or special exception granted has been exercised by the recipient. as per RSA 674:33, IV.

Cc:  
Applicant  
File Copy: ZBA Case #2021-02

Brian Arsenault,  
Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer  
for Keith Klawes, ZBA Chairman  
September 27, 2021



ALLENSTOWN, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

ZBA Case No: #2021-02

*In re* Variance Application of Paul Stauffacher

**MOTION FOR REHEARING**

Paul R. Stauffacher (“Mr. Stauffacher”), by and through his attorneys, Ransmeier & Spellman, P.C., submits this Motion for Rehearing of the Town of Allenstown Zoning Board of Adjustment’s decision of September 22, 2021, in which it denied Mr. Stauffacher’s variance application, and in support thereof states as follows.

**STANDARD OF REVIEW**

Within 30 days after any order or decision of the zoning board of adjustment, or any decision of the local legislative body or a board of appeals in regard to its zoning, the selectmen, any party to the action or proceedings, or any person directly affected thereby may apply for a rehearing in respect to any matter determined in the action or proceeding, or covered or included in the order, specifying in the motion for rehearing the ground therefor; and the board of adjustment, a board of appeals, or the local legislative body, may grant such rehearing if in its opinion good reason therefor is stated in the motion. . . .

RSA 677:2.

A motion for rehearing pursuant to RSA 677:2 shall set forth fully every ground upon which it is claimed that the decision or order complained of is *unlawful or unreasonable*. RSA 677:3 (emphasis added).

**BACKGROUND**

On June 7, 2021, Mr. Stauffacher submitted a variance application to the Town of Allenstown Zoning Board of Adjustment (the “ZBA”). In the application, Mr. Stauffacher sought relief from Article V, §504, and Article X, §1001 of the Town of Allenstown Zoning Ordinance

(the “Ordinance”) in order to allow him to construct a single family residence on his property. The property consists of 36 acres of undeveloped land, situated at 91 Pinewood Road in Allenstown, New Hampshire (the “Property”). The Property is identified in the Allenstown Tax Maps as Map 105, Lot 3. Mr. Stauffacher acquired title from Dan and Pamela Stauffacher by deed dated April 23, 2021 and recorded April 27, 2021 at Book 3735, Page 2330 of the Merrimack County Registry of Deeds. The Property is zoned Commercial/Light Industrial, and residential structures are not permitted without obtaining a variance.

The ZBA held a hearing on June 23, 2021. Following the hearing, the ZBA voted in favor of granting the variance by a vote of three to one. Subsequently, it came to the ZBA’s attention that two abutters (Map 410, Lot 19 and Map 105, Lot 41) were not provided proper notice of the variance application. Accordingly, the decision of the ZBA granting the variance was vacated. Mr. Stauffacher subsequently submitted a new variance application to the ZBA, with proper abutter notices, which was marked complete on or around August 12, 2021 (the “Application”). The ZBA thereafter scheduled a new hearing for September 22, 2021. It is notable that between June 23 and September 22 (the date of the initial granting of the variance and the date of the new hearing following the abutter issue) the ZBA’s composition changed. Two members who voted yes to the original application were not present at the September 22 hearing (with one no longer serving on the ZBA). Despite the fact that no evidence changed from the initial application, the ZBA voted on September 22 three to one to deny the Application.

#### **ARGUMENT**

Under RSA 674:33, the ZBA has the power to authorize a variance from the terms of the zoning ordinance if:

- (A) The variance will not be contrary to the public interest;
- (B) The spirit of the ordinance is observed;

- (C) Substantial justice is done;
- (D) The values of surrounding properties are not diminished; and
- (E) Literal enforcement of the provisions of the ordinance would result in an unnecessary hardship.

New Hampshire courts have provided clear guidelines on how zoning boards of adjustment should interpret and apply these criteria. During the hearing on Mr. Stauffacher's Application, the ZBA consistently misapplied the criteria in contravention of New Hampshire law. Additionally, the actions of the board with respect to board member George Lemire were unreasonable and unlawful, and the change of the composition of the ZBA following the initial granting of the variance was unfairly prejudicial to Mr. Stauffacher.

#### **A. Public Interest and Spirit of the Ordinance Prongs**

By a vote of three to one, the ZBA ruled that Mr. Stauffacher failed to prove that the requested variance would not be contrary to the public interest and that the spirit of the ordinance would be observed. In reaching this conclusion, the ZBA utilized the following analysis: if the Ordinance prohibits the requested use, the use must, by necessity, be contrary to the public interest and the spirit of the Ordinance, because the public has an interest in the Ordinance being complied with. The minutes of the meeting reflect this analysis.

This analysis by the ZBA is a clear misinterpretation of established New Hampshire law. As the New Hampshire Supreme Court has stated:

As the provisions of the ordinance represent a declaration of public interest, *any* variance would in some measure be contrary thereto (internal citation omitted). Accordingly, to adjudge whether granting a variance is not contrary to the public interest and is consistent with the spirit of an ordinance, we must determine whether to grant the variance would "unduly, and in a marked degree conflict with the ordinance such that it violates the ordinance's basic zoning objectives" (internal citation omitted)...*Mere conflict with the terms of the ordinance is insufficient* (emphasis added).

Harborside Assocs., L.P. v. Parade Residence Hotel, LLC, 162 N.H. 508 (2011).

The ZBA simply concluded that because the proposed use (construction of a residence) violates the letter of the Ordinance (no residences permitted in the Commercial/Light Industrial Zone absent a variance), it must also violate the spirit of the Ordinance. This analysis flies in the face of New Hampshire law, and is therefore both unlawful and unreasonable.

As noted above, to be “contrary to the public interest or injurious to the public rights of others, the variance must unduly, and in a marked degree conflict with the ordinance such that it violates the ordinance’s basic zoning objectives.” Chester Rod & Gun Club v. Town of Chester, 152 N.H. 577, 581 (2005) (quotations omitted). One way to ascertain whether granting the variance would violate basic zoning objectives is to examine whether it would alter the essential character of the locality. Id. Another approach to determining whether granting the variance would violate basic zoning objectives is to examine whether granting the variance would threaten the public health, safety or welfare. Id.

Rather than analyzing whether the applicant’s proposed use would “violate the ordinance’s basic zoning objectives,” “alter the essential character of the locality,” or “threaten the public health, safety, or welfare,” the ZBA instead simply held that mere conflict with the Ordinance was sufficient to determine that these variance criteria were not satisfied. Using this logic, a variance could never be granted, as these criteria could never be met.

As discussed in the Application, because the requested variance would in no way violate the Ordinance’s basic zoning *objectives*, alter the essential character of the locality, or threaten the public health, safety, or welfare (again, the ZBA addressed none of these factors), the ZBA should have determined that the public interest and spirit of the Ordinance prongs were satisfied.

#### **B. Substantial Justice Prong**



When analyzing the substantial justice prong, the ZBA once again failed to accurately interpret the criteria. New Hampshire law is clear that “[p]erhaps the only guiding rule on this factor is that any loss to the individual that is not outweighed by a gain to the general public is an injustice.” Harborside Assocs., L.P., 584 N.H. at 590 (2011). Instead of considering any loss to the individual or gain to the general public, the ZBA centered its analysis, once again, on the fact that the proposed use is in conflict with the letter of the Ordinance, and on the fact that Mr. Stauffacher knew how the Property was zoned when he purchased it.

The ZBA’s interpretation of the variance criteria creates an absurd result: any time an applicant is aware of the zoning when purchasing the property, it is not an injustice to deny a variance request. This analysis clearly violates New Hampshire law, as discussed in more detail in Section C, below.

Again, as described in Section A, above, the ZBA conflated a “gain” to the general public with the simple fact of having the Ordinance complied with – with no analysis of what the purported gain might actually be. As argued by Mr. Stauffacher, because the neighborhood, though zoned Commercial/Light Industrial, has over time become a mixed use neighborhood (with 9 out of 14 abutters having residences on their properties despite similarly being zoned Commercial/Light Industrial or Industrial), there is no gain to the public in preventing Mr. Stauffacher from constructing a residence on his Property, as any zoning objectives for segregating residential and commercial uses have already been undermined.

The ZBA’s analysis is a clear misinterpretation of the substantial justice prong, and is therefore unlawful and unreasonable. Denying the variance is a significant loss to Mr. Stauffacher. Because of the wetlands on the Property, a commercial use of the Property is not economically viable. Allowing a residence would allow Mr. Stauffacher to put the Property to a

productive use. Because this loss outweighs the non-existent gain to the public, the ZBA should have determined that the substantial justice prong was satisfied.

### **C. Unnecessary Hardship Prong**

Pursuant to RSA 674:33-1(b), “unnecessary hardship” means that, owing to special conditions of the property that distinguish it from other properties in the area:

- (i) No fair and substantial relationship exists between the general public purposes of the ordinance provision and the specific application of that provision to the property; and
- (ii) The proposed use is a reasonable one.

Once again, the ZBA chose not to apply the criteria. There was no discussion of the relationship between the general public purposes of the Ordinance and the specific application of the provision to the Property. Because, as discussed *supra*, the neighborhood has over time become mixed with commercial and residential properties (with more residential properties abutting the Property than commercial), a reasonable ZBA would have analyzed whether there exists a fair and substantial relationship between the *general public purposes of the Ordinance* and the *specific application of that provision to the Property* – and come to the natural conclusion that no such relationship exists.

Additionally, though raised by Mr. Stauffacher in his Application and at the hearing, the ZBA gave no consideration to the “special conditions of the property that distinguish it from other properties in the area” – namely the fact that the topography and distribution of wetlands on the Property give rise to a hardship. The ZBA once again employed a flawed analysis when it insisted that, because Mr. Stauffacher may be able to sell his property, at any price, this means no hardship exists.

Furthermore, the ZBA again insisted that because Mr. Stauffacher was aware of how the Property was zoned when he purchased it, this necessarily means that there is no hardship in denying a variance. This is a misinterpretation of the unnecessary hardship prong.

For years, the general rule in many jurisdictions was that one who purchased property with actual or constructive knowledge of the restrictions of a zoning ordinance was barred from securing a variance. P. Loughlin, 15 N.H. Practice: Land Use Planning and Zoning, 4th Ed., §24.25 (2010) (internal citation omitted). While this rule may still be applicable in some jurisdictions, it has been altogether abandoned, or modified into nonexistence, in others. *Id.*

In *Hill v. Town of Chester*, the New Hampshire Supreme Court made clear that it was rejecting the “old rule” which barred an applicant from obtaining a variance when he purchased the property with knowledge of the zoning restrictions. *Hill v. Town of Chester*, 146 N.H. 291 (2001). In fact, the New Hampshire Supreme Court has *never* ruled that the fact that an individual purchased property with knowledge of restrictions is a sufficient basis for denial of a variance. P. Loughlin, 15 N.H. Practice: Land Use Planning and Zoning, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., §24.25 (2010).

The ZBA must follow the clearly established law in New Hampshire for analyzing a variance application. Because, once again, the statutory variance criteria were not applied and analyzed correctly, the ZBA’s decision with regard to the unnecessary hardship prong was unlawful and unreasonable. A proper analysis of the unnecessary hardship prong should have led the ZBA to determine that this prong was satisfied.

#### **D. Property Values Prong**

In considering whether the proposed use would lead to a diminution of surrounding property values, board members are permitted to consider their own familiarity with the area involved. *Vannah v. Bedford*, 111 N.H. 105 (1971). In arriving at their decision, members of the

ZBA can consider their own knowledge concerning such factors as traffic conditions, surrounding uses, etc., resulting from their familiarity with the area involved. *Id.* Testimony in the form of a real estate appraisal or other expert analysis is not required, though can be considered.

Here, the ZBA determined that because the applicant chose not to submit any expert testimony, the board was unable to decide on this prong. Rather than analyze the proposed use and the expected impact it may or may not have on surrounding property values, the ZBA punted on the issue, citing, erroneously, that without expert testimony, the board would have no way to analyze the property value prong. This analysis is unlawful and unreasonable.

Because Mr. Stauffacher's proposed use would in no way alter the character of the neighborhood, a reasonable ZBA would have determined that no change in surrounding property values would be expected.

#### **E. Actions of ZBA Member George Lemire**

Additionally, the actions of one of the board members, George Lemire, were unlawful and unreasonable. It was abundantly clear from the meeting (and as further shown in the minutes) that Mr. Lemire did not know how to apply the variance criteria. It is unlawful and unreasonable to have a board member who openly admits to not understanding how to apply the variance criteria. Mr. Lemire was then "instructed" on how to apply the criteria by the ZBA Chair, Keith Klawes, however this instruction was laced with the same legal issues that are discussed *supra*.

Because Mr. Lemire's vote was indispensable to the ZBA decision, this is reason alone to grant Mr. Stauffacher a rehearing.

#### **F. Change of Composition of ZBA Between Grant and Denial of Variance**

As discussed herein, Mr. Stauffacher's variance application was initially granted by a three to one vote by the ZBA. Because of a failure to properly notice all of the abutters, a new hearing was required. At the new hearing, the ZBA had two new members (one being Mr. Lemire), and two members who initially voted yes on the application were not present. Because the applications and evidence were identical at the initial hearing and the new hearing, it was unreasonable for the ZBA to reach a completely opposite result as it had just three months before.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing, the ZBA's decision to deny Mr. Stauffacher's variance application was unlawful and unreasonable. Accordingly, the ZBA should grant a rehearing of this matter and subsequently grant Mr. Stauffacher's variance application.

WHEREFORE, Paul R. Stauffacher respectfully requests that the Zoning Board of Adjustment:

- A. Grant this Motion for Rehearing; and
- B. Grant Mr. Stauffacher's variance application.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul R. Stauffacher

By and through his counsel,

**RANSMEIER & SPELLMAN, P.C.**

Date: October 21, 2021


By: 

Jack D. Hepburn (NHBA #270956)  
P.O. Box 600  
Concord, NH 03302-0600  
(603) 228-0477  
[jhepburn@ranspell.com](mailto:jhepburn@ranspell.com)

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that a copy of the foregoing has been forwarded by first class mail this day to Keith Klawes, ZBA Chairman, and Brian Arsenault, Town of Allenstown Building Inspector and Code Enforcement Officer.

Date: October 21, 2021

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jack D. Hepburn

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**Town of Allenstown**  
**Zoning Board of Adjustment**  
**16 School Street, Allenstown, NH 03275**  
**603-485-4276 ext. 125**  
**planning@allenstownnh.gov**

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**Notice of Decision**  
**Motion for Rehearing Request**

**ZBA Case # 2021-02:**  
**Lot#105 Map#003**  
**Applicant - Attorney Jack D. Hepburn**  
**Owner - Paul Stauffacher**  
**Location - 91 Pinewood Road**  
**Zoning District - CLI-Commercial/Light Industrial**

**At the November 10, 2021 meeting, the Allenstown Zoning Board of Adjustment voted 5-0 to GRANT the Motion for a Rehearing based on the Atty. Jack D. Hepburn, Ransmeier & Spellman Attorneys at Law letter dated October 21, 2021.**

**On September 22, 2021 variance relief was denied as requested from Article V; Section 504 and Article X; Section 1001 to allow construction of a new residential single family dwelling (SFD) on a 36-acre parcel of Commercial/Light Industrial zone property, where a SFD is not an allowed use, per plan provided and dated March 29, 2021 with no revisions.**

Any person affected directly by this decision has a right to appeal this decision to the Zoning Board of Adjustment. If you wish to appeal, you must act within thirty days of the date following the date of the Board vote. See New Hampshire Statutes, RSA Chapter 677 (Rehearing & Appeal Procedures) for more details.

Any variance or special exception granted by the Board of Adjustment shall be terminated two (2) years from its issuance by the Board of Adjustment unless the variance or special exception granted has been exercised by the recipient. as per RSA 674:33, IV.

Cc:  
Applicant  
File Copy: ZBA Case #2021-02

Brian Arsenault,  
Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer  
for Keith Klawes, ZBA Chairman  
November 11, 2021





Town of Allenstown  
Zoning Board of Adjustment  
16 School Street  
Allenstown, NH 03275

**RE: ZBA Variance Hearing: Case No. 2021-01**  
**Letter of Authorization**

To Whom It May Concern:

I, Paul R. Stauffacher, am the applicant for the above-referenced application for variance filed with the Zoning Board of Adjustment. I hereby authorize Jack D. Hepburn, Esq. of Ransmeier & Spellman, P.C. to communicate with the Town of Allenstown on my behalf regarding this application, and to represent me at any hearing associated with this application. I do also wish to retain the right to speak on my behalf at the hearing.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Paul R. Stauffacher

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul R. Stauffacher', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

