

Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting Minutes
April 8th, 2021 7:00 p.m.
Public Hearing
Northfield Town Hall

Members Present: Jennifer Cox, Chair, Erin Jaworski, Shawn Foster, Al Dietrich, Timothy Rogers, Michael Bird and Vivien Venskowski, administrative assistant.

Jennifer Cox, Chair opened the meeting at 7:20 p.m. The Zoom meeting was connected as required by Governor Baker's per the order dated March 12th regarding social distancing and masks. Cox read the following public hearing notice: The Zoning Board of Appeals of the Town of Northfield will hold a public hearing at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 8th, 2021 at the Town Hall, 69 Main Street, Northfield, MA on the application by Charles & Sarah Willor, 463 Millers Falls Road Northfield, MA 01360 for a Variance or whatever relief is needed to excavate and build a (26 ft x 30 ft, height 26ft) two car garage at 463 Millers Falls Rd., Northfield MA 01360 (Assessor' Parcel ID 56-B9.3) as required by the Northfield Zoning Bylaws per Section 7, Paragraph E, Table 2. Cox noted that she had three documentation of proper posting and abutters notification list. She requested the applicant come forward to speak about his application.

Chuck Willor explained his proposed garage addition. He noted that the property lines on the Town map were not accurate. The land was recently surveyed and he noted that the neighbors had agreed with the last survey. It was within 15 – 20 feet off the existing lines. Willor noted that there was no other location available for the garage. He discussed the obstacles including the failed septic system in front yard, electric line, well and slope issues. He also noted that he is not going to change the paved driveway and he considered the pitch of the driveway a hazard. There are pitch issues with the grade to the well. He discussed the option of putting the garage behind the house that would disrupt the well and electric line and in addition the deck on his house would have to be removed and that would involve additional excavation. It would also be a financial hardship because the power lines would need to be moved, remove the deck, relocate the well etc. The topography issue is the elevation changes. There is no existing ledge, the soil is sandy/gravel soil. The proposed location would involve excavation – approximately 8 feet all the way around the foundation, 4-6 feet down. The excavation will be sufficient enough to keep the garage level. The neighbors are in agreement and have signed the plan presented to show support for this project. Three surrounding neighbors all have garages.

The Board members asked questions and Willor responded.

- The variance condition regarding distance would be measured from the house foundation
- The property was surveyed for the cutting of timber and the neighbors have agreed to the surveyed lines, stated therein
- There will be no running water or plumbing in the garage
- There might be a water spigot on the outside
- There will be a 50 amp box in the garage
- The garage will not be a living space

The Chair closed the public hearing portion of the meeting. The Board began discussing the information presented and if the variance conditions were met. It was noted that family safety cannot be considered as part of the basis of the decision regarding the variance.

Findings

- The topography of the lot slopes upwards
- No other viable location on the lot
- Shape of the lot (narrow) and the house is in the center of the lot
- There would be extreme financial hardship to locate the garage any other location on the property
- The location of the leach fields, the well, the electrical service limits the location of the garage
- Not detrimental to neighbors as all neighbors have garages
- All direct abutters have signed a statement approving the garage
- No negative impact on the public good

Possible conditions were discussed.

On a motion by Jaworski, seconded by Foster it was unanimously voted (Cox/yes, Jaworski/yes, Foster/yes, Dietrich/yes, Rogers/yes) to grant a variance to Charles and Sarah Willor at 463 Millers Falls Road, Northfield, MA 01360 to build a free standing garage 26x30x26 feet closer to the lot line than allowed with the following conditions:

- 1. The garage foundation will not extend more than 36 feet from the south side of the house foundation**
- 2. The addition shall not be used for the purpose of living space**

The Chair advised the applicant of the process and requirements.

On a motion by Jaworski, seconded by Foster it was unanimously voted to accept the minutes of March 18th, 2021 as amended.

On a motion by Dietrich, seconded by Rogers it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Vivien Venskowski
Administrative Assistant to
The Zoning Board of Appeals