

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF YPSILANTI
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS**

Wednesday, May 6, 2026

6:30 pm

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Elizabeth El-Assadi

Ericka Vonyea

David Marshall

STAFF AND CONSULTANTS

Mark Yandrick, Planning Director

- **CALL TO ORDER/ESTABLISH QUORUM**

MOTION: Ms. El-Assadi called the meeting to order at 6:40 pm.

- **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

MOTION: Mr. Marshall **MOVED** to approve the agenda as presented. The

MOTION was **SECONDED** by Ms. Vonyea and **PASSED** by unanimous consent.

- **APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 3, 2025, REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

MOTION: Ms. Vonyea **MOVED** to approve the December 3, 2025, regular meeting minutes. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Mr. Marshall and **PASSED** by unanimous consent.

- **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Applicant: Brian Burkett, Aspire Architecture; Douglass Lampe

Location: 1680 Grove Road, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

Parcel ID: K-11-14-300-006

Request: Articles 4, 14, and 16 for the following five (5) variances; (1) height variance (29.4'), (2) number of stories (3), (3) expansion of a nonconformity (principal structure within 100' of front lake/natural feature setback), (4) new accessory structure building within 100' of front lake/natural feature setback, and (5) patio expansion including grading into the 50' no disturbance setback and within the 100' from front lake/natural feature setback

Mr. Mark Yandrick, Planning Director, presented the parcel and noted the historic Henry Ford parcel to the right. The front-street view was presented, and it was noted that the property was not visible from Grove Road. The 2010 photo, before the 100-foot setback, was presented. The adjacent parcels were R3. There were high-density residential units on one side and low-density residential units on the other. Some items were placed in the request column to clarify what is being requested. The height requirement was 25 feet, and the applicant sought a 29.4-foot pitched roof. Parts of the home were currently three stories, but it needed a variance due to the expansion. The existing home was already within the 100-foot setback and was currently 88.53 feet. The principal structure would not move any closer to the setback. The new building would be 59.1 feet tall. There was a 50-foot non-disturbance setback, and the part of the construction that required the variance was the retaining wall and the construction equipment within the setback.

Mr. Yandrick reviewed the five variance requirements, noting that he had separated the five variances and completed a high-level analysis. Given the building's height, a pitched roof seemed to better protect the structure. For the third variance requirement (that the authorizing of such variance will not be a substantial detriment to adjacent property, will not be harmful to or alter the essential character of the area, and will not materially impair the purposes of this ordinance or the public interest), staff did not feel that the expansion would significantly modify or disturb the surrounding area. There were no exceptional circumstances requiring the third-story addition. While there was a nonconformity, there was no need to expand the third story to enjoy the property. Staff did not find unique circumstances where the need was not self-created. Staff also noted that there were still opportunities to build with a smaller footprint or something further away from the 50-foot disturbance. Staff concluded that the existing home could not be expanded in any direction without encroaching on the setback, as it was already within the 100-foot setback. Staff concluded that the existing pool building location could not be added without encroaching on the setback.

In summary, the requested variance was required due to the steep slope. The ZBA needed to evaluate if the addition and construction of the patio and poolhouse was necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right possessed by other properties along Ford Lake. The change was unlikely to be significant or noticeable to nearby properties due to larger parcel sizes and multi-family buildings. There were no unique circumstances found by staff in relation to the 50-foot setback that were not self-created. Staff concluded that the variance requests were not the minimum necessary outside the setbacks, and no disturbance could be achieved for reasonable use of the property. Staff reminded the commissioners that there were five variances, five assessments and five separate motions requested. Site plans were provided in the staff report.

Mr. Marshall (Commissioner) asked about the third point regarding the expansion of a non-conformity. He noted that it was stated that any addition to a non-conforming structure was considered an expansion of the non-conformity and asked whether the proposed addition was within the setback boundary. Staff confirmed that it was not.

Ms. El-Assadi (Commissioner) asked about the height variance and if it was on the third story. Staff confirmed that it was on the third story. Staff did not provide a formal recommendation but determined that compliance was greater in the first variance than in the second. The existing third stories had flat roofs, but the proposed addition would have a pitched roof, increasing the height. The application of the five standards varied with the number of stories relative to the roof height. The roof pitch would not add area, so a variance from the ZBA would still be needed. Staff noted that there were other improvements to the site that did not require variances.

Brian Burkett, the principal architect of Aspire Architecture, provided information on the house's plan. The property itself was one of three parcels facing south. The parcel's area was eight times the minimum requirement for the zoning classification and twice the minimum width, so the impact on the neighbors was minimal. The unique factors of the mid-century modern house were that it had no basement, had primarily flat roofs throughout the structure, and had steep slate tiles for the majority of the façade. One of the reasons to go higher was to achieve better drainage and less leakage. The roofs were also surrounded by parapets, which contained the water. A series of roof drains backed up consistently, leading to pooling water on the roof. The house was relatively close to the lake, necessitating the fourth variance. The water's edge featured a seawall and a steep drop, and an inlet was created by a dock at the property. Closer to the water, there was an existing building within the 50-foot non-disturbance setback. To

address the issues, the plan was to expand the first floor, add space on the third floor, and create a garage addition.

The height variance requested was due to the sloped roof, which would be 1.5 feet higher than the current roof. The goal was to keep the non-conformance to a minimum. The variance for the third floor was due to wanting to increase the floor area, enjoy the lake views and reinforce the building's structure. The proposed third floor was also due to not being able to expand at the basement level. The existing third floor was 888 square feet, and the new area to add was 2,479 square feet. The third variance, in relation to modifying a pre-existing non-conforming structure, would be necessary for the property, even if there were no third-story expansion. The fourth variance sought concerned the addition within the 100-foot setback. The proposed addition was an accessory function to the existing pool. There was a cabana to the south of the pool, but the addition would serve the pool itself. There was one tree enjoyed by the client and neighbor that was being avoided. The addition would extend 40 feet into the 100-foot setback. The patio was removed in an attempt to be more in accordance with the ordinance. There was a series of retaining walls that went down to the water, but some of them were failing. The goal was to couple the repairs with the current work. The fifth variance requested allowed people to enter the area and complete the work, provided they remained within five feet of the 50-foot setback. Additional floor plans and elevation views were available.

Ms. El-Assadi (Commissioner) asked what square footage would be added by the accessory building and patio. Mr. Burkett reported that the pool house was approximately 1,000 square feet. It was a single-story home with a walkout basement. The patio was moved so that it would not extend into the setback, and it no longer required a variance. Ms. El-Assadi asked for clarification on which retaining wall would be fixed. Mr. Burkett explained that the top one would be removed due to the pool house, and the middle one would be removed as well. They were all made of timber and were leaning outward. Ms. El-Assadi asked for clarification on which tree was trying to be kept, and Mr. Burkett pointed it out in a photograph.

Ms. Vonyea (Commissioner) asked whether the 29.4-foot height was measured from the third floor or from the sloped roof. Mr. Burkett reported that the height was approximately 28 feet, but with the addition, it was 29.4 feet.

Mr. Yandrick stated that the majority of ZBA members had to vote for approval, not only a majority of members present, so all three ZBA Commissioners would have to vote in favor.

Applicant Douglass Lampe provided some additional information. He discussed the house's unique features, including issues with the flat roof and pooling water. He explained that the sloped roof was critical to the building's structure. The sloped roof was intended to preserve long-term integrity and to facilitate water and snow dispersal. The higher level sought was to have a unified structure and to prevent water from pooling. He noted that the mechanical room and closets ate up living space since they had no basement. The house was noisy because it was on top of the hill, and the engineer's solution was to install stiff walls tied together with cabling on the third floor. Mr. Lampe discussed the tree they wanted to keep. Their neighbors supported the planned pool structure to keep the tree and maintain privacy for both parties.

PUBLIC HEARING OPENED AT 7:25 P.M.

PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED AT 7:26 P.M.

Staff noted that three letters of written support were included in the Board packet.

Mr. Marshall (Commissioner) asked whether a variance would be required if the base-level expansion did not connect to the house. Mr. Yandrick explained that it would likely not require a variance if it were outside the 100-foot setback, as it would not expand the variance. However, the third story could not be expanded without encroaching on the setback.

MOTION: Mr. Marshall **MOVED** to approve the variance request to permit a 29.4-foot-tall building on a lot while Sec. 406, Dimensional Requirements of the Zoning Ordinance requires a maximum height of 25'. The property is located in the R-3 Zoning District at 1680 Grove Rd (K -11-14-300- 006), and the proposal meets all the criteria, as the following practical difficulties have been noted:

- The proposed modification to a pitched roof as opposed to the current flat roof may be seen as necessary to maintain the structural integrity of the home in heavy snow and rain.
- The third story is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right possessed by other properties in the same zoning district and in the vicinity.

- Authorizing the requested variance will not be a substantial detriment to adjacent properties, given that the existing nearby multi-family residential developments are taller than the proposed residence.
- The site's shape and building location were not created by the applicant or previous property owners.
- The proposed modification to a pitched roof as opposed to the current flat roof may be seen as the minimum necessary to fix any potential issue with snow and rain collecting on the roof, and affect the long-term condition of the roof and structure.

The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Ms. Vonyea.

Roll Call Vote: Ms. Elizabeth El-Assadi (Yes); Mr. David Marshall (Yes); Ms. Erica Vonyea (Yes).

MOTION PASSED.

Ms. El-Assadi (Commissioner) asked what would occur if all three Commissioners did not vote in favor of an item. Staff explained that the portion would fail rather than going to the next meeting, and the applicant could not seek the same variance for 365 days.

Mr. Marshall (Commissioner) commented that other areas on the property could be developed.

Ms. El-Assadi (Commissioner) commented that the only item that met the variance requirement was that it did not constitute a substantial detriment to nearby properties. She asked if a postponement would offer the applicants the ability to come back with a new plan. Staff confirmed this was correct. Ms. El-Assadi (Commissioner) asked the applicant if he would prefer a postponement. The applicant confirmed that they would prefer to postpone.

MOTION: Mr. Marshall **MOVED** to postpone the variance request to permit three (3) stories in height to give the applicant opportunity to revise the plan, finding that the current plan does not meet the need for enjoyment of a substantial property right possessed by other priorities in the same zoning district.

The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Ms. Vonyea.

Roll Call Vote: Ms. Elizabeth El-Assadi (Yes); Mr. David Marshall (Yes); Ms. Erica Vonyea (Yes).

MOTION PASSED.

MOTION: Mr. Marshall **MOVED** to approve the variance request to permit expansion of the principal building to 88.53 feet from Ford Lake, where Sec. 1404, Natural Features Setback of the Zoning Ordinance requires a maximum building setback of 100 feet. The property is located in the R-3 Zoning District at 1680 Grove Rd (K -11-14-300-006), and the proposal meets all the criteria, as the following practical difficulties have been noted:

- Because of the 2022 Zoning Code change, the existing principal structure/home is already within the 100' Ford Lake (Natural Feature) setback, which is an extenuating circumstance of any modification to the existing building would encroach into the required setback or expand the nonconformity.
- The principal building expansion within the setback is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right possessed by other properties in the same zoning district and in the vicinity.
- Authorizing of the requested variance will not be a substantial detriment to adjacent properties.
- The building location was not created by the applicant or previous property owners.
- The proposed modification to build the principle building extension within the 100' setback is the minimum variance necessary.

The **MOTION** was **NOT SECONDED** and **FAILED**.

Mr. Marshall commented that he struggled to reach a yes on the remaining motions.

Ms. El-Assadi stated that she would prefer to postpone the remaining items and return with more ideas in the future.

Staff noted that the remaining three variances could be postponed in a single motion.

MOTION: Mr. Marshall **MOVED** to postpone the variance request to permit the principal building to be expanded into the 100' natural features setback, as well as to postpone the variance request to permit patio expansion, retaining wall replacement, construction and grading in the 50' no disturbance setback along Ford Lake to allow

the applicant to revise their plan, and to postpone the variance request to permit an accessory structure to be located in the 100' natural features setback.

The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Ms. Vonyea.

Roll Call Vote: Ms. Elizabeth El-Assadi (Yes); Mr. David Marshall (Yes); Ms. Erica Vonyea (Yes).

MOTION PASSED.

Ms. El-Assadi asked the applicant to work with Staff.

Applicant: 136 Group LLC (Camelot Apartments)

Location: 2982 Washtenaw, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

Parcel ID: K-11-06-325-003

Request: Article 15 – Sec. 1506.A.1, Request For Ground Sign On A Parcel Than 50' In Width.

Mr. Yandrick reported that the applicant requested to postpone to the June meeting. The public hearing will have to be advertised again for the June meeting.

MOTION: Ms. Vonyea **MOVED** to postpone the variance request to permit a sign as requested for the lot with insufficient lot width of 48-23 feet, while Section 1506.A.1 requires a minimum lot width of 50 feet. The property is located within the regional corridor district at 2982 Washtenaw Avenue, K-11-06-325-003, to consider comments presented during the public hearing.

The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Mr. Marshall.

Roll Call Vote: Ms. Elizabeth El-Assadi (Yes); Mr. David Marshall (Yes); Ms. Erica Vonyea (Yes).

MOTION PASSED.

- **OPEN DISCUSSIONS FOR ISSUES NOT ON AGENDA**
 - **PLANNING DEPARTMENT REPORT – 2025 ANNUAL ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS REPORT**

Staff noted that a report was included in the last two pages of the Board packet to recap the year. There were no other updates.

- **CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED**

None to Report.

- **ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS MEMBERS**

None to Report.

- **MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE/PUBLIC**

The applicant thanked the Commissioners for their time.

- **OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY COME BEFORE THE ZONING BOARD**

None to Report

- **ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION: Mr. Marshall **MOVED** to adjourn at 7:47 p.m. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Ms. Vonyea and **PASSED** by unanimous consent.

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Respectively Submitted by Minutes Services