



Zoning Board of Appeals

Meeting Minutes Draft –APPROVED

March 12, 2026, at 6:30 P.M.

Saugatuck City Hall, 102 Butler St, Saugatuck, MI 49453

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 by Chair Kubasiak.

2. Roll Call

Members Present: Bouck, Crawford, Raphael, Kubasiak.

Members Absent: Bont.

Staff Present: Clerk Wolters.

Others Present: David Jirousek and Trent Cunningham.

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Bouck, supported by Raphael, to approve the agenda as presented for March 12, 2026. Via voice vote, motion carried 4-0.

4. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Bouck, supported by Crawford, to amend the January 8, 2026, minutes, to include two separate motions for item 6B, noting that Bouck did not motion to nominate himself for Vice Chair. Via voice vote, motion carried 4-0.

5. Public Comment

None.

6. New Business

A. 250 Mason – Dimensional Variance Request

Public Hearing

1. The Public Hearing was called to order by the Chair at 6:35 p.m.

2. Summary by Horizon Planning's David Jirousek.

Consulting Planner Jirousek explained the dimensional variance request for 250 Mason Street. He stated the applicant wants to convert an existing historic church into a bed and breakfast with nine guest rooms plus an owner's unit, in the R-4 City Center Transitional Residential District, where B&Bs are a permitted use. The lot is just at the minimum conforming size and width, and the building footprint takes up a large portion of it. He outlined the parking requirements: a B&B needs one space per three sleeping units, meaning only four spaces are required by ordinance, yet the applicant proposes 11 on-site spaces to avoid relying on on-street parking. To accommodate 11 spaces with code-compliant stall sizes (9' x 20') and a 22-foot drive aisle, the layout encroaches into the required 5' landscape separation strip along the north property line, violating Section 154.134(G)(1), which requires that off-street parking has at least a 5-foot landscaped separation along all property lines and streets. Jirousek noted that if the ordinance were fully met, roughly eight on-site spaces would fit. He explained that alternatives exist - such as fewer on-site spaces with more on-street parking or reducing the number of guest rooms. However, the owner wants to accommodate all guest and owner parking on site. He then reviewed the four variance approval standards in Section 154.155(B) (unnecessarily burdensome, substantial justice to owner and neighbors, unique circumstances vs. general neighborhood conditions, and not self-created/financial) and said the staff report lays out pros and cons for each to assist the board in determining whether positive findings for all four standards can be made.

3. Presentation by the Applicant:

Kendra Scheerhorn, the co-owner of 250 Mason Street, explained that she and her husband (the project's general contractor) are converting a contributing historic church into a bed and breakfast with 9 guest rooms plus an owner's suite in the lower level. The exterior changes and use have already been approved by the Historic District Commission and the City's Zoning Administrator, and they have their building permit. She emphasized that the church has never had on-site parking or a driveway and that the building's size and location on a small, conforming lot leave only the rear yard available for parking. Their plan shows 11 spaces (one per guest room plus two for the on-site owners), all meeting the required stall and drive-aisle dimensions, and they've voluntarily sacrificed a potential 12th space to use that area for HVAC screening instead. The fire department and city engineer have tentatively approved the layout. Because there isn't enough depth to also provide the required 5-foot landscape strip on the north property line, they are requesting a variance there and proposing instead a 6-foot cedar fence on the north line, which Kendra argued would provide better visual screening for the neighbor than a landscaped strip inside the lot. She stressed their long-term investment, intent to live on-site, desire to avoid burdening limited on-street parking, and commitment to making the project a positive asset for downtown Saugatuck.

4. Public comment regarding the application:

- a. Supporting comments (audience and letters): None.
- b. Opposing comments (audience and letters): Katherine Lake.
- c. General comments (audience and letters): None.
- d. Repeat comment opportunity (Supporting, Opposing, General): None.

5. Public comment portion closed by the Chair at 6:54 p.m.

6. Commission deliberation:

During deliberation on the 250 Mason variance, the board focused heavily on how to reconcile two ordinance sections: §154.134(G)(1) (5-foot landscaped separation for parking lots) and §154.142 (screening/buffering between non-residential or multifamily uses and residential property, which can be met by either a 10-foot landscaped buffer, a berm, or a 5–6 ft solid fence). Jim Bouck argued §154.142 is the more restrictive, “controlling” standard and that the proposed 6-foot fence along the north line should fully satisfy screening without needing the 5-foot landscape strip. David Jirousek and Attorney Trent Cunningham agreed both sections apply but serve different purposes (one for parking separation, one for land-use screening) and that §154.134(G)(1) still requires a variance; §154.142 can be handled administratively or via its own waiver language. The board debated whether to postpone for a formal interpretation but ultimately decided to proceed under §154.134(G)(1) and treat the fence as satisfying §154.142. Members discussed the lot’s constrained size, the historic, existing building footprint, the city’s seasonal parking demand, and whether alternatives (8-space lot, fewer rooms, off-site parking) meant the request was or was not “unnecessarily burdensome” or self-created. Views were mixed on hardship, with Chris Raphael more skeptical and Kubasiak, Bouck, and Crawford emphasizing the uniqueness of adapting a historic church and the public benefit of on-site parking.

ZBA Findings of Fact: *Note: Applicant must show practical difficulty by demonstrating that all four standards are met.*

Standard 1: *That strict compliance with area, setbacks, frontage, height, bulk, or density would unreasonably prevent the owner from using the property for a permitted purpose or would render conformity unnecessarily burdensome.” § 154.155(B)(1).*

Crawford and Kubasiak agree the standard is met and vote yes, reasoning that under these conditions and given seasonal parking pressures, requiring strict compliance with the landscape strip would be unnecessarily burdensome. Bouck, Crawford, and Kubasiak agree that the standard has been met. Raphael concluded that the standard had not been satisfied.

Standard 2: *"That a variance would do substantial justice to the owner as well as to other property owners in the district, or whether a lesser relaxation would give substantial relief and be more consistent with justice to others."* § 154.155(B)(2).

Bouck says the variance meets the standard because it allows the owner to reasonably accommodate all guests with on-site, off-street parking, which he sees as substantial justice to both the owner and the public. He notes that a lesser relaxation wouldn't really accomplish anything in this case and adds that his support assumes stormwater runoff will be properly managed by the zoning administrator. Bouck, Kubasiak, and Raphael agree that the standard has been satisfied. Crawford disagreed and said that the standard had not been met.

Standard 3: *"That the plight of the owner is due to unique circumstances of the property and not to general neighborhood conditions."* § 154.155(B)(3).

Raphael expressed concern that reasonable alternatives may exist, including reducing the number of rooms, decreasing on-site parking, or utilizing nearby off-site parking, and questioned whether the applicant's circumstances were unique to the property. Upon deliberation, and at the time of voting, Raphael supported Standard 3, finding that the combination of the lot configuration, existing historic structure, and dimensional constraints constituted a unique circumstance applicable to the property. Bouck, Crawford, Kubasiak, and Raphael concurred that Standard 3 had been met.

Standard 4: *"That the problem is not self-created or based on personal financial circumstances."* § 154.155(B)(4).

Kubasiak reads and adopts staff's reasoning that, although a smaller parking lot or fewer guest rooms are theoretically possible, the need to provide on-site, off-street parking in a town with heavy seasonal demand is not a self-created hardship. He also notes that constructing a larger, 11-space lot with fencing is not clearly more financially advantageous than a smaller, compliant lot. Bouck, Crawford, and Kubasiak agreed that the standard had been met. Raphael disagreed that the standard had been met.

Motion by Bouck, second by Raphael, based upon findings for each of the four standards as described in the meeting minutes, to approve the variance requests related to section 154.134(G1) submitted by Kendra Scheerhorn to construct an 11-space parking lot at 250 Mason Street in the rear yard, without a five-foot northern landscape separation strip based on the boards findings related to 154.155(B). Upon roll call vote, motion carried 4-0.

7. Communications

None.

8. ZBA Member Comments

Bouck: He expressed appreciation for the thorough discussion and differing viewpoints among board members, emphasizing the importance of clearly stating opinions and the basis for them. He also thanks the consultant and city attorney for their input, the applicant for staying through the lengthy discussion, and Jamie for the work put into supporting the meeting.

9. Public Comments

None.

10. Adjournment

Motion by Crawford, supported by Bouck, to adjourn at 8:24 pm. Via voice vote, Motion carried 4-0.

Submitted by:

Sara Williams

Deputy Clerk

City of Saugatuck