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ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
VILLAGE OF NORTH HAVEN
Held at:
335 Ferry Road
Sag Harbor, New York 11963
Also Held Via:
Zoom
Video Communications
March 12, 2024
7:00 p.m.
Proceedings Recorded by
Electronic Sound Recording
Transcribed by: Agata Davis

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A P P E A R A N C E S:

Mark Poitras, Chairperson
Scott Brooks, Vice Chairman
Steve Hatfield, Board Member
Steve Cox, Board Member (Absent)
Michael D'Angelo, Board Member
Michael Daly, Alternate Board Member (Absent)

Richard DeMaio, Esq., Village Attorney George Butts, Village Building Inspector

1

## nORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Well, good
evening, everyone. Welcome to the
Tuesday, March 12th, 2024 Zoning Board of
Appeals for the Village of North Haven.
This evening, the first order of
business is we need an approval by the Board to -- of the January 9th, 2024 transcript.

Motion by Mr. Brooks, second Mr. D'Angelo.

All in favor?
ALL BOARD MEMBERS: Aye.
CHAIRMAN POITRAS: All members in favor. Okay.

As far as correspondence, we did have some correspondence, but only related to the application that was ZBA \#423A, Jason and Caroline Craig at 6 West Harbor Drive. That, at their counsel's request today, was adjourned, so we will hold that for the next -- the next meeting.

And so that leaves us with one application this evening. It's a new application for $Z B A$ \# $424 \mathrm{~A}, 45$ Bay View

1

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
Court, LLC. The property is located at 45 Bay View Court, North Haven, New York. Suffolk County Tax Map No. 901-4-5-7. The applicant seeks relief for an as-built addition and alteration that pierces the allowable primary FAR by 201 square feet and the total allowable FAR by 135 square feet. Section 163-13 of the Village Code allows a maximum of 5,813 square feet for the primary structure and a total allowable FAR of 6,685 square feet. The subject premises is bounded by Bay View Court, Gruenstein, John P. Picone, Jr. 2011 Qualified Personal Residence, and West Banks Association, Inc.

Okay. And this evening, so who would like to begin with the presentation? MR. MORASH: Okay. I believe our attorney Al D'Agostino is Zooming in. He was under the impression that we were the second case called, so $I$ just reached out to him.

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Okay.
MR. MORASH: He's getting

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - 3/12/2024 situated.

MR. BROOKS: Okay.
CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Okay. We'll give him a moment.

MR. BUTTS: And just for the record, just state your name.

MR. MORASH: Good evening. I'm Michael Morash, 45 Bay View Court.

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Okay. And your relationship to the -- to the applicant is?

MR. MORASH: I'm his son.
CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Okay.
MR. BROOKS: We did not get an updated plan with a --

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: No. All we
have is this as -- right here, breezeway between the two.

MR. BROOKS: Okay.
CHAIRMAN POITRAS: That's it.
MR. HATFIELD: So none of this has anything to do with the patio being --

MR. BROOKS: Is this as-built?
CHAIRMAN POITRAS: It's built

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
already, yeah.
MR. BROOKS: I mean, this
as-built. This isn't the plan. This is, theoretically --

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: We'll confirm once the attorney gets on, yup.

MR. MORASH: I have an affidavit of support from one of the neighbors. I left it in a different folder. Is that something you'd like me to get now while we're waiting, or?

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: If you have it. If you have it with you, yeah, I would -we're waiting right now.

MR. MORASH: Okay.
CHAIRMAN POITRAS: We'll give the attorney five, ten minutes, and then, you know. So if you have it, then --

MR. MORASH: Okay. Thank you.
CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Then $I$ would grab it.

MR. MORASH: I apologize for the mixup.

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Sure, yup.

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD-3/12/2024
Who is eligible to speak on this behalf? I think the applicant's the one who signed everything, right? So if he gives permission for his attorney to take over, the attorney can sign the application? That's okay?

MR. DeMAIO: Yeah.
CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Okay.
MR. MORASH: They're in the proc--- I just confirmed they are in the process of logging in.

MR. D'AGOSTINO: Yeah, I'm in.
CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Hello, Mr.
D'Agostino, can you hear us?
MR. D'AGOSTINO: Yes. My
apologies. I had some difficulties probably tending to my age.

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: All right.
MR. D'AGOSTINO: You let me know when you're ready for me.

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: We -- we are ready. We are awaiting -- awaiting your words eagerly, so.

MR. D'AGOSTINO: Okay.

## NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - 3/12/2024

MR. BROOKS: Announce yourself and your address and --

MR. D'AGOSTINO: I will.
MR. BROOKS: -- you know, relationship to --

MR. D'AGOSTINO: For the applicant, my name is Albert A. D'Agostino, D, apostrophe, capital A-G-O-S-T-I-N-O. I'm a member of the firm of Minerva, $M-I-N-E-R-V-A, ~ a n d ~ D ' A g o s t i n o$, P.C., with offices at 107 South Central Avenue, Valley Stream, New York 11580 . And I appreciate your patience with me with the technology. But let me start off by saying, I am a bit embarrassed by being here by events which apparently have occurred.

As you may very well recall, I was before you, I believe it was on May 7 th of last year, seeking variances, which are in the notice of that meeting, and that is somewhat tied in to what are before you this evening. I would respectfully request that the transcript of that

1

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
meeting be included in the exhibits.
Among other things, $I$ submitted a letter from my client's physicians. And my client being Thomas Morash. Thomas Morash being the -- Thomas Morash, Sr. being the principal member of the LLC which owns the subject property.

Mr. Morash has been hospitalized several times over the intervening period since May 7 th of last year and, in fact, had been in and out of St. Francis Hospital in Nassau County over the last day and last couple of days as well.

I don't want to belabor the -well, I guess first $I$ would request whether or not you would be willing to incorporate the transcript of that meeting and the exhibits that were then submitted on March 7th of 2023.

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Well, at this point, Mr. D'Agostino, this is a new application. So you could -- you could submit a letter request that would allow the Village to, I guess, pull those. But

## NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$

we would -- we would also want to -- being that this is a new application at this point, that application was abandoned, and so we would need to still start from -essentially from scratch on this.

We're not going to just be able to incorporate and pick up from where we left off on that. It's going to be a case where we need to establish a new record and start -- you know, start from the beginning on what is presented to this Board at this point.

MR. D'AGOSTINO: Well, the request at that hearing and where we are now are somewhat linked in that -- and I -- let me say that $I$ was and am most appreciative of the position that -- for the time that the Board members spent on May 7 th, and, you know, the -- we went through the various iterations and alternatives and the possibility of attaching the -- the garage to the house.

What we did not go through, and which has me a little bit embarrassed even

1

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
being here, is that construction apparently was inadvertently started. And the Village issued a Stop Work Order, which was immediately honored. I'm not saying that the Village had to issue the Stop Work Order, but it had to based upon the commencement of the construction. And for that, $I$-- and that confusion on my client's part, I apologize. I mean, this is -- it was not like, you know, construction that could have been hidden or was not plainly visible.

But in any event, picking up on the discussion which occurred at the end of the May 7 th meeting with the Board and the good faith and appreciated suggestions, and therefore, I left that meeting. I pointed out to my client the construction at the Village Hall where you have a north and a south main building with that glass enclosure. And I -- and I said to him, "That's" -- "You know, that's what they're talking about, conceptually. You have to, you know, do what you have to

## NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$

do to get it reviewed."
Now, upon the -- upon the review of the -- of the (inaudible).

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: I'm sorry, Mr. D'Agostino, you must have gone away from your microphone. We couldn't hear anything you just said, that last -- that last --

MR. D'AGOSTINO: Oh, okay. Can you hear me now?

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Yes, we can. MR. D'AGOSTINO: Okay. Don't be afraid to interrupt me because it's like flying a plane for me. And $I$ don't have (inaudible).

I believe the lot area coverage in the two computations, which are set forth in the notice of hearing under 163-13 of the Village Code, I believe, if my math is correct, we're approximately two percent over those calculations. Of course, the problem is that -- and there was a permit for some construction, and that may have led to the continued construction.

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
That, plus my client's condition, which $I$ think has been described by his physicians, where he -- his treatment is the result of cardiac issues, full knee replacement, and as well as kidney cancer. And without getting into the messy details, his -- the issues related to his being able to get to a bathroom as quickly as he would like in many occasions.

MR. BROOKS: I'm gonna interrupt you. You said you're okay with us interrupting.

With all respect -- and I appreciate all the background, you know, as a Zoning Board, we're required to evaluate variance applications based on a specific five prong test. If you could just get to the five prong test without all the background, we --

MR. D'AGOSTINO: Well --
MR. BROOKS: I don't mean to be dismissing it, but $I$-- I really want to try to focus on what the presentation is, why we should -- you know, how you address

1

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
the five-prong test and how that fits in, without regard to all the background on other things that are not necessarily relevant to the five prong test.

MR. D'AGOSTINO: Well, respectfully, and $I$ fully understand. My firm represents many municipal boards.

And the reason -- the reason that
I was requesting the inclusion of the transcript of the prior hearing is that spelled out the hardship.

MR. BROOKS: But, I mean, I understand. Respectfully, again, we understand that hardship in the context of --

MR. D'AGOSTINO: I will do that. I will do that.

MR. BROOKS: But no, let me just explain.

We understand that hardship in the context of a variance that was then sought, which is different than the variance that is now sought, and want to try to understand how this variance is

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
appropriate based on the application.
MR. D'AGOSTINO: Well, the circumstances, as I said, surrounding the variance application were spelled out previously, but going to Section 7-712-B, Subdivision 3, dealing with area variances, the balancing test deals with benefit of the applicant, if the variance is granted, is waived against the detriment to the health, safety and welfare of the neighborhood or community by such grant.

And the considerations, the five considerations. One, whether an undesirable change will be produced in the character of the neighborhood or a detriment to nearby properties will be created by the granting of the area variance. I would respectfully submit that it will not. And that, you know, following that last meeting, my client proceededly (sic) -- proceeded, although overly exuberantly in dealing with a contractor, there was an open permit for

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$ part of this construction, and they went ahead and brought it to the point of attack.

But I would respectfully request that the granting of a variance, now that this is proposed to be habitable space and as connected to the house, of two percent is di minimus. And the benefit to the applicant, of course, is that the -- the distance in his ability to get to a bathroom from the pool where he is generally out there in the summers with his grandchildren, as opposed to an interior bathroom in the house or a bathroom in the basement.

This is -- those are difficult for him to get to based upon the number of steps, the distance, the fact that there are no showers at neither one of them. In fact, they're very often, to be quite graphic, he has to take a shower if he doesn't get there in time.

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Mr. D'Agostino, if $I$ could interject something here.

## NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$

Just two -- two questions, because
the detriment to the community is
honestly -- this is the single biggest hurdle, I think, you have in this, right, because there are two major detriments that are associated. While, yes, the two percent may seem de minimis, it is creating a precedent that this Village has never granted, and that's the expansion of the FAR by an expansion of footprint to the house and which is, I think, a really big issue.

And then the second issue is the fact that -- is the construction being completed, if you can comment on where we are on that. I mean, that's another issue. 'Cause you're -- from this Board's perspective, that's a very big hurdle that never has been made in the Village before. So if you could address that.

MR. D'AGOSTINO: Okay.
MR. MORASH: If I may, I had to take some pictures of -- today of the site.

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
And $I$ just want to reiterate
before Mr. D'Agostino gets started, that, as he indicated, there was miscommunication as to what we were supposed to do. But as soon as George placed the Stop Work Order, we have not moved forward with anything, so. CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Okay. MR. MORASH: Even though there's framing there, it is not -- we did not complete construction work. CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Okay. So construction's not complete, but it's still -- still -- you still have the major -- the biggest hurdle here is, is exactly what the variance is asking for, which is the FAR. And the detriment to the community there is the precedent that allows people to go ahead and exceed that. And then in this, a very dangerous one in the sense that it's exceeding it by asking for forgiveness rather than permission, right.

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    And so if -- if -- like you said,
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NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
if, Mr. D'Agostino, you would like to comment to this, because this is -- this is a serious hurdle for us to try to get over.

MR. BROOKS: And I think it would probably be useful to address feasible alternatives, because we had -- not that it matters 'cause it was a different application, but we had pretty good conversation last time about the feasibility of alternatives, that, frankly, there's absolutely no reason $I$ see that one would need to grant the variance here. There's a feasible alternative that requires no variance. And the fact that you built it without a permit is not necessarily relevant to this Board in evaluating the feasibility of alternatives.

And it seems to me a really, really tough one to overcome because all of the concerns you've raised about his medical condition seem to be feasibly, you know, achievable by having a bathroom that

## NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$

 complies with applicable code. And the fact that he built one that doesn't comply with the code without a permit isn't an overwhelmingly successful, for me, argument why we should ignore the fact that there's a feasible alternative.MR. D'AGOSTINO: Again, one of the feasible alternatives that was discussed at the last hearing, and again, that's one of the reasons why $I$ was requesting that that transcript be incorporated, was the connection, which was done.

What was not considered, and frankly, is the proverbial elephant in the room, is that the construction went ahead. And there is a two percent excess of the FAR. And that was the one -- connecting the buildings was the one where the board and $I$ and Mr. Morash spent the most time. And that had -- and you're absolutely correct, had the FAR been complied with in that construction, that we would not be before you today.

And again, and $I$ want to make this

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NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
clear, that discussion that we had at the end of the last hearing is one which I am most appreciative of. And what $I$ didn't expect is that $I$ would be before you again asking for forgiveness on a two percent excess of the --

And that being said, that being said, there -- I believe there was one other alternative that was briefly referred to having to do with a shed at that time. And one of the Board members raised it and then the other Board members sort of spoke over it, and we didn't explore that in detail.

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Well, Mr.
D'Agostino, we'll leave it to you to review feasible alternatives, if you would like to present the -- if you have some tonight, we would be happy to hear. But if -- otherwise, you can present to this Board what you think would be feasible alternatives at this point, so.

MR. D'AGOSTINO: Well, I mean, the first alternative is the request for the

1

## NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$

 discretionary relief. The only other possibility would somehow be modifying the structure that is there to bring it into compliance or some other area that's within the FAR.And if $I$ understood the brief reference that was made to that -- to that shed, there was something involving a shed, and I didn't know -- it wasn't clear through the record whether that referenced --

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: So once again, Mr. D'Agostino, that hearing, since it was abandoned, is not part of this record. So if you'd like to reestablish that
conversation, you can. Otherwise, you need to submit in writing and we can bring that into the meeting for next --

MR. D'AGOSTINO: I can't -- I can't -- I'm sorry, $I$ can't see or hear who's speaking, honestly.

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: This is Chair -- Chairman Poitras is speaking right now, so.

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
MR. D'AGOSTINO: Mr. Chairman, I would be happy to do that in writing as an alternative. But again, I would respectfully submit that the -- a two percent increase in the FAR, you know, purely looking at the application, not whether it was built or not.

And $I$ understand that construction was brought to the point of wherever -the date of the Stop Work Order, which has been diligently adhered to. But I would subject -- I would respectfully submit that the undesirable change of two percent increase in the FAR will neither create a detriment to the character of the neighborhood or a detriment to the nearby properties.

The benefits sought by the applicant can be achieved by some other method feasible for the applicant to pursue. Other than an area variance, we would obviously have to remove or demolish something. And again, after referring -there was a suggestion from other Board

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NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
members at the end of the May 7 th hearing.
MR. BROOKS: I don't want to
interrupt again. Did any Board member at the prior hearing recommend that you violate the applicable Zoning Law?

MR. D'AGOSTINO: Absolutely, one hundred percent, no. And I -- and I --

MR. BROOKS: Okay. I just want to be really clear about that, that --

MR. D'AGOSTINO: NO, I --
MR. BROOKS: -- this was not a recommendation of the Zoning Board, to --

MR. D'AGOSTINO: No, absolutely not.

MR. BROOKS: -- violate the Zoning Law.

MR. D'AGOSTINO: You are absolutely correct.

MR. BROOKS: Okay. So --
MR. D'AGOSTINO: And $I$ can only reiterate that I'm more than embarrassed at having to be here under these circumstances. But $I$ can assure you that it was -- whatever happened, happened, and

| 1 | north haven zoning board - 3/12/2024 |
| :---: | :---: |
| 2 | it's obviously not something that I'm |
| 3 | going to suggest that anybody on the |
| 4 | Village side suggested. |
| 5 | My assumption is that anything |
| 6 | that was coming as a suggestion from the |
| 7 | Board or any Board members was being made |
| 8 | in good faith, trying to be helpful, and |
| 9 | did not, in any way, indicate that anybody |
| 10 | should try to shortcut any of the Village |
| 11 | processes. I'll make that clear. And |
| 12 | that I was appreciative of the time that |
| 13 | you spent for it. So I -- and I'm not |
| 14 | trying to say that was an alternative. |
| 15 | But if there has to be a |
| 16 | modification as a condition of approval, |
| 17 | should the Board grant one, obviously the |
| 18 | Village has the authority to set forth and |
| 19 | require reasonable alternatives to the |
| 20 | granting of a variance. |
| 21 | And I heard what you said, and I'm |
| 22 | assuming it came from the chairman at the |
| 23 | very beginning. And you are absolutely |
| 24 | correct, that if this can be brought into |
| 25 | compliance and know the variance, when it |

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NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
would be required, we would not be before you now or in the future, but it would have to be brought in compliance. And I understand exactly what you were saying. Three, whether the requested area variance is substantial. Clearly, two percent, to me, is not substantial. How it got here is problematic and embarrassing. But the two percent, as a calculation, is -- if my calculation is correct, is clearly not substantial. CHAIRMAN POITRAS: And Mr.

D'Agostino, along those lines, I had -this is Chairman Poitras again. The idea of setting precedent, do you have a comment to that? Because this is something the Village has never granted before --

MR. D'AGOSTINO: Well --
CHAIRMAN POITRAS: -- which would
make two percent substantial. Because your two percent becomes the next person's three and the --

MR. D'AGOSTINO: Well --

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
CHAIRMAN POITRAS: -- next
person's four, and then it's where -that's the issue with the precedent that becomes a real issue for this Board, so. MR. D'AGOSTINO: I understand that. But $I$ would respectfully submit that the statutory responsibility of the Court of Appeals in any jurisdiction is to look at and weigh the request for the variance, for the relief. Taking a hard, fast position that we will not grant this because it might be a precedent.

A precedent is something which, one, I would say arguably would be limited to two percent under the exact same circumstances and facts. I don't think a blanket refusal is the way to address it. And obviously I'm arguing for a client, and $I$ say that respectfully, but $I$ don't see a precedent anywhere in 7-712-B as being a reason to deny. There are five elements to the -to weighing the request for a variation from the -- certain requirements under the

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NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
facts. And again, you know, I'm not gonna repeat what I already repeated. I wish I did not have to be here on this, but $I$ do. But the circumstances that occurred, I mean, it could not have been done intentionally for the following reason. I mean, obviously this was not gonna go away, and $I$-- my understanding is that there was a misunderstanding. I can tell you that $I$ only became aware of this when the Stop Work Order was issued. And I didn't understand, I went through all the papers, why they put a Stop Work Order, because $I$ know there was a permit for some of the work, but not for this specific work. So I understand, but I would respectfully say that taking a stance that anything is a precedent, that every piece of real property is unique and is developed uniquely.

And I can tell you, and I've been involved in literally thousands of decisions in my 54-year career, and I'm not exaggerating, and $I$ mean thousands,

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NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
and when a board wanted to take a position, a precedent, it basically would not, in my opinion, fly without pointing out each one of the reasons for it. I'm not saying you don't have the right to dismiss it. I just don't think precedent, as a broad brush approach, is a way to do it. And obviously, you're either going to approve or deny it, or if you approve it, you know, possibly with conditions.

But there was, you know, obviously a misunderstanding here. It was not my misunderstanding. I wasn't asked, but -'cause your attorney asked me that at one point, and $I$ said to him, you know, if you think that $I$ advised anybody to act in this manner, I did not. I only became aware of it after it was a problem. Mr. Morash was in and out of the hospital. He was having a lot of issues. And, you know, forgiveness, yeah. I guess that's the only thing $I$ can say under the circumstances. And we're not talking about 20 percent or 18 percent or 10

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NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
percent. And you may have conditions, and I would respectfully hope --

MR. BROOKS: I'm gonna interrupt one more time just to try to get to the last prong you haven't mentioned, which is self-creation. Is this a problem that is self-created? And $I$ think the answer to that is, yeah, it's entirely self-created. It was self-created in violation of the law, without a building permit and plans submitted for the work that's being asked to be blessed.
So I mean, I -- it's not -- I
think precedent is relevant, but this is not solely a precedent issue. This is a self-creation issue. This is a feasible alternatives issue. You know, it's not just one prong. This seems to fail almost every prong.
And so I -- I hear everything
you're saying, but given the absolutely simplistic feasible alternative, it's irrelevant to me that you previously built it in violation of law. I mean, that

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD-3/12/2024
can't be something we take into
consideration, 'cause then everybody will be out building in violation of the law and saying, "Hey, well, it already exists."

MR. D'AGOSTINO: Is this the chairman?

MR. BROOKS: This is the Vice Chairman Brooks.

MR. D'AGOSTINO: Mr. Vice
Chairman, if $I$ might finish, and $I$ had only gotten up to three, and there are five of them. I didn't -- I addressed four or five, and you jumped to five under the statute.

Four is whether the proposed variance will have an adverse effect or impact on physical or environmental conditions in the neighborhood or district. I would respectfully submit that it does not and will not.

And five, which is the one that you were referring to, if $I$ can recite it exactly as it appears in the statue.

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## NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$

"Whether the alleged difficulty was self-created" -- and I think you have an idea that it was -- "whose consideration shall be relevant to the decision of the Board of Appeals, but shall not necessarily preclude the granting of the area variance."

What $I$ would respectfully ask you to look at is whether there are any conditions that you might impose on a possible approval.

And $I$ fully hear what you're saying. And the condition -- and I'm not a doctor, $I$ can -- I have to go back to the exhibits that were submitted in the last hearing -- were created by Mr.

Morash's health conditions. And he -- all
I can say is the construction should not have transpired, but $I$ don't know what else to say on that.

But the closing clause of five is, "but shall not necessarily preclude the granting of the area variance".

And I respectfully submit that so

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
to, taking the position that this will
creat an adverse possession -- position to the Village, that there's an application under the exact same facts in the future for the exact same extension. And stuff happens. I mean, I see that we were Number 2 on the calendar. Number one on the calendar, just looking at the notice, addresses something which is as-built, which is entirely -- you know, I mean, that -- you know, that was a much, much, much greater as-built in growth. And I don't know of the circumstances of that, but there's a difference between -- between that type of a -- an encroachment and a two percent, at least as to that element, not as to you making a decision. And you have the -you know, you have the right to make a discretionary decision in accordance with the law.

And I am -- I am not in the strongest position because $I$ am representing a client who did not follow

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## NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$

it. Only recite the fact that Mr. Morash has been in and out of the hospital. And I can tell you personally that he's had many situations where he has been unable to get to a lavatory.

And if you could consider some conditions that -- reasonable conditions that the Board might want to -- and I understand where you're coming from. And it is much -- you know, much further than just a flat table. The reason $I$ say that is because you were that helpful in talking to us the last time. You were -I mean, I can understand the way -- you know, the position that you're taking. But in trying to respond to the law, that's the only request $I$ can make, that you can go back to -- you consider reasonable conditions that might be imposed.
But the -- I can assure you, at
least from my position, that there was no effort or attempt to stick one's thumb in your eye. It would be the worst thing to

## NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$

do. It's -- stuff happened. A stop work was ordered. And the day it was issued, it was complied with. And, you know, I'm not even sure whether it covers some of the things that did not require a variance. It's just that we stopped, you know, 'cause we're not looking to -- I would say antagonize, but $I$ think $I$ would say further antagonize anybody at the Village.

And I'm most appreciative that you gave me an opportunity to speak, and I'd be happy to try to answer whatever questions you might have.

MR. MORASH: The only thing I'd want to just add -- and $I$ thank you for your time and your consideration. And George will, $I$ think, attest to this. We have looked at every other alternative to get him a bathroom on the first floor that is easily accessible, and this is really the only alternative we could come up with.
It's not only a function of

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NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
distance. It's also a function of grade. The property's not level, so some of the other areas of the main house require going up a number of steps. He is -- he does have ADA license plate, so he does have a legitimate disability. And we just hope that you would maybe take this into consideration.

> And also, I know you don't want to
go ahead and set precedent over one percent or two percent, whatever the numbers may be, but $I$ think one of the limiting factors that you will have is, I doubt you'll have most people saying they're one or two percent over or plus there, have an ADA issue.

So I understand that we've made mistakes. I can assure you that it was unintentional. There was no way that we would ever hide this.

MR. BROOKS: I think the -MR. MORASH: We're not -MR. BROOKS: I think the difficulty -- the difficulty is that that

| 1 | NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$ |
| :---: | :---: |
| 2 | ADA or restroom accessibility issue could |
| 3 | have been addressed in compliance with |
| 4 | code. And so the variance really is not |
| 5 | about accessibility or the restroom issue, |
| 6 | because it could have been addressed in |
| 7 | compliance with code. This has now been |
| 8 | done in violation of building permit laws, |
| 9 | not in violation of, you know -- and as a |
| 10 | result, because no one ever submitted a |
| 11 | plan for review, it ended up being in |
| 12 | violation of Zoning Laws. So this is not |
| 13 | an application about accessibility and -- |
| 14 | and disabled accommodation, because that |
| 15 | could have been done in compliance with |
| 16 | the code. |
| 17 | And so this -- to me, this is an |
| 18 | application about blatant noncompliance |
| 19 | when there was a feasible alternative. |
| 20 | And -- and violating building permit laws |
| 21 | doesn't seem like a good excuse for |
| 22 | accommodating a noncompliance with zoning |
| 23 | Laws. |
| 24 | I'm not trying to be |
| 25 | unsympathetic, but like, gosh, imagine the |

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## NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$

 havoc it would wreak in any village if that was the standard we took, that, well, you didn't pull a permit for your, you know, work in violation of code, and so now we should just grant a little variance because, hey, how are you to know that it didn't comply with code? 'Cause you didn't submit for building permits. I mean, it just kind of a little bit unfair for you, to me, to start talking about this in the context of accessibility and handicap, because that's not what this is about. There was a feasible alternative to address that. And $I$-- you know, I feel you guys ignored that.MR. MORASH: With due respect, they were working under an existing permit. They got out over their skis a little bit. It was -- it was unintentional and it was a mistake. Things happen. We've always been in constant communication with George, Mr. Butts. I don't --

MR. BROOKS: I hear you, but --

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## NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$

 anyway. I don't have any other questions. CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Well, Mr. D'Agostino, how would you like to proceed from this at this point? I don't think any of the Board has any other questions at this point. And I'll get to the other people on the call, too.MR. D'AGOSTINO: Just a point of clarification. And by the way, that was Michael Morash was speaking. I'm sure he identified himself earlier, the son of Thomas Morash, who's the principal member of the LLC.

It was my understanding, at least in the intervening period, that there were plans submitted, and they say nothing was submitted. We couldn't be here without a disapproval or denial letter based upon what was submitted. It was the two percent excess. So, you know, unless I'm missing something. And I'm not saying that --

MR. BROOKS: Submitted after the work was performed is what you're saying.

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
After you --
MR. D'AGOSTINO: Well --
MR. BROOKS: After it was caught and the Stop Work Order was --

MR. D'AGOSTINO: No, no, no. No, my understanding -- well, $I$ don't know how the circumstances surrounding the Stop Work Order. I do know that as soon as it was issued, it was stopped. It is my understanding that the plans were submitted, and that's where the numbers are coming from.

And by the way, and I'll say it again, this is far from a -- an as-built relief that you had in Item 1, which is 40 as opposed to 90 feet. This is two percent. And if there's a --

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Once again, Item 1 has not been heard and has no bearing whatsoever on this. It's two entirely different variances, so, right. I mean, you're talking about Item 1 on our agenda today?

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MR. D'AGOSTINO: You're -- except
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NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
for one thing. It is being characterized as a precedent.

I just would like to establish, whatever your decision is, it is two percent. There were plans that were submitted to the Building Department. I cannot tell you when they were submitted by the architect to George Butts, obviously whether it was before or after the Stop Work Order was issued.

MR. BROOKS: I think -- I think you're focusing on a little bit -- you're missing the point. There were not permitted -- hold on a second.

There were not approved, permitted plans submitted and approved by the Village. So that is a violation of Building Code, not even a violation of Zoning Code. And if it were not for the work that was already done, and if you had just waited for a response on the submitted plans and then looked at the Turndown Letter, we wouldn't be having this conversation because --

## NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$

MR. D'AGOSTINO: I fully --
MR. BROOKS: The only reason we're having this conversation is that the work was done in violation of Building Law, and now you're asking for a variance to look back to make what was built in violation of building law valid under zoning.

And so this is -- unlike some of the self-creation issues we have where you're like, "Oh, well, it's self-created 'cause I want to build a pool that's too close to my neighbor's yard, I haven't built it yet, but it's self-created 'cause it's my desire to build this pool," this is self-created 'cause you built the structure already. So that's a different -- I mean, I really think that's -- that's just, $I$ don't know, somewhat difficult to overcome.

> MR. MORASH: I would say that
there was a time when -- and I wasn't present at the last hearing, but I did watch it on Zoom, that this seemed like a very reasonable and viable alternative.

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NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
And had we not -- had we not made a mistake and if we weren't a percent or two over, it seemed like a very viable option.

MR. BROOKS: 'Cause you would never need to come back and get a variance. That's what was --

MR. HATFIELD: If it was a viable option, if it was done in a conforming manner.

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Right. This was not the option presented, right, so this is not -- this is not the viable option that would be out there, right, so.

MR. HATFIELD: It was a concept.
CHAIRMAN POITRAS: And just to go back to Mr. Brooks' point, too, I'm looking -- the plan -- the only plan $I$ have here that actually shows in the application, at least, that shows the current structure, the breezeway that's connecting the garage, the bathroom, the date $I$ find on that is $3 / 31$ of twenty -- I belive it's $3 / 31$ of ' 24 here. Hold on, I lost it. Maybe it's '23. So '23. So --

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
and then our turndown is in December.
So I don't know when these plans
were submitted as part of the actual record, but $I$ think that that would be something for you to establish when these were -- documents were submitted for approval, so.

MR. BROOKS: But the approval was never granted.

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Approval was never granted, either, right, so.

MR. BROOKS: It's not that compelling, but --

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Right.
MR. BROOKS: -- you know -- I
don't know. I'm sorry, I --
And I don't think that responding in the manner that $I$ feel I'm responding, which is somewhat negatively to the application, is reflective of unreasonableness or unfairness. I think that the circumstance that we are trying to be cooperative about was to point out that there were feasible ways to make this

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## north haven zoning board - $3 / 12 / 2024$

work without a variance, and now we're back seeking a variance. And $I$ don't need to reiterate the issue.

MR. MORASH: Putting aside the square footage issue, and $I$ know that's the core reason we're here --

MR. BROOKS: It's the sole reason we're here.

MR. MORASH: Of course. As I
acknowledge. We don't have any other alternatives. We can't put a bathroom in the --

MR. BROOKS: Can't you just tear it down and build one that complies with zoning?

MR. MORASH: Tear what down?
MR. BROOKS: The work that was done that exceeds the FAR.

MR. MORASH: We only have nine feet of available FAR, so that's -that's -- that's the --

MR. BROOKS: I mean, I'm not the architect. And $I$ certainly don't want to make suggestions because maybe it'll be

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NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
taken out of context, but go back to the drawing board would be --

MR. MORASH: There's no drawing board to go back to. We don't have any other options. And that's one of the elements that you've discussed. We have no other options. That's why we're here. George will tell you, $I$ spent multiple times reaching out to him to try and work some -- some way into this to not be in this position. I don't -- we don't have a choice. I have a handicapped father that's in the ninth inning of his life and I'm trying to come here to advocate for him. This is a one percent issue that you're --

MR. BROOKS: Well, again, it's not one percent. Next time you reference it, it'll be a half percent. It -- it is a FAR variance which we don't grant, and --

MR. MORASH: And there's never been one in the history of this Village?

MR. BROOKS: I'm not gonna get into it. I don't now the history of the

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NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
Village. But $I$ can tell you that in the context of the prongs that we are asked to consider, I've certainly never seen one where all the -- where these prongs were ticked off in this manner, particularly the manner of the self-creation. Sorry, I -- I can't -- it's hard to overcome that. That people should be able to say, "The fact that I already built it in violation of not having a permit for it gives me a good excuse to seek a variance."

MR. MORASH: I don't think that's what we're saying.

MR. BROOKS: It's exactly the basis of your variance.

MR. MORASH: I think our position would be that we made a mistake. We were operating under an existing permit that was there. We got out ahead of our skis a little bit. We stopped immediately. And the variance -- under those circumstances, we -- it's not like we -- we started cold and we said, "Let's just build this thing,

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
we're not gonna consult George, we're not gonna follow permits."

It was -- it's a little bit of a unique situation, 'cause you already had an existing permit that was open, and there was a little bit of miscommunication, and this just kind of snowballed.

I would just ask you to look at intent on it. A mistake is a mistake. It's not -- we didn't say let's just blatantly violate the Zoning Laws of North Haven. If that was the case, we wouldn't have filed for a variance in the first place. There has to be some level of reason and compassion in this case. MR. BROOKS: I'm compassionate. I just -- I don't know. I don't think there's anything to be gained from hearing again the mistake and, you know --

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: I think maybe an examination, if you look with your counsel, of the FAR, like, of what the FAR calculation was, what is going into that,

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
maybe there's some -- some way to look at the feasible alternatives from where you are. So I don't know. We don't have the diagram here that shows how the FAR was ultimately calculated. So if you want to present that as an exhibit, that's something you can do at the next meeting and/or if you have it here.

Once again, we're not here to make suggestions, but $I$ think it's something that maybe there's some way to look at that and see if there's a way to cut back. 'Cause you're talking about 200 square feet, so it's not a substantial amount to try to cut back, so.

MR. MORASH: The problem is, I think, I believe on the primary, we only have nine square feet.
So if there -- if there was a reasonable way, I'm just trying to look at alternatives, it says, "to legalize an as-built addition and alteration that pierces the allowable primary FAR by 201 square feet and the total allowable FAR by

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
135 square feet".
If we were able to knock that down
a little bit and maybe resolve the primary FAR square footage --

MR. BROOKS: I feel really, you know, gun shy about giving any suggestions. You guys should go back, talk to the architect, make another submission. It's not our job, it's just not.

I'm sorry, but things that we might have said at our last hearing seem to be taken out of context. I have to clarify that we never suggested that you violated Zoning Law. I mean, I think that you need to consider feasible alternatives with your architect and your counsel and make another submission if that's what you want to do, or close the hearing and let us make a determination.

MR. D'AGOSTINO: Mr. Chairman, can
I just respond to -- to Mr. Brooks?
Mr. Brooks, I can -- I can assure you that there's no effort or thought

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NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
that -- that the suggestions that were made by the Board at the end of the last hearing -- and they weren't suggestions, it was a colloquy -- are being used in any way or there's any intention to do that.

All $I$ can say is that $I$ and my client were and are most appreciative of the time you spent and the discussions we had. But there's -- you know, there's -it's not something that $I$ 'm taking a position that, well, we follow what you said, or anything like that. Obviously, it was subject to the required process with the Building Department. That didn't happen, and $I$ acknowledge that. And -but, you know, please don't feel that in any way, $I$ or my client are taking a negative view or attacking you in any way for being nothing more than helpful, and we appreciate it.

MR. DEMAIO: Mr. D'Agostino, this is Rich DeMaio. I work with Scott Middleton, the Village Attorney.

Would you like to keep the hearing

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
open for additional submissions?
MR. D'AGOSTINO: I would -- I
would say yes. If you give me an adjourn date and hopefully I'll get there to see you in person, but $I$ would -- I would say yes.

MR. DEMAIO: It's your prerogative.

MR. D'AGOSTINO: Yes.
MR. DEMAIO: You know, you have to make the record. So if you're inclined to do that, that's fine. I think the next meeting is on for April 9th, if I'm recalling correctly.

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Yes. April 9th is the next meeting.

But before we move on, so we do have another caller. Mr. Kline, do you have anything to add to the record today? He was on there. Let's see. Yup, there he is.

MR. KLINE: Hi. Thanks for taking me. No, I'm okay. That was very helpful.

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: All right.

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NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - 3/12/2024
Thank you, Mr. Kline.
And then we have Mr. Gruenstein?
MR. GRUENSTEIN: Yes.
Thank you very much. I think -- I think most everything has been covered, so I would limit myself to pointing out some facts, some facts of the --

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: And actually, I'm sorry, Mr. Gruenstein, if you could just start by giving your relationship to the application or in the Village, you know, your residence, just for the record. Thank you.

MR. GRUENSTEIN: My name is David Gruenstein. I live at 47 Bay View Court, which is right next to the property in question.

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Thank you.
MR. GRUENSTEIN: So I simply
wanted to point out some facts that the -that the Board may not be aware of pertaining to the first and the last prongs of the standard, if $I$ hold it up correctly on Google.

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NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD-3/12/2024
The first -- the first factor is undesirable neighborhood change or detriment to nearby properties. And, you know, putting -- there's been an extensive discussion of FAR, so I'm not gonna go into that. But what people may not be aware of is that our master bedroom is very close to the property in question, to the garage. And this is something -- you know, we hear everything that goes on there. So I think it does -- I think that's relevant to that consideration. I don't think it's a big problem if you're in the garage and you're listening to what happens in the master bedroom, but it's not necessarily the same in reverse.

With respect to the fifth prong, which is self-created hardship, the only -- you know, which is also related to the issue to the extent it is one of intentionality, which has been discussed on a number of occasions.

I would simply point out that we are a -- the west -- when I say "we," West

## nORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$

Banks is a homeowners association that has a series of rules providing for an architectural review board where these issues are informally dealt with and they never have to reach any further. And there was no compliance with the rules of the architectural review board. Had there been such compliance, we would have had a neighborly discussion with our neighbors, which $I$ would have been happy to do.

And then when we found out by getting a certified mail of this -certified mail notice of this legal application when we found out about it, I immediately went to Marcus Kline, who will be speaking briefly after me, and I pointed out to him that $I$ thought these things should be handled by -- you know, we should give a notice that the architectural review board should consider it, and we should invite our neighbor to a meeting in order to try to resolve this on an amicable basis.

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                                    And Mr. Kline can speak for
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## NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$

himself, but that notice was given to our neighbor. And despite efforts, there was no response. The neighbor simply ignored the request for a neighborly meeting.

So I think that goes to
self-created hardship. It also goes to
the question of how many inadvertent mistakes can a person make.

MR. MORASH: I'd like to re- -I'd like to respond to that.

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Just one moment. Yeah, one moment.

Mr. Gruenstein, just -- are you related to the -- you mentioned there's a homeowners association. Are you related to that board in any way, or are you just -- besides just paying dues to it? MR. GRUENSTEIN: Yeah, I am a member of the Board of Directors of the West Banks Association. I'm also an officer of the association. But I'm speaking here today purely in my capacity as a neighbor and as the adjoining property owner with my master bedroom

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NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
abutting the garage, which is having a bathroom and could conceivably become living quarters immediately adjacent to our master bedroom.

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Thank you.
And $I$ think you wanted to respond?
You had something to say, or?
MR. MORASH: I just wanted to say that if there was a notice sent via hard mail, we never received it. We're not year-round residents. If the mailing was sent to this address here --

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Okay.
MR. BROOKS: Hold on. (Crosstalk)

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Before, Mr.
Kline, before you jump in, is there anything else? So that was -- that was it?

Mr. Kline, if you could just, actually for the record, too, just mention --

MR. KLINE: Sure.
CHAIRMAN POITRAS: State your

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$
address and relationship to the application also, please.

MR. KLINE: Sure. This is Marcus Kline. I live at 1 Fox Crossing, and I'm the president of the board of directors of West Banks, and so I'm speaking on behalf of the Board.

And I just wanted to reinforce something that David said, that we do have a formal process here. And I actually also unfortunately don't have many members that are active, but I'm also the head of the architectural review board. And $I$ was not privy to any plans that were brought to, you know, the architectural review board, to the board, or anything. So, you know, to David's point, it would have been resolved.

We did send a letter. We sent it via e-mail. I think there was very, very recently a response to that e-mail after multiple attempts. But, yeah, we're disappointed to be here as well. We want to try to get this resolved. But we were

NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD-3/12/2024 also unaware of a lot of the back and forth that was going on.

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: And so Mr.
Kline, just to be clear, your architectural review board, you're referencing the West Banks, just for the record to be clear? Not -- not the North Haven Village Architectural Review Board, 'cause that has an independent one also. MR. KLINE: That is correct. It's the West Banks Architectural Review Board, which $I$ think works in tandem or parallel to the -- to North Haven Architectural Review Board.

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Okay.
With that, Mr. D'Agostino or Gruenstein, anybody else want to add anything further at this point?

MR. D'AGOSTINO: I have nothing further. I appreciate the additional time which you spent on this and all of the comments which were made. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN POITRAS: So with that, the record could show that there's no

## NORTH HAVEN ZONING BOARD - $3 / 12 / 2024$

other request for comment. There's nobody in person additional here that hasn't spoken. So with that, at the request of counsel, we will leave the application open 'til next month.

And once again, $I$ would suggest
the review of feasible alternatives.
Perhaps now that you know there was
communication from the West Banks
Association, $I$ might make a suggestion to speak to them also in the interim. But that is -- I think that's all we have then.

So anything else from the Board?
MR. BROOKS: No.
CHAIRMAN POITRAS: No? In that case, we will adjourn the meeting for this evening. Next meeting, once again, will be on Tuesday, April 9th, 2024. Okay. MR. D'AGOSTINO: Thank you. CHAIRMAN POITRAS: Thank you, all. Have a good night.
(End of Provided Recording)

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2 ERRATA SHEET FOR THE TRANSCRIPT OF:

Hearing Name: North Haven Zoning Board
Hearing Date: March 12, 2024
CORRECTIONS
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Subscribed and sworn to before me this ______ day of $\qquad$ , 2024

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I, Agata Davis, certify that the foregoing transcript of Proceedings of the Zoning Board of Appeals of the Village of North Haven, held on March 12, 2024, was prepared using the required electronic transcription equipment and is a true and accurate record of the Proceedings.




| ```39:9, 40:3, 40:6, 40:25, 42:2, 50:22, 52:3, 52:10, 59:20, 60:21 d'Agostino [1] - 16:24 D'Agostino [14]-4:20, 7:15, 8:9, 8:11, 9:22, 12:6, 18:3, 19:2, 21:17, 22:14, 26:14, 39:4, 51:22, 59:17 D'Angelo [2] - 2:7, 3:11 Daly [1]-2:8 dangerous [1] - 18:21 date [3]-23:11, 43:23, 52:5 Date [2]-61:3, 61:19 David [2] - 53:15, 58:10 David's [1] - 58:18 Davis [3]-1:24, 62:2, 62:11 days [1]-9:14 de [1] - 17:8 dealing [2] - 15:7, 15:24 deals [1]-15:8 dealt [1]-55:5 December [1]-44:2 decision [4]-32:5, 33:19, 33:21, 41:5 decisions [1]-28:24 DeMaio [3]-2:10, 7:8, 51:23 DEMAIO [3] - 51:22, 52:8, 52:11 demolish [1] - 23:23 denial [1] - 39:19 deny [2]-27:22, 29:10 Department [2] - 41:7, 51:15 described [1] - 13:3 desire [1] - 42:15 despite [1]-56:3 detail [1]-21:15 details [1] - 13:8 determination \([1]\) - 50:21 detriment \([7]\) - 15:11, 15:18, 17:3, 18:18, 23:16, 23:17, 54:4 detriments [1] - 17:6 developed [1] - 28:21 di [1]-16:9 diagram [1] - 49:5 difference [1] - 33:16 different [5] - 6:10, 14:23, 19:9, 40:22, 42:18 difficult [2] - 16:17,``` | 42:20 <br> difficulties [1] - 7:17 <br> difficulty [3]-32:2, <br> 36:25 <br> diligently [1] - 23:12 <br> Directors [1] - 56:20 <br> directors [1] - 58:6 <br> disability [1] - 36:7 <br> disabled [1] - 37:14 <br> disappointed [1] - $58: 24$ <br> disapproval [1] - 39:19 <br> discretionary [2] - $22: 2,33: 21$ <br> discussed [3]-20:9, 46:7, 54:22 <br> discussion [4] - $11: 15,21: 2,54: 6$ $55: 10$ <br> discussions [1] - 51:9 <br> dismiss [1]-29:7 <br> dismissing [1] - 13:23 <br> distance [3] - 16:11, $16: 19,36: 2$ <br> district [1] - 31:21 <br> doctor [1] - 32:15 <br> documents [1] - 44:7 <br> done [8]-20:13, 28:7, <br> 37:8, 37:15, 41:21, <br> 42:5, 43:9, 45:19 <br> doubt [1] - 36:15 <br> down [3]-45:15, <br> 45:17, 50:3 <br> drawing [2]-46:3, 46:4 <br> Drive [1] - 3:20 <br> due [1] - 38:17 <br> dues [1] - 56:18 | ```embarrassing [1] - 26:10 enclosure [1] - 11:22 encroachment [1] - 33:17 End [1] - 60:24 end [4]-11:15, 21:3, 24:2, 51:3 ended [1] - 37:11 entirely [3] - 30:9, 33:11, 40:22 environmental \({ }_{[1]}\) - 31:19 equipment \([1]\) - 62:7 ERRATA [1] - 61:2 Esq[1]-2:10 essentially \({ }_{[1]}-10: 6\) establish [3]-10:10, 41:4, 44:6 evaluate \({ }_{[1]}-13: 17\) evaluating [1] - 19:19 evening \([7]-3: 3,3: 6\), 3:24, 4:17, 5:8, 8:24, 60:19 event [1] - 11:14 events [1] - 8:17 exact \([3]-27: 16,33: 5\), 33:6 exactly [4] - 18:17, 26:5, 31:25, 47:16 exaggerating [1] - 28:25 examination [1] - 48:23 exceed [1] - 18:20 exceeding [1] - 18:22 exceeds [1] - 45:19 except \([1]-40: 25\) excess [3]-20:17, 21:7, 39:21 excuse [2]-37:21, 47:12 exhibit [1] - 49:7 exhibits [3]-9:2, 9:19, 32:16 existing [3] - 38:18, 47:20, 48:6 exists [1] - 31:6 expansion [2]-17:10, 17:11 expect \([1]-21: 5\) explain [1]-14:20 explore [1] - 21:15 extension [1]-33:6 extensive [1] - 54:5 extent [1]-54:21 exuberantly \({ }_{[1]}\) - 15:24 eye \([1]-34: 25\)``` | ```fact \([9]-9: 11,16: 19\), 16:21, 17:15, 19:17, 20:3, 20:6, 34:2, 47:10 factor [1] - 54:2 factors [1] - 36:14 facts [6] - 27:17, 28:2, 33:5, 53:8, 53:21 fail [1] - 30:19 faith [2] - 11:17, 25:8 FAR [20] - 4:7, 4:8, 4:12, 17:11, 18:18, 20:18, 20:22, 22:6, 23:6, 23:15, 45:19, 45:21, 46:21, 48:24, 49:5, 49:24, 49:25, 50:5, 54:6 far [2] - 3:16, 40:15 fast \([1]-27: 12\) father \([1]-46: 13\) favor \([2]-3: 12,3: 15\) feasibility \([2]-19: 12\), 19:19 feasible [15]-19:7, 19:15, 20:7, 20:9, 21:18, 21:22, 23:21, 30:17, 30:23, 37:19, 38:14, 44:25, 49:3, 50:17, 60:8 feasibly [1] - 19:24 feet \([9]-4: 7,4: 9,4: 10\), 4:12, 40:17, 45:21, 49:15, 49:19, 49:25 feet" [1]-50:2 Ferry \({ }_{[1]}\) - 1:10 fifth \({ }_{[1]}\) - 54:18 filed [1] - 48:15 fine \([1]-52: 13\) finish [1] - 31:12 firm [2] - 8:10, 14:8 first \([8]-3: 6,9: 16\), 21:25, 35:21, 48:15, 53:23, 54:2 fits [1]-14:2 five [12] - 6:18, 13:18, 13:19, 14:2, 14:5, 15:14, 27:23, 31:14, 31:15, 31:23, 32:22 five-prong \({ }_{[1]}-14: 2\) flat [1] - 34:12 floor [1] - 35:21 fly \([1]\) - \(29: 4\) flying [1] - 12:15 focus [1] - 13:24 focusing [1] - 41:13 folder [1]-6:10 follow [3] - 33:25, 48:3, 51:12``` | ```following [2] - 15:22, 28:7 footage [2] - 45:6, 50:5 footprint [1] - 17:11 FOR [2]-61:2, 61:4 foregoing [1] - 62:3 forgiveness [3] - 18:23, 21:6, 29:22 formal \({ }_{[1]}-58: 11\) forth [3]-12:18, 25:18, 59:3 forward [1] - 18:8 four \([3]-27: 3,31: 15\), 31:17 Fox [1]-58:5 framing [1] - 18:11 Francis [1]-9:12 frankly [2]-19:13, 20:15 full \({ }_{[1]}-13: 5\) fully \([3]-14: 7,32: 13\), 42:2 function [2]-35:25, 36:2 future \({ }_{[2]}\) - 26:3, \(33: 5\)``` <br> G <br> gained [1] - 48:20 <br> garage [5]-10:23, <br> 43:22, 54:10, 54:15, 57:2 <br> generally ${ }_{[1]}$ - 16:13 <br> george [1] - 46:9 <br> George [6] - 2:11, <br> 18:7, 35:19, 38:23, <br> 41:9, 48:2 <br> given $[2]-30: 22,56: 2$ <br> glass [1] - 11:22 <br> gonna [8]-13:11, <br> 28:2, 28:9, 30:4, <br> 46:24, 48:2, 48:3, <br> 54:6 <br> Google [1] - 53:25 <br> gosh [1] - 37:25 <br> grab [1] - 6:22 <br> grade [1] - 36:2 <br> grandchildren [1] - <br> 16:14 <br> grant [6] - 15:13, <br> 19:14, 25:17, 27:12, 38:6, 46:21 <br> granted [5] - 15:10, <br> 17:10, 26:18, 44:10, <br> 44:12 <br> granting [5] - 15:19, 16:6, 25:20, 32:7, 32:24 <br> graphic [1] - 16:22 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |


| greater ${ }_{[1]}-33: 13$ <br> growth [1] - 33:14 | $\begin{aligned} & \begin{array}{l} 34: 13,51: 20,52: 24 \\ \text { hi }[1]-52: 23 \end{array} \end{aligned}$ | $\text { indicate }[1]-25: 9$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { knee }[1]-13: 5 \\ & \text { knock }[1]-50: 3 \end{aligned}$ | M |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { Gruenstein }[5]-4: 14, \\ & 53: 3,53: 10,53: 16, \\ & \text { 59:18 } \\ & \text { gruenstein }[1]-56: 14 \end{aligned}$ | hidden [1] - 11:12 | informally |  | $\begin{aligned} & \text { mail }[5]-55: 13,55: 14, \\ & 57: 11,58: 21,58: 22 \\ & \text { mailing }[1]-57: 12 \\ & \text { main }_{[2]}-11: 21,36: 4 \end{aligned}$ |
|  | hide ${ }_{[1]}-36: 2$ | inning ${ }_{[1]}-46: 1$ |  |  |
|  | himself [2] - 39:12, | Inspector [1]-2:11 |  |  |
|  | 56:2 | intent ${ }_{[1]}$ - 48:1 | last $[17]-8: 21,9: 11$, |  |
| GRUENSTEIN ${ }^{[4]}$ - <br> 53:4, 53:15, 53:20, <br> 56:19 | history [2] - 46:23 | intention [1]-51:6 | :13, 9:14, 12:8, | $\begin{aligned} & \text { major }_{[2]}-17: 6,18: 16 \\ & \text { manner }[5]-29: 18, \end{aligned}$ |
|  | 46:25 | int | 12:9, 15:22, 19:11, |  |
|  | hold | 54:22 | :10, 21:3, 30:6, | $\begin{aligned} & 43: 10,44: 19,47: 6, \\ & 47: 7 \end{aligned}$ |
| 56:19 <br> guess [3]-9:16, 9:25, | 43:24, 53:24 | intentionally [1] - | 32:17, 34:14, 42:23, |  |
| $\begin{aligned} & 29: 22 \\ & \text { gun }[1]-50: 7 \\ & \text { guys }[2]-38: 16,50: 8 \end{aligned}$ | homeowners | interim [1]-60:12 | 0:13, 51:3, 53:23 | ```Map [1] - 4:4 March [5] - 1:13, 3:4, 9:20, 61:3, 62:5 Marcus [2]-55:16, 58:4``` |
|  | 55:2, 56:16 | interior [1] - 16:15 | lavatory [1] - 34:6 |  |
|  | honestly [2]-17:4, | interject [1] - 16:25 | Law [4]-24:6, 24:17, |  |
|  | 22:22 | interrupt [4] - 12:1 | 2:5, 5 |  |
|  | honored [1] - 11:5 | , | law [6] - 30:11, 30:2 |  |
| habitable [1] | 30:3, 36:8 | interrupting [1] |  | Mark [1] - 2:3 master $[4]$ - 54:8, 54:16, 56:25, 57:5 |
|  | hopefully ${ }^{[1]}-52: 5$ | 13:13 | 42:8 laws [2] - 37:8, 37:20 |  |
| Hall [1] - 11:20 handicap [1] - 38:13 | 34:3 | 39:16 | Laws [3] - 37:12, | math [1] - 12:20 <br> matters [1]-19:9 |
|  | Hospital [1] - 9:13 | invite [1] - 55:22 | 37:23, 48:13 |  |
| handicapped $[1]$ -46:13 | hospitalized [1] - 9:9 | involved [1] - 28:23 | least [4]-33:18, | $\begin{aligned} & \operatorname{maximum~}_{[1]}-4: 10 \\ & \text { mean }[19]-6: 3,11: 10, \end{aligned}$ |
|  | house [5] - 10:23, | involving [1]-22:9 | 4:23, 39:15, 43:20 |  |
| $46: 13$ <br> handled [1]-55:19 <br> happy [4]-21:20 | :8, 16:15, 17:12, | irrelevant [1] - 30:24 | e [2] - 21:17, 60 | $\begin{gathered} \text { mean }[19]-6: 3,11: 10, \\ 13: 22,14: 13,17: 17, \end{gathered}$ |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { happy }[4]-21: 20, \\ & 23: 3,35: 14,55: 11 \end{aligned}$ | 36:4 | issue [16]-11:6, | ves [1] - 3:23 | $\begin{aligned} & 21: 24,28: 6,28: 8 \\ & 28: 25,30: 14,30: 25, \end{aligned}$ |
|  | hundred [1]-24:8 | 17:13, 17:14, 17:18, | led [1] - 12:25 |  |
| 23:3, $35: 14,55: 11$ Harbor $[2]-1: 10,3: 19$ | hurdle [4]-17:5, | 4, 27:5, 30:16 | left [3] - 6:10, 10:8, | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 28:25, 30:14, 30:25, } \\ & 33: 7,33: 12,34: 15, \end{aligned}$ |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { hard }[3]-27: 11,47: 8, \\ & 57: 10 \end{aligned}$ | , | 30:18, 36:1 | 11:18 | $\begin{aligned} & 38: 10,40: 23,42: 18, \\ & 45: 23,50: 16 \end{aligned}$ |
|  |  | 37:2, 37:5, 45:4, | al [1] - 55:14 |  |
| ```hardship [5] - 14:12, 14:15, 14:21, 54:19, 56:7``` |  | , 54:2 | galize [1] - 49:22 | medical [1]-19:24 <br> meeting [15] - 3:22, |
|  |  | issued [5] - 11:4 | legitimate [1] - 36:7 |  |
|  | d | :12, 35:3, 40:10 | letter [4]-9:4, 9:2 | $\begin{aligned} & 8: 22,9: 2,9: 18 \\ & \text { 11:16, 11:19, 15:22, } \end{aligned}$ |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { 56:7 } \\ & \text { Hatfield [1] - 2:5 } \end{aligned}$ | identified [1] - 39:12 | 41:11 | 39:19, 58:20 |  |
| HATFIELD [3]-5:22,$43: 8,43: 15$ | ignore [1] - 20:6 | is | Letter [1] - 41:2 | $\begin{aligned} & 22: 19,49: 8,52: 14, \\ & 52: 17,55: 23,56: 5, \end{aligned}$ |
|  | ignored [2] - 38:16 | 29:21, 42:10, $55:$ | el [2] - 36:3, 48:1 |  |
| HAVEN [1] - 1:6 | 56:4 | it'll [2] - 45:25, 46:20 | license [1] - 36:6 |  |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { Haven }[7]-3: 5,4: 3 \\ & 48: 14,59: 9,59: 14, \\ & 61: 2,62: 5 \end{aligned}$ | imagine [1] - 37:25 | Item [3]-40:16, 40:20, | life [1] - 46:14 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { Member }[4]-2: 5,2: 6, \\ & 2: 7,2: 8 \end{aligned}$ |
|  | immedia | 40:23 | limit [1] - 53:7 |  |
|  | 11:5, 47:22, 55:16 | iterations [1] - 10:21 | nited [1] - 27:15 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { member }[5]-8: 10, \\ & 9: 7,24: 4,39: 13, \\ & 56: 20 \end{aligned}$ |
| $\begin{gathered} 61: 2,62: 5 \\ \text { havoc }[1]-38: 2 \end{gathered}$ | 57:4 |  | iting ${ }_{[1]}-36: 14$ |  |
| head $[1]-58: 13$health $[2]-15: 11$, | impact [1] - 31:19 | J | es [1] - 26:14 |  |
|  | impose [1] - 32:11 imposed [1] - 34:21 |  | linked [1] - 10:16 listening [1] - 54:15 | MEMBERS ${ }_{[1]}-3: 13$ members [7]-3:14, |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { health [2]-15:11, } \\ & 32: 18 \end{aligned}$ |  | January [1] - 3:8 |  |  |
| hear [9]-7:15, 12:7, | impression [1] - 4:21 | Jason [1]-3:19 | literally [1] - 28:23 | $\begin{gathered} \text { members }[7]-3: 14, \\ 10: 19,21: 12,21: 13 \end{gathered}$ |
| 12:11, 21:20, 22:21, | inadvertent [1] - 56:8 | job [1] - 50:10 | e [2] - 53:16, 58:5 | $24: 2,25: 7,58: 12$ |
| $30: 21,32: 13,38: 25,$ | inadvertently [1] - | John [1] - 4:14 | living [1] - 57:4 | mention [1]-57:23 <br> mentioned [2] - 30:6, |
| 54:11heard [2]-25:21, | (11:3 $\begin{gathered}\text { (inaudible) [2] - 12:4, }\end{gathered}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \operatorname{Jr}_{[1]}-4: 14 \\ & \text { jump }[1]-57: 18 \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { LLC }[3]-4: 2,9: 7, \\ & 39: 14 \end{aligned}$ |  |
|  |  |  |  | $\begin{aligned} & \text { mentioned [2] - 30:6, } \\ & 56: 15 \end{aligned}$ |
| 40:20 | 12:16 | jumped [1] - 31:15 | LN [1] - 61:4 <br> located ${ }_{[1]}-4: 2$ <br> logging [1] - 7:12 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { messy }[1]-13: 7 \\ & \text { method }[1]-23: 21 \end{aligned}$ |
| Hearing [2] - 61:2,61:3 | $\boldsymbol{I n c}[1]$ - 4:16 | jurisdiction [1] - 27:9 |  |  |
|  | inclined ${ }_{[1]}$ - 52:12 |  |  | $\begin{aligned} & \text { Michael }[4]-2: 7,2: 8, \\ & 5: 9,39: 11 \end{aligned}$ |
| $\begin{gathered} \text { hearing }[15]-10: 15, \\ 12: 19,14: 11,20: 10, \end{gathered}$ | included [1] - 9:2 <br> inclusion [1] - 14:10 | K | look [8]-27:10, 32:10, | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 5:9, 39:11 } \\ & \text { microphone }[1]-12: 7 \end{aligned}$ |
| $\begin{aligned} & 21: 3,22: 14,24: 2, \\ & 24: 5,32: 17,42: 23 \end{aligned}$ | incorporate [2] - 9:18, | $\text { keep }_{[1]}-51: 25$ <br> kidney ${ }_{[1]}$ - 13 .6 | 49:2, 49:12, 49:21 | Middleton [1] - 51:24 |
| 48:20, 50:13, 50:20, |  | kind [2]-38:10, 48:8 | $\begin{gathered} \text { oked } \\ 41: 23 \end{gathered}$ | $31: 12,32: 11,34: 9,$ |
| 51:4, 51:25 | 20:12 | Kline [8] - 52:19, 53:2, |  | 34:20, 35:15, 50:13, |
| Held [2]-1:9, 1:11 <br> held [1] - $62 \cdot 5$ | increase [2]-23:6, | 55:16, 55:25, 57:18, <br> $57.21,58 \cdot 5,59 \cdot 5$ | 33:9, 35:8, 43:18 | 60:11 |
| held [1] - 62:5 | $23: 1$ | $57: 21,58: 5,59:!$ | lost [1] - 43:25 | nerva[1]-8:11 |
| hello [1] - 7:14 helpful [4]-25:8, | $\begin{aligned} & \text { independent }[1] \text { - } \\ & 59: 10 \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { KLINE [4] - 52:23, } \\ & 57: 24,58: 4,59: 11 \end{aligned}$ |  | MINERVA ${ }_{[1]}$ - 8:11 minimis [1] - 17:8 |


|  | $\begin{gathered} 31: 11,35: 16,36: 22, \\ 36: 23,36: 24,38: 17, \\ 38: 25,39: 9,39: 24, \\ 40: 3,40: 4,40: 6, \\ 40: 25,41: 12,42: 2, \\ 42: 3,42: 21,43: 5, \\ 43: 8,43: 15,44: 9, \\ 44: 13,44: 16,45: 5, \\ 45: 8,45: 10,45: 14, \\ 45: 17,45: 18,45: 20, \\ 45: 23,46: 4,46: 18, \\ 46: 22,46: 24,47: 14, \\ 47: 16,47: 18,48: 18, \\ 49: 17,50: 6,50: 22, \\ 51: 22,52: 3,52: 8, \\ 52: 10,52: 11,52: 23, \\ 53: 4,53: 15,53: 20, \\ 56: 10,56: 19,57: 9, \\ 57: 15,57: 24,58: 4, \\ 59: 11,59: 20,60: 16, \\ 60: 21 \\ \text { multiple }[2]-46: 9, \\ 58: 23 \\ \text { municipal }[1]-14: 8 \\ \text { must }[1]-12: 6 \end{gathered}$$\mathbf{N}$ <br> Name $[1]-61: 2$ <br> name $[3]-5: 7,8: 8$, <br> $53: 15$ <br> Nassau $[1]-9: 13$ <br> nearby $[3]-15: 18$, <br> $23: 17,54: 4$ <br> necessarily $[5]-14: 4$, <br> $19: 18,32: 7,32: 23$, <br> $54: 17$ <br> need $[8]-3: 7,10: 5$, <br> $10: 10,19: 14,22: 18$, <br> $43: 6,45: 3,50: 17$ <br> negative $[1]-51: 19$ <br> negatively $[1]-44: 20$ <br> neighbor $[4]-55: 22$, <br> $56: 3,56: 4,56: 24$ <br> neighbor's $[1]-42: 13$ <br> neighborhood $[5]-$ <br> $15: 12,15: 17,23: 17$, <br> $31: 20,54: 3$ <br> neighborly $[2]-55: 10$, <br> $56: 5$ <br> neighbors $[2]-6: 9$, <br> $55: 10$ <br> never $[11]-17: 10$, <br> $17: 20,26: 18,43: 6$, <br> $44: 10,44: 12,46: 22$, <br> $47: 4,50: 15,55: 6$, <br> $57: 11$ <br> new $[4]-3: 24,9: 22$, <br> $10: 3,10: 10$ <br> New $[3]-1: 10,4: 3$, | ```8:13 next [12]-3:22, 22:19, 26:23, 27:2, 46:19, 49:8, 52:13, 52:17, 53:17, 60:6, 60:19 night [1] - 60:23 nine [2]-45:20, 49:19 ninth [1] - 46:14 nobody [1] - 60:2 noncompliance [2] - 37:18, 37:22 none [1]-5:22 north [1] - 11:21 North \([7]\) - 3:5, 4:3, 48:13, 59:8, 59:14, 61:2, 62:5 NORTH \({ }_{[1]}\) - 1:6 Notary [1] - 61:24 nothing [3] - 39:17, 51:20, 59:20 notice \([7]-8: 22\), 12:19, 33:10, 55:14, 55:20, 56:2, 57:10 NOW [1] - 61:4 number [4]-16:18, 33:9, 36:5, 54:23 Number [1] - 33:8 numbers [2] - 36:13, 40:12```O <br> obviously $[9]-23: 23$, <br> $25: 2,25: 17,27: 19$, <br> 28:8, 29:9, 29:12, <br> $41: 10,51: 13$ <br> occasions $[2]-13: 10$, <br> $54: 23$ <br> occurred [3] - 8:18, <br> 11:15, 28:6 <br> OF $[3]-1: 5,1: 6,61: 2$ <br> officer $[1]-56: 22$ <br> offices $[1]-8: 12$ <br> often $[1]-16: 21$ <br> once $[6]-6: 7,22: 13$, <br> $40: 19,49: 10,60: 7$, <br> $60: 19$ <br> one $[40]-3: 23,6: 9$, <br> $7: 3,15: 15,16: 20$, <br> $18: 21,19: 14,19: 22$, <br> $20: 3,20: 8,20: 10$, <br> $20: 18,20: 19,21: 3$, <br> $21: 9,21: 12,24: 7$, <br> $25: 17,27: 15,29: 5$, <br> $29: 15,30: 5,30: 19$, <br> $31: 23,33: 9,36: 11$, <br> $36: 13,36: 16,37: 10$, <br> $41: 2,45: 15,46: 6$, <br> $46: 16,46: 19,46: 23$, <br> $47: 4,54: 21,56: 12$, | $\begin{aligned} & 56: 13,59: 10 \\ & \text { one's }[1]-34: 24 \\ & \text { open }[4]-15: 25,48: 6, \\ & 52: 2,60: 6 \\ & \text { operating }[1]-47: 20 \\ & \text { opinion }[1]-29: 4 \\ & \text { opportunity }[1]- \\ & 35: 13 \\ & \text { opposed }[2]-16: 14, \\ & 40: 17 \\ & \text { option }[4]-43: 4,43: 9, \\ & 43: 12,43: 14 \\ & \text { options }[2]-46: 6, \\ & 46: 8 \\ & \text { order }[2]-3: 6,55: 23 \\ & \text { Order }[9]-11: 4,11: 7, \\ & 18: 7,23: 11,28: 12, \\ & 28: 15,40: 5,40: 9, \\ & 41: 11 \\ & \text { ordered }[1]-35: 3 \\ & \text { otherwise }[2]-21: 21, \\ & 22: 17 \\ & \text { overcome }[3]-19: 22, \\ & 42: 20,47: 8 \\ & \text { overly }[1]-15: 24 \\ & \text { overwhelmingly }[1] \text { - } \\ & 20: 5 \\ & \text { owner }[1]-56: 25 \\ & \text { owns }[1]-9: 8 \\ & \hline \\ & \hline \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { permit }[13]-12: 23, \\ & \text { 15:25, 19:18, 20:4, } \\ & \text { 28:15, 30:11, 37:8, } \\ & \text { 37:20, 38:4, 38:19, } \\ & \text { 47:11, 47:20, 48:6 } \\ & \text { permits }[2]-38: 9, \\ & \text { 48:3 } \\ & \text { permitted }[2]-41: 15, \\ & 41: 16 \\ & \text { person }[3]-52: 6, \\ & 56: 9,60: 3 \\ & \text { person's }[2]-26: 23, \\ & 27: 3 \\ & \text { Personal }[1]-4: 15 \\ & \text { personally }[1]-34: 4 \\ & \text { perspective }[1]- \\ & 17: 19 \\ & \text { pertaining }[1]-53: 23 \\ & \text { PG [1]-61:4 } \\ & \text { physical }[1]-31: 19 \\ & \text { physicians }[2]-9: 4, \\ & 13: 4 \\ & \text { pick }[1]-10: 8 \\ & \text { picking }[1]-11: 14 \\ & \text { Picone }[1]-4: 14 \\ & \text { pictures }[1]-17: 24 \\ & \text { piece }[1]-28: 20 \\ & \text { pierces }[2]-4: 6, \\ & 49: 24 \\ & \text { place }[1]-48: 16 \\ & \text { placed }[1]-18: 7 \\ & \text { plainly }[1]-11: 13 \\ & \text { plan }[5]-5: 16,6: 4, \\ & 37: 11,43: 18 \\ & \text { plane }[1]-12: 15 \\ & \text { plans }[8]-30: 11, \\ & 39: 17,40: 11,41: 6, \\ & 41: 17,41: 23,44: 3, \\ & 58: 15 \\ & \text { plate }[1]-36: 6 \\ & \text { plus }[2]-13: 2,36: 16 \\ & \text { point }[17]-9: 22,10: 4, \\ & 10: 13,16: 3,21: 23, \\ & 23: 10,29: 16,39: 5, \\ & 39: 7,39: 9,41: 14, \\ & 43: 17,44: 24,53: 21, \\ & 54: 24,58: 18,59: 19 \\ & \text { pointed }[2]-11: 19, \\ & 55: 18 \\ & \text { pointing }[2]-29: 4, \\ & 53: 7 \\ & \text { Poitras }[3]-2: 3, \\ & 22: 24,26: 15 \\ & \text { PoITRAS }[51]-3: 2, \\ & 3: 14,4: 24,5: 4,5: 10, \\ & 5: 14,5: 17,5: 21, \\ & 5: 25,6: 6,6: 13,6: 17, \\ & 6: 21,6: 25,7: 9,7: 14, \\ & 7: 19,7: 22,9: 21, \\ & 12: 5,12: 12,16: 24, \\ & \hline \end{aligned}$ |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |


| 18:9, 18:13, 21:16, <br> 22:13, $22: 23,26: 13$, <br> 26:21, 27:2, 39:3, <br> 40:19, 43:11, 43:16, <br> 44:11, 44:15, 48:22, <br> $52: 16,52: 25,53: 9$, <br> $53: 19,56: 12,57: 6$, <br> $57: 14,57: 17,57: 25$, <br> $59: 4,59: 16,59: 24$, <br> $60: 17,60: 22$ <br> pool $[3]-16: 12$, <br> 42:12, 42:15 <br> position $[11]-10: 18$, <br> $27: 12,29: 3,33: 2$, <br> $33: 3,33: 24,34: 16$, <br> $34: 23,46: 12,47: 18$, <br> $51: 12$ <br> possession $[1]-33: 3$ <br> possibility $[2]-10: 22$, <br> $22: 3$ <br> possible $[1]-32: 12$ <br> possibly $[1]-29: 11$ <br> precedent $[14]-17: 9$, <br> 18:19, $26: 16,27: 4$, <br> $27: 13,27: 14,27: 21$, <br> $28: 19,29: 3,29: 7$, <br> $30: 15,30: 16,36: 11$, <br> $41: 3$ <br> preclude $[2]-32: 7$, <br> $32: 23$ <br> premises $[1]-4: 13$ <br> prepared $[1]-62: 6$ <br> prerogative $[1]-52: 9$ <br> present $[4]-21: 19$, <br> $21: 21,42: 23,49: 7$ <br> presentation $[2]-$ <br> $4: 18,13: 24$ <br> presented $[2]-10: 12$, <br> $43: 12$ <br> president $[1]-58: 6$ <br> pretty $[1]-19: 10$ <br> previously $[2]-15: 6$, <br> $30: 24$ <br> primary $[5]-4: 7,4: 11$, <br> $49: 18,49: 24,50: 4$ <br> principal $[2]-9: 7$, <br> $39: 13$ <br> privy $[1]-58: 15$ <br> problem $[5]-12: 23$, <br> $29: 19,30: 7,49: 17$, <br> $54: 14$ <br> problematic $[1]-26: 9$ <br> proc $[1]-7: 10$ <br> proceed $[1]-39: 4$ <br> proceeded $[1]-15: 23$ <br> proceededly $[1]-$ <br> 15:23 <br> proceedings $[1]-1: 23$ <br> Proceedings $[2]-$ <br> $62: 3,62: 8$ <br>  | $\begin{aligned} & \text { process }[3]-7: 12, \\ & 51: 14,58: 11 \\ & \text { processes }[1]-25: 11 \\ & \text { produced }[1]-15: 16 \\ & \text { prong }[8]-13: 18, \\ & 13: 19,14: 1,14: 5, \\ & 30: 6,30: 19,30: 20, \\ & 54: 18 \\ & \text { prongs }[3]-47: 3, \\ & \text { 47:5, } 53: 24 \\ & \text { properties }[3]-15: 18, \\ & 23: 18,54: 4 \\ & \text { property }[6]-4: 2,9: 8, \\ & 28: 20,53: 17,54: 9, \\ & 56: 25 \\ & \text { property's }[1]-36: 3 \\ & \text { proposed }[2]-16: 7, \\ & 31: 17 \\ & \text { proverbial }[1]-20: 15 \\ & \text { Provided }[1]-60: 24 \\ & \text { providing }[1]-55: 3 \\ & \text { Public }[1]-61: 24 \\ & \text { pull }[2]-9: 25,38: 4 \\ & \text { purely }[2]-23: 7, \\ & 56: 23 \\ & \text { pursue }{ }_{[1]}-23: 22 \\ & \text { put }[2]-28: 14,45: 12 \\ & \text { putting }[2]-45: 5,54: 5 \\ & \hline \\ & \hline \end{aligned}$ | ```reasonable [5] - 25:19, 34:8, 34:20, 42:25, 49:21 reasons [2]-20:11, 29:5 recalling \({ }_{[1]}-52: 15\) received \([1]\) - \(57: 11\) recently [1]-58:22 recite [2] - 31:24, 34:2 recommend [1] - 24:5 recommendation [1] - 24:13 record [12]-5:7, 10:10, 22:11, 22:15, 44:5, 52:12, 52:20, 53:13, 57:22, 59:8, 59:25, 62:8 Recorded [1] - 1:23 Recording [2] - 1:23, 60:24 reestablish [1] - 22:16 reference [2]-22:8, 46:19 referenced [1] - 22:12 referencing [1] - 59:7 referred [1]-21:11 referring [2]-23:24, 31:24 reflective \({ }_{[1]}\) - 44:21 refusal [1]-27:18 regard [1] - 14:3 reinforce [1]-58:9 reiterate [3]-18:2, 24:22, 45:4 related [5] - 3:17, 13:8, 54:20, 56:15, 56:16 relationship [4]-5:11, 8:6, 53:11, 58:2 relevant [5] - 14:5, 19:18, 30:15, 32:5, 54:13 relief \([4]-4: 5,22: 2\), 27:11, 40:16 remove [1] - 23:23 repeat [1] - 28:3 repeated [1]-28:3 replacement \([1]\) - 13:6 representing [1] - 33:25 represents [1]-14:8 request [13]-3:20, 8:25, 9:16, 9:24, 10:14, 16:5, 21:25, 27:10, 27:24, 34:18, 56:5, 60:2, 60:4 requested [1]-26:6 requesting [2] - 14:10, 20:11 require [3]-25:19,``` | ```35:6, 36:4 required [4]-13:16, 26:2, 51:14, 62:6 requirements [1] - 27:25 requires [1]-19:16 Residence [1]-4:15 residence \({ }_{[1]}\) - 53:13 residents [1] - 57:12 resolve [2] - 50:4, 55:23 resolved [2] - 58:19, 58:25 respect [3] - 13:14, 38:17, 54:18 respectfully \([14]\) - 8:24, 14:7, 14:14, 15:20, 16:5, 23:5, 23:13, 27:7, 27:20, 28:18, 30:3, 31:21, 32:9, 32:25 respond [4] - 34:17, 50:23, 56:11, 57:7 responding [2] - 44:18, 44:19 response [3]-41:22, 56:4, 58:22 responsibility \({ }_{[1]}\) - 27:8 restroom [2] - 37:2, 37:5 result [2] - 13:5, 37:10 reverse [1] - 54:17 review [10]-12:3, 21:18, 37:11, 55:4, 55:8, 55:21, 58:14, 58:16, 59:6, 60:8 Review [3]-59:9, 59:12, 59:15 reviewed [1]-12:2 Rich [1] - 51:23 Richard [1] - 2:10 Road [1] - 1:10 room [1] - 20:16 round [1]-57:12 rules [2]-55:3, 55:7``` <br> S $\begin{aligned} & \text { safety }[1]-15: 11 \\ & \text { Sag } \left._{[1]}\right]-1: 10 \\ & \text { Scott }_{[2]}-2: 4,51: 23 \\ & \text { scratch }[1]-10: 6 \\ & \text { second }[4]-3: 10, \\ & 4: 22,17: 14,41: 15 \\ & \text { Section }[1]-15: 6 \\ & \text { section }[1]-4: 9 \\ & \text { see }[7]-19: 14,22: 21, \\ & 27: 21,33: 7,49: 13, \\ & 52: 5,52: 21 \end{aligned}$ | ```seek [1] - 47:12 seeking [2]-8:21, 45:3 seeks \({ }_{[1]}-4: 5\) seem [4]-17:8, 19:24, 37:21, 50:13 self [13] - 30:7, \(30: 8\), 30:9, 30:10, 30:17, 32:3, 42:10, 42:11, 42:14, 42:16, 47:7, 54:19, 56:7 self-created [9] - 30:8, 30:9, 30:10, 32:3, 42:11, 42:14, 42:16, 54:19, 56:7 self-creation [4] - 30:7, 30:17, 42:10, 47:7 send [1]-58:20 sense [1]-18:22 sent [3]-57:10, 57:13, 58:20 series [1] - 55:3 serious [1]-19:4 set [3]-12:18, 25:18, 36:11 setting [1] - 26:16 several \({ }_{[1]}-9: 10\) shall [3] - 32:5, 32:6, 32:23 shed [3]-21:11, 22:9, 22:10 SHEET \({ }_{[1]}-61: 2\) shortcut [1]-25:10 SHOULD [1] - 61:4 show [1] - 59:25 shower [1] - 16:22 showers [1]-16:20 shows [3] - 43:19, 43:20, 49:5 shy \([1]-50: 7\) sic [1] - 15:23 side [1] - 25:4 sign [1] - 7:6 Signature [1] - 61:19 signed [1] - 7:4 simplistic [1] - 30:23 simply [3] - 53:20, 54:24, 56:4 single [1] - 17:4 site [1]-17:25 situated [1]-5:2 situation [1] - 48:5 situations [1] - 34:5 skis [2] - 38:19, 47:21 snowballed [1] - 48:9 sole [1] - 45:8 solely [1] - 30:16 somewhat [4]-8:23,``` |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |

10:16, 42:20, 44:20
son [2] - 5:13, 39:12
soon [2] - 18:6, 40:9
sorry [6] - 12:5, 22:21, 44:17, 47:7, 50:12, 53:10
sort [1]-21:14
sought [3]-14:23,
14:24, 23:19
Sound [1] - 1:23
South [1] - 8:12
south [1] - 11:21
space [1] - 16:7
speaking [6] - 22:22, 22:24, 39:11, 55:17, 56:23, 58:7
specific [2]-13:18, 28:17
spelled [2] - 14:12, 15:5
spent [6] - 10:19, 20:20, 25:13, 46:9, 51:9, 59:22
spoken [1] - 60:4
square [10] - 4:7, 4:8,
4:10, 4:12, 45:6,
49:14, 49:19, 49:25,
50:2, 50:5
Sr [1] - 9:6
St ${ }_{[1]}-9: 12$
stance [1] - 28:19 standard [2] - 38:3, 53:24
start [6] - 8:15, 10:5, 10:11, 38:11, 53:11
started [3]-11:3,
18:3, 47:24
state [2] $-5: 7,57: 25$
statue [1] - 31:25
statute [1] - 31:16
statutory [1] - 27:8
steps [2] - 16:19, 36:5
Steve [2]-2:5, 2:6
stick [1] - 34:24
still [4] - 10:5, 18:15
stop [1] - 35:2
Stop [9]-11:4, 11:7,
18:7, 23:11, 28:12,
28:14, 40:5, 40:8,
41:11
stopped [3] - 35:7,
40:10, 47:22
Stream [1] - 8:13
strongest [1] - 33:24
structure [4]-4:11,
22:4, 42:17, 43:21
stuff [2] - 33:7, 35:2
Subdivision [1] - 15:7
subject [4]-4:13, 9:8,
23:13, 51:14
submission $[2]$ -
$50: 10,50: 19$ 50:10, $50: 19$
submissions [1] 52:2
submit [9]-9:24,
15:20, 22:18, 23:5, 23:13, 27:7, 31:21, 32:25, 38:9
submitted [16] - 9:3, 9:19, 30:12, 32:16, 37:10, 39:17, 39:18, 39:20, 39:24, 40:12,
41:7, 41:8, 41:17,
41:23, 44:4, 44:7
Subscribed [1] -
61:21
substantial [5] - 26:7, 26:8, 26:12, 26:22, 49:15
successful [1]-20:5
suffolk [1] - 4:4
suggest [2]-25:3, 60:7
suggested [2] - 25:4, 50:15
suggestion [3] -
23:25, 25:6, 60:11
suggestions [6] -
11:18, 45:25, 49:11, 50:8, 51:2, 51:4
summers [1] - 16:13
support [1]-6:9
supposed [1] - 18:6 surrounding [2] -
15:4, 40:8
sworn [1] - 61:21
T
table [1] - 34:12
tandem [1] - 59:13
Tax [1]-4:4
tear [2]-45:14, 45:17
technology [1]-8:15
ten [1]-6:18
tending [1]-7:18
test $[5]-13: 18,13: 19$,
$14: 2,14: 5,15: 8$
THE [1] - 61:2
theoretically [1] - 6:5
therefore [1] - 11:18
Thomas [3] - 9:5, 9:6, 39:13
thomas [1]-9:5
thousands [2]-28:23, 28:25
three [3]-26:6, 26:24,
31:13
thumb [1] - 34:24
ticked [1] - 47:6
tied $[1]-8: 23$
today $[6]-3: 21,17: 24$,
$20: 24,40: 24,52: 20$,
$56: 23$
tonight $[1]-21: 20$
took $[1]-38: 3$
total $[3]-4: 8,4: 11$,
$49: 25$
tough [1] - 19:22
Transcribed [1] - 1:24
TRANSCRIPT [1] -
$61: 2$
transcript [6] - 3:9,
8:25, 9:18, 14:11, 20:12, 62:3
transcription [1] -
62:7
transpired [1] - 32:20
treatment [1] - 13:4
true [1] - 62:7
try [10]-13:24, 14:25,
19:4, 25:10, 30:5,
35:14, 46:10, 49:16, 55:23, 58:25
trying [7] - 25:8,
25:14, 34:17, 37:24, 44:23, 46:15, 49:21
Tuesday [2] - 3:4,
60:20
turndown [1] - 44:2
Turndown [1] - 41:24
twenty [1] - 43:23
two [25] - 5:19, 12:18,
12:21, 16:8, 17:2,
17:6, 17:7, 20:17,
21:6, 23:5, 23:14,
26:7, 26:10, 26:22,
26:23, 27:16, 33:17,
36:12, 36:16, 39:20,
40:17, 40:21, 41:5,
43:3
type [1] - 33:16

| $\mathbf{U}$ |
| :---: |
| ultimately [1]-49:6 |

ultimately [1] - 49:6
unable [1] - 34:5
unaware [1] - 59:2
under [12]-4:21,
12:19, 24:23, 27:16, 27:25, 29:23, 31:15, 33:5, 38:18, 42:8, 47:20, 47:23
understood [1] - 22:7 undesirable [3] -
15:16, 23:14, 54:3 unfair [1] - 38:10 unfairness [1] - 44:22 unfortunately [1] -
58:12
unintentional [2] 36:20, 38:21
unique [2]-28:20, 48:5
uniquely [1] - 28:21
unless [1] - 39:21
unlike [1] - 42:9
unreasonableness [1]

- 44:22
unsympathetic [1] -
37:25
up [7] - 10:8, 11:14, 31:13, 35:23, 36:5, 37:11, 53:24
updated [1] - 5:16
useful [1] - 19:7

| $\mathbf{V}$ |
| :--- |
| valid $_{[1]}-42: 8$ |

valid [1] - 42:8
Valley [1] - 8:13
variance [30]-13:17,
14:22, 14:24, 14:25,
15:5, 15:9, 15:20,
16:6, 18:17, 19:15, 19:16, 23:22, 25:20, 25:25, 26:7, 27:11, 31:18, 32:8, 35:7, 37:4, 38:6, 42:6, 43:7, 45:2, 45:3, 46:21, 47:13, 47:17, 47:23, 48:15
variance" [1] - 32:24
variances [3] - 8:21,
15:8, 40:22
variation [1] - 27:24
various [1] - 10:21
Via [1] - 1:11
via [2] - 57:10, 58:21 viable [4] - 42:25,
43:4, 43:8, 43:13
Vice [3] - 2:4, 31:9,
31:11
Video [1] - 1:12
view [1] - 51:19
View [5] - 3:25, 4:3,
4:13, 5:9, 53:16
VILLAGE ${ }_{[1]}-1: 6$
village [1] - 38:2
Village [24]-2:10,
2:11, 3:5, 4:9, 9:25,
11:4, 11:6, 11:20,
12:20, 17:9, 17:20,
25:4, 25:10, 25:18,
26:18, 33:4, 35:11,
41:18, 46:23, 47:2,
51:24, 53:12, 59:9,
62:4
violate [3] - 24:6,
24:16, 48:13
violated [1] - 50:16
violating [1] - 37:20
violation [12] - 30:10,
30:25, 31:4, 37:8,
$37: 9,37: 12,38: 5$,
41:18, 41:19, 42:5,
42:7, 47:11
visible [1] - 11:13
W
waited [1] - 41:22
waiting [2] - 6:12, 6:15
waived [1] - 15:10
watch [1]-42:24
ways [1] - 44:25
weigh [1] - 27:10
weighing [1]-27:24
welcome [1]-3:3
welfare ${ }_{[1]}-15: 12$
West [8]-3:19, 4:16,
54:25, 56:21, 58:7,
59:7, 59:12, 60:10
west ${ }_{[1]}-54: 25$
whatsoever [1] -
40:21
willing [1] - 9:17
wish [1]-28:3
words [1]-7:24
works [1] - 59:13
worst [1] - $34: 25$
wreak [1] - $38: 2$
writing [2]-22:18,
23:3

| $\mathbf{Y}$ |
| :---: |
| yard $[1]-42 \cdot 13$ |

yard ${ }_{[1]}-42: 13$
year [3]-8:21, 9:11,
57:12
year-round ${ }_{[1]}-57: 12$
York [3]-1:10, 4:3,
8:13
yourself [1]-8:2
yup [3]-6:7, 6:25,
52:21

| $\mathbf{Z}$ |
| :---: |
| ZBA $^{[2]}-3: 18,3: 25$ |

zoning [2] - 42:8,
45:16
ZONING [1] - 1:5
Zoning [12] - 3:4,
13:16, 24:6, 24:13,
24:16, 37:12, 37:22,
41:20, 48:13, 50:16, 61:2, 62:4
Zoom [2] - 1:12, 42:24
Zooming [1] - 4:20

