

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
CITY OF EAST GRAND RAPIDS

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July 23, 2025

East Grand Rapids Community Center – Commission Chambers

1. CALL TO ORDER

Andrew Howard called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM including pledge of Allegiance.

2. ROLL CALL

Roll call was taken by Zoning Administrator Jay Gianotti.

Present: Andrew Howard, George Davis, David Jackson, Matt Feyen, Joe Rizqallah, Scott Dienes

Absent: Jonathan Paasch, Brad Hunter

Also Present: Zoning Administrator Jay Gianotti, City Attorney John Huff and City Manager, Shea Charles

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by George Davis and supported by Andrew Howard to approve the minutes as written

4. PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

No public comment was given.

5. New ZBA members:

Janet Dietsch she is still in the onboarding process

6. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Chairman: A motion was made by George Davis and supported by Scott Dienes to nominate Chairman Andrew Howard. No other nominations were given.

Yeas: Howard, Davis, Jackson, Feyen, Rizqallah and Dienes

Nays: 0

Vice-Chairman: A motion was made by Joe Rizqallah and supported by Matt Feyen to nominate David Jackson. No other nominations were given.

Yeas: Howard, Davis, Jackson, Feyen, Rizqallah and Dienes

Nays: 0

Secretary: A motion was made by Joe Rizqallah and supported by Matt Feyen to nominate Jonathan Paasch. No other nominations were given.

Yeas: Howard, Davis, Jackson, Feyen, Rizqallah and Dienes

Nays: 0

6. PUBLIC HEARING – CASE #2025-05

- Applicant: Mike Brosnan
- Location: 2727 Reeds Lake Blvd.

- Request: Chapter 50, Section 5.28B – To build a new home with a front yard setback of 51.2’ where 58.2’ is required.

Zoning Administrator Jay Gianotti opened the public hearing. The intent is to demolish this house and build a new house on this property. The two main issues that the applicant has requested the variance related to is related to the shape of the lot also the topography of the lot. Based on the setback requirements, they would be encroaching or infringing on some of the stronger slopes. The proposed footprint of the house is 13% larger than the existing house. He proposed modifications.

Dienes: Questioned the setback in the front yard and where the encroachment is located:

Gianotti: Compared 51.2 with 58.2 encroachment variance of the 7 foot difference.

Dienes: So the request is not for 7’ on the Reeds Lake frontage.

Gianotti: The request would be a 7’ encroachment into the required front yard.

Dienes: What is the significance of being a corner lot

Gianotti: The East side there is a much larger setback required from the street.

- Davis: Assuming setbacks were explained to the builder.
Gianotti: Had discussions with contractor about process in which a surveyor was hired for exact measurements
- Dienes: What is the minimum structure size for a single family home?
Gianotti: There is no minimum

At this point Chairman Howard invited the owner or the owner’s representative to present:

Mike Brosnan with Colonial Builders speaking on behalf of Kristen and Dan Lorenz. They bought 2727 Reeds Lake Blvd. 2 years ago, they have a young family and intend to build a new house and make a forever home. Dan is a retired Army Veteran with full disability so having an open floor plan with an accessible home is very important. Topics discussed were as follows: Minimum Structure size and Zoning Requirements; Original build envelope based on incorrect survey data; Site topography causing constraints; Elevation Concerns; Current design reflects needs of client; Whether variance is justified and East side setback.

- Feyen: Questions about levels and elevations regarding client’s disability
Brosnan: Sloping of the garage will provide water control and still limit in terms of the amount of elevation inside the home.
- Davis: If correct information would have been provided initially how would this be different?
Brosnan: He cannot answer this because they like their design and are not willing to give up anything in the design, this is their forever home.
- Feyen: Struggling with the fact that client is refusing modifications to meet ordinance
Brosnan: If people continue to push back with setbacks, we will eventually end up with tiny houses. Please continue to consider the topography, lot shape, etc.

Chairman Howard asked for board member discussion.

Chairman Howard: practical difficulty non-existent to comply with the ordinance. Being a new build, it is buildable to be within the requirements and we have to meet all five.

Mr. Jackson: seconds what Chairman Howard says with the exception of the minimum necessary

Mr. Feyen: Struggling with it, it seems like it wouldn't take much to get this to comply. Sometimes when I go to print things, they don't all fit on one page. If I mess with my print settings, instead of two or three pages, I can make it 97% and it fits on one page. And I'm kind of wondering if it seems to be there might be a solution like that here. I did look at the topography, and that's definitely a challenge, as is the shape. But given the teardown situation, I do think there is the ability to meet the ordinance requirements without a special variance. I really don't see a practical difficulty.

Mr. Rizqallah: I'm in agreement with my partners. A smaller home can fit with this available lot.

Mr. Dienes: There's nothing that's been said that I disagree with. It seems to me that a smaller home can fit with this available one. The more rational to seek would have been a side yard pushing the house back; they get a side yard to honor the front, which then honors the average of the home's setback from the road which is the aesthetic that we're trying.

Mr. Davis: I don't have too much to add to what everyone else has said, but the key thing to me is that this is a teardown. Unfortunately, there was a mistake made, but for that, you might have designed a house that meets all the standards without a variance and this is not meeting the standards.

Chairman Howard asks for motion to vote

Mr. Rizqallah motioned to deny request, Mr. Davis 2nd the motion because the request does not meet all applicable standards.

Nays: Howard, Davis, Jackson, Feyen, Rizqallah and Dienes

Yeas: 0

Request is denied

9. OTHER ZBA BUSINESS: No other business to discuss.

10. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Chairman Howard to adjourn the meeting, and supported by Mr. Rizqallah.

Yeas: Howard, Davis, Jackson, Feyen, Rizqallah and Dienes

Nays: 0

Meeting adjourned

Respectfully submitted,

Tracey Alwood
Office Administrator DPW

Video of meeting also available at: [July 23, 2025 Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting](#)

