

ATHENS TOWNSHIP ZONING HEARING BOARD

October 26, 2021

Zoning Hearing Board members in attendance were: Solicitor, Taunya Rosenbloom, Esq., Chairman Bill Bresser, Rick Felt, and Cheryl Wood-Walter, Ed Reid, Zoning Officer, and Secretary, Cindy Parrish. Stenographer was Christin Reynolds of CSR Court Reporting. Sign-in sheet was available for all others in attendance and is hereby attached.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Bill Bresser called the meeting to order at 6:30PM. Motion by Wood-Walter to approve the minutes from August 24, 2021, second by Felt and motion carried unanimously.

Correspondence

Board members reviewed the correspondence file

Stephen T. Schmeckenbecher

Parcel #09-006.00-013-004-000

Application for Variance

The subject property is owned by Chesapeake Land Company, LLC and is located at 175 Lamoka Road, Sayre, PA (Tax Parcel No. 09-006.00-013-004). A request for a Variance to the "Ordinance", Section 303 to allow the property to be used as an Institutional Residence and Section 411F to allow relief from the requirement of residents to stay a minimum of 30 days.

Ed Reid was sworn in and read a statement from the Zoning Office.

Atty. Wes Kocsis was in attendance to request a use variance to allow a drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility (institutional residence as defined in the ordinance) to operate on the property. He gave the history of the property and stated that no new construction would be necessary. He went on to discuss the unique conditions such as existing dormitory facilities on site, unkempt vegetation, and long term vacancy. The owners will be marketing the property to be leased by a rehabilitation center and not managing the facility themselves. Presentation and statements from psychologist Michele Strohl, owner Steve Schmeckenbecher, and realtor Lori Williams can be found in the transcript.

The Board asked questions about capacity. Strohl and Williams made comments about the treatment process and the impacts of vacant properties on the local tax base, respectively. Kocsis inquired as to whether the board wanted to swear in all those who have spoken, and they were then sworn in by the stenographer. Realtor, Val O'Neil stated that saying "no" would almost be like turning your back on the community.

Chairman Bresser took the board into executive session at 7:09PM. The hearing resumed at 7:29PM. Discussion was held about whether this use needed a Variance through the ZHB or a Conditional Use through the Supervisors and concerns over who had the authority to make the decision. Chairman Bresser took the board into a second executive session at 7:45PM. The hearing resumed again at 8:29PM.

Motion to grant the variance requests with the stipulation that the Township Supervisors confirm that this matter was properly brought before the ZHB and that they (ZHB) have the

Pg. 2
ZHB minutes
10/26/21

authority to grant a use variance for it was made by Bresser, seconded by Felt. The motion carried unanimously. Atty. Rosenbloom requested a three day extension on the written decision and Kocsis agreed.

Motion to adjourn the hearing at 8:31PM as there was no further business to discuss was made by Felt and seconded by Wood-Walter. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia R. Parrish, Secretary