

**February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019**  
**City of Erie, Pennsylvania**  
**ZONING HEARING BOARD**  
**- M I N U T E S -**

1. MEETING CALL TO ORDER
2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
3. ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Member Name	Present	Absent
Ed Dawson	X	
Mike Hornyak	X	
Jeffery Johnson	X	
Jacqueline Spry		X
Selena King	X	

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019 MINUTES AS RECEIVED**  
Motioned by Edward Dawson, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mike Hornyak, Approved unanimously.
5. **VOTING AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF OUTSTANDING DECISIONS- NONE**
6. **CONTINUED HEARINGS- NONE**
7. **APPEALS TO BE HEARD:**

**Appeal No. 12,195 by Bruce Hoffman (3052-237)** concerning property located in an R-2 zoning district at 1001-03 West 8<sup>th</sup> Street, at the southwest corner of 8<sup>th</sup> and Cascade Streets. The appellant is seeking two dimensional variances for a proposed change of non-conforming use from a 4-family dwelling with first floor commercial to a 6-family dwelling. Per Section 302 of the Erie City Zoning Ordinance, 6-family dwellings require six (6) off-street parking spaces (one off-street parking space per family living unit); four (4) off-street parking spaces are proposed. Per Section 205 of the City Code, the minimum lot area per family in an R-2 district is 3,000 square feet of lot area per family, 570 square feet of lot area per family is proposed. (The lot area is 3,420 square feet.).

**Findings of Fact**

1. The appellant and owner of the property, Mr. Bruce Hoffman, appeared at the hearing together with the architect, Mr. Michael Grab, to explain to the Board the proposed change of dimensions and change of the overall use of the property. The building, located at the southwest corner of West 8<sup>th</sup> and Cascade Streets, is presently a mixed-use property with both commercial and residential units. The commercial units, both on the first floor of the dwelling, have been vacant for several years. The appellant is seeking to convert those unused commercial units into residential properties.

2. Mr. Grab first addressed the Board, and pointed out that the area has changed, and it is unlikely that the vacant, commercial properties will be rented any time soon. On the other hand, the demand for small residential units (particularly for college students in that part of the City) is strong. He said that the appellant's proposal is to convert the two commercial properties into residential units – each with one bedroom and one bath – each occupying approximately 880 square feet. If the variances are approved, Mr. Grab added that the appellant would seek all necessary permits as required for his renovation proposals.
3. The appellant Mr. Hoffman also addressed the Board, and began by presenting them with a petition signed by 25 neighborhood residents, who are all in favor of transferring the vacant commercial properties into usable, residential apartments. He also told the Board that the two commercial units have been vacant since the last business tenant left eleven years ago. He reiterated that the business model for the lower west-side area of the City has changed, and it is unlikely that the current economic circumstances will change again anytime soon.
4. Mr. Hoffman said that he also owns three other buildings on the block – one commercial and two residential, all on the opposite side of West 8<sup>th</sup> Street – and is familiar with the neighborhood. He told the Board that the proposed change will not affect the character of the area.
5. As for the parking requirements, the appellant said that of the four tenants that presently occupy the building on 8<sup>th</sup> and Cascade, only one has a car. This, he said, is typical of residents in the neighborhood, and that the proposed change of his property should not create a parking problem.

## **Conclusions**

1. The appellant is seeking to convert his property at West 8<sup>th</sup> and Cascade Streets from a mixed commercial/residential into an entirely residential dwelling. Currently the property houses four residential units, and two vacant commercial units.
2. Given the changing economic circumstances in the area, and the number of years the commercial units have been vacant, the appellant believes that his proposal would be the best way to utilize the property. In order to convert the building into all residential units, the appellant would require two dimensional variances: one for the square footage of the property, and the other for the number of parking spaces.
3. According to Section 205 of the Erie City Zoning Ordinance, the minimum lot area per family in an R-2 district is 3,000 square feet of lot area per family; the appellant's proposed apartments are approximately 880 square feet each. Additionally, according to Section 302 of the City Code, a 6-family dwelling would require six (6) off-street parking spaces (one off-street parking space per family living unit); whereas the appellant's property only provides four off-street parking spaces.
4. The appellant provided a petition signed by twenty-five area residents who approve the proposed change. The appellant also indicated that the character of the neighborhood would not be negatively affected by the change, citing that off-street parking would not be affected as only one of his four current residents has a car.

## **Decision**

By a unanimous vote, with one abstention, the Board approved the request for the dimensional variances. Board member Edward Dawson cited the difficulty that the appellant has had in trying to rent the commercial properties, and the effort he has made to invest in the community. Similarly, members Selena King and Mike Hornyak both expressed the appellant's willingness to invest in the community, and believe that the proposed change would be an improvement to the area. All three members therefore voted to approve the proposed variances.

Board chairman Jeffrey Johnson, citing a personal business relationship he had with the appellant, abstained from the vote.

## **It is So Ordered.**

**8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS- NONE**

**9. NEW BUSINESS:**

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

Note: The regular meetings of the Zoning Hearing Board are located in Council Chambers, City of Erie Municipal Building, 626 State Street, Erie PA. Persons with a disability who wish to attend and require an auxiliary aid service or other accommodation to testify at the hearing should contact the City of Erie ADA Coordinator at (814) 870-1469 at least 48 hours in advance so that arrangements can be made.