TOWN OF PAWLEYS ISLAND ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS MINUTES

Town Hall – Conference Room | 323 Myrtle Ave | Pawleys Island SC 29585
11-5-2025 – 2:30 pm

PRESENT: Eileen Boettcher-Patterson, James Blaszczyk, Peter Fawcett, Jerry Lieberman (Virtual), and Byron York (Virtual)

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Corey Higdon (Town Clerk), Daniel Newquist (Town Administrator), Robert Cox (Building Official)

ADDITIONAL PRESENT: Craig Pless (Owner of 619 Springs), Greg Weathers (Town Attorney)

1. **CALL TO ORDER**
   A. Chair Eileen Boettcher-Patterson called the meeting to order at 2:30 pm.
2. **DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM – AGENDA**
   A. Mrs. Boettcher-Patterson confirmed that there is a quorum.
3. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**
   A. **619 Springs Avenue**
   No comments were presented.
4. **APPROVAL OF 9-16-2025 ZBA Minutes**
   A. **Chair Boettcher-Patterson requested a motion to approve or amend the September 16, 2025 minutes. Peter Fawcett made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. James Blaszczyk seconded. All voted in favor.**
5. **NEW BUSINESS**
   A. **VAR2025-00004: 619 Springs Avenue (Tax Map Number: 42-0174-106-00-00)**
   Mr. Higdon introduced the variance request for 619 Springs Avenue, noting that the applicant is proposing to install a staircase on the rear side of the structure. He explained that the staircase and associated platform would encroach into the rear yard setback. The requested variance would allow for relief from the setback requirements outlined in *Article 3 Section 3-2.2(E) Minimum Required Yards.* Mr. Higdon introduced Craig Pless, the applicant and property owner of 619 Springs Avenue.

   Mr. Pless provided a brief introduction, noting that he had recently purchased the property after vacationing on the island for 24 years. He explained that the main concern he has with the current structure is that there is no egress in the rear of the home. Mr. Pless further explained that there are two front doors and no back door, and an addition of a back door and staircase would encroach on the rear

setback line. He added that the second front door would be removed if the variance is approved. Mr. Higdon displayed images of the property for the board to reference. Mrs. Boettcher-Patterson questioned if a tree to the rear of the structure would need to be removed for the staircase addition, to which Mr. Pless clarified that the tree would only need to be trimmed.

Mr. Higdon presented his staff report for the variance, prefacing that the house was built in 1990 prior to the passing of the Town's Unified Development Code. He added that the house is currently compliant with all setback requirements, but the proposed staircase addition would extend approximately 5 feet into the 15-foot rear setback. The variance would grant relief from the setback requirements outlined in *Article 3 Section 3-2.2(E) Minimum Required Yards*. Mr. Higdon explained that staircases are not a listed feature that is exempt from setback regulations, as outlined in *Article 3- District Boundaries 3-5.7 Setback Exceptions for Certain Structures*. He added that the applicant also proposes to add an on-grade patio in the rear yard to accommodate the staircase. Mr. Higdon clarified that the patio would be allowable as per Article 3-5.7 without a variance, as long as it is constructed using permeable materials. He outlined the conditions of the property that create the hardship without a variance. Mr. Higdon explained that the structure is located within a foot of the rear and side yard setbacks, so any staircase addition would have to extend into the setback. He stated that it is not a requirement for a home to have a rear exit per the building code; however, Town staff acknowledges that fire safety could be greatly enhanced with the addition of a rear exit. Mr. Higdon added that the home is used as a short-term rental, which further increases the need for additional exits because renters are unfamiliar with the home's layout. Lastly, he clarified that similar features, such as an elevator, would be allowable without a variance under Article 3-5.7, but an elevator would not serve the same fire-safety purpose as a staircase.

The board raised several questions regarding the variance request. Mrs. Boettcher-Patterson questioned how many houses on the island do not have back doors, to which Mr. Higdon noted that there likely aren't many as most have rear decks, especially homes on the beachfront and creekfront. Mrs. Boettcher-Patterson asked what the egress requirements are per building code and if the staircase has to extend out 5 feet. Mr. Cox clarified that the minimum width for the staircase is 36 inches, and the door is required to be 32 inches in width at minimum. Mr. York inquired whether the addition would be for only fire safety or

also convenience, to which Mr. Pless stated that it would be for both. Mr. Lieberman recommended limiting the encroachment to 3 feet, the minimum requirement for the staircase width per building code. Mrs. Boettcher-Patterson raised concerns over impervious coverage with the addition, to which Mr. Newquist noted that the staircase can be built using permeable material. Mr. Blaszczyk explained that the landing must be wide enough to accommodate the width of the door, as the door will open outward. Mr. Lieberman recommended allowing the door to be 36 inches in width, as the staircase must be 36 inches in width to meet building code requirements. Mrs. Boettcher-Patterson expressed support for the 36-inch door condition and also stated that all materials in the new construction must be permeable. Mr. Fawcett and Mr. Blaszczyk recommended increasing the width of the door. Mr. Lieberman added that the staircase must be attached to the structure and not projected out at all.

Mrs. Boettcher-Patterson requested a motion to approve the variance with conditions. Mr. Lieberman moved to approve the variance with the following conditions: the stairwell is the minimum width per building code (36 inches), the stairwell is against the house and is not enclosed, the landing is the minimal size required, the door is at most 36 inches in width, and that the entire addition does not add to the impervious coverage of the lot. Mr. York seconded the motion. Eileen Boettcher-Patterson, Jerry Lieberman, and Byron York voted to approve the variance. Mr. Blaszczyk and Mr. Fawcett abstained from the vote. Motion passes.

6. **NEXT MEETING DATE-** January 29, 2026 (if needed)

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

   A. Mrs. Boettcher-Patterson requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Fawcett moved to adjourn. Mr. Blaszczyk seconded. All in favor.

APPROVED **DATE** 10/22/26

ATTEST **DATE** 10-22-2026