

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
CITY OF LIVONIA
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2026

A Meeting of the Zoning Board of Appeals of the City of Livonia was held on Tuesday, April 7, 2026.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Gregory G. Coppola, Chairman
Brian Meagher
Marc Rotondo
Michael Testa
Timothy Klisz, Secretary

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jim Baringhaus, Vice Chairman
Lindsey Hakala

OTHERS PRESENT: Mike Fisher, Chief Assistant City Attorney
Sydnee Rogers, Assistant City Attorney
Larry O’Neal, Building Inspector

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. Chairman Coppola explained the Rules of Procedure to those interested parties. Each Petitioner must give their name and address and declare hardship for appeal. Appeals of the Zoning Board's decisions are made to the Wayne County Circuit Court. The Chairman advised the audience that appeals can be filed within 21 days of the date tonight's minutes are approved. The decision of the Zoning Board shall become final within five (5) calendar days following the hearing and the applicant shall be mailed a copy of the decision. There are four decisions the Board can make: To deny, to grant, to grant as modified by the Board, or to table for further information. Each Petitioner may ask to be heard by a full seven (7) member Board. Five (5) members were present. Secretary, Timothy Klisz, then read the Agenda and Legal Notice to each appeal, and each of the Petitioners indicated their presence. One of the Petitioners asked to be rescheduled to be heard by a full Board. Appeals came up for hearing after due legal notice was given to all interested parties within 300 feet, Petitioners, and City Departments. There were several (not counted) people present in the audience.

(7:00)

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APPEAL CASE NO. 2025-11-36, 20160 Milburn Avenue (tabled on January 6, 2026): an appeal was made to the Zoning Board of Appeals by Joshua Engels, seeking to maintain an illegally erected 6-foot-tall privacy fence resulting in a privacy fence erected in the side yards forward toward the street beyond the rear corner of the dwelling, which is prohibited.

This Low Density Residential property is located on the east side of Milburn (20160), between Bretton and Eight Mile Roads, Lot. No. 006-99-0066-000, RUF, Rural Urban Farm, rejected by the Inspection Department under Livonia Zoning Ordinance, Section 15.44.090 (B).

ENGELS I would like to be rescheduled.

COPPOLA Can you step—I apologize. Can you step up for me? And which case are you?

ENGELS Josh Engels, at 20160 Milburn Street.

COPPOLA Okay.

ENGELS I'd like to be rescheduled, but I will not be able to make the May date. I'm gonna be out of town.

COPPOLA Okay.

ENGELS So I don't know how that works.

COPPOLA We had.... We tabled....

ENGELS We tabled last time because there were five of you and no one could come to an agreement on what to do. And it sounds like tonight might be a repeat of that. We'd like to at least try for a full Board again.

COPPOLA Okay, so that would mean... you're gonna be out of town in May. So what you... I think when we tabled, we gave it a time period. About six months.

ENGELS I think it was May. Was the deadline. That's why. I knew I was going to be out of town, so I got in early to try to do this one.

COPPOLA Okay, so you'd like to be heard by the full Board. There's no guarantee it'll be a full Board in June.

ENGELS I'd like to try.

COPPOLA Okay. I think in June... I will not be there in June. So there will not be a full Board. There may be six of seven, but there won't be—

ENGELS Six is better than five.

COPPOLA All right. So what I'd like to do is propose to the Board that I think we required them to be in by May, if everybody's willing to give them an extension until the June 9

meeting. Is that okay with the Board? So we've got five that are in agreement. So what you'll need to do is call, if you would, tomorrow morning, call the Zoning Board office and get scheduled for the June....

ENGELS Appreciate it.

COPPOLA Anyone else? We have one case. So we're going to go ahead, move the first case, which is case number 2025-11-36, 20160 Milburn Avenue, which was tabled on January 6, will be extended till the meeting on June ninth.

RESOLVED: APPEAL CASE NO. 2025-11-36, 20160 Milburn Avenue (tabled January 6, 2026): an appeal was made to the Zoning Board of Appeals by Joshua Engels, seeking to maintain an illegally erected 6-foot-tall privacy fence resulting in a privacy fence erected in the side yards forward toward the street beyond the rear corner of the dwelling, which is prohibited.

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be rescheduled to the June 9, 2026 meeting to allow the Petitioner to revise their plans and perhaps bring a new proposal back and be heard by a fuller Board.

COPPOLA So then we would go ahead and call the next case, Appeal Case No. 2026-03-01.

APPEAL CASE NO. 2026-03-01, 33925 Wadsworth Avenue: an appeal was made to the Zoning Board of Appeals by Lisa and Nicholas Nelson, seeking to erect a six-foot-tall privacy fence encroaching into the side yard forward toward the front of the lot beyond the rear of the house, which is prohibited.

Encroachment

Allowed: 0 feet
Proposed: 33 feet
Excess: 33 feet

This Low Density Residential property is located on the south side of Wadsworth (33925), between Stark Road and Cul-de-sac, Lot. No. 112-02-0010-002, RUF, Rural Urban Farm, rejected by the Inspection Department under Livonia Zoning Ordinance, Section 15.44.090 B – Residential district regulations: Privacy fence.

COPPOLA All right, thank you. Is there anything you'd like to add?

O'NEAL No.

COPPOLA Any questions for the Inspection Department? All right, seeing none. The Petitioner could step up to the podium. And just for the record, for our notes, who's actually speaking, I can get a name and address.

NELSON My name is Lisa Nelson, at 33925 Wadsworth Street, Livonia, Michigan.

COPPOLA All right, Ms. Nelson, why don't you just give us a quick synopsis of [inaudible] a variance, and then I'd like to understand from your perspective what the hardship is.

NELSON So for the... what we're trying to attempt to do is there's a[n] existing chain-link fence, and we would like to replace it with the privacy fence. Basically, we're on the cul-de-sac, so... and at the very corner of everything. So our lot does not kind of line up in a perpendicular manner to the street or anything like that, because we're at an angle to the next neighbor and whatnot on the corner. So basically, what we're trying to do is... and our house has also been added on multiple times. So we're basically trying to replace the existing privacy-- or chain-link fence with a privacy fence for basically privacy from the neighbors, and then just because of the angles of the property, if we... because the house has been added on, the... I think it goes from the back of the house to the back of the neighbor's garage. And so we were just trying to make it for the property fence, basically.

COPPOLA Okay. So are you just replacing the front fence or are you replacing the whole fence around the whole property?

NELSON So we put the fence up along the rest of the property, because we have a lot of coyotes and deer, and then we're just trying to get the other portion done, too. That way, hopefully it's a privacy fence. That way, we have a lot of coyotes and deer, and we want to protect our pets and eventually get a pool. But....

COPPOLA Okay. So all the rest of the fence has been replaced with privacy on the.... That would be....

NELSON As of yesterday.

COPPOLA Oh, congratulations.

NELSON Thank you.

COPPOLA On the west side of your property so that you're the opposite of where you're--

NELSON I think it's east.

COPPOLA I'm looking at the map. No, I know that you want east side.

NELSON Oh, okay.

COPPOLA I'm saying on your west side.

NELSON Oh.

COPPOLA Where did you put, where did the fence go?

NELSON So it's all the rest of the property was on the east side too, that we just fenced in fully. The other side was already done.

COPPOLA Okay.

NELSON Yeah.

COPPOLA And that stopped at the back of the house.

NELSON That stops at the back of the garage.

COPPOLA Right. Okay. Okay, and you would've gotten the neighbors' approval for the rest of the fence you put on the neighbor to come to the northeast of you.

NELSON Correct, yeah.

COPPOLA Okay. Have you ever thought about, I know the rules suggest they need to be kind of a line that's parallel to the back of the house, but have you thought of maybe as a compromise running it from the back of the house to the front of the garage, neighbor's garage instead? So you're still starting at the back of the house, but you're actually kind of also parallel to the road. You follow what I'm saying? So right now, you went from the back of the house, you went front of the house to the front, almost the front of the neighbor's garage. You're actually in front of the garage.

NELSON Yes.

COPPOLA Did you build the fence from the front of his garage to where you wanted to connect?

NELSON So they have it. The City approved for us. It is in the front of his garage, the existing, from what they approved from what we submitted.

COPPOLA Okay, so what I'm suggesting is still starting at the back of the garage, back of your house.

NELSON Yeah.

COPPOLA But then running it to where the fence ends that you have on the east side. So you're still at the back of the house. A little bit of a compromise. It's still at the back of the house, but you don't have to run parallel. You don't have to run parallel to the plane of the back of your house. You can just match it up to where your fence ends on the neighbor's side that's to the east.

NELSON Like on the back of his house?

COPPOLA Why don't you come up here just for a second, so I can just point it out to you. I think we're talking past each other. So instead of going from here to here, we go from here to the same place, basically. In other words, you said you ran a fence from here to here, right?

NELSON Yeah, it should be somewhere in there, yeah.

COPPOLA So then you just went back to the house. So you're still in the back of the house. You still got that visibility. It's parallel to the road, and you don't have [inaudible].

NELSON There's a big concern that we would have on our end too. It's like if we got a pool, that our--

COPPOLA All right, can you step back just to make sure that you can be heard.

NELSON Yeah, so I think they'll need—

COPPOLA Hold on a second till you get to the podium.

NELSON The only concern, if we did that on that end too, though, is the utility wires go kind of in the middle of the backyard, so having enough space for a pool and being a safe distance away from that.

COPPOLA Okay. Any questions for the Petitioner?

TESTA Mr. Chair.

COPPOLA Mr. Testa.

TESTA A question for the Petitioner.

COPPOLA Thank you.

TESTA Per Google Maps, there is a pool, obviously, maybe not there today. Would you be getting a similar size pool? It looks like a ground--

NELSON No, I would get one of the, not necessarily an in-ground, but one of the big oval pools.

TESTA Okay.

NELSON Yeah.

TESTA Okay, I do see the power lines and....

NELSON Yeah.

TESTA Do you see what we're saying if you follow the Chairman's recommendation, which I like, but it does constrain you. The point of the pool, power lines are there. And regarding the fence you put up, I assume you pulled the permit for that?

NELSON Yes, yeah.

TESTA And there was something in our packet regarding proposed lot line changes?

NELSON Yeah. So our neighbor accidentally put his garage on our property. And so when we were getting our property surveyed to get started for a fence, we found that out. And I guess his survey, the surveyor that he thought he used, was dead. And so then we kind of got that figured out, and then we had to go through the process of [how] to change the property lines, what we needed to do. So then we went through all that process. I think that was last year or the year before.

TESTA Yeah, it's dated last year. So these were approved, and these are the new lot lines?

NELSON Yes.

TESTA Okay. Thank you.

COPPOLA Any other questions for the Petitioner?

ROTONDO Mr. Chair.

COPPOLA Mr. Rotondo.

ROTONDO I have a question for the Petitioner. So the fence that you said that you guys just reinstalled, does that follow the new property line or the old property line?

NELSON It follows the new property line.

ROTONDO Okay. Because it looks like previously, just looking at Google, the old fence was probably your old property line, I would guess, because it kind of comes away from the garage.

NELSON The old fence wasn't. For the new fence that we have. We didn't have an old fence up.

ROTONDO Oh, okay, maybe....

NELSON So it's a brand-new fence that actually follows the property line.

ROTONDO Gotcha.

NELSON I think the old owners took it, took it out, or part of that. I don't really know.

ROTONDO Yeah, I mean, I'm sure this is dated, because this is the one that shows the pool, too. I was just on Google Maps, so.

NELSON Yeah, there shouldn't be a fence.

ROTONDO So this one essentially runs parallel to the garage and then jolts over.

NELSON Yeah, behind the garage, and then back to the....

ROTONDO And the proposed material that you're using for this is going to match the vinyl fence?

NELSON The vinyl fence? Yeah. We're going to use the same company.

ROTONDO I'll [inaudible].

COPPOLA Okay.

MEAGHER Mr. Chair.

COPPOLA Sure.

MEAGHER Did you have a question for the Petitioner? Does your neighbor with the garage have any problem with this?

NELSON No, he said, "It looks like shit. Why were they allowing it?" And we said, "We don't know."

MEAGHER All right, thanks. That was my only question.

COPPOLA I think, actually, we have a....

MEAGHER I just couldn't tell from the address if that was....

COPPOLA Yeah.

MEAGHER 33901, or 33601.

COPPOLA All right, any other questions for the Petitioner? All right, just why don't you just hang in there for a second.

NELSON Okay.

COPPOLA Okay, anyone in the audience like to speak for or against this petition? Seeing that there is none, we have correspondence.

KLISZ We do. We have three letters. Letter of approval. Shelly Rodman, 33985, Wadsworth Street (Letter of approval was read). A letter of approval from Kenneth Smoltz, [33910] Wadsworth (Letter of approval was read). And a letter of approval. Brian Brickan, B-R-I-C-K-A-N, 33944 Wadsworth (Letter of approval was read).

COPPOLA What was the name of the second one you read?

KLISZ Kenneth Smoltz, looks like? S-M-O-L-T-Z.

COPPOLA There's no—

NELSON Actually, yeah.

COPPOLA I don't. He's on Wadsworth? There is no 339--

KLISZ 339. It's either 960, or 910.

NELSON I don't even know who that is.

MEAGHER That's why I was asking if that was the next-door neighbor or not.

COPPOLA Okay, anything you want to stay in closing? Well, thank you. You can go and have a seat. I'm gonna close the public portion of the case and start the Board's comments with Mr. Testa.

TESTA Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I don't generally... these fence cases are tough, but I think in this case, it's a pretty unique size lot. I want to say it's pie shaped. It's not actually pie shape. You are kind of sandwiched in, like you said, in the cul-de-sac. And the way the lot lines lie versus the way the house lies, you're kind of constrained. And I like where the Chairman was going with the counter proposal, but looking at the aerial view and where the power lines are, and for future use of the pool, if we did push you to put the fence line in the back of the house, you really wouldn't have space for the pool. Plus it would be directly below or encroaching with power lines. Driving this area last week, these are bigger lots. There are kind of bunch of odd fences in the area already to begin with. And again, you are back in that cul-de-sac on a pie-shaped lot. And again, the neighbor's agreement. I can be in support of this.

COPPOLA All right. Thank you. Mr. Rotondo.

ROTONDO Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, I think Mr. Testa summed it up pretty well. I think this is obviously an awkwardly shaped parcel. The property lines are kind of weird. I can understand why you want to put the fence there. I think the way that it plays out, it doesn't really go to the front of your neighbor's house either, right? It's going back towards their garage. So I don't really have any issues with this. I think that the neighbor's support also makes this decision a little bit easier for me as well. So I'll be in support of this.

COPPOLA All right, thank you. Mr. Meagher.

MEAGHER Thanks, Mr. Chair. I don't have any problem with this, based on a lot of the reasonings from the two gentlemen before me. I can be in support of this.

COPPOLA Okay. Secretary Klisz.

KLISZ I agree. I think Mr. Testa started us off good with a good analysis of it. There is a good question of, could it be altered? Could it be done a little bit more towards the ordinance, and again, the hardship would be no to that. And again, there's definitely the odd shapeness of this, and very much reasons that would be considered hardships compared to other people with similar problems. So based on all that and the other person's support, I will be in support as well.

COPPOLA All right, thank you. This one I could have supported a reconfiguration, as I suggested. I'm not sure I'm in support of where it's being proposed, but I think you've got your four votes. From my perspective, a pool is not a hardship, that's a luxury. There's a lot of space here from which you can make it fit, but I think you're in pretty good shape. So I'm going to close this out and go ahead and open it up for a motion.

KLISZ Mr. Chair.

COPPOLA Secretary Klisz.

KLISZ Resolved that the variance sought in Appeal Case No. 2026-03-01, filed by Lisa and Nicholas Nelson, be granted for the following reasons and findings of fact: The uniqueness requirement is met because of the unique nature of the positioning of the house in relation to the pie-shaped lot that the Petitioners are on. Denial of the variance would have severe consequences for the Petitioner because of the inability to build a future pool that they would like to build. The variance is fair in light of its effect on neighboring properties, in the spirit of the zoning ordinance, due to full neighbor support and no objections from any nearby neighbors. This property is classified R-U-F under the Master Plan, and the proposed variance is not inconsistent with that classification. Further, that the variance be granted with the following conditions: that it be built as presented as to location and materials.

TESTA Support.

COPPOLA All right, I have a motion from Secretary Klisz. Supported by Mr. Testa.
Any comments?

FISHER Can you just go back over those conditions?

KLISZ The two conditions would be built as presented as to location and materials.

MEAGHER Mr. Chair.

COPPOLA Mr. Meagher.

MEAGHER In continuation of other conditions that we've done for six-foot fences, should we say something about decorations?

COPPOLA Thank you.

KLISZ No decorations.

COPPOLA I think—Pardon?

NELSON No decorations?

COPPOLA Yeah, when you get back up, once we get done, I would say that if there's any decorations, they can't stay up for more than a week because again, it looks like it's Fourth of July to put up some stuff.

KLISZ No permanent decorations, or... no?

COPPOLA No, no decorations beyond a week, is my recommendation. I mean, you may want to put some Christmas decorations....

KLISZ No decorations on the fence longer than a week.

COPPOLA I'll give a little background when we're done. That all right? Go ahead and take roll.

On a motion by Klisz, supported by Testa, the variance was granted.

RESOLVED: APPEAL CASE NO. 2026-03-01, 33925 Wadsworth Avenue: an appeal was made to the Zoning Board of Appeals by Lisa and Nicholas Nelson, seeking to erect a six-foot-tall privacy fence encroaching into the side yard forward toward the front of the lot beyond the rear of the house, which is prohibited.

Encroachment

Allowed: 0 feet
Proposed: 33 feet
Excess: 33 feet

This Low Density Residential property is located on the south side of Wadsworth (33925), between Stark Road and Cul-de-sac, Lot. No. 112-02-0010-002, RUF, Rural Urban Farm, rejected by the Inspection Department under Livonia Zoning Ordinance, Section 15.44.090 B – Residential district regulations: Privacy fence,

be granted for the following reasons and findings of fact:

1. The uniqueness requirement is met due to the unique nature of the positioning of the house in relation to the pie-shaped lot that the Petitioners are on,
2. Denial of the variance would have severe consequences for the Petitioner due to the inability to build a pool in the future as they intend to do,
3. The variance is fair in light of its effect on neighboring properties and in the spirit of the zoning ordinance due to full neighbor support and no objections from any nearby neighbors, and
4. The property itself is classified as Low Density Residential under the Master Plan, and the proposed variance is not inconsistent with that classification.

Further, that the variance **be granted** with the following conditions:

1. The fence will be built as presented as to location and materials,
2. No decorations on the fence for more than a week, and
3. The five-day waiting period is waived for pulling the permit.

ROLL CALL VOTE

AYES: Klisz, Testa, Meagher, Rotondo

NAYS: Coppola

ABSENT: Hakala, Baringhaus

PASS/FAIL/TABLED: PASS: PASS

KLISZ Mr. Meagher.

MEAGHER Aye.

KLISZ Mr. Rotondo.

ROTONDO Aye.

KLISZ Mr. Testa.

TESTA Aye

KLISZ Secretary Klisz votes aye. Vice—er, Chairman Coppola.

COPPOLA I'm sorry, did you just demote me?

KLISZ No. I said, "Vice," and then [inaudible].

[Laughter]

COPPOLA [Inaudible] Nay.

KLISZ Passes four to one.

COPPOLA Okay, so your petition is passed, so you'll be granted your variance, put your fence where you proposed it. It has to be as presented. So you have your layout here, which I assume you want to put it, and it has to be what you presented in the materials and stuff. So you had a better version of what you were putting up with, a color and a style. I assume that's what you used. If it wasn't what you used, you need to put up what you used. Within close proximity, but it should be close to that. As to the no decorations, we have allowed certain fences in the past that have... that are in a very public space, that have decorations on all year long. Christmas decorations all year long. So we've decided from now on, anything that has a public facing, such as the front, we put a limitation. Normally it's a corner lot type thing, so if you get down Farmington Road, between Six and Seven Mile on the east side, there's a white fence. You'll know exactly what I'm talking about. So that's all. We didn't know. If you want to put stuff up for Christmas, that's fine. Not year round. I have a neighbor that has a fence that has his Christmas decorations on year-round. Only lights them during Christmas, but it's all year round. So I mean, Fourth of July, Christmas, if you want to put something nice up, but no permanent decorations, no flowers that stay on it all year, or anything like that. That's all. Okay, you're good to go. So you should be able to go down.... [Inaudible] Everyone good with waiving the waiting period? All in favor?

The Board voted unanimously to waive the waiting period.

COPPOLA All right, so we waived the waiting period, so you can go down tomorrow and get your permit.

NELSON Okay. Thank you.

COPPOLA You're welcome.

ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS

COPPOLA All right, we have minutes, couple of minutes. Well, so well-paid.

TESTA Move to approve the meeting minutes for October 28, 2025.

KLISZ Support.

COPPOLA I have a motion by Mr. Testa, supported by Secretary Klisz, to approve the minutes for October 28, 2025. All in favor?

MEAGHER Can we have a—before?

COPPOLA Oh, I apologize. Is there a comment?

MEAGHER I do have a comment, and I'm only saying this for future potential issues among neighbors. On the... I believe it was the second case, or third case with the Morningstar property. The one piece that I didn't see in here were Mr. Jimenez's comments once we had voted on it that were relatively vaguely threatening.

COPPOLA Yeah.

MEAGHER And I wasn't sure if that was something we should include in official minutes or not for the purpose of any future disputes among the two of them.

COPPOLA I guess, from my perspective, it's not pertinent to the case. It doesn't create anything that is directly supporting the case in the sense of facts. So I would, It's not in here. I don't know if that was a decision that was made just by the Zoning office, but I'm in support. There's no point in having that in the record. But I, that's my opinion. Anybody else, I don't know, Mr. Fisher, from your perspective?

FISHER Actually, what I am most interested in about this question is, what have you done since with these guys who said they were going to violate immediately?

COPPOLA I haven't heard anything.

MEAGHER That's, that's really what I didn't see in the minutes was that, plus the other comments that he made.

TESTA I'm aware they've done something, but we can talk after the meeting.

MEAGHER I was more bringing the question up to you, Mr. Fisher of if that's important or not to have in the minutes or not before we approve them.

FISHER Well, your minutes should be accurate. They should be from pillar to post, from the start until you actually vote to adjourn. However, if because of the incendiary nature of the comments, in this case, and you decide that's not wise. That's your discretion.

COPPOLA I guess, from my, kind of my perspective, I don't think it was created to the case itself, so it had no bearing on the case. We had actually made our decision by then. Enforcement is not our responsibility. That's the responsibility of the Inspection Department, Building Department, so I don't think, I guess, I don't think it adds anything to the case or to the record. From my perspective, I'd forgotten about that, but I look to this. It's like, I kind of just brushed it off. I was hoping the guy would cool off. If he did something violated, that's something that it should be, hopefully, I would assume, based on the neighbor, that that would have been reported immediately if he did something. But I don't know. That's my position. It doesn't add anything important to the case itself. We already made our decision. That's, it was a good point to bring it up. So we've hashed it out. We've got these minutes. We'll make sure that they stay at those minutes. Okay? So then any other comments on those minutes? If not, all in favor? Opposed? No opposed. So that's five, oh, in favor.

The Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes from the meeting of October 28, 2025.

COPPOLA All right. So we have another set of minutes.

TESTA Move to approve the minutes for December 9, 2025.

KLISZ Support.

COPPOLA I have a motion by Mr. Testa, supported by Secretary Klisz, to approve the minutes from December 9 of 2025. Any discussion? And seeing none, all in favor? Any opposed? No opposed. So it passes unanimously.

The Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes from December 9, 2025.

COPPOLA So anything else that we need to discuss as a Board tonight? Mr. Testa, you look like you're thinking.

TESTA No, I'm good.

COPPOLA You're good. Everybody else good? All right, so then we just need a final motion.

TESTA Move to adjourn.

MEAGHER Support.

COPPOLA Okay, I have a motion by Mr. Testa, supported by Mr. Meagher. All in favor?

The Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

COPPOLA All right, we are adjourned at 7:36.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

Gregory G. Coppola, Chairman

Timothy Klisz, Secretary