

Statement to accompany the Application for Zoning Variance—June 28, 2022

Back before 2000 a builder friend of mine gave me the advice that a good way to buy a lot to build on was to look for a double lot and build on the "other" lot. So my wife and I bought the 29 Johnson Rd house, which included the lot at 31, where there was a detached 2-car garage, maybe 50 years old. I took that down and blacktopped over its floor and block foundation to make a small parking lot, then built what I like to think looks like a pretty nice house (though it's actually 3 individualized apartments), set deeper in the lot. I still had room to build a small, one-car garage (to use for storage) that opens back on to the alley. (And I lived in the little apartment in the back for a few years while my marriage was coming apart....) Anyway, the main point of this is that whoever lives in 29 has absolutely no place to park either their own cars or the cars of guests--there's no on-street parking--other than sharing part of the parking lot at 31. As long as I'm alive, they'll be welcome to do that, but that won't always be the case. These lots are all extremely narrow. If the residents at 29 were senior citizens or renters without much stuff, mandating a high percentage of green space would be no hardship, but for a family headed by a physical worker who needs shop-space and storage for the tools of his trade, they need a variance from that requirement in order to become long-term, contributing residents of this neighborhood.

Jacob and Kelsey Young live in 29 Johnson now and are buying it from me on land contract. He was a young teenager when his mom and stepdad starting renting there back in 2006. His mom died from COVID this past November, after which Jacob and family moved in, his stepdad retired to a cabin somewhere in the Wayne. He's been fixing up the house non-stop. They've got 4 kids ages 6 and down, plus 2 pups, which is why they pretty quickly put up a fence for a safe contained yard between their house and the unfinished garage. That turned out to be a violation, too, but it makes perfect sense to me, and one of my prospective tenants (who also has a young child) who saw it both before and after the fence liked the look of it for similar reasons—it making a nice, contained yard for her boy to play in under the huge, old apple tree back there.

Robert L. Henninge