

VILLAGE OF SARANAC
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
SPECIAL MEETING/PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES

JUNE 30, 2025

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) Special Meeting was called to order by President Darby at 7:00 p.m. at the Saranac Village Office, 27 N Bridge Street.

The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: President Darby, Straubel; Trustees – Day, Mulnix, Talcott, Whorley
Absent: Doll, Klutman
Guests: Jeanne Vandersloot – Zoning Administrator, Mark & Cheryl Totch – Applicants, and Village Residents – Sarah Doll (188 Church Street), Tim & Virginia McClellan (153 Mill Street) and Robin Schneider (138 Church Street)

Motion was made by Talcott, supported by Mulnix, to approve the ZBA Special Meeting Agenda. All yeas.

Motion was made by Whorley at 7:05 p.m., supported by Mulnix, to open the Public Hearing to receive comments on the Variance Application submitted by Mark Totch, for his property located at 146 Church Street. All yeas.

Totch has applied for a variance from Zoning Ordinance Sec. 30.5.04 A. Minimum Lot Area, Zoning Ordinance Sec. 30.5.04 B. Minimum Lot Width, and Zoning Ordinance Sec. 30.6.02 A. Special Land Uses, to convert the former church at 146 Church Street, into a 3-unit dwelling.

Public Comments:

Tim McClellan introduced himself and his wife Virginia, as Village residents residing at 153 Mill Street. McClellan stated that he is happy to hear that Totch plans to improve the property at 146 Church Street. McClellan explained that his property is land-locked and that he had a handshake agreement with the previous owner of 146 Church Street, to use the church parking lot to access his backyard, which abuts the former church property. McClellan has a gate at the southwest corner of 146 Church Street, which allows him to access his 153 Mill Street property. McClellan stated that he would be happy if Totch would honor the agreement he had with the previous owner.

Robin Schneider introduced herself as a Village resident residing at 138 Church Street, the property adjacent to 146 Church Street on its west property line. Schneider stated that there is only 19 ft between the property line between the two addresses, and the east side of her house. Her concerns with turning 146 Church Street into a 3-family dwelling are the increased traffic, vehicle lights coming in and going out, and additional noise. All of her bedrooms are located on the east side of her house, right next to the driveway of 146 Church Street. Schneider added that she drove around the village and noticed that the properties that have 3 or more rental units are on 1.5 or 2 lots.

Also, per Schneider, 146 Church Street has had bats for as long as she can remember. She contacted the DNR for information and was told that the bats are protected, and therefore have to be accommodated or eradicated in a humane manner. She offered the information she obtained from the DNR, to Totch who accepted it.

Schneider explained that she is not opposed to a 2-family dwelling, but believes that a 3-family dwelling is too much considering the size of the property.

Mark & Cheryl Totch referred to the display boards they brought with them, one of which is a rendering shows (not to scale) all 6 parking spaces at the back of the property. Totch emphasized that they will work with the neighbors if they have concerns.

Day inquired about snow removal, questioning whether there is adequate area to push snow. Totch indicated on the display board, where he would move any accumulation of snow.

Totch stated that they will be installing a 6 ft fence on 3 sides of the property, except where it may extend into the required front yard, where it would be 4 ft. He believes this will help to buffer the potential increase in traffic, noise and lights, which are Schneider's concerns. Additionally, Totch stated that he will coordinate with the McClellans to maintain access to their property, from his.

Darby asked Vandersloot whether she has any concerns regarding Totch's variance requests. Vandersloot said that the ZBA has 3 options. They can grant the 3 variances as proposed, deny the variances completely, or grant the width and area variances, but only allow a 2-unit dwelling.

Sarah Doll introduced herself as a Village resident residing at 188 Church Street. She appreciates that someone is going to improve the property at 146 Church Street. While she is not directly impacted by Totch's proposal to convert the old church into an apartment dwelling, she has concerns about turning it into a 3-unit dwelling. Per Doll, there are already a lot of folks that park up and down Church Street, and the street is very heavily traveled by customers of Speedway, Independent Bank and Real Pro Auto as well as school traffic.

Doll inquired about the square footage of the building, as the property was listed as 1,512 sf. and Vandersloot's notes regarding Totch's variance application refers to the building as 3,812 sf. Doll wondered how it can go from 1,512 sf. to 3,812 sf.

Totch explained that there will be a 2nd story addition inside the building, which he is able to accomplish because of the cathedral ceilings. Also, as board members pointed out, the math may be off a bit, as it is entirely possible that the listing was inaccurate.

Darby read aloud, an email received from Jon Powers, a Village resident who resides at 172 Church Street. Per the email, it is Power's opinion that 146 Church Street should have no more than 2 families living in it. Powers assumes that there would be 2-3 vehicles per unit requiring 9 parking spots, not including any boat, trailer, 4-wheeler or motor bike that the tenants may have.

Totch explained that the rental agreement will state that only 2 vehicles are allowed and recreational vehicles will not be accommodated.

Motion was made by Mulnix at 7:27 p.m., supported by Talcott, to close the Public Hearing. All yeas.

Council discussed the variance application and the public's concerns.

Darby inquired about Totch's experience with rental properties. Totch stated that he and his wife own 8 other rental properties.

Darby inquired about the rental rates for Totch's properties. Totch stated that rent ranges from \$650 - \$1,200 per month.

Darby inquired how long construction would take. Totch stated approximately 1 year.

Darby inquired about his work background. Totch described his areas of expertise.

Mulnix stated he appreciates that the Totch's are willing to work with and accommodate the neighbors. Granting access to property and adding a fence to obstruct traffic, noise and lights, is a kindness not a requirement.

Totch stated that they don't want to be a problem. They want to be an asset to the Village.

Mulnix and Darby emphasized the need for housing in the Village.

Darby inquired whether there would need to be any remediation for mold or other types of contaminants. Totch replied, not to his knowledge.

Mulnix asked, and Totch confirmed, that additions will be to the interior of the building. The footprint of the building will remain the same.

Motion was made by Mulnix, supported by Whorley, to approve Mark Totch's application for a variance from Zoning Ordinance Sec. 30.5.04 A. Minimum Lot Area, Zoning Ordinance Sec. 30.5.04 B. Minimum Lot Width, and Zoning Ordinance Sec. 30.6.05 A. Special Land Uses, to convert the former church at 146 Church Street, into a 3-unit dwelling.

Roll call vote: yeas – Mulnix, Talcott, Whorley, Darby; nays – Day; absent – Doll, Klutman.

Darby stated that Totch's willingness to work with the neighbors, is a key component of her support for this project.

Mulnix stated that it really comes down to the landlord being able to manage their tenants and work well with their neighbors. The Totch's investment in our community is testament that this project is manageable.

Straubel stated that the next step is for Totch to apply for a Special Use Permit (SUP) for a 3-unit dwelling in the MDR-2 (Medium Density Residential) Zoning District, as only single-family units are allowed by right. The Planning Commission will hold a Public Hearing to accept comments on the SUP and approve, deny or approve with conditions, the SUP application.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.



Becky Straubel,
Village Treasurer/Deputy Clerk