

St. Charles Zoning Board of Appeals
C/O Rachel Hitzemann – City Planner
rhitzemann@stcharlesil.gov

To whom it may concern,

We are writing this letter to the Zoning Board of Appeals to **OBJECT to granting the Multiple Variances to the STC City Building Codes** for the property at 303 North 3rd Avenue.

My family moved to 304 Chestnut Avenue in St. Charles 38 years ago, specifically, because of the historic charm of Saint Charles on the Fox River.

Thirty years ago, the neighbors in this historic community encouraged then Mayor Norris to Not Locate a new Fox River bridge and roadway through Pottawattamie Park and this historic community. We now have two lovely bridges at Red Gate Road and Prairie Street.

More recently, this community worked with the City Council to reject the massively inappropriate hotel at the former police station site and restart the RFP to study All the critical riverfront issues.

Appropriate Development is Always welcome. Inappropriate development is never OK. We do appreciate a new neighbor wanting to restore a historic house but we implore the Zoning Board to **NOT allow the multiple exceptions to the ordinances that govern the community at large.**

The new neighbor is a builder and applicant to these variances.

The Zoning Board of Appeals, application for variation states....

17.04.310 VARIATIONS.

C. APPROVAL CRITERIA.

5. The applicant/builder states the variation will NOT alter the essential character of the neighborhood

This is FALSE.

This proposed enlarged House with the Attached Apartment/Garage will seriously increase the size of the current house. The carriage house/garage is almost four times the size of the current garage.

This builder requests the Zoning Board allow an INCREASE to the building/lot coverage ordinance to 34.83% or a 10% increase OVER the 25 % building /lot ratio currently allowed. This increase is OVER the maximum allowed by code, to add an additional 573.63 sq/ ft of building coverage. There are no other houses over 2000 sq. ft. on single lots in the Central Historic

District in the Original Town of St. Charles. There are no other garages with living spaces above it on lots of this size in the historic district.

Other similar size houses on 5,000 sq. ft. single lots on Chestnut Ave and 3rd Ave have driveways but no garage because the ordinances do not allow them to have a garage on the smaller lot sizes. ***These houses are not requesting an exception or exemption from the rules.*** Please do not allow an exception to this builder to ***Overbuild*** this lot, as this exemption from the rules will establish a very bad precedent for future variance requests in this historic district.

The builder also requests a variance to the setback requirement at the north lot line. He requests the setback requirement be reduced from the 30 ft. to 7.3 ft. The proposed set back reduction for this Overbuilt house with attached garage /apartment will be over 70 ft. long on a 100 ft long lot. This amounts to a visual house /lot ratio of 70% !

If allowed this exception to the current zoning rules will ***ABSOLUTELY alter the essential character of the neighborhood.***

6. The builder/ applicant states the Variance if granted will NOT be detrimental to the Public Welfare or injurious to other property.

Also

7. The builder/applicant stated the proposed variation will NOT impair an adequate supply of light and air to the adjacent property.....OR Endanger the Public Safety.... Within the neighborhood.

These claims are both FALSE.

SAFETY: The driveway between the garage and 3rd Avenue is Dangerous.

Quadrupling the size of the garage/apartment and *moving* it to within 7ft of the North property line will ***severely exacerbate the limited visibility problem*** for all vehicles backing out of the garage. The North property line has a 6ft. high stockade fence. The brick columns of the bridge railing also block visibility. The current small garage was built 70 years ago when the bridge had a wooden top deck and the street was relatively flat. The new wider street now rises to the crown of the bridge. The speed limit is 25 MPH but many vehicles travel at a much higher rate. There are several signs encouraging drivers to Slow down along 3rd avenue. This driveway was located 70 years ago when conditions were very different from today. This old garage has not been used in the 38 years we've lived here.

Years ago, two police officers and the Building and Code Enforcement Division Manager stated the driveway was ***UNSAFE***. This relocated garage/apartment is in an UNSAFE location and is DANGEROUS to the house residents with young drivers. Vehicles backing out of the garage do not see southbound vehicles Until the rear bumper is at the curb. A driver will need to back

across the southbound lane into the northbound lane to proceed north on 3rd avenue. The garage and 3rd avenue driveway are also dangerous to southbound vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles and the neighboring house. The curb cut was eliminated on my 3rd avenue property when the new bridge was built. The garage was moved to Chestnut Avenue years earlier.

See attached elevation view drawing of the street scape with the current small garage juxtaposed on the huge new garage/apartment.

See also attached photos

1. current garage and street scape
2. vehicle street view
3. vehicle in driveway
4. southbound vehicles at blurring speed
5. southbound vehicles at speed
6. west side drive way option.

Options & Alternatives

The ZBA Variance Request distinguishes between granting a variance due to a **Hardship or merely a Preference by the builder**. This unsafe driveway location is probably the builder's preference, because that's where the old garage has been. This location may have made sense 70 years ago but it does Not make sense today, since the bridge was rebuilt. He probably is unaware of the Unsafe situation.

Photo # 6 shows the west side driveway granted years ago because of the unsafe 3rd Avenue driveway. The garage/apartment is expanding toward the west lot line. If a *Detached* garage is considered, the existing west side driveway could feed a west garage entry and provide an **ALTERNATIVE** to the Unsafe 3rd Avenue driveway.

At the March 15th HPC meeting the staff comments stated the Building Department may require changes to the window sizes for **SAFETY** reasons.

If the Building Department reviews the Windows for Safety issues, I expect a more serious **SAFETY** Issue that the Zoning Department MUST review would be this **UNSAFE DRIVEWAY LOCATION**.

The driveway safety is NOT a cosmetic issue.

Street conditions have changed since this very old garage and driveway were located and built. I expect **BEFORE any permit will be issued a serious TRAFFIC study** of the Driveway location, bridge height, street incline and vehicular blind spots will be analyzed. This driveway enters 3rd avenue **ON THE BRIDGE'S SOUTH APPROACH** (not on the street leading to the bridge). A simple

sign on the north side of the bridge alerting vehicles to a *Hidden Driveway WILL NOT WORK* because southbound vehicles can't see the garage AND Vehicles backing out of the garage can't see cars speeding south on 3rd avenue. Currently several SIGNS along 3rd avenue implore cars to slow down, to no avail as drivers don't see or read the signs.

*I felt it critical to bring the issue to your attention and/or the POLICE Department's attention **BEFORE a very preventable accident occurs.** Any future accidents will be INEXCUSABLE because an ALTERNATIVE drive way is available. Corporations and cities preach SAFETY all the time. I seriously HOPE STC believes that also.*

Finally, If this variance is allowed this house will set a very bad precedent and will be an **anomaly** for years to come. Normally a large house with five bedrooms is set on a large property for children to play. This house will have no yard for children. Single lots will have proportional houses for young families and retirees.

NOTE This Variance will not be necessary if the garage is NOT Attached. This is Not a hardship as a compromise is available.

Please DO NOT ALLOW THIS VARIANCE. Hold the new builder to the same long established ordinances we all follow.

Thank you for having this meeting and inviting the community

I'm sorry that we will be out of town for the ZBA public hearing. I will listen in if possible.

Paul and Brenda McMahon, Resident, Voter, Taxpayer

304 Chestnut Avenue (since 1985)

St. Charles, Il., 60174

paulmac0903@gmail.com







