

Ganges Township Zoning Board of Appeals

Meeting Minutes for March 2, 2026

Ganges Township Hall

119th Avenue and 64th Street

Fennville MI, Allegan County

1. Call to Order

Carol **Josefowicz** called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

2. Roll Call

Present:

Carol **Josefowicz**

Dale **Pierson**

Chuck **Mannion**

Tasha **Smalley**

Katelynn **Wolfe**

Audience:

Rich **Bloem** – True North Homes, South Haven

Patricia **Alexander** – 1333 & 1337 Fabun Rd

Gerard **Weston** – 2246 Lakeshore Dr.

Vinny **Ferrari** – 2244 Lakeshore Dr.

3. Review/Approve Agenda

Pierson made a motion to approve the agenda. **Mannion** seconded the motion. Motion passed.

4. Public Comment for non-agenda items – None

5. Election of Officers

A motion was made by **Pierson** to elect **Josefowicz** as the Chairperson. **Mannion** seconded the motion. Motion passed.

A motion was made by **Josefowicz** to elect **Mannion** as the Secretary. **Pierson** seconded the motion. Motion passed.

6. Public Hearing

Owner: Carrie Hartgen

Subject Property: 1335 Fabun Road 0307-205-001-00

Carrie Hartgen has petitioned for variances to construct a home at 1335 Fabun Road.

1. Front setback (Fabun Rd) required 40 feet; request 10 feet of relief (to be 30 ft from property line)
2. Front setback (Meadow Ave) required 40 feet; request 34 feet 6 inches of relief (to be 5 ft 6 in from property line)
3. South side setback, required 15 feet; request 9 feet 3 inches of relief (to be 5 ft 9 in from property line)
4. Lot coverage, required 25%, request is to exceed by 5.5% (30.5%)

Opening of Public Hearing – 6:06 PM

a. Applicant/Owner explain request

Rich **Bloem** from True North Homes introduced himself and shared an Agent Authorization to represent Carrie **Hartgen** and Christopher **Laughlin**. **Bloem** shared that the homeowners are seeking variances due to the unique layout of the property, specifically in regards to Meadow Ave; which functions more as a shared driveway serving two properties to the east. The lot itself is 45 feet wide and narrows further toward the rear and, under the current ordinance, the property is subject to two front-yard setbacks. These setback requirements make it impractical to construct a house on the lot without a variance. An existing house currently sits on the property, but it is not in good condition.

Josefowicz asked if a new home had been designed. **Bloem** replied that no design plans have been prepared because they wanted to wait until the outcome of the variance request is known.

Mannion asked if the new build would fit the same footprint as the original house. **Bloem** confirmed and said they are not looking to expand. **Pierson** noted that a driveway is required so the plans will have to account for that. **Smalley** explained that the proposed home would be fully contained within the requested building envelope, including roof overhangs, porches and decks.

Smalley also noted that the plans included a platted map, which means that the right-of-way and the property line is the same.

Josefowicz asked about the septic system. **Bloem** noted that the county sanitarian reported that the existing septic serves three homes. The septic tanks are located directly behind the home, and the drain field is located east of the third home. Soil borings and an inspection were conducted, and a report concluded that the system is in good working condition. The report indicates that adding the new home would not create an issue, provided that the number of bedrooms and bathrooms is not increased beyond what the system currently serves. **Josefowicz** asked how many bedrooms are in the current house. **Bloem** stated that there are three.

Bloem continued that the well also serves all three homes and it was reviewed by the health department. If the variance is approved, the plan is to demolish the existing home. During this time, they will install a temporary pole so the well pump continues to receive power during demolition and construction. The well is currently located beneath the existing house, with piping running through the basement. **Bloem** stated that modifications to the well piping will need to be completed before demolition begins. The existing basement cannot be preserved, so the well infrastructure will need to be addressed as part of the demolition and construction process.

Pierson wonders if the health department takes into account the number of people in a rental property when they determine if a septic system is adequate.

b. Correspondence

Josefowicz shared a letter from Patricia Kerr **Alexander** (1333 & 1337 Fabun Rd) expressing interest and concern regarding the variances.

c. Audience for/against comments

Patricia **Alexander**, the neighboring property owner who shares the well and septic system, expressed concerns. She stated that while the shared systems have functioned for many years, she is worried about potential disruption.

d. Any further discussion

Pierson wondered where the 30.5% lot coverage came from. **Smalley** replied that she added a 10x40 driveway because that is required for the ordinance.

Pierson stated that he would prefer that the new build is the same exact footprint as the existing house. The single-story porch area shall remain a single story.

Mannion asked if there were any issues with water rights for the property. **Alexander** responded that all water rights are clearly defined in the existing easement and property deeds.

Smalley noted that the measurements shown in the site plan are taken from the overhang. It was also noted that the homeowners may choose the location of their driveway, provided it complies with the ordinance definition of a driveway; the minimum required size for a driveway is 324 sq ft.

Smalley clarified, with the proposed house at 1,231 sq ft and the 324 sq ft driveway, the maximum total lot coverage allowed would be 28.8% or 1,555 sq ft.

Close of Public Hearing – 6:38 PM

Discussion/Decision of Variance Request

Finding of Facts

For a variance to be granted, all of the following standards must be met.

1. There are exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions applying to the property in question that do not apply generally to other properties in the same zoning district.

Exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions include any of the following: a) exceptional narrowness, shallowness or shape of a specific property on the effective date of the Ordinance; b) exceptional topographic conditions or other extraordinary situation on the land, building or structure; or c) any other physical situation on the land building or structure deemed by the ZBA to be extraordinary.

Met. A nonconforming house is already on the small platted lot. The corner lot creates difficulty in meeting 40 ft setbacks on two sides.

2. The variance is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right similar to that possessed by other properties in the same zoning district and in the vicinity. The possibility of increased financial return shall not itself be deemed sufficient to warrant a variance.

Met. The foundation needs to be replaced on a 130 year old house.

3. The variance will not be significantly detrimental to adjacent property and the surrounding neighborhood.

Met. The new home will be the same footprint of the old home, and where current porches are, they must be replaced with the same height or one story.

4. The variance will not impair the intent and purpose of the Ordinance.

Met.

5. The immediate practical difficulty causing the need for the variance request was not created by any affirmative action of the applicant.

Met. In order to update the home, the foundation must be replaced. The entire existing structure will be removed and replaced as part of the construction.

6. The reasons set forth in the application justify the granting of the variance and the variance is the minimum variance necessary.

Met. The home must stay within the current footprint. The footprint under the porch area must remain one story.

Pierson made a motion to approve the variance for 1335 Fabun Road 0307-205-001-00 with the setbacks as presented on the survey, (front setback (Fabun) 30ft from property line, front setback (Meadow) 5ft 6in from property line, and south setback 5ft 9in from property line) with lot coverage allowed to be 28.8% or 1555 sq ft. With the following conditions:

1. The house must remain in the current footprint.
2. The footprint under the porch area can remain the same and must remain one story.
3. The maximum lot coverage cannot exceed 1555 sq ft.

Mannion seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote:

Pierson – Yes

Mannion – Yes

Josefowicz – Yes

Motion passed (3-0).

7. 20.7 Re-Submission ZBA Application – Gerard Weston 2246 Lakeshore, initial application denied on Oct. 16, 2025. Revised application: move fence into property approx 31 ft from right-of-way (required 50 ft); height 6 ft (required 4 ft); other fence to be 6 ft.

ZBA to determine if request meets 1 of the 2 conditions to not wait a year for re-submittal

Pierson stated that although the plans have been revised, the conditions related to the reasons for the original denial remain unchanged and have not been significantly altered. He further noted that no new conditions or circumstances exist that would change the nature of the original request.

Weston stated that an individual came onto his property and stole a piece of art off of his front porch.

Pierson responded that **Weston** submitted essentially the same request as before, with only minor changes to what he is asking for. He continued that these changes are not sufficient for the ZBA to allow **Weston** to go against the ordinance requirement and come back with an application sooner than one year.

Josefowicz made a motion to deny the reapplication. **Mannion** seconded the motion. Motion passed (3-0).

Josefowicz emphasized that the conditions established at the October meeting must be met, and the fence has to be removed.

8. Public Comments – None

9. Approval of Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by **Josefowicz** to approve the October 16, 2025 regular meeting minutes. **Pierson** seconded the motion. Motion passed.

10. Adjournment

Josefowicz made a motion to adjourn the meeting. **Mannion** seconded the motion. Motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 7:47 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Katelynn Wolfe
Ganges Township, Zoning Board of Appeals