

## **Alma Zoning Board of Appeals**

**June 10, 2026**

### **Meeting Minutes**

A special meeting of the Alma Zoning Board of Appeals was called to order at 5:04 p.m. by Chairperson David Justin in the Alma Municipal Building, 525 E. Superior Street, Alma, Michigan. A quorum of the Board was present.

Present: Nina Guerrero, David Justin, and Russ Wight.

Absent: Tadd Godfrey.

**Motion by Guerrero, seconded by Wight, to approve minutes of March 3, 2026, as presented. Motion carried.**

**Yes: Guerrero, Justin, and Wight.**

**No: none.**

**Absent: Godfrey.**

#### *Variance Request*

Chairperson Justin opened a public hearing at 5:06 p.m. and explained the public hearing had been opened for consideration of a request for a variance for property located at 523 Mechanic Street, parcel #29-51-042-343-00. The applicants, Chris and Elizabeth VanDyke, are requesting a 10-foot (10') variance from the front yard setback requirement of twenty-five feet (25'), for a new front yard setback of fifteen feet (15'); the current setback of the home is twenty-one feet (21'). The variance will allow for replacement of the front steps with a 6' x 10' covered porch, with railings, to improve access and safety into and out of the home. The request is located in the R1-A, Single Family Zoning District, and the request is a permitted use in the R1-A District.

City Manager Aeris Ripley explained that a building permit has been submitted for the new front porch including aerial photos showing the proposed layout. He added the sidewalks in that area are on the property owner's property and not in the right of way, also front and side yard setbacks in the neighborhood are inconsistent. He said the proposed addition is for safer access to the home.

Chairperson Justin noted the current steps wouldn't pass code today.

Ripley pointed out the applicants had provided responses to the six required standards, MISSDIG had been contacted to mark relevant lines, notices had been sent as required to surrounding property owners, and the hearing had been published in the local newspaper. Ripley said he had received only one comment and it had been in support of the application.

Chairperson Justin asked how far the steps would extend from the porch. The VanDyke's contractor, Danny Castellon, said the steps would extend 32 to 36 inches. Justin asked if the request for a variance should be changed to allow for the steps. After brief discussion to clarify the change from ten feet to twelve feet, the group agreed the setback request could be adjusted, to allow for the steps, and the change would be a big improvement.

No other questions were offered, and Chairperson Justin closed the public hearing at 5:13 p.m.

**Motion by Guerrero, seconded by Wight, to approve a variance request from Chris and Elizabeth VanDyke, for 523 Mechanic Street (parcel 29-51-042-343-00), to allow a variance of the front yard setback from twenty-five feet (25') to twelve feet (12') based on the following six points which satisfy the six basic standards listed in the related ordinance:**

**1. Will not be contrary to public interest and will not be contrary to the spirit and intent of this chapter.**

The addition will replace a set of steps that are not protected from snow and ice, at our age it is more and more difficult to use these steps safely.

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- 2. Shall not permit the establishment within a zoning district of any use that is not permitted by right within the district.** The home is a single family residential use and is permitted by right within the R1-A district.
- 3. Will not cause any adverse effect to property in the vicinity or in the zoning district of the City.** The homes in this neighborhood were constructed well before the current zoning setbacks, as the west side of the home is very close to the west property line and the front of the home is only 19' from the property line. The sidewalk is located within our property line.
- 4. Is not where the specific conditions pertaining to the property are so general or recurrent in nature as to make the formulation of a general regulation for such conditions practicable.** The homes in our neighborhood were built before current zoning, some of the parcels are larger than others, our parcel is on a corner, we want to improve our access to the front door as well as improve the looks of the home.
- 5. Affects only property subject to exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions that do not generally apply to other property or uses in the vicinity and have not resulted from any act of the applicant.** The neighborhood and the home were built before current zoning, all the homes in the neighborhood are non-conforming structures, the only way to make this necessary addition for access, safety, and aesthetics is to request a variance. Also, being on a corner limits the lot, as there are two front yard setbacks to comply.
- 6. Must be granted in order to avoid practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship that would result from enforcement of the strict letter of this Chapter.** Our age requires that we improve our entrance into the front door. The size of the new steps and covered porch is small, a 6' x 10' addition to provide the needed access and improving the looks of the front of the home. We have lived in our home for many years, and we need better accessibility to stay in our home.

**Motion to approve the requested variance carried.**

**Yes:** Guerrero, Justin, and Wight.

**No:** none.

**Absent:** Godfrey.

*Other Business*

No other business was presented, and no public comment was offered or received.

**Motion by Guerrero, seconded by Wight to adjourn at 5:15 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.**

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Sara Anderson, Alma City Clerk

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Date of Approval