



City of La Crosse, Wisconsin

City Hall
400 La Crosse Street
La Crosse, WI 54601

Meeting Minutes - Final

Board of Zoning Appeals

Monday, November 17, 2025

4:00 PM

Council Chambers
City Hall, First Floor

Call to Order

Chair Cherf called the meeting to order and explained the meeting procedures.

Roll Call

Present: 5 - Anastasia Gentry, Ben Stepanek, Douglas Farmer, James Cherf, James Szymalak

Variance Appeals:

[2697](#)

An appeal regarding the requirement that an accessory structure be setback two (2) feet to the projecting roof overhang at property known as 225 15th Street South, La Crosse, Wisconsin.

Meeting went into recess at 4:07 p.m. to allow time for owner of 221 15th St S to arrive and reconvened at 4:17 p.m.

The Board decided to hear both appeals together.

Andy Berzinski, representing the Building & Inspections Department, was sworn in to speak. Berzinski reviewed the three requirements to grant a variance: unnecessary hardship, hardship due to unique property limitations, and no harm to public interest. He stated that the applicants applied for a permit to construct a new detached garage that does not meet the required minimum side yard setback. Per Municipal Code Sec. 115-390(2)(C), detached accessory buildings in the rear yard shall maintain minimum rear yard and side yard setbacks of two feet including roof line. A variance of two feet would need to be granted to each property for this project to proceed as proposed. Berzinski showed an aerial view of the properties and current shared garage. Farmer asked if the current two-car garage is split between the two properties and the proposed plan will be bigger. Berzinski confirmed. Berzinski showed the proposed plans including a firewall and foundation protecting each side individually. He showed site plans including the two-foot rear setback, and street-view images of the properties and current shared garage. Berzinski stated that there is no unnecessary hardship because both properties can continue to be used as single-family dwellings and having to remove a fence and obtain easements is not a hardship. He added that there are no unique property limitations because both lots are similar in size to most lots in the City and there is enough room to build separate garages on each property. He stated that there is harm to public interest because it sets a precedent to grant similar variances in the future.

Cherf asked about the width of the shared driveway. Berzinski stated he did not have the specific measurement. Stepanek asked if shared garages are common in the City. Berzinski stated that there are some but it is not common.

Todd Mandel, 225 15th St S, was sworn in to speak. Mandel, answering Cherf's earlier question, stated that the driveway is about one car width at the street and two car widths at the garage entrance. He stated that they currently have the shared garage and driveway that is divided evenly at the middle by the property line. He stated that the garage is in poor shape and needs to be replaced. He added that the current shared driveway is due to the lack of rear alley access because of a multi-family parcel on the block. He stated that building two garages would create issues like dead space and, more significantly, would require the current driveway to be redone. He added that the current garage is built on the back line of the lots with the property line going through the middle and the proposed plan is to take it two feet off the back line and keep the midline through the middle of the garage. He stated that the current garage has no wall separating the two sides.

The applicant for 221 15th St S was present and did not wish to speak.

A motion was made by Szymalak, seconded by Farmer, to grant a variance of the 2 feet to the required side yard setback (motion covers both properties at 225 15th St S and 221 15th St S). The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Gentry, Stepanek, Farmer, Cherf, Szymalak

2698

An appeal regarding the requirement that an accessory structure be set back two (2) feet to the projecting roof overhang at property known as 221 15th Street South, La Crosse, Wisconsin.

The Board decided to hear both appeals together.

Andy Berzinski, representing the Building & Inspections Department, was sworn in to speak. Berzinski reviewed the three requirements to grant a variance: unnecessary hardship, hardship due to unique property limitations, and no harm to public interests. He stated that the applicants applied for a permit to construct a new detached garage that does not meet the required minimum side yard setback. Per Municipal Code Sec. 115-390(2)(C), detached accessory buildings in the rear yard shall maintain minimum rear yard and side yard setbacks of two feet including roof line. A variance of two feet would need to be granted to each property for this project to proceed as proposed. Berzinski showed an aerial view of the properties and current shared garage. Farmer asked if the current two-car garage is split between the two properties and the proposed plan will be bigger. Berzinski confirmed. Berzinski showed the proposed plans including a firewall and foundation protecting each side individually. He showed site plans including the two-foot rear setback, and street-view images of the properties and current shared garage. Berzinski stated that there is no unnecessary hardship because both properties can continue to be used as single-family dwellings and having to remove a fence and obtain easements is not a hardship. He added that there are no unique property limitations because both lots are similar in size to most lots in the City and there is enough room to build separate garages on each property. He stated that there is harm to public interest because it sets a precedent to grant similar variances in the future.

Cherf asked about the width of the shared driveway. Berzinski stated he did not have the specific measurement. Stepanek asked how common shared garages are in the City. Berzinski stated that there are some but it is not common.

Todd Mandel, 225 15th St S, was sworn in to speak. Mandel, answering Cherf's earlier question, stated that the driveway is about one car width at the street and two car widths at the garage entrance. He stated that they currently have the shared garage and driveway that is divided evenly at the middle by the property line. He stated that the garage is in poor shape and needs to be replaced. He added that the current shared driveway is due to the lack of rear alley access because of a multi-family parcel on the block. He stated that building two garages would create issues like dead space and, more significantly, would require the current driveway system to be redone. He added

that the current garage is built on the back line of the lots with the property line going through the middle and the proposed plan is to take it two feet off the back line and keep the midline through the middle of the garage. He stated that the current garage has no wall separating the two sides.

The applicant for 221 15th St S was present and did not wish to speak.

A motion was made by Szymalak, seconded by Farmer, to grant a variance of the 2 feet to the required side yard setback (motion covers both properties at 225 15th St S and 221 15th St S). The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Gentry, Stepanek, Farmer, Cherf, Szymalak

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 4:34 p.m.