

Time 6:00PM

February 16,2026

PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
VARIANCE BOARD
TOWN OF SANTA CLARA

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Nancy LaBombard, Chairperson
Judy Meagher
Lea Bedard
Dave Wisniewski
Todd Hall
Robin Sullivan, Secretary

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OTHERS PRESENT:

Todd David, Code Enforcement Officer, town of Santa Clara
Chris Gerard, Dock Doctors
Craig Kominoski, neighbor
Sandy Kominoski, neighbor
Dottie Altemus, neighbor
Dave Nuss, neighbor
Ian Carroll, neighbor

The Variance Board of the Town of Santa Clara, County of Franklin, State of New York held a Public Hearing on February 16, 2026, at 6:00 PM at the Santa Clara Town Hall, Route 30, Saranac Inn, New York, to hear comments on the following application:

Application of Cheers MF-Holdings NY, LLC, owners David Smith and Carrie Speschock, requires a variance for the replacement of a dock and boathouse and a modification of a non-conforming building.

This variance would be on the applicants' property at 87 Saranac Inn Lane, Saranac Lake, NY 12983, Town of Santa Clara, Franklin County, New York Tax Map ID 442.-2-9-13.6.

The proposed dock and boathouse would exceed what is allowed in the Santa Clara Land Use Code in total percentage of the shoreline used. Section 7.35 of the Santa Clara Land use code states that the width of a boathouse and dock structure may not exceed 15% of the width of the shoreline of the lot. The proposed structure would use 31.73% of the shoreline. The proposed bridge connection from the existing pumphouse structure to the proposed boathouse would cause a modification to the non-conforming pumphouse. It is non-conforming because it is within 75 ft of the shoreline. Section 8.30 of the Santa Clara Land Use Code states that a non-conforming structure may not be increased in size.

Nancy LaBombard, chairperson, began the meeting with introductions. Nancy then read the details of the variance application. Nancy asked if any written comments had been received from neighbors of the applicants. Robin replied that none had been received.

Nancy read the comments from the Planning Board and their statement that they had no objection to the granting of this variance.

Nancy asked Chris Gerard if he had any comments. Chris stated that the percentage of change in the use of the shoreline is small, the sideline setback would be met, and that the project would allow more accessibility in the future, if needed. He also stated the boathouse would be 2 slips, with a 4 boat capacity.

Nancy asked Todd David about the town code requirements regarding this project. He stated the square footage proposed is within the 875 sq ft allowed for a boathouse and the project would allow setbacks to be met. Todd stated he did not feel the pumphouse should be part of the variance request.

Nancy stated that the variance board usually visits a site but, in this case, did not feel it was needed. She stated that the DEC and APA review indicated it was preferable to keep the boathouse in the same location to reduce impacts to the lakebed and other areas of the shoreline.

Dottie asked for clarification on the procedure to make written comments on a variance application. Board members replied that this information is in the application mailed to neighbors, and in the legal notice placed in the newspaper. Ian and Nancy stated that in person comments are welcome.

Dottie expressed concerns that there would not be a lot of shoreline left on either side of the boathouse, and felt it was too big for the Back Bay. She questioned the distance the structure would go out from the shoreline. Todd stated that 33 ft is allowed in the town code. This is a change from 30 ft, due to the DEC requirement that boathouses be placed 3 ft from the shoreline. Todd stated that the proposed structure would not be significantly larger than the existing one, and the slips would be narrower. The percentage of the shoreline used for the existing structure (30.81) and the proposed structure (31.73) were reviewed. Todd and Nancy stated that since the boathouse was grandfathered in, the owners are legally allowed to rebuild using the same footprint, without needing a variance.

Ian brought up that this project is about a variance for a new structure, not an exact replacement of the existing structure, and therefore comparisons to the existing structure should not be considered.

Craig K. expressed concerns about additional clear cutting of trees from the property. Craig stated the applicants could choose to rebuild in the same footprint as is there now. He also said there is a deck now on top of the pumphouse and did not see a need for another.

Chris G. stated the proposed structure would be more compliant due to the setback being met.

Dave Noss asked about the height restriction regarding the deck on top of the boathouse. Todd stated that it would be under the 15 ft requirement in the town code.

Ian stated that it would still be close to his property and would like to see only 15% of the shoreline be used.

Nancy asked the board if they had any questions. There were none.

Nancy proceeded to discuss the 5 factors to consider when granting a variance.

1. Undesirable Change -

Judy stated the new structure would look better and would be a desirable change.

Dave asked Craig what he thought was undesirable. Craig replied that there is no need for a new deck since one is there already.

Dottie agreed it would be attractive but does not have to be as large or as far out in the water.

Dottie asked for a definition of a boathouse. It was stated that there are many open boathouse designs on the lake, and the proposed structure meets the definition of a boathouse.

Ian expressed concerns about future large boathouses being approved.

Nancy stressed that precedents are not considered in variance decisions, and that applications are not compared.

Lea asked why the deck on the pumphouse is not included in the total square feet of the proposed structure. Todd Hall and Todd David replied that the existing pumphouse is not part of the proposed boathouse structure.

Craig stated there could be a possible eyesore problem with storage of equipment. Nancy stated that it would be an issue to address with the Planning Board.

2. Some Other Method - Nancy stated an option would be to rebuild using the same footprint. Ian stated that using no more than 15% of the shoreline is an option. Dottie stated that the total square footage of the proposed structure is larger than the existing structure.

3. Substantial - No board members considered it substantial.

4. Adverse Impact on Environment- Nancy expressed it would be better for the habitat of the shoreline.

5. Self-Created - Todd Hall stated that the existing boathouse was there when the property was purchased and therefore not self-created. Other members agreed.

Dottie thanked the board for their work on the application.

The Variance Committee Members having taken into consideration the benefit to the applicant, as weighed against the detriment to the health, safety and welfare of the neighborhood or community and having considered the five factors has decided to GRANT the variance. The decision does not preclude on our part any APA or other authoritative approval. It is the responsibility of the applicants or owners to contact other state, county and/or local agencies to secure any necessary permits.

Robin Sullivan

Secretary