



Memorandum

TO: Village of Lake Orion Board of Zoning Appeals
FROM: Jake VanBoxel, MSA, Principal Planner
Sommer Nafal, Assistant Planner
SUBJECT: Board of Zoning Appeals Training Session #2
DATE: September 24, 2026

TRAINING SESSION #2: MOCK HEARINGS

The purpose of this training session is to provide Board members with an opportunity to practice applying variance standards in a structured and educational setting. The mock hearings are designed to mirror real-world cases and help members develop confidence in evaluating evidence, applying the practical difficulty criteria, making findings of fact, and reaching legally defensible decisions.

The three mock hearings have been intentionally organized so that each case becomes progressively more difficult. The first scenario is a relatively straightforward residential setback variance that focuses on the fundamentals of variance review. The second introduces additional complexity through corner lot conditions, questions regarding Board authority, and considerations related to prior approvals. The third and most advanced scenario involves a downtown sign variance where members must evaluate competing planning objectives, historic building constraints, business concerns, and the potential implications of precedent.

As you work through the exercises, focus less on finding the “correct” answer and more on developing your reasoning. Consider how the variance standards apply to the facts presented, what evidence supports your conclusions, and whether your decision could be justified based on the record. The goal of the training is to strengthen your understanding of the decision-making process and encourage meaningful discussion among Board members.

Please review each mock hearing packet over the next week and complete the questions and decision sections to the best of your ability. During the training session, we will discuss each scenario as a group, review different perspectives, and examine how the variance standards apply to the facts of each case. Staff will facilitate the discussion, provide recommended analyses, and review potential approval and denial outcomes, including the findings necessary to support a defensible decision.

We appreciate your participation and look forward to a productive discussion that will enhance the effectiveness and consistency of future decisions made by the Village of Lake Orion Board of Zoning Appeals.

Respectfully submitted,

McKENNA

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