

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

VARIANCE — 705 HAUGEN DRIVE

Action #:	2026-803
Meeting Date:	August 11, 2026
Applicant(s):	Aaron Buller and Rachel Welde
Property Owner(s):	
Agent/Representative:	-
Property Address:	705 Haugen Drive
Legal Description:	Lot 6A, Block 77, Plat 69-202
Parcel ID:	01-006-836
Acreage/Lot Size:	8,500 sf
Current Zoning:	Multiple-Family Residential (MFR)
Comp Plan Designation:	Low Density Residential
Request Type:	Variance — Front Yard Setback (PMC Chapter 19.80)

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Applicant Request	The applicant requests a variance to reduce the required 20-foot front yard setback along Haugen Drive to approximately 13 feet, to allow construction of an attached second-story exterior deck and stairs serving the existing duplex dwelling.
Staff Recommendation	Approve 1' variance.
Key Issues	Whether the existing building/garage placement constitutes an exceptional physical circumstance under PMC 19.80.050(A). Whether the requested 7-foot setback reduction is the minimum necessary to allow reasonable use.

B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Intended Use	Continued residential duplex rental use; proposed accessory second-story deck with stairs attached to the existing garage/bonus-room structure.
Building/Development	Attached second-story exterior deck with stairs, framed with a 4x12 beam per the submitted site sketch, located above/adjacent to the existing garage.
Site Improvements	Deck and stair construction only; no other site improvements proposed.
Operations Plan	-
Timeline	Not specified by applicant.

C. SITE CHARACTERISTICS

Topography	Lot is fully developed
Existing Structures	Existing duplex with covered front deck; existing garage with upstairs bonus room.
Legal Access	Haugen Drive
Utilities	Municipal water, wastewater, and power.

Flood Zone	Not Applicable
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D. ZONING AND LAND USE

Zoning District: Multi-Family Residential	Actual Land Use: Residential (duplex)
District Purpose:	The purpose of the multiple-family residential district is to provide a sound residential environment for three or more one-family, two-family, or multiple-family dwellings.
Principal Uses:	The following are principal permitted uses: A. One-family and two-family dwellings; B. Multiple-family structures, townhouse dwellings; C. Public parks and playgrounds.
Conditional Uses:	The following are uses that may be permitted by action of the commission under the conditions and procedures specified in <u>Chapter 19.72</u> of this title: A. Boardinghouses; B. Rooming houses; C. Home occupations;

Surrounding Area	Zoning District	Actual Land Use
North	Single-family Residential	Residential
South	Single-family Residential	Residential
East	Single-family Residential	Vacant
West	Single-family Residential	Residential

E. SETBACK STANDARDS

Standard	Required	Proposed/Existing	Conforms?	Comment
Lot Size	10,000	8,500	No	Lot was rezoned to MF in 1996 at the request of the previous owner.
Setback – Front (Haugen Dr)	20 ft	≈13 ft	No	7-ft reduction requested for 2nd-story deck/stairs; subject of this variance
Setback – Side	10 ft	No change proposed	N/A	Not part of this request
Setback – Rear	20 ft	No change proposed	N/A	Not part of this request
Max. Lot Coverage	35%	No change proposed	N/A	Not part of this request
Max. Building Height	3 stores or 35 ft.	No change proposed	N/A	Not part of this request

F. VARIANCE CRITERIA (PMC 19.80.050)

The Planning Commission must find all three of the following conditions exist to grant the variance:

1. That there are exceptional physical circumstances or conditions applicable to the property or to its intended use or development which do not apply generally to other properties in the same zone.

Staff analysis: The applicant submitted a code-compliant deck design for this same lot, under the same existing building constraints — showing that the previous construction didn't prevent a compliant design. The setback conflict only appeared after the applicant changed the deck's design and constructed the stairs in a new location without submitting the proposed change to the building official. Since Finding 1 requires showing that a physical circumstance necessitates the variance being requested, and the applicant hasn't demonstrated the need — as opposed to their design choice — is what makes compliance impractical, this finding isn't supported. The original approved design encroached 1' into the front setback and that encroachment should be approved for a variance.

2. That the strict application of the provisions of this title would result in practical difficulties or unnecessary pecuniary hardships.

Staff analysis: The applicant isn't claiming compliance is impossible — a functional deck can be built within the setback. The record does show that a 1-foot encroachment was part of the previously approved design, so that limited deviation was already reviewed.

The current request goes beyond that 1-foot allowance. For the additional encroachment, the applicant hasn't shown it's necessary — only that a more convenient staircase would result.

3. That the granting of the variance will not result in material damage or prejudice to other properties in the vicinity nor be detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare.

Staff analysis: No anticipated issues. If 13' variance is granted, condition should be applied that applicant should ensure no parking is allowed in front of the staircase that could encroach onto sidewalk.

G. DEPARTMENT REVIEWS

Public Works	No comment.
PMP&L	No concerns.
Fire	No comment.

H. PUBLIC NOTICE

The borough provided public notice consistent with PMC 19.80.040. Notice was mailed by first class mail to owners of record of property within six hundred (600) feet of the exterior boundary of the property that is the subject of the application, and notice was posted in three public places at least fifteen days prior to the hearing. See Attachment D for sample letter.

I. FINDINGS AND CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

(See resolution on the following page for findings and conditions.)

Proposed Motion:

I move to approve RESOLUTION 2026-803 to approve a variance reducing the required 20 foot front yard setback to allow construction of an attached second-story deck and stairs 19 feet from the property line at 705 Haugen Drive.

J. ALTERNATIVES

The Planning Commission has the following options:

1. Approval of the application as submitted.
2. Approval of the application with staff-recommended conditions.
3. Approval of the application with modified or added conditions.
4. Continue the hearing to allow for additional information or public input.
5. Deny the application.

K. ATTACHMENTS

A. Maps	D. Public Notice Letter (mailing list upon request)
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B. Applicant Materials (variance application, site plan)	
C. Public Comments	

L. APPEAL (PMC 19.92)

If approved by the Planning Commission, this decision may be appealed to the Borough Assembly within 10 days of the Planning Commission's decision by the Applicant; a property owner within 600 feet of the subject property; or any governmental agency that may be adversely affected by the decision. Appeal forms are available at the Borough Clerk's office and must be accompanied by the required fee.

PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. 2026-803

**A RESOLUTION OF THE PETERSBURG BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDING
APPROVAL OF A VARIANCE TO REDUCE THE FRONT YARD SETBACK
AT 705 HAUGEN DRIVE.**

WHEREAS, on August 11, 2026, the Planning Commission conducted a duly and properly noticed public hearing to consider an application for a variance to reduce the required front yard setback from 20 feet to approximately 13 feet, to allow construction of an attached second-story deck with stairs at 705 Haugen Drive, legally described as Lot 6A, Block 77, Plat 69-202; and

WHEREAS, the applicant and staff presented testimony and evidence, and all interested persons were given the opportunity to provide public testimony regarding the application; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has reviewed the staff report, attachments, and all relevant documents and materials, and has heard all testimony presented at the public hearing; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has considered the proposed request in light of the findings required by PMC 19.80.050; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has made the following findings of fact, based on substantial evidence in the record:

Finding 1: The property's limited size constitutes an exceptional physical circumstance not generally applicable to other properties in the zone. This condition supports the one-foot setback encroachment.

Finding 2: Strict application of the setback requirement, without the one-foot allowance reflected in the previously approved design, would result in unnecessary practical difficulty given the property's substandard dimensions.

Finding 3: The one-foot encroachment will not obstruct visibility, interfere with utilities, or create a hazard to neighboring properties or the public, and is consistent with the design previously reviewed and approved for the site.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Planning Commission of the Petersburg Borough hereby approves the variance to allow a one-foot encroachment into the required front setback, consistent with the previously approved design.

ADOPTED this 11th day of August 2026, by the following vote:

AYE:

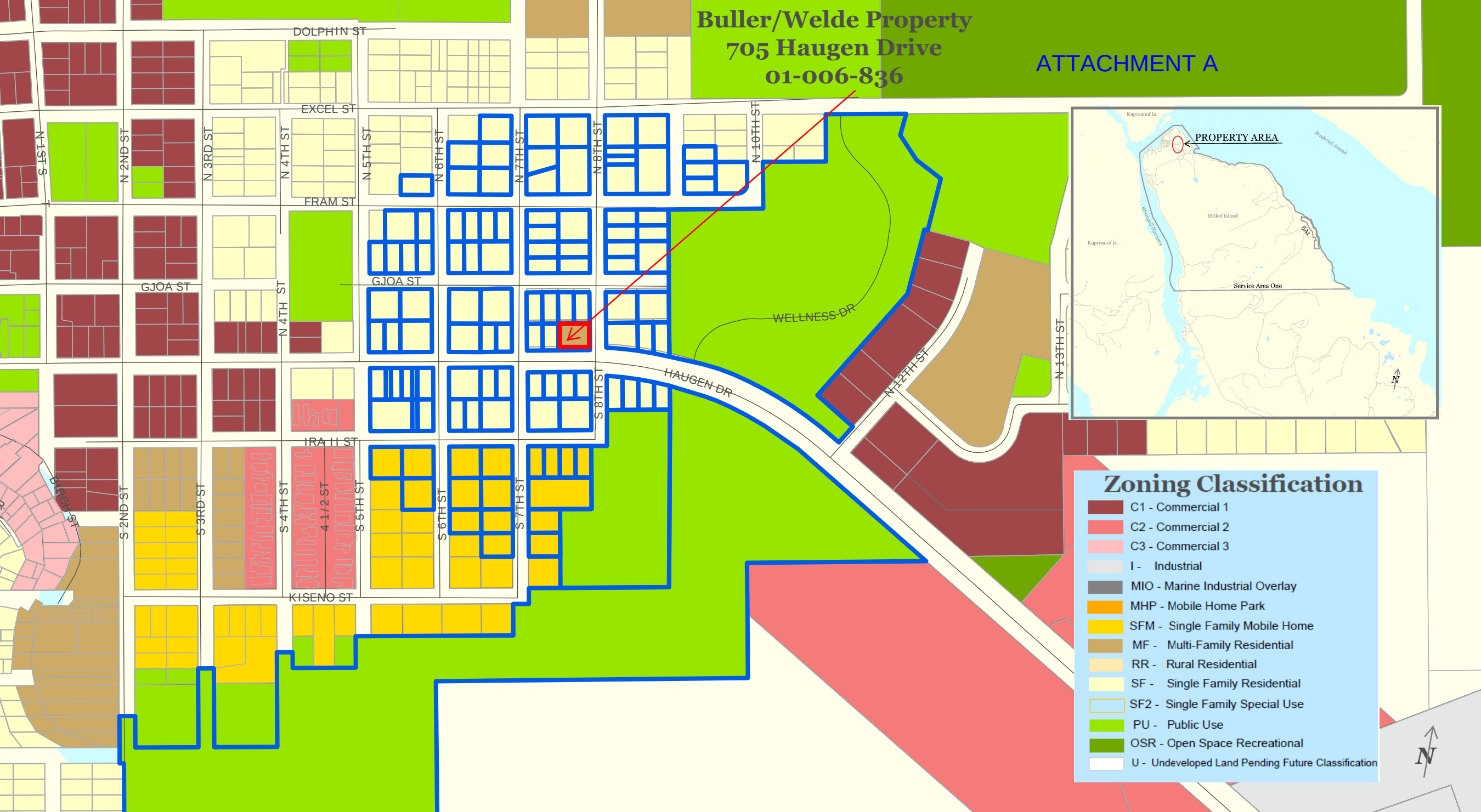
NAY:

ABSENT:

Chair, Planning Commission

Buller/Welde Property
705 Haugen Drive
01-006-836

ATTACHMENT A



Zoning Classification

- C1 - Commercial 1
- C2 - Commercial 2
- C3 - Commercial 3
- I - Industrial
- MIO - Marine Industrial Overlay
- MHP - Mobile Home Park
- SFM - Single Family Mobile Home
- MF - Multi-Family Residential
- RR - Rural Residential
- SF - Single Family Residential
- SF2 - Single Family Special Use
- PU - Public Use
- OSR - Open Space Recreational
- U - Undeveloped Land Pending Future Classification

ATTACHMENT B

 PETERSBURG BOROUGH VARIANCE APPLICATION	
For Borough Use	Date:
Base Fee: \$100	Check No. or CC:
Public Notice Fee: \$70	Received by:
Total: \$170	Code to: 110.000.404110
APPLICANT INFORMATION	
NAME: Aaron Buller/ Rachel Welde	
PROPERTY INFORMATION	
PHYSICAL ADDRESS or LEGAL DESCRIPTION: 705 Haugen Drive	
Lot Size: 10,000 sqft	
LOT: 6A	BLOCK: 27
SUBDIVISION:	PLAT #: 69-202
PARCEL ID: 01006836	ZONE: Multi-Family
OVERLAY:	
LEGAL ACCESS AND UTILITIES	
WASTEWATER SYSTEM: What is the current or planned system? ☒ Municipal ☐ DEC-approved on-site system	
WATER SOURCE: What is the current or planned system? ☒ Municipal ☐ Cistern/Roof Collection ☐ Well	
LEGAL ACCESS TO LOT(S) (Street Name): Haugen Drive	
TYPE OF USE	
What is the current use of property? Existing Duplex residential rental property.	
What is the proposed use of property? Construction of an attached second-story exterior deck with stairs serving the existing residential dwelling. The variance request is solely to allow the deck to project into the required 20-foot front setback along Haugen Drive. The proposed deck will remain approximately 13 feet from the front property line (sidewalk). The deck location and dimensions are shown on the attached site plan and elevation drawings.	
SUBMITTALS	
Is a site plan included? For new construction, please include elevation drawing. ☒ Yes ☐ No	
Photographs can also be helpful to the commission.	
SIGNATURE(S)	
I hereby affirm all the information submitted with this application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I also affirm that I am the true and legal property owner or authorized agent thereof for the property subject herein.	
Applicant(s): 	Date: <u>6/26/26</u>
Owner (if different from applicant): _____	Date: _____
Owner (if different from applicant): _____	Date: _____

19.80 VARIANCE APPLICATION

Applicant Name: Aaron Buller/Rachel Welde

Project Summary: Variance request to reduce the required 20-foot front setback along Haugen Drive to approximately 13 feet in order to construct an attached second-story deck serving the existing residence.

Please respond to the following conditions of approval as required in Petersburg Municipal Code 19.80.050 below:

(Note: In addition to meeting criteria, all regulations and requirements of Title 19 must be satisfied for the Commission to approve a variance.)

1. What is the exceptional physical circumstance or condition affecting this property?

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| ☐ Substandard Lot Area | ☐ Easements/ROW | ☐ Stream/Drainage |
| ☐ Steep/Unstable Slope | ☐ Odd Lot Shape | ☐ Nonconforming Structure |

☒ OTHER (Please Specify): Existing building location and attached deck configuration.

2. Explain the exceptional physical circumstances or conditions applicable to the property or to its intended use or development which do not apply generally to the other properties in the same zone.

The existing duplex and attached garage were previously constructed in a location that limits the available area for an exterior second-story deck. The proposed deck provides safe access to the second-floor living area and must be attached to the existing structure. Due to the existing building placement and lot configuration, meeting the full 20-foot front setback would significantly reduce the decks functionality and make the project impractical.

3. That the strict application of the provisions of this title would result in practical difficulties or unnecessary pecuniary hardships. *Please explain how your property/project would be affected if you did not receive the variance.*

Strict application of the required 20-foot setback would prevent construction of a reasonably functional exterior deck serving the second-floor. Reducing the deck size to comply with the setback would substantially limit its intended residential use and safe access. The existing building placement leaves little flexibility for relocating the deck elsewhere on the property. Granting the variance will allow reasonable residential use of the property while maintaining substantial separation from Haugen Drive.

4. That the granting of the variance will not result in material damage or prejudice to other properties in the vicinity nor be detrimental to the public health, safety or welfare. *What is the impact of your project on neighboring properties and the community?*

The proposed deck will not obstruct traffic visibility, interfere with public utilities, or create adverse impacts to neighboring properties. The structure will remain entirely on private property, approximately 13 feet from the front property line, and will comply with all applicable building code requirements. The variance affects only the front setback and will not negatively impact public health, safety, or welfare.

VARIANCE APPLICATION - ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

APPLICANT NAME: Aaron Buller/Rachel Welde

This application requests a variance to reduce the required 20-foot front setback to approximately 13 feet for the construction of an attached second-story deck.

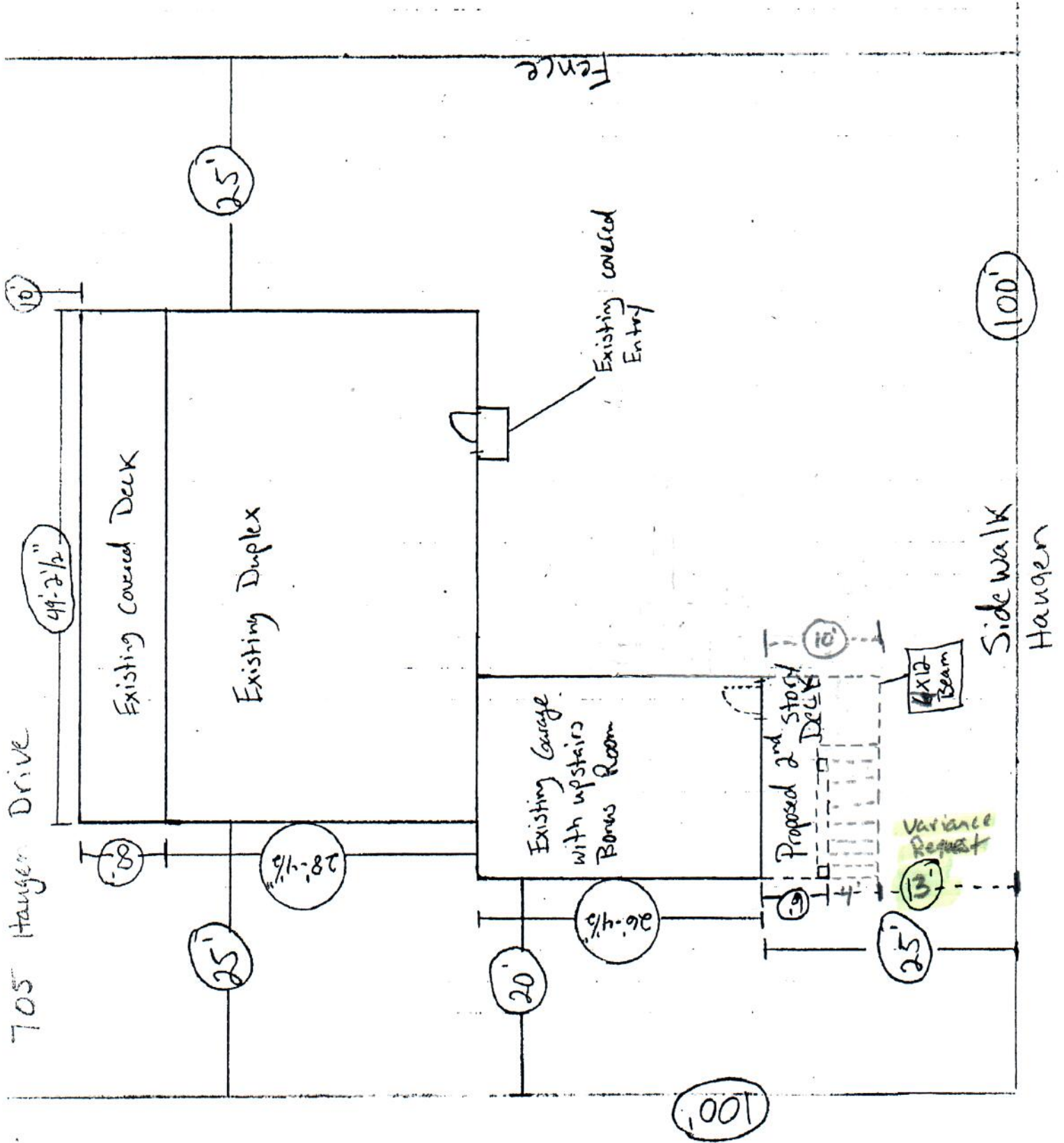
The existing duplex and garage location substantially limit the area available for an exterior deck. The proposed deck is intended to provide safe and functional outdoor access to the second-floor residence and cannot reasonably be relocated elsewhere on the property due to the existing building configuration.

The proposed deck will remain entirely on private property, will comply with all applicable building codes, and will not adversely affect neighboring properties, public safety, traffic, or utilities.

The requested variance (7' relief) is the minimum necessary to allow reasonable use of the property while preserving the intent of the Borough's setback regulations.



N 8th St



ATTACHMENT C

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Anna Caulum](#)
Subject: Buller & Welde variance
Date: Friday, July 31, 2026 2:43:38 PM

External Email! Use Caution

Hi, We live across 8th Street from the Buller & Welde duplex at 705 Haugen Drive. We have no objection to their request for a variance from the front (south) side setback from Haugen Drive.

Regards,

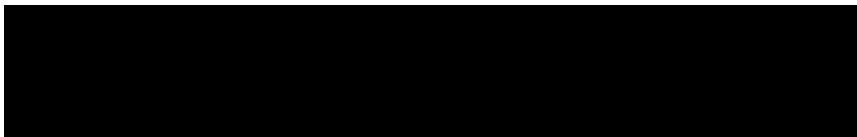
Sam & Linda Bunge



ATTACHMENT D



July 27, 2026



NOTICE OF SCHEDULED PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Petersburg Borough Planning Commission has scheduled a public hearing to consider:

An application from Aaron Buller and Rachel Welde for a variance from the front yard setback requirement at 705 HAUGEN DR (PID: 01-006-836).

The public hearing and consideration of the application will be held:	Tuesday, August 11, 2026, at 12:00 PM Assembly Chambers, Municipal Building 12 South Nordic Drive, Petersburg, Alaska.
The meeting is open to the public. To attend via ZOOM , please contact Anna Caulum at 907-772-5409.	

Interested persons desiring to present their views on the applications, either in writing or verbally, will be given the opportunity to be heard during the above-mentioned hearing. Said hearing may be continued from time to time as necessary. If the Planning Commission is unable to meet at the date and time stated above, this application will be considered at a future meeting with no further notice provided except for the general notice provided to the public.

TO SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION	
By Mail:	PO Box 329, Petersburg, Alaska 99833
By Email:	acaulum@petersburgak.gov
Hand-Deliver:	Petersburg Municipal Building, 12 S. Nordic Dr.

The Petersburg Municipal Code (PMC) provides for an appeal of a Planning Commission decision to the Borough Assembly by the property owner or a governmental agency, or any property owner within 600' of the applicant property and requires that such an appeal be filed within 10 consecutive calendar days of the date the decision is made. For more information regarding appeal requirements, please see PMC Chapter 19.92.

Sincerely,

Liz Cabrera
Community & Economic Development Department

Community & Economic Development

PO Box 329, Petersburg, AK 99833 – Phone (907)772-4042 Fax (907)772-3759

www.petersburgak.gov