

**Board of Adjustment  
Application Worksheet**



**LA CROSSE COUNTY**

<b>OFFICE USE ONLY</b>	
Appeal No.	_____
Fee	_____
Meeting Date	_____
Application Date	_____

Applicant's Name/Acting on Behalf of \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Parcel Number \_\_\_\_\_ Zoning District \_\_\_\_\_ Township \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for Appeal \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Mailing List (OFFICE USE ONLY)**

- D Applicant \_\_\_\_\_
- D Property owner \_\_\_\_\_
- D Owners within 150 feet \_\_\_\_\_
- D Board Members \_\_\_\_\_
- D Town Board \_\_\_\_\_
- D County Board Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_
- D County Board Chair \_\_\_\_\_
- D County Administrator \_\_\_\_\_
- D County Surveyor \_\_\_\_\_
- D Land Conservation \_\_\_\_\_
- D Highway Department \_\_\_\_\_

Others:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- D Dept. Natural Resources \_\_\_\_\_
- D Corps of Engineers \_\_\_\_\_
- D Dept. of Transportation \_\_\_\_\_

**Application for Appeal to the Board of Adjustment Number** \_\_\_\_\_  
(entered by staff)

Now comes \_\_\_\_\_  
(Applicant's name)

and (appeals to / requests a variance from ) the Board of Adjustment for La Crosse County from a denial by the Zoning Supervisor for La Crosse County denying the applicant a Zoning and Occupancy permit to (Describe denied request )

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ on property described as  
(legal description or address)

in accordance with the application on file with said Supervisor. This request is made for the following reason:

The applicant recognizes that the Zoning Ordinance requires certain performance standards they believe they are unable to meet due to the unique characteristics of the property, such as:

The applicant feels the unique characteristics of this property meet the standards for a variance, that a variance in this case would not be contrary to the public interest, and that a literal enforcement of the Zoning Ordinance would result in an unnecessary hardship being imposed. The applicant does not believe any hardship is self-imposed.

Dated this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.  
*day month year*

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

Acting on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_  
property owner if other than applicant

By signing this form, I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, all information presented herein is true and correct and that the property described is not in violation of the La Crosse County ordinance.

## PUBLIC HEARING REQUIREMENTS

### APPLYING FOR A VARIANCE

Appeals to the Board of Adjustment are considered monthly at a public hearing. In order to be considered at the next meeting, complete applications must be received in the Zoning, Planning and Land Information Office no later than **12:00 NOON on the working Friday four weeks before the next Planning Resources and Development Committee Meeting.**

Meeting Date at 6:00 PM  
Administrative Center

**ALL** applications must include:

1. Application forms, signed and dated, which are available at the Zoning, Planning and Land Information Office.
2. A legal description of the property.
3. A Filing Fee is required to complete the application, based on project costs.
4. A site sketch drawn to scale, indicating the location of all existing structures and the proposed construction in relation to side, rear and front lot lines. A survey may be required if inadequate.

***Incomplete applications will not be placed on the meeting agenda.***

Applicants shall answer the following questions:

- *What hardship is created by the application of the Zoning Ordinance to this property? Is there a reasonable use of the property available without a variance? In other words, is there an alternative plan that would comply with the ordinance?*
- *Is there a unique physical characteristic of the property which prevents development in compliance with the Zoning Ordinance?*
- *Would granting of the variance harm the public interest in any way? For example, would public safety be compromised? What aesthetic impact would the project have? Would the proposal interfere with protected shorelands? What other impacts would the project have on the public interest?*

A Class II notice is published in the local newspaper. A notice of the date and time of the hearing and a site plan will be mailed to all property owners within 150 feet of your property. **Notice of the hearing is sent to the Town Board. It is important that you discuss your proposal with town representatives, prior to the public hearing, as the Town Board acts in an advisory capacity to the Board of Adjustment.**

Depending on the location of your property, notice of the hearing will be sent to the County Highway Commissioner and the Land Conservation Department, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Transportation and the La Crosse Municipal Airport for technical input.

**The property owner or his representative shall be present at the public hearing to present his request to the Board and answer any questions it may have.** Should an appearance not be made, or should insufficient information be presented, the appeal will not be considered and will be placed on the agenda for the next meeting. The applicant will be required to pay the additional expense that is incurred because of the postponement of the hearing.

*I have read and understand my responsibilities regarding my appeal to the Board of Adjustment.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Variance Standards

State law sets three standards for granting a zoning variance. Applicants must provide evidence to the local board that their situation meets the standards. All three standards must be met in order for a variance to be granted.

- Unnecessary hardship
- Unique property feature
- Not contrary to public interest

### **1. Unnecessary Hardship**

Application of the zoning ordinance to the site must cause unnecessary hardship.

When does unnecessary hardship occur?

- **Unnecessarily Burdensome**

Unnecessary hardship is present when “compliance with the strict letter of the restrictions governing area, set backs, frontage, height, bulk or density would unreasonably prevent the owner from using the property for a permitted purpose or would render conformity with such restrictions **unnecessarily burdensome**.” (State v. Waushara County board of Adjustment, 2004 WI 56 (2004), State ex rel. Ziervogel v. Washington County Board of Adjustment, 2004 WI 23 (2004))

- **No Self-Imposed Hardships**

The State Supreme Court also ruled that a hardship may not be self imposed or created by a prior owner. An example of a self-imposed hardship would be someone who builds at a setback and later requests a variance for an addition within the setback area. Such a variance should be denied because the applicant created the hardship by building at the setback and restricting future building or expansion options.

- **Loss of Profit is Not Hardship**

Loss of profit is not in itself an unnecessary hardship, nor is additional expense incurred to comply with zoning ordinances. For instance, limiting the number of units which can be built on a parcel may reduce potential profits but is not an unnecessary hardship.

- **Due to Regulations**

The hardship cannot be one that would have existed in the absence of the zoning ordinance. Some properties may not be buildable because of the physical nature of the property. For instance, if an entire parcel consists of land with a steep slope, or is entirely covered with wetlands, the property would not be suitable for development whether or not there was an ordinance regulating such development. In such extreme cases, the only reasonable use may be for open space uses.

## **2. Unique Property Limitations**

Unique physical characteristics of the property must prevent the applicant from developing in compliance with the zoning ordinance.

- **Physical Features**

Wetlands, soil type, bedrock and steep slopes are some characteristics which may limit use of a property.

- **Property Limitations – Not Applicant’s Circumstances**

The property must qualify for the variance, not the situation of the applicant.

- **Violations/Previous Variances not Grounds for Variance**

Existing violations on other properties, or improper variances previously granted, are not grounds for a variance. Applications must be evaluated individually based on the variance standards.

- **Amend Zoning Ordinance**

Variances should not be granted for property features affecting many parcels in the same way. The proper remedy in such a situation is to amend the zoning ordinance.

## **3. Public Interest Protected**

Granting of a variance must not harm the public interest.

- **Look to Ordinance Objectives**

Board members should look to the objectives statement in their local ordinance to determine what constitutes public interest. Local ordinance objectives generally mirror objectives set forth in state statutes. For example, shoreland zoning protects the public interest in water quality, fish and wildlife resources, shore cover and natural beauty.

- **Not Just Lack of Opposition**

The fact that there is no objection to a variance from neighbors or area residents does not necessarily mean a variance would not harm the public interest. A local zoning board must consider the public at large and not just nearby property owners.

- **Minimum Relief**

Landowners who do qualify for a variance are to be granted only the minimum relief necessary for them to have reasonable use of their property. Boards also have the authority to impose conditions on a variance to protect the public interest. Examples of conditions for variances to shoreland standards include such as erosion control measures or vegetative screening.

Applicants must prove their situation meets all three of these standards. However, municipalities can assist landowners and expedite the process by providing application forms that help landowners determine if they will qualify for a variance. Similarly, zoning officials and zoning board members can ask applicants questions to help determine if the standards are met or if there is an alternative that would not require a variance.



