

BEFORE THE TALBOT COUNTY BOARD OF APPEALS

IN THE MATTER OF

\* CASE NO. VAR-25-6

DENNIS and  
MICHAEL BRAMBLE

\* VARIANCE REQUEST APPLICATION  
(Non-Critical Area)

\* \* \* \* \*

The Board of Appeals (the “Board”) held a hearing on December 15, 2025, in the Bradley Meeting Room, Court House, South Wing at 11 N. Washington Street, Easton, Maryland to consider the application of Dennis and Michael Bramble (the “Applicants”). Applicants requested a variance for the property at 29214 Almshouse Rd., Trappe, Maryland. Chairman Frank Cavanaugh, Vice Chairman Louis Dorsey, Jr., Board Members Meredith Watters, Jeff Adelman, Keith Prettyman, and Board Attorney Lance Young were present. Board Secretary Christine Corkell and Planner Andrew Nixon appeared on behalf of the County.

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE**

The Applicants requested approval for two Non-Critical Area Variances of the 100-foot state highway setback to permit the following items:

1. Construct a one-story dwelling with attached garage (58' x 96') at 78' from the state road.
2. Construct a 12' x 14' deck with a 5' x 31' ramp and 5' x 7' steps at 68' from the state road.

**SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY**

Applicant Michael Bramble appeared with Brett Ewing of Lane Engineering, LLC.

Mr. Ewing explained that the residence was built in the 1930s and needs demolition. The existing nonconforming dwelling is 22' from the property line. The Applicants propose to construct a new dwelling back to 78' from the property line.

The Applicants propose to construct the dwelling as one-story because the Applicant’s aging father will reside in the home and requires that accommodation. There are sheds on the Property that will be taken down.

The Property is unique. It is a corner lot with two fronts where there are 50' and 100' setbacks. Mr. Ewing suggests that the AC zone is intended to have larger size lots with these setbacks. The Property is 1.5 acres. The practical difficulty arises from the fact that the dwelling cannot be constructed anywhere on the Property to abide by the setbacks. This is due to the location of the Well and the Sewage Disposal Area.

While not meeting the setbacks, the demolition and reconstruction of the dwelling will be an improvement to the aesthetics and safety of the Property. The dwelling will be further away from the State Highway, which allows vehicle traffic to see cross traffic more easily.

Mr. Ewing summarized that the need for a variance is not self-created because the condition has existed for over 90 years and the Applicant's proposal will improve the non-conformance. The Applicants will not profit from the variance. The proposal is the minimum necessary because the proposed dwelling is pushed back as far as possible with the limitations on the Property.

The Board received a letter from State Highway Administration stating that there are no concerns from SHA.

### **FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

All Board members have visited the site and the Board's conclusions are based on the testimony provided, written submissions, and the Board's visit to the property. The Board agrees that the new dwelling will be an improvement to the corner intersection. Moving the dwelling further back will alleviate traffic hazards at the Property. The Board concurs from review of the site plan and physical visit of the Property that the proposed dwelling could not be closer to conformance with setbacks.

The Board addresses the standards for a Non-Critical Area variances set forth in the Talbot County Code, § 190-58.3.

*A. Unique physical characteristics exist, such as unusual size or shape of the property or extraordinary topographical conditions, such that a literal enforcement of the provisions of this chapter would result in practical difficulty or unreasonable hardship in enabling the applicant to develop or use the property;*

The Property is a corner lot with less than two acres. Being located along a state highway, the standard 50-foot front setback is increased to 100 feet which drastically reduces the building envelope for the Property. The Well and Sewage Disposal Area reduces the amount of buildable area to the extent that the dwelling could not be constructed to conform with setbacks.

*B. The need for the variance is not based upon circumstances which are self-created or self-imposed;*

The proposed dwelling would be permitted without the need of a variance if the Property were not located along a state highway as it complies with all other setbacks. The existing dwelling encroaches farther into the setback than the proposed dwelling as well as encroaching into the setback from Almshouse Road.

*C. Greater profitability or lack of knowledge of the restrictions shall not be considered as sufficient cause for a variance;*

The request is based upon the condition of the existing dwelling and the needs of the homeowner for a one-story residence.

*D. The variance will not be contrary to the public interest and will not be a detriment to adjacent or neighboring properties;*

The project will result in a dwelling that is more conforming than what exists and will increase the visibility of the drivers passing through this intersection. The proposed dwelling will be positive for both the neighboring properties and the safety of the traffic in the intersection. The existing dwelling and detached garage are in poor condition and will be removed as part of this project.

*E. The variance shall not exceed the minimum adjustment necessary to relieve the practical difficulty or unreasonable hardship.*

None of the improvements proposed with this variance request will encroach further into any setback than what is existing. The configuration of the dwelling and driveway will minimize the need to change the driveway and will allow the use of the existing entrance.

#### Documents on Record

1. Application for Non-Critical Area Application.
2. Tax Map with subject property highlighted.
3. Notice of Public Hearing for Advertising.
4. Newspaper Confirmation.
5. Notice of Public Hearing with List of Adjacent Property Owners attached.
6. Non-Critical Area Variance Standards.
7. Staff Report
8. Sign Maintenance Agreement / Sign Affidavit.
9. Authorization Email from Mike Bramble, dated 11/6/25.
10. Independent Procedures Disclosure and Acknowledgement Form.
11. Aerial Photo.
12. Elevation and Floor Plans, 2 pages.
13. Floor Plans, 2 pages.
14. Site Plan by Lane Engineering, LLC.
15. Comments from State Highway Administration.

Vice Chairman Dorsey moved that the two (2) non-critical area variances be granted subject to staff conditions. Mr. Prettyman seconded the motion. Based upon the foregoing, the Board finds, by a unanimous vote, that the Applicant's request for two (2) non-critical area variances is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The Applicants shall make an application to the Office of Permits and Inspections, and follow all rules, procedures, and construction timelines as outlined regarding new construction.

2. The Applicants shall commence construction of the proposed improvements within eighteen (18) months of the date of the Board of Appeals approval.

3. The Applicants shall remove the storage shed prior to the issuance of the building permit for the new dwelling.

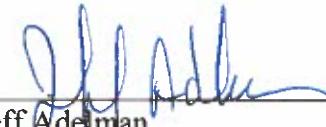
4. This approval is only for the requested improvements and additions in this application and does not cover or permit any other changes or modifications. Items not specifically addressed in this application may require additional approvals.

**IT IS THEREFORE**, this 7<sup>th</sup> day of January 2026, **ORDERED** that the Applicant's requests for a variance is GRANTED.

  
Frank Cavanaugh

  
Louis Dorsey, Jr.

  
Meredith Watters

  
Jeff Adelman

  
Keith Prettyman