# APPLICATION OF O'BRIEN FAMILY REVOCABLE TRUST <br> 3 MOEBUS TERRACE, PORTSMOUTH <br> Map 207, Lot 21 

## APPLICANT'S NARRATIVE

## I. THE PROPERTY:

The applicants, Kevin and Sandy O'Brien, acquired the property located at 3 Moebus Terrace, which consists of a single family dwelling with attached garage, last fall, after selling their previous home on Brigham Lane in Portsmouth, where they resided for over fifteen years. The property is in the SRB zone and is non-conforming as to lot area and lot area per dwelling unit. An existing elevated deck encroaches into the rear yard setback.

According to city tax records, the existing dwelling dates back to 1970. The dwelling is functionally obsolete. It has substandard insulation, unsafe and noncompliant windows, and mold. The existing dwelling is served by a private septic system in proximity to Little Harbor.

The O'Briens have considered carefully whether or not to renovate and remodel the existing structure to address these deficiencies, however, the cost to do so and appropriately modernize the dwelling would be prohibitive. Accordingly, we are proposing to raze the existing dwelling structure and replace it with a new dwelling which will meet all dimensional requirements under the zoning ordinance except for the pre-existing lot area deficiency, which cannot be remedied.

The existing elevated deck is approximately 8 feet high and encroaches into the 30 foot rear yard setback. By virtue of its height and the surrounding topography of the neighborhood, the deck significantly impacts the privacy of the property to the rear. The project will result in the deck being removed and the rear yard setback requirement being fully observed. The project will also result in the discontinuance of the existing septic system as the new home will be tied into city sewer.

The project requires relief from Section 10.521 - Table of Dimensional Standards, to permit lot area and lot area per dwelling of 10,823 square feet where 15,000 square feet is the minimum required. All other dimensional requirements of the ordinance are satisfied. ${ }^{1}$

We have submitted herewith a site plan and building plans which demonstrate the applicants' preferred building design elements. While the applicants are committed to this design, it remains possible that the exact location and dimensions of some of the proposed improvements may change slightly as the proposal moves forward. For example, as the site plan notes, the final configuration of the proposed patio and front

[^0]steps will be determined in the field. Nevertheless, the project will meet all applicable setback, height and lot coverage requirements.

## II. CRITERIA:

The applicants believe the within Application meets the criteria necessary for the Board to grant the requested variance.

Granting the requested variances will not be contrary to the spirit and intent of the ordinance nor will it be contrary to the public interest. The "public interest" and "spirit and intent" requirements are considered together pursuant to Malachy Glen Associates v. Chichester, 152 NH 102 (2007). The test for whether or not granting a variance would be contrary to the public interest or contrary to the spirit and intent of the ordinance is whether or not the variance being granted would substantially alter the characteristics of the neighborhood or threaten the health, safety and welfare of the public.

The essentially residential characteristics of the neighborhood would not be altered by this project. The existing structure and lot are already non-compliant with the lot area and the identical non-conformity resulting from this project will in no way compromise the neighborhood.

Were the variances to be granted, there would be no change in the essential characteristics of the neighborhood, nor would public health, safety or welfare be threatened in any way, but would, in fact, be enhanced as a result of the elimination of the existing septic system and the removal of the existing, non-compliant elevated deck.

Substantial justice would be done by granting the variance. Whether or not substantial justice will be done by granting a variance requires the Board to conduct a balancing test. If the hardship upon the owner/applicant outweighs any benefit to the general public in denying the variance, then substantial justice would be done by granting the variance. It is substantially just to allow a property owner the reasonable use of his or her property.

In this case, there is no benefit to the public in denying the variances that is not outweighed by the hardship upon the owner. There is no way for the applicants to comply with the lot area requirements given the size of the lot. Accordingly, the loss to the applicant clearly outweighs any gain to the public if the applicants were required to conform to the ordinance.

The values of surrounding properties will not be diminished by granting the variance. The proposal will result in a brand new, code-compliant dwelling. This will increase the value of the applicants' property and those around it. The property will become fully compliant with the rear yard setback by eliminating the raised deck facing the neighbor to the rear, which currently is the property most affected by the existing
setback nonconformities. The values of surrounding properties will not be negatively affected in any way.

There are special conditions associated with the property which prevent the proper enjoyment of the property under the strict terms of the zoning ordinance and thus constitute unnecessary hardship. The property is non-conforming as to lot area, lot area per dwelling, and rear yard setback. Any residential development of this property would require relief from the lot area requirements.

The use is a reasonable use. The proposal is a residential use in a residential zone.

There is no fair and substantial relationship between the purpose of the ordinance as it is applied to this particular property. The purpose of the lot area requirements is to prevent overcrowding of land. There has been a single family dwelling on this lot since at least 1970 without any negative impacts whatsoever.

Accordingly, the relief requested here would not in any way frustrate the purpose of the ordinance and there is no fair and substantial relationship between the purpose of the lot area requirements and their application to this property.

## III. Conclusion.

For the foregoing reasons, the applicants respectfully request the Board grant the variances as requested and advertised.

Dated: March 26, 2024
Respectfully submitted,
John K, Baden
John K. Bosen, Esquire


















[^0]:    ${ }^{1}$ The front yard setback is determined by averaging the existing alignments of the principal buildings on the abutting properties under section 10.516 .10 , which would work out to a required 26 foot front yard.

