

INSTRUCTIONS TO APPLICANTS APPEALING TO  
THE CHICHESTER BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

IMPORTANT: READ ALL INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY BEFORE FILLING OUT ATTACHED APPLICATION.

**The board strongly recommends that, before making any appeal, you become familiar with the zoning ordinance, and also with the New Hampshire Statutes TITLE LXIV, RSA Chapters 672-678, covering planning and zoning.**

**Four types of appeals** can be made to the board of adjustment:

**VARIANCE:** A **variance** is an authorization, which may be granted under special circumstances, to use your property in a way that is not permitted under the strict terms of the zoning ordinance. For a variance to be legally granted, you must show that your proposed use meets **all five** of the following conditions:

1. Granting the variance must not be contrary to the public **interest**.
2. The proposed use is not contrary to the **spirit** of the ordinance.
3. Granting the variance would do substantial **justice**.
4. The proposed use would not diminish surrounding property **values**.
5. Denial of the variance would result in unnecessary **hardship** to the owner. Hardship, as the term applies to zoning, results if a restriction, when applied to a particular property, becomes arbitrary, confiscatory, or unduly oppressive because of conditions of the property that distinguish it from other properties under similar zoning restrictions. RSA 674:33 (b) (5) provides the criteria for establishing unnecessary hardship:

(A) For purposes of this subparagraph, “unnecessary hardship” means that, owing to special conditions of the property that distinguish it from other properties in the area:

- (i) No fair and substantial relationship exists between the general public purposes of the ordinance provision and the specific application of that provision to the property; and
- (ii) The proposed use is a reasonable one.

(B) If the criteria in subparagraph (A) are not established, an unnecessary hardship will be deemed to exist if, and only if, owing to special conditions of the property that distinguish it from other properties in the area, the property cannot be reasonably used in strict conformance with the ordinance, and a variance is therefore necessary to enable a reasonable use of it.

If you are applying for a variance, you must first have some form of determination that your proposed use is not permitted without a variance. Most often, this determination is a denial of a building permit. A copy of the determination must be attached to your application.

**APPEAL FROM AN ADMINISTRATIVE DECISION:** If you have been **denied a building permit** or **are affected by some other decision regarding the administration of the Chichester zoning ordinance**, and **you believe that the decision was made in error under the provisions of the ordinance**, you may appeal the decision to the board of adjustment. The appeal will be granted if you can show that the decision was indeed made in error.

If you are appealing an administrative decision, a copy of the decision appealed from must be attached to your application.

**SPECIAL EXCEPTION:** Certain sections of the zoning ordinance provide that a particular use of property in a particular zone will be permitted by special exception if specified conditions are met. The necessary conditions for each special exception are given in the ordinance. Your appeal for a special

exception will be granted if you can show that the conditions stated in the ordinance are met.

If you are applying for a special exception, you may also need site plan or subdivision approval, or both, from the planning board. Even in those cases where no planning board approval is needed, presenting a site plan to the planning board will assist in relating the proposal to the overall zoning. This should be done before you apply for a special exception.

**EQUITABLE WAIVER OF DIMENSIONAL REQUIREMENTS:** The board may grant an equitable waiver only for existing dimensional nonconformities provided the applicant can meet the required standards.

- a) The nonconformity was not discovered until after the structure was substantially completed or after a vacant lot in violation had been transferred to a bona fide purchaser;
- b) The nonconformity was not an outcome of ignorance of the law or bad faith but was instead caused by a legitimate mistake;

If these conditions are satisfied, the board can move on to the additional findings to grant the waiver:

- c) The nonconformity does not constitute a public or private nuisance nor diminish the value or interfere with future uses of other property in the area; and
- d) The cost of correction would far outweigh any public benefit to be gained.

In lieu of the requirements in paragraphs (a) and (b), the violation has existed for 10 years or more with no enforcement action, including written notice, commenced by the town.

For any appeal, the application form must be properly filled out. The application form is intended to be self-explanatory, but be sure that you show:

**WHO** owns the property? If the applicant is not the owner, this must be explained and written permission from the owner must accompany the application.

**WHERE** is the property located?

**DESCRIBE** the property. Give area, frontage, side and rear lines, slopes and natural features, etc.

**WHAT** do you propose to do? Attach sketches, plot plans, pictures, construction plans, or whatever may help explain the proposed use. Include copies of any prior applications concerning the property.

**WHY** should the appeal be granted?

Prepare a list of all abutting property owners, have it verified at the town office, and attach it to your application. If you have any difficulty, consult the selectmen's office, but the accuracy of the list is your responsibility.

Mail or deliver the completed application, with all attachments to the clerk of the board or to the office of the board of selectmen. A fee is charged sufficient to cover the cost of preparing and mailing the legally required notices. Make check payable to the **Town of Chichester** and remit with your application.

The board will schedule a public hearing within 30 days upon receipt of your properly completed application. Public notice of the hearing will be posted and printed in a newspaper, and notice will be mailed to you and to all abutters and to other parties whom the board may deem to have an interest, at least five (5) days before the date of the hearing. You and all other parties will be invited to appear in person or by agent or counsel to state reasons why the appeal should or should not be granted.

After the public hearing, the board will reach a decision. You will be sent a notice of decision.

If you believe the board's decision is wrong, you have the right to appeal. The selectmen, or any party affected, have similar rights to appeal the decision in your case. To appeal, you must first ask the board for a rehearing. The Motion for Rehearing may be in the form of a letter to the board. The motion

must be made within 30 days of the decision and must set forth grounds on which it is claimed the decision is unlawful or unreasonable.

The board may grant such a rehearing if, in its opinion, good reason is stated in the motion. The board will not reopen a case based on the same set of facts unless it is convinced that an injustice would be created by not doing so. Whether or not a rehearing is held, you must have requested one before you can appeal to the courts. When a rehearing is held, the same procedure is followed as for the first hearing, including public notice and notice to abutters.

See RSA Chapter 677 for more detail on rehearing and appeal procedures.

These instructions have been taken from The Board of Adjustment in New Hampshire Handbook dated October 2009.