

Town of Cornish, New Hampshire

Zoning Board of Adjustment

PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES

August 13, 2026

Case 2026-06

The Zoning Board of Adjustment met on Thursday, August 13, 2026 at 6:30pm at the Cornish Town Office to hear Case 2026-06, a request for a Variance from Marc and Stephanie Gattie for a garage/workshop attached to the existing home in a wetlands buffer zone.

Present for the ZBA: Michael Fuerst, Kate Freeland, Merilynn Bourne, Kerry Osgood,
Alternate: David Haseman, Karim Chichakly

Present for the Public: Marc Gattie

Michael Fuerst, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:32pm.

Merilynn Bourne, Clerk, presented the Hearing Invoice for payment. Payment in full being received, the clerk read the Notice of Hearing and announced the date of publishing in the Valley News (August 6, 2026), the date of posting at 12% Solution (August 6, 2026), the date of publishing in Connect Cornish (August 7 & 10, 2026) and the posting on the town website on July 30, 2026.

The clerk then reported that Certified Mailing to abutters and the owner were sent August 4, 2026 to:

Marc & Stephanie Gattie
Robert & Ann Hier
Loren McEwen & Travers Findley
Charles Baker
John Landry & Mary Carroll

Returned receipts were received from:

Marc & Stephanie Gattie
Robert & Ann Hier
Loren McEwen & Travers Findley
John Landry & Mary Carroll

Michael Fuerst then invited Marc to present his case for a Variance and asked that he include the dimensions of the structures currently on the property. Michael further explained that it may be easier to meet the criteria for a Special Exception which could allow for an addition of no more than 50% of the original structure. The question is, what was the square footage. Kate Freeland had a copy of the tax card for review and Karim Chichakly had some knowledge of the changes made in the past. Kate had dimensions of the structure in 1997. That sketch does not include the decks or porches visible now. Mr. Gattie stated that in 2020 a few feet may have been added to the footprint. In 2014 he added a dormer which did not change the footprint.

Michael explained that the maximum square footage increase for a Special Exception was held to 50% of the original structure and we need to know what that square footage was. We do not have documentation of that number. Michael stated that we could take what information Mr. Gattie is able to provide tonight but we will most likely need to continue this hearing because we need more documentation from town records and Mr. Gattie needs to provide us with detailed square footages of what is being added as well as what was being removed. Mr. Gattie plans to remove a large shed which is close to the brook. The attached garage will be 28' x 45'. The board pointed out that the removal of the shed does not affect the square footage of the main structure. Mr. Gattie stated that the sunroom would also be removed. Kate reported that her calculation shows that the footprint of the existing structure totals 992 square feet. If the sunroom is included, that adds another 231 square feet. The 2026 tax card shows 1,184 as the total. If the porches and decks are included, that adds another 200 square feet. Porches and decks are considered structural. Kate added that in a previous case we only factored in the original footprint. The original footprint appears to be 960 sq.ft. in 1997. Mr. Gattie stated that the original footprint was created in 1889.

There was a discussion regarding Special Exception vs. Variance and Michael stated the Special Exception and the 50% calculation, whatever square footage that would allow, would be easier to approve than a Variance. Mr. Gattie asked about the criteria for a Variance. Michael explained hardship and proof hardship under a Variance. Setbacks are an issue. Mr. Gattie feels a portion of the garage will meet the setback. The garage will be no closer to the road ROW than the house but a portion of the garage will be closer to the brook. Michael asked about the back of the garage lining up with the back of the house. Merilynn asked if the depth of the garage needed to be 28'. Marc states that making it shallower wouldn't work because of storage for his tractor, access to house, moving around in the space, putting his workshop in the garage, etc. The shed he plans to remove currently holds some of that equipment.

David Haseman had a question about parking vehicles and road work for access to the garage. Mr. Gattie said no road work would be needed. He is currently parking his vehicles where his driveway would be. Michael asked about entering the garage from the uphill side instead of the front. Mr. Gattie doesn't want to use more of the yard then is already planned.

Mr. Gattie was then asked to speak to the criteria for a Variance.

#1. The garage will not alter the character of the neighborhood or threaten public health or safety.

#2. No closer to the buffer zone than existing because the far end of the house is much closer to the brook than the garage will be.

#3. Safe covered space for vehicles to keep them away from the road. Benefits the town and the property.

#4. The addition would enhance rather than diminish surrounding property values. Storing equipment inside improves the aesthetic.

#5a. Size and depth of lot is an issue. A garage is a reasonable use on a residential lot to shelter vehicles. The lot is smaller than modern zoning lot sizes.

#5b. The lot size & buffer zones excludes adding a garage which is a reasonable use and a denial places an unfair burden on us because our lot is smaller than modern zoning lot sizes.

Merilynn asked about moving the garage forward toward the road and away from the brook. Mr. Gattie reported that the Selectmen did not want to see that. Part of the house is already very close to the road. The board would like to know more about the ROW measurement.

There followed a discussion by the board regarding how to proceed. Do we need to see the original ZBA files? We need to know the square footage of the original structure.

The chair asked what the board would like to do and added that Karim Chichakly will be the designated alternate member for the purpose of tonight's vote. Kerry Osgood feels we need to see the complete file for the property. Karim made a motion to continue the Gattie Hearing to allow the board time to review the file, seconded by Merilynn Bourne.

Karim Chichakly voted "Aye"

Merilynn Bourne voted "Aye"

Michael Fuerst voted "Aye"

Kate Freeland voted "Aye"

Kerry Osgood voted “Aye”

The board agreed to continue the hearing to August 24, 2026, 6:30pm at the town offices. Merilynn agreed to gather all the information that exists in the files and to provide a synopsis of that information to the board prior to August 24th.

Merilynn asked for a motion regarding the July 2, 2026 minutes. Kate Freeland moved to approve the July 2, 2026 minutes as presented, seconded by Kerry Osgood. The vote was in the affirmative. There followed a general conversation regarding the issues facing pre-existing, non-conforming lots.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:55pm

Respectfully submitted,
Merilynn Bourne, Clerk