



The Case of the Parking Spaces

Parts:

Narrator

Lee Templin, Chair, Big Rapids Zoning Board of Appeal

Paul Jackson, Member, Big Rapids Zoning Board of Appeal

Terry Harper, Member, Big Rapids Zoning Board of Appeal

Mary Jane Cook, Member, Big Rapids Zoning Board of Appeal

Chris Jacobs, Member, Big Rapids Zoning Board of Appeal

Daryl Poprave, city employee

Bob Tetzlaff, builder

Ruth Tetzlaff, Bob's wife

Judy Canfield, citizen

Betty Witt, citizen

Other citizens attending the meeting

Script:

Narrator: The date: November 30, 2000, 7:00 p.m. The place: A meeting room in the city hall of Big Rapids, Michigan. The Zoning Board of Appeals is about to begin its meeting. A land developer in Big Rapids would like to build on a vacant piece of land in the city. The nearby land uses are residential and transportation. Most of the people living in the neighborhood live in single-family houses. The residents are very concerned with their neighborhood.

Lee Templin: I call this regular meeting of the Big Rapids Zoning Board of Appeals to order. I am happy to see that all the members of the board are here tonight and that we have so many citizens here as well. Welcome.

Tonight we are having a public hearing on a request for a zoning variance. That means someone wants to be able to use some land in a way different than the city has said it should be used. Mr. Poprave here is with the city. He's going to tell us about the request.

Daryl Poprave: Mr. Bob Tetzlaff wants to put up an apartment building on a piece of land that he owns. The building will have nine four-bedroom apartments and one apartment that has two bedrooms and is suitable for handicapped residents. There will also be a manager's office.

Mr. Tetzlaff does not have enough land to include the number of parking spaces that the city ordinances require. Our ordinances would require 61 spaces for this building. Mr. Tetzlaff only has room for 49 parking spaces.



Lee Templin: Mr. Tetzlaff, why are you asking for this change?

Bob Tetzlaff: Well, sir, I just can't build these nice townhouses and have enough space left over for 61 parking spaces. And I don't think I need that many. My family has owned apartments in Big Rapids for years and years. And we've never had a problem with parking. We issue parking permits to the people who live in the apartments. We put up security cameras in the parking lots. And our managers check the parking lots every day to make sure they are not overcrowded or misused.

I just don't see a problem.

Lee Templin: Does anyone else wish to speak in favor of the request?

Ruth Tetzlaff: Yes, sir, I support the request.

Lee Templin: What is your name, ma'am?

Ruth Tetzlaff: Ruth Tezlaff.

Lee Templin: Is anyone here to speak against this request?

Judy Canfield: I am, sir. My name is Judy Canfield. This project is going to be built on Clark Street. We already have a big traffic problem on this street. And a big parking problem. Sometimes I have to drive around the block three times before I can find a parking space. If you approve this request, there will be more people parking on the street and the problem will get worse. Much worse.

Lee Templin: Thank you. Are there other persons who wish to make statements?

Betty Witt: My name is Betty Witt and I am against this request, too. I have lived on Clark Street since 1956. I've seen the area change. There's a lot of traffic in the area. And lots of accidents. It's a dangerous situation. The parking lot at the Rapids Apartments over on Morrison Street is always full. Those people are already coming over and parking on our street. We don't have room for more folks!

Lee Templin: Mr. Tezlaff, do you have anything to say in response?

Bob Tetzlaff: My family owns 15 houses in town. With all the new students over at Ferris State University, every one of our houses is full. Those young people need good, safe housing. By building this new set of apartments, I am helping our young people and our community.

Lee Templin: Are there any other comments? (Pause)

Lee Templin: Hearing no further comment, this public hearing is over. Thank you for your participation.



Narrator: Now that the public hearing is over, the Board will discuss the request for a variance and make a decision. The citizens listen carefully.

Paul Jackson: I think this is a bad idea. All apartments in town need the proper amount of parking. If we let one builder have a variance, all the builders will want a variance. Then we'll really have parking problems.

Judy Canfield and Betty Witt smile and nod. Bob and Ruth Tetzlaff frown.

Terry Harper: We did give another project a parking variance.

Chris Jacobs: But those were condos owned by the people who lived in them.

Mary Jane
Cook: Still, this could be a good project. It would provide housing for quite a few people. We do seem to have a shortage of apartments here in town.

Terry Harper: I agree. I think this project would be an asset to the neighborhood.

Bob and Ruth Tetzlaff smile and nod. Judy Canfield and Betty Witt frown.

Lee Templin: Do I hear a motion on this request?

Terry Harper: I move we approve the variance for the project in the 700 block of Clark Street, allowing Tetzlaff Enterprises to build a 10-unit apartment building with 49 off-street parking spaces, a variance of 12 spaces from what is required by ordinance.

Mary Jane
Cook: I second the motion.

Stop the play. Ask each student to vote on the issue before the Zoning Board of Appeals. Collect the ballots. Continue with the play.



Lee Templin: I will call the roll. Ms. Cook?

Mary Jane
Cook: No.

Lee Templin: Terry Harper?

Terry Harper: Yes.

Lee Templin: Paul Jackson?

Paul Jackson: No.

Lee Templin: Chris Jacobs?

Chris Jacobs: No.

Lee Templin: The chair votes no. The variance request is denied and this meeting is adjourned.

Narrator: It's 8:05 p.m. The people have had their say, and a conflict over land use has been solved. Was it a good solution? You be the judge.

Count the ballots from the class and compare the outcome to the vote by the Zoning Board of Appeals.