



**BARTHOLOMEW COUNTY  
BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS  
(January 26, 2026 Meeting)**

**STAFF REPORT**

**Docket No. / Project Title:** BZA-25-1 (Exclusive Cabins)  
**Staff:** Melissa Begley  
  
**Applicant:** Exclusive Cabins  
**Property Size:** 2.7 Acres  
**Current Zoning:** AG (Agriculture: General)  
**Location:** 14000 Mount Healthy Road, in Jackson Township

**Background Summary:**

The applicant has indicated that the proposed variance is for the purpose of allowing a single family dwelling (a manufactured home) to be 560 square feet in size, 390 square feet smaller than the minimum 950 square foot dwelling size.

**Preliminary Staff Recommendation:**

Approval, all criteria have been met.

**Zoning Ordinance Considerations:**

**District Intent:** The intent of the AG (Agriculture: General) zoning district is as follows: to provide areas for a mixture of agricultural and residential land uses. This mixture is intended to support the long-term viability of agricultural operations, while also allowing increased nonagricultural development in areas adjacent to developed infrastructure. This district should be used to provide unique, rural housing options and the future ability to extend urban infrastructure.

**Development Standards:** Sections 3.6 (C) and 6.7(A)(2)(a): Lot Standards: Minimum Living Area per Dwelling for Manufactured Homes – 950 square feet

| Current Property Information: |                                         |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Land Use:                     | Undeveloped                             |
| Site Features:                | Woods                                   |
| Flood Hazards:                | No flood hazards exist on the property. |
| Street/Road Frontage:         | Mount Healthy Road (Local)              |

| Surrounding Zoning and Land Use: |                           |                                  |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
|                                  | Zoning:                   | Land Use:                        |
| North:                           | AG (Agriculture: General) | Single Family Residential, Woods |
| South:                           | AG (Agriculture: General) | Single Family Residential, Woods |
| East:                            | AG (Agriculture: General) | Woods                            |
| West:                            | AG (Agriculture: General) | Single Family Residential, Woods |

| Interdepartmental Review: |              |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| County Engineer:          | No concerns. |
| Code Enforcement:         | No comments. |
| County Health:            | No comments. |

### Planning Consideration(s):

The following general site considerations, planning concepts, and other facts should be considered in the review of this application:

1. The applicant is requesting to construct a new dwelling that will be 560 square feet in size. The Zoning Ordinance requires that the minimum manufactured home living area in the AG (Agricultural: General) zoning district is 950 square feet.
2. The applicant has indicated approximately two-thirds of the lot is steep and sloping, making construction difficult. In addition, there are limitations to where the septic system can be placed, per the site assessments, which in-turn limits the placement of a driveway. Lastly, there is a natural runoff/waterway taking up the majority of the lot and further restricting a new home location.
3. This area of the county is fairly rural and sparsely populated. The nearest residence is approximately 410 feet to the northwest across Mt. Healthy Road. The new lots to the north and south of this property were recently subdivided but have not been developed.

### Provisional Findings of Fact/Decision Criteria:

The Board of Zoning Appeals may approve or deny variances from the development standards of the Bartholomew County Zoning Ordinance. The Board may impose reasonable conditions as part of an approval. A variance from the development standards may only be approved upon a determination in writing that:

1. **The approval will not be injurious to the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the community.**

*Provisional Findings:* A smaller primary structure will meet all applicable setbacks required by the Zoning Ordinance and will not create a sight visibility issue along Mt. Healthy Road. The County Highway Department and Fire Inspector do not have any issues with the proposal. *This criterion has been met.*

2. **The use and value of the area adjacent to the property included in the variance will not be affected in a substantially adverse manner.**

*Provisional Findings:* The proposed dwelling will not impede the residential use of adjacent properties. The area is very rural in nature and the adjacent properties are heavily wooded. The smaller than permitted dwelling will not negatively impact the neighboring properties. *This criterion has been met.*

- 3. The strict application of the terms of the zoning ordinance will result in practical difficulties in the use of the property. This situation shall not be self-imposed, nor be based on a perceived reduction of, or restriction on, economic gain.**

*Provisional Findings:* The site is entirely wooded with steep topography limiting the area for a 950 square foot dwelling, which is further limited by the space needed for a septic system. The site limitations create a practical difficulty in the use of the property. *This criterion has been met.*

### **Board of Zoning Appeals Options:**

In reviewing a request for development standards variance the Board may (1) approve the petition as proposed, (2) approve the petition with conditions, (3) continue the petition to a future meeting of the Board, or (4) deny the petition (with or without prejudice). Failure to achieve a quorum or lack of a positive vote on a motion results in an automatic continuance to the next regularly scheduled meeting.



## Record No: BZA-25-1

Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA)  
Application

Status: Active

Submitted On: 11/18/2025

## Primary Location

14000 W MT HEALTHY RD  
COLUMBUS, IN 47201

## Owner

MCCLAIN FRED  
WEST MT HEALTHY ROAD 14000 COLUMBUS,  
IN 47201

---

## Application Information

### Application Type\*

Development Standards Variance

### Property Type\*

Residential (1 to 3 Units)

You may enter multiple requests for the same application type. If you are also requesting a different application type, you will need to submit a separate application.

---

## Development Standards Variance Request

I am requesting a variance from the Zoning  
Ordinance Section (insert the ordinance section  
number below):\*

3.5(C) and 6.7(A)(2)(c)

**Please provide the details of the variance request:\***

I am requesting a variance to the minimum square footage requirement of 950sf. Due to septic location, driveway, slope and natural waterways, there is very limited space to build and foundation costs will be significant. I would have a very upscale, luxury prefab home built offsite and brought in that would be secured to a permanent foundation. 14'x40' but trying to get to 16'x40'

**The approval will not be injurious to the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the community. For example: What harm could come from approving the variance? Would it create any public safety issues? Why or why not.\***

No adverse impact.

**The use and value of the area adjacent to the property included in the variance will not be affected in a substantially adverse manner. For example: What impacts can the neighbors realistically expect to the use of their property and to their property values? Will approval of the variance cause any negative impacts to the neighbors? Why or why not?\***

There will be no negative impacts to any adjacent properties. If anything, we are confident we will be a very welcomed addition to the area and will likely increase values in the area.

The strict application of the terms of the Zoning Ordinance will result in practical difficulties in the use of the property. This situation shall not be self-imposed; nor be based on a perceived reduction of, or restriction on, economic gain. For example: Is there a reason the property cannot be used without the variance? If so, what is that reason (does a stream, existing building, well, or septic system limit options for new construction)? Explain the reason.\*

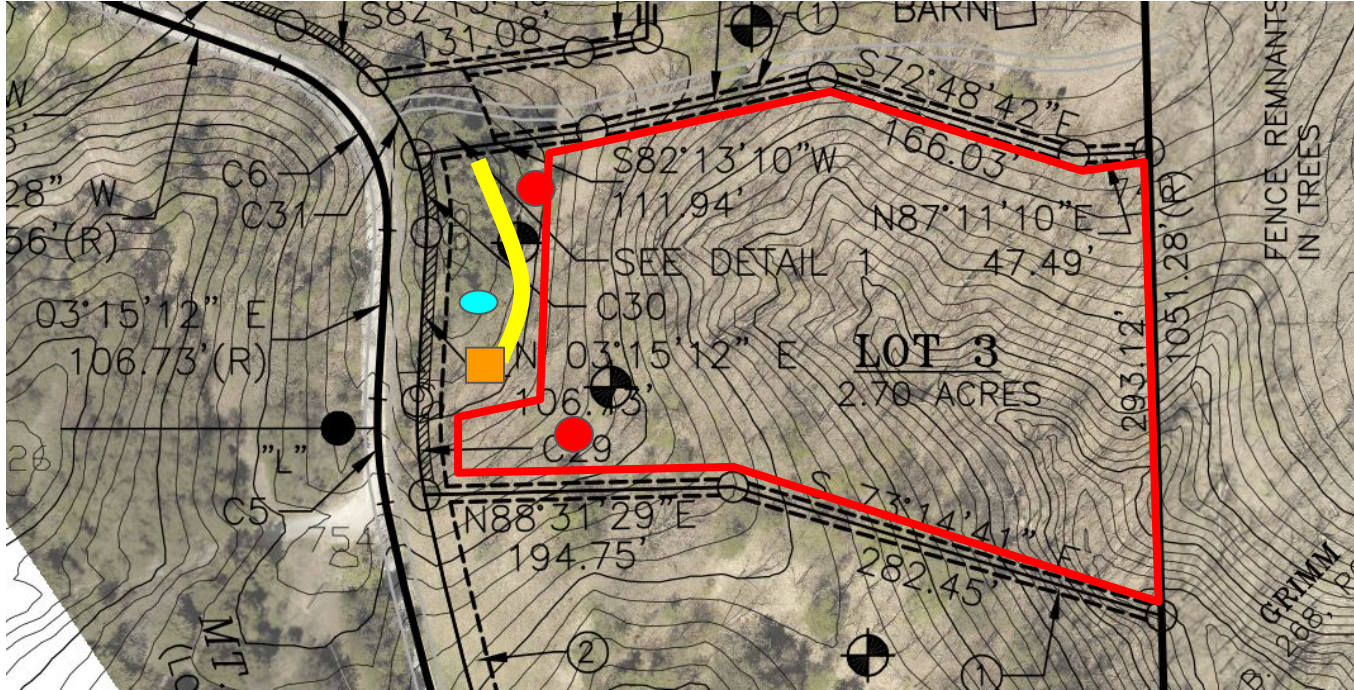
Yes. The lot has had numerous parties interested in buying but they have backed out due to build limitations. The current owner is now selling due to these same limitations. With easements, setbacks, driveway location, approved septic site, slope and natural water way there is an extremely limited build site. There is also an extremely large cistern in what appears to be the ideal build seat. Therefore, I'm requesting a variance to do a luxury elevated structure with interior space of 600+sf, a covered under patio section of 400sf, and upscaled decking of over 500sf.

The City of Columbus Comprehensive Plan can be found at:  
<https://www.columbus.in.gov/planning/comprehensive-plans/>.

The Bartholomew County Comprehensive Plan can be found at:  
<https://www.columbus.in.gov/planning/comprehensive-plans/comprehensive-county-plans/>.

---

# Site Plan: 14000 W. Mt. Healthy Rd. Lot 3



- Approved septic sites
- 36" Cistern cover
- Unusable land
- Proposed home site 16'x38'
- Driveway and parking



# ALTO A-FRAME



8:0

11/17/2025

Dear Planning Staff and Members of the Board of Zoning Appeals,

My name is Josh Helvie. I reside at 7640 Bishops Grn., Zionsville IN 46077. 317.213.3065. I have been a full time financial adviser since graduating from Indiana University in 1997. Over the last 5 years, I have built and managed 5 luxury short term rental cabins in Sevierville, TN. I would like to expand my Exclusive Cabins brand to Indiana within a format that is a long term success for both myself and Bartholomew county.

I am currently in the process of purchasing a 2.7-acre parcel at **14000 W Mt Healthy Rd, Columbus, Indiana**. The purchase is contingent upon **receiving approval for a variance to build a 600 square-foot, upscale pre-engineered vacation cabin built on a permanent foundation.**

I am requesting a Development Standards Variance to the zoning ordinance requiring a minimum dwelling size of 1,000 square feet.

---

## 1. About the Property and Project

This property is a wooded, scenic 2.7-acre lot with significant physical limitations. Approximately **two-thirds of the lot is steep and sloping**, making construction difficult. On the small portion that is **relatively level and the only realistic build site**, I **discovered a large iron lid covering a large old cistern, or well**. In addition, there are limitations to where the septic can be placed per the attached site assessments, which in-turn limits the placement of a driveway. Lastly, there is a natural runoff/waterway taking up the majority of the lot and further restricting a build location.

These site conditions limit the usable building area and make it financially impractical to develop a larger home at a reasonable cost. Constructing a 1000+ sqft home would require extensive grading, retaining walls, and excavation, which would significantly disturb the natural landscape and add substantial expense. **A 600 sq ft Cabin built on a permanent foundation is the most reasonable and environmentally responsible way to make use of this property.**

---

## 2. Intended Use and Community Benefits

The cabin will serve as a **personal retreat and short-term guest home**. This type of lodging encourages visitors to explore Bartholomew County, **spending at local restaurants, shops, and attractions**, generating modest economic activity. The property will be **well maintained and quietly managed**, creating a positive presence in the area. All of our reviews have been 5 stars and we make it clear to our guests what our rules and expectations are. We are a value add to any community.

---

## 3. Why the Variance Is Needed

Site conditions (steep slopes, old cistern, septic, drive, waterway) make it impractical to construct a 1000+sqft home. The property has been **on the market nearly 3 years**, and multiple buyers have withdrawn from purchasing the lot, after discovering the high cost of site preparation and construction. **A 600 sqft cabin represents a realistic, responsible, and minimally disruptive development option.**

---

## 4. Positive Impact on the Area

This project will create an attractive, permanent, and well-maintained cabin with elegance that compliments the rural character of the area. It will generate **modest, sustainable tourism income** and bring **economic activity to local businesses** without adding strain on infrastructure or public services.

The cabin will meet all applicable building and safety codes, and I intend to maintain the property year-round. Having an occupied and cared-for cabin on this parcel will also **improve oversight and upkeep in the area**, which benefits neighbors and the broader community.

---

## 5. Consistency with Ordinance Intent

I understand the 1,000 sq ft minimum is intended to ensure stable, livable, and visually compatible homes. This proposed **high-end, small vacation cabin** fulfills that intent. It will be **safely constructed on a firm foundation, fully code-compliant, and visually compatible** with the rural surroundings.

---

## 6. Minimum Relief Requested

I am requesting the **minimum relief necessary**—a 400 sq ft reduction in dwelling size—to responsibly develop this property given its natural limitations.

---

**In summary**, this project represents a modest, environmentally sensitive approach to developing a challenging property.

**Granting the variance will allow a high-end, small vacation cabin to be built, that will support local tourism, economic activity, and will preserve the natural landscape.**

Thank you for your consideration.

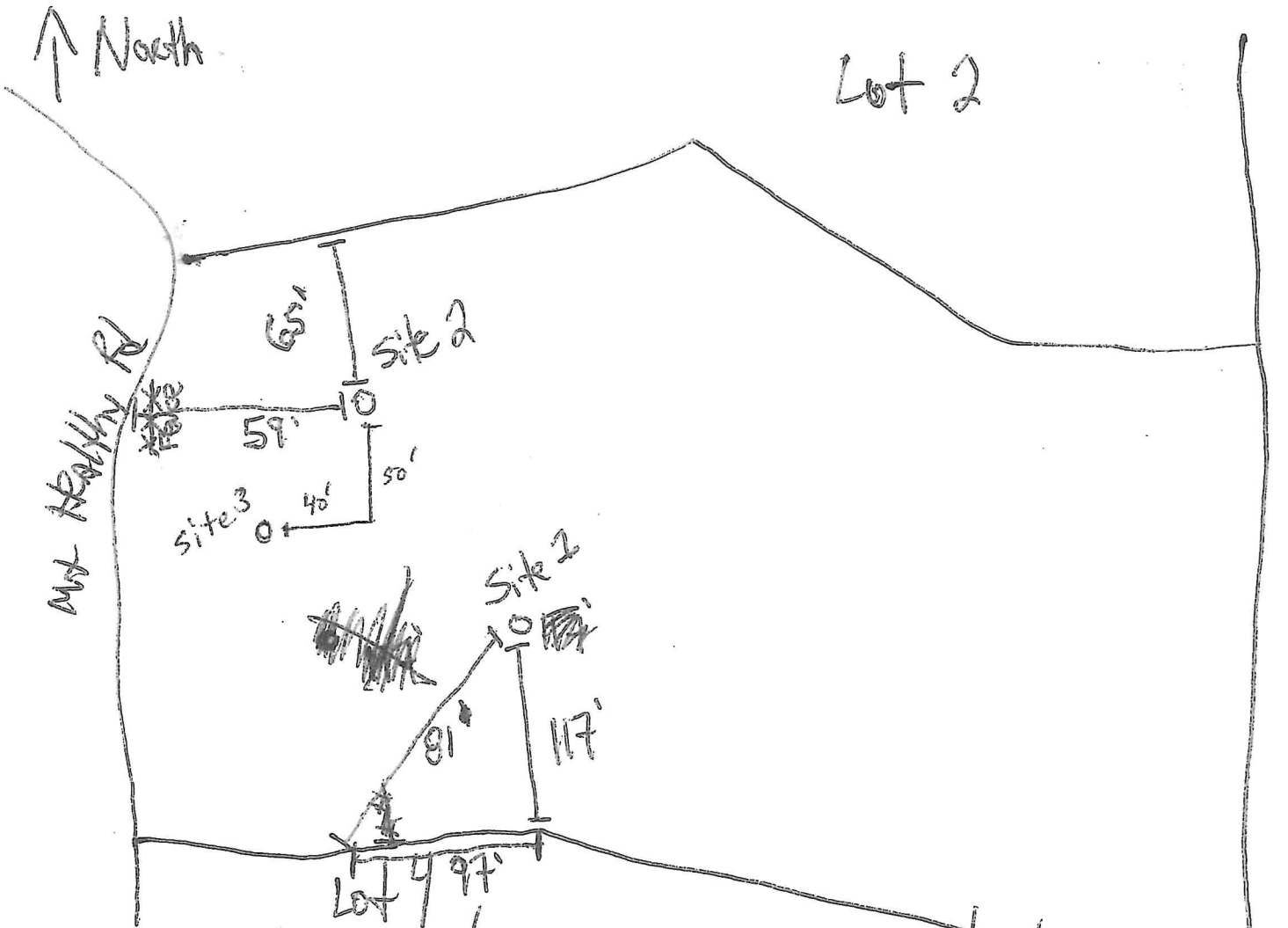
Respectfully,

Josh Helvie

# SITE SURVEY DRAWING FOR SOIL ANALYSIS LOCATIONS

DATE 7/20/22 TOWNSHIP JACKSON SECTION 34  
 (LOCATION) Mt. Healthy Rd FRONTING ON THE NE SIDE OF Mt Healthy Rd  
 APPROXIMATELY 4,000 (FEET/MILES) NW OF 800 W (NEAREST CROSS ROADS)  
 ACRES 16.72 DIMENSIONS X SUBDIVISION Wooded Meadows LOT NO. 3  
 OWNER'S NAME LARRY Kleinhertz PHONE NO. 812 350-0052

INFORMATION/COMMENTS REGARDING PREFERRED SYSTEM PLACEMENT: \_\_\_\_\_



INSPECTOR Matt Galbraith / Travis Anderson DATE 7/20/22  
 PERSONS ATTENDING Tim Allen  
 TYPE OF MONUMENT LEFT AT INTENDED ANALYSIS LOCATION Wooded Stake Painted Pink