

**2025-4-ORD requested by Matthew Jewell, Parish President / Dept. of Planning & Zoning to amend Section XX.E.2.a. of the St. Charles Parish Zoning Ordinance of 1981, as amended, to increase the threshold for construction below base flood elevation for residential accessory buildings from 145 sq. ft. to 600 sq. ft.**

**Ms. Stein** – this request is to change the flood damage prevention ordinance at present. Any structure over 144 sq. feet to be built in a flood zone is required to meet the minimum building elevation it is an extremely low threshold FEMA regulations allow us to increase that to 600 sq. feet, we would like to increase that to 600 sq. feet the result is most likely to be about 1/3 of the accessory structure that we permit in the flood zone will be able to be built at grade that means you can run your lawnmower right into it. That's about a third of the residential accessory's that we permit that are 600 sq. feet or under right now. Another third probably run about 600 sq. feet to 800 sq. feet. We estimate that some people are going to reduce their plans when they find out they can put it at grade and the process is called wet flood proofing. That's when you see vents in a building to equalize the pressure if flood waters come. We do have a lot of folks who build big accessory buildings in residential areas in a special flood hazard area. We expect that those would be going to the Board of Adjustments for variances. And that is something FEMA it is actually listed in FEMA guidance, and I don't know if everybody received the additional packet, additional information in your packet those are FEMA's guidelines for residential accessory buildings we are going with option C, that I kind of highlighted in everyone's packets. So we ask for your support this will make permitting residential accessory buildings a lot easier for a lot of residence and save some folks some money.

Commissioner Petit – Thank you Marny. Any, I guess we will have to open the public hearing. I did get a call on the FEMA. So when someone applies, I guess it's a question, a clarification when someone applies can the variance include the requirement for wet proofing cause, so one of the big concerns cause I read 44C FR 60.3. It says you have to put these louvers and vents in addition to a bunch of other stuff. The big thing it says you have to have a professional engineer sign off the drawings, um. Like in Cocodrie and other areas that I'm more familiar with they have a lot of these building below grade, most people just open the garage door on both sides when they leave so the water goes in and out. Because I get that this helps with cost by saying you don't have to bring it to flood elevation but then if you have to have if you going buy a standard metal building then have to take it to an engineer to draw some squares and put 1 foot by 6 foot louvers or whatever in it, then it adds cost is that really necessary for a building that can only be used as a garage or storage any way, cause I think that 44C FR also includes what it can be used for.

Ms. Stein – right it does, and the last clause of item 4 in the staff report on page 20. The opening, the flood vents must allow for the automatic entry and exit of flood waters. So, without the presence of without the manual operation or without the presence of a person. So that actually cuts out garage doors being the equalizing vent.

Commissioner Petit - is that in there today? Or is this an addition?

Ms. Stein – yes this is their regulation. Oh, is that in?

Commissioner Petit – addition. So, is that a new requirement?

Ms. Stein – it is not a new requirement, no. I mean I don't remember the date on the guide and site have it. Something that is a big discussion nationwide compliance with residential access with small accessories and this is again just in the A zones. The restriction in the B zones is 100 square feet period and were not, we don't actually permit buildings that's actually with our next ordinance. We don't really get request in building permits in the V zones and the high velocity flood zones. But to the original question, do we require an engineer to stamp all of the plans? No. We have standard and the standard is an inch per square foot, an inch of opening per square foot we can handle that in the office and often the license surveyor who goes out and works on it we do require documentation at the end.

But does it have to be done by a licensed engineer? No. A lot of people get pre-engineer plans and a lot of people get pre engineered vents. So, little bit cost to the vents yes, but um the current restriction of 114 sq. ft. has been a real problem, so we really would like to increase that, that's really the issue.

Mr. Albert – so your looking at the difference between a bike shed and a garage. Your looking at 12 x 12 versus 30 x 20.

Ms. Stein – so again this is 100 % increasing residents options to build more cheaply, increasing their options and um there are a couple of other.

Commissioner Petit – so the variance is for flood elevation, you can not get a variance from the FEMA?

Ms. Stein – well, actually in your guidance it's actually forget section 1 and that's about agriculture buildings and forget section 2 skip to whatever it is, page 7. And you will see that FEMA own guidance says without getting a variance you can go up to 600 sq. ft.

Mr. Albert – it's one of the few things where variances are hastily acceptable.

Ms. Stein – yea they are kind of commending that if people need a larger accessory building, they can go for a variance.

Commissioner Petit- ok, thank you.

Ms. Stein – and we do have two of those actually on the upcoming Board of Adjustment meeting where we are allowing them to increase or where they have requested to increase the maximum square footage for wet flood proofing. We will see how that goes.

The public hearing was opened and closed after no one spoke for or against.

Commissioner Folse made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Keen.

YEAS: KEEN, PRICE, FOLSE, PETIT, JAY, ROSS

NAYS: NONE

ABSENT: FRANGELLA

**PASSED**

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