

# State of Wisconsin



2017 Assembly Bill 479

Date of enactment: **November 27, 2017**  
Date of publication\*: **November 28, 2017**

## 2017 WISCONSIN ACT 67

AN ACT *to renumber and amend* 59.694 (7) (c) and 62.23 (7) (e) 7.; *to amend* 59.69 (10e) (title), 59.69 (10e) (a) 1., 59.69 (10e) (b), 60.61 (5e) (title), 60.61 (5e) (a) 1., 60.61 (5e) (b), 62.23 (7) (hb) (title), 62.23 (7) (hb) 1. a. and 62.23 (7) (hb) 2.; and *to create* 59.69 (5e), 59.694 (7) (c) 1., 59.694 (7) (c) 3., 60.61 (4e), 60.62 (4e), 62.23 (7) (de), 62.23 (7) (e) 7. a., 62.23 (7) (e) 7. d., 66.10015 (1) (e), 66.10015 (2) (e), 66.10015 (4), 227.10 (2p) and 710.17 of the statutes; **relating to:** limiting the authority of local governments to regulate development on substandard lots and require the merging of lots; requiring a political subdivision to issue a conditional use permit under certain circumstances; standards for granting certain zoning variances; local ordinances related to repair, rebuilding, and maintenance of certain nonconforming structures; and the right to display the flag of the United States.

*The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:*

**SECTION 2.** 59.69 (5e) of the statutes is created to read:

59.69 (5e) **CONDITIONAL USE PERMITS.** (a) In this subsection:

1. "Conditional use" means a use allowed under a conditional use permit, special exception, or other special zoning permission issued by a county, but does not include a variance.

2. "Substantial evidence" means facts and information, other than merely personal preferences or speculation, directly pertaining to the requirements and conditions an applicant must meet to obtain a conditional use permit and that reasonable persons would accept in support of a conclusion.

(b) 1. If an applicant for a conditional use permit meets or agrees to meet all of the requirements and conditions specified in the county ordinance or those imposed by the county zoning board, the county shall grant the conditional use permit. Any condition imposed must be

related to the purpose of the ordinance and be based on substantial evidence.

2. The requirements and conditions described under subd. 1. must be reasonable and, to the extent practicable, measurable and may include conditions such as the permit's duration, transfer, or renewal. The applicant must demonstrate that the application and all requirements and conditions established by the county relating to the conditional use are or shall be satisfied, both of which must be supported by substantial evidence. The county's decision to approve or deny the permit must be supported by substantial evidence.

(c) Upon receipt of a conditional use permit application, and following publication in the county of a class 2 notice under ch. 985, the county shall hold a public hearing on the application.

(d) Once granted, a conditional use permit shall remain in effect as long as the conditions upon which the permit was issued are followed, but the county may impose conditions such as the permit's duration, transfer, or renewal, in addition to any other conditions specified in the zoning ordinance or by the county zoning board.

\* Section 991.11, WISCONSIN STATUTES: Effective date of acts. "Every act and every portion of an act enacted by the legislature over the governor's partial veto which does not expressly prescribe the time when it takes effect shall take effect on the day after its date of publication."

(e) If a county denies a person's conditional use permit application, the person may appeal the decision to the circuit court under the procedures contained in s. 59.694 (10).

**SECTION 3.** 59.69 (10e) (title) of the statutes is amended to read:

59.69 (10e) (title) REPAIR, ~~REBUILDING,~~ AND MAINTENANCE OF CERTAIN NONCONFORMING STRUCTURES.

**SECTION 4.** 59.69 (10e) (a) 1. of the statutes is amended to read:

59.69 (10e) (a) 1. "Development regulations" means the part of a zoning ordinance ~~enacted under this section~~ that applies to elements including setback, height, lot coverage, and side yard.

**SECTION 5.** 59.69 (10e) (b) of the statutes is amended to read:

59.69 (10e) (b) An ordinance ~~enacted under this section~~ may not prohibit, or limit based on cost, or require a variance for the repair, maintenance, renovation, rebuilding, or remodeling of a nonconforming structure or any part of a nonconforming structure.

**SECTION 8.** 59.694 (7) (c) of the statutes is renumbered 59.694 (7) (c) 2. and amended to read:

59.694 (7) (c) 2. To authorize upon appeal in specific cases variances from the terms of the ordinance that will not be contrary to the public interest, where, owing to special conditions, a literal enforcement of the provisions of the ordinance will result in unnecessary hardship, and so that the spirit of the ordinance shall be observed and substantial justice done.

4. A county board may enact an ordinance specifying an expiration date for a variance granted under this paragraph if that date relates to a specific date by which the action authorized by the variance must be commenced or completed. If no such ordinance is in effect at the time a variance is granted, or if the board of adjustment does not specify an expiration date for the variance, a variance granted under this paragraph does not expire unless, at the time it is granted, the board of adjustment specifies in the variance a specific date by which the action authorized by the variance must be commenced or completed. An ordinance enacted after April 5, 2012, may not specify an expiration date for a variance that was granted before April 5, 2012.

5. A variance granted under this paragraph runs with the land.

**SECTION 9.** 59.694 (7) (c) 1. of the statutes is created to read:

59.694 (7) (c) 1. In this paragraph:

a. "Area variance" means a modification to a dimensional, physical, or locational requirement such as the setback, frontage, height, bulk, or density restriction for a structure that is granted by the board of adjustment under this subsection.

b. "Use variance" means an authorization by the board of adjustment under this subsection for the use of

land for a purpose that is otherwise not allowed or is prohibited by the applicable zoning ordinance.

**SECTION 10.** 59.694 (7) (c) 3. of the statutes is created to read:

59.694 (7) (c) 3. A property owner bears the burden of proving "unnecessary hardship," as that term is used in this paragraph, for an area variance, by demonstrating that strict compliance with a zoning ordinance would unreasonably prevent the property owner from using the property owner's property for a permitted purpose or would render conformity with the zoning ordinance unnecessarily burdensome or, for a use variance, by demonstrating that strict compliance with the zoning ordinance would leave the property owner with no reasonable use of the property in the absence of a variance. In all circumstances, a property owner bears the burden of proving that the unnecessary hardship is based on conditions unique to the property, rather than considerations personal to the property owner, and that the unnecessary hardship was not created by the property owner.

**SECTION 11.** 60.61 (4e) of the statutes is created to read:

60.61 (4e) CONDITIONAL USE PERMITS. (a) In this subsection:

1. "Conditional use" means a use allowed under a conditional use permit, special exception, or other special zoning permission issued by a town, but does not include a variance.

2. "Substantial evidence" means facts and information, other than merely personal preferences or speculation, directly pertaining to the requirements and conditions an applicant must meet to obtain a conditional use permit and that reasonable persons would accept in support of a conclusion.

(b) 1. If an applicant for a conditional use permit meets or agrees to meet all of the requirements and conditions specified in the town ordinance or those imposed by the town zoning board, the town shall grant the conditional use permit. Any condition imposed must be related to the purpose of the ordinance and be based on substantial evidence.

2. The requirements and conditions described under subd. 1. must be reasonable and, to the extent practicable, measurable and may include conditions such as the permit's duration, transfer, or renewal. The applicant must demonstrate that the application and all requirements and conditions established by the town relating to the conditional use are or shall be satisfied, both of which must be supported by substantial evidence. The town's decision to approve or deny the permit must be supported by substantial evidence.

(c) Upon receipt of a conditional use permit application, and following publication in the town of a class 2 notice under ch. 985, the town shall hold a public hearing on the application.

(d) Once granted, a conditional use permit shall remain in effect as long as the conditions upon which the permit was issued are followed, but the town may impose conditions such as the permit's duration, transfer, or renewal, in addition to any other conditions specified in the zoning ordinance or by the town zoning board.

(e) If a town denies a person's conditional use permit application, the person may appeal the decision to the circuit court under the procedures described in s. 59.694 (10).

**SECTION 12.** 60.61 (5e) (title) of the statutes is amended to read:

60.61 (5e) (title) REPAIR, REBUILDING, AND MAINTENANCE OF CERTAIN NONCONFORMING STRUCTURES.

**SECTION 13.** 60.61 (5e) (a) 1. of the statutes is amended to read:

60.61 (5e) (a) 1. "Development regulations" means the part of a zoning ordinance ~~enacted under this section~~ that applies to elements including setback, height, lot coverage, and side yard.

**SECTION 14.** 60.61 (5e) (b) of the statutes is amended to read:

60.61 (5e) (b) An ordinance ~~enacted under this section~~ may not prohibit, or limit based on cost, or require a variance for the repair, maintenance, renovation, rebuilding, or remodeling of a nonconforming structure or any part of a nonconforming structure.

**SECTION 15.** 60.62 (4e) of the statutes is created to read:

60.62 (4e) (a) In this subsection:

1. "Conditional use" means a use allowed under a conditional use permit, special exception, or other special zoning permission issued by a town, but does not include a variance.

2. "Substantial evidence" means facts and information, other than merely personal preferences or speculation, directly pertaining to the requirements and conditions an applicant must meet to obtain a conditional use permit and that reasonable persons would accept in support of a conclusion.

(b) 1. If an applicant for a conditional use permit meets or agrees to meet all of the requirements and conditions specified in the town ordinance or those imposed by the town zoning board, the town shall grant the conditional use permit. Any condition imposed must be related to the purpose of the ordinance and be based on substantial evidence.

2. The requirements and conditions described under subd. 1. must be reasonable and, to the extent practicable, measurable and may include conditions such as the permit's duration, transfer, or renewal. The applicant must demonstrate that the application and all requirements and conditions established by the town relating to the conditional use are or shall be satisfied, both of which must be supported by substantial evidence. The town's decision

to approve or deny the permit must be supported by substantial evidence.

(c) Upon receipt of a conditional use permit application, and following publication in the town of a class 2 notice under ch. 985, the town shall hold a public hearing on the application.

(d) Once granted, a conditional use permit shall remain in effect as long as the conditions upon which the permit was issued are followed, but the town may impose conditions such as the permit's duration, transfer, or renewal, in addition to any other conditions specified in the zoning ordinance or by the town zoning board.

(e) If a town denies a person's conditional use permit application, the person may appeal the decision to the circuit court under the procedures described in s. 61.35.

**SECTION 16.** 62.23 (7) (de) of the statutes is created to read:

62.23 (7) (de) *Conditional use permits.* 1. In this paragraph:

a. "Conditional use" means a use allowed under a conditional use permit, special exception, or other special zoning permission issued by a city, but does not include a variance.

b. "Substantial evidence" means facts and information, other than merely personal preferences or speculation, directly pertaining to the requirements and conditions an applicant must meet to obtain a conditional use permit and that reasonable persons would accept in support of a conclusion.

2. a. If an applicant for a conditional use permit meets or agrees to meet all of the requirements and conditions specified in the city ordinance or those imposed by the city zoning board, the city shall grant the conditional use permit. Any condition imposed must be related to the purpose of the ordinance and be based on substantial evidence.

b. The requirements and conditions described under subd. 2. a. must be reasonable and, to the extent practicable, measurable and may include conditions such as the permit's duration, transfer, or renewal. The applicant must demonstrate that the application and all requirements and conditions established by the city relating to the conditional use are or shall be satisfied, both of which must be supported by substantial evidence. The city's decision to approve or deny the permit must be supported by substantial evidence.

3. Upon receipt of a conditional use permit application, and following publication in the city of a class 2 notice under ch. 985, the city shall hold a public hearing on the application.

4. Once granted, a conditional use permit shall remain in effect as long as the conditions upon which the permit was issued are followed, but the city may impose conditions such as the permit's duration, transfer, or

renewal, in addition to any other conditions specified in the zoning ordinance or by the city zoning board.

5. If a city denies a person's conditional use permit application, the person may appeal the decision to the circuit court under the procedures contained in par. (e) 10.

**SECTION 17.** 62.23 (7) (e) 7. of the statutes is renumbered 62.23 (7) (e) 7. b. and amended to read:

62.23 (7) (e) 7. b. The board of appeals shall have the following powers: To hear and decide appeals where it is alleged there is error in any order, requirement, decision, or determination made by an administrative official in the enforcement of this section or of any ordinance adopted pursuant thereto; to hear and decide special exception to the terms of the ordinance upon which such board is required to pass under such ordinance; to authorize upon appeal in specific cases such variance from the terms of the ordinance as will not be contrary to the public interest, where, owing to special conditions, a literal enforcement of the provisions of the ordinance will result in practical difficulty or unnecessary hardship, so that the spirit of the ordinance shall be observed, public safety and welfare secured, and substantial justice done.

e. The council of a city may enact an ordinance specifying an expiration date for a variance granted under this subdivision if that date relates to a specific date by which the action authorized by the variance must be commenced or completed. If no such ordinance is in effect at the time a variance is granted, or if the board of appeals does not specify an expiration date for the variance, a variance granted under this subdivision does not expire unless, at the time it is granted, the board of appeals specifies in the variance a specific date by which the action authorized by the variance must be commenced or completed. An ordinance enacted after April 5, 2012, may not specify an expiration date for a variance that was granted before April 5, 2012.

f. A variance granted under this subdivision runs with the land.

c. The board may permit in appropriate cases, and subject to appropriate conditions and safeguards in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the ordinance, a building or premises to be erected or used for such public utility purposes in any location which is reasonably necessary for the public convenience and welfare.

**SECTION 18.** 62.23 (7) (e) 7. a. of the statutes is created to read:

62.23 (7) (e) 7. a. In this subdivision, "area variance" means a modification to a dimensional, physical, or locational requirement such as a setback, frontage, height, bulk, or density restriction for a structure that is granted by the board of appeals under this paragraph. In this subdivision, "use variance" means an authorization by the board of appeals under this paragraph for the use of land for a purpose that is otherwise not allowed or is prohibited by the applicable zoning ordinance.

**SECTION 19.** 62.23 (7) (e) 7. d. of the statutes is created to read:

62.23 (7) (e) 7. d. A property owner bears the burden of proving "unnecessary hardship," as that term is used in this subdivision, for an area variance, by demonstrating that strict compliance with a zoning ordinance would unreasonably prevent the property owner from using the property owner's property for a permitted purpose or would render conformity with the zoning ordinance unnecessarily burdensome or, for a use variance, by demonstrating that strict compliance with a zoning ordinance would leave the property owner with no reasonable use of the property in the absence of a variance. In all circumstances, a property owner bears the burden of proving that the unnecessary hardship is based on conditions unique to the property, rather than considerations personal to the property owner, and that the unnecessary hardship was not created by the property owner.

**SECTION 20.** 62.23 (7) (hb) (title) of the statutes is amended to read:

62.23 (7) (hb) (title) *Repair, rebuilding, and maintenance of certain nonconforming structures.*

**SECTION 21.** 62.23 (7) (hb) 1. a. of the statutes is amended to read:

62.23 (7) (hb) 1. a. "Development regulations" means the part of a zoning ordinance enacted under this subsection that applies to elements including setback, height, lot coverage, and side yard.

**SECTION 22.** 62.23 (7) (hb) 2. of the statutes is amended to read:

62.23 (7) (hb) 2. An ordinance enacted under this subsection may not prohibit, or limit based on cost, the repair, maintenance, renovation, or remodeling of a nonconforming structure.

**SECTION 23.** 66.10015 (1) (e) of the statutes is created to read:

66.10015 (1) (e) "Substandard lot" means a legally created lot or parcel that met any applicable lot size requirements when it was created, but does not meet current lot size requirements.

**SECTION 24.** 66.10015 (2) (e) of the statutes is created to read:

66.10015 (2) (e) Notwithstanding any other law or rule, or any action or proceeding under the common law, no political subdivision may enact or enforce an ordinance or take any other action that prohibits a property owner from doing any of the following:

1. Conveying an ownership interest in a substandard lot.

2. Using a substandard lot as a building site if all of the following apply:

a. The substandard lot or parcel has never been developed with one or more of its structures placed partly upon an adjacent lot or parcel.

b. The substandard lot or parcel is developed to comply with all other ordinances of the political subdivision.

**SECTION 25.** 66.10015 (4) of the statutes is created to read:

66.10015 (4) Notwithstanding the authority granted under ss. 59.69, 60.61, 60.62, 61.35, and 62.23, no political subdivision may enact or enforce an ordinance or take any other action that requires one or more lots to be merged with another lot, for any purpose, without the consent of the owners of the lots that are to be merged.

**SECTION 26.** 227.10 (2p) of the statutes is created to read:

227.10 (2p) No agency may promulgate a rule or take any other action that requires one or more lots to be merged with another lot, for any purpose, without the consent of the owners of the lots that are to be merged.

**SECTION 27.** 710.17 of the statutes is created to read:

**710.17 Right to display the flag of the United States.** (1) **DEFINITIONS.** In this section:

(a) "Housing cooperative" means a cooperative incorporated under ch. 185 or organized under ch. 193 that owns residential property that is used or intended to be used, in whole or in part, by the members of the housing cooperative as their homes or residences.

(b) "Member of a homeowners' association" means a person that owns residential property within a subdivision, development, or other similar area that is subject to any policy or restriction adopted by a homeowners' association.

(c) "Member of a housing cooperative" means a member, as defined in s. 185.01 (5) or 193.005 (15), of a housing cooperative if the member uses or intends to use part of the property of the housing cooperative as the member's home or residence.

(2) **RIGHT TO DISPLAY THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES.** (a) Except as provided in sub. (3), a homeowners' association may not adopt or enforce a covenant, condition, or restriction, or enter into an agreement, that

restricts or prevents a member of the homeowners' association from displaying the flag of the United States on property in which the member has an ownership interest and that is subject to any policy or restriction adopted by the homeowners' association.

(b) Except as provided in sub. (3), a housing cooperative may not adopt or enforce a covenant, condition, or restriction, or enter into an agreement, that restricts or prevents a member of the housing cooperative from displaying the flag of the United States on property of the housing cooperative to which the member has a right to exclusive possession or use.

(3) **EXCEPTIONS.** A homeowners' association or housing cooperative may adopt and enforce a covenant, condition, or restriction, or enter into an agreement, that does any of the following:

(a) Requires that any display of the flag of the United States must conform with a rule or custom for proper display and use of the flag set forth in 4 USC 5 to 10.

(b) Provides a reasonable restriction on the time, place, or manner of displaying the flag of the United States that is necessary to protect a substantial interest of the homeowners' association or housing cooperative.

**SECTION 28. Initial applicability.**

(1) **RIGHT TO DISPLAY THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES.** The treatment of section 710.17 of the statutes first applies to a covenant, condition, or restriction that is adopted, renewed, or modified, or to an agreement that is entered into, renewed, or modified, on the effective date of this subsection.

(2) **CONDITIONAL USE PERMITS.** The treatment of sections 59.69 (5e), 60.61 (4e), 60.62 (4e), and 62.23 (7) (de) of the statutes first applies to an application for a conditional use permit that is filed on the effective date of this subsection.