# **STANDARD**

# **ZONING ENFORCEMENT**

# **PROCEDURES**



# TOWN OF CANTON

LAND USE OFFICE 4 MARKET STREET P.O. BOX 168 COLLINSVILLE, CT 06022

ADOPTED BY THE ZONING COMMISSION ON NOVEMBER 18, 2009

Revised by the Planning and Zoning Commission on November 19, 2013 Revised by the Planning and Zoning Commission on August 19, 2015 Revised by the Planning and Zoning Commission on September 21, 2016

# SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

# 1.1. OBJECTIVE

The Connecticut General Statutes authorize the Planning and Zoning Commission (Commission) of the Town of Canton (Town) to enforce its Zoning Regulations (Regulations). On November 18, 2009, the Commission established these procedures to ensure that zoning complaints are dealt with in a timely, fair and equitable manner, consistent with the intent of the regulations and the Commission. The procedures provide a framework for the zoning enforcement process.

# 1.2. GOALS AND GENERAL PROCEDURES

The Commission sets forth the following goals and general procedures to guide the zoning enforcement process. The term "shall" when referring to an enforcement action or step by the Zoning Enforcement Officer (ZEO) shall be interpreted to mean that the ZEO is authorized to take such action or step, and that such action or step is generally the proper procedure under the subject circumstance, subject to the provisions of Paragraph 1.2.4 below. It is not the intent of these procedures to undermine the ability of Town staff to make sound, reasonable judgments; rather, it is intended to serve as a framework within which those judgments will be made.

- **1.2.1** Action regarding initial violations shall be focused on compliance rather than penalty. It is not the Commission's intent to collect fines or stop owners from enjoying otherwise permitted activity on their property while actively resolving an enforcement issue. Progressive action towards compliance is a necessity.
- 1.2.2 The ZEO shall be responsible to create and maintain a record of all activity regarding each complaint, including the complaint itself, whether initiated by the public or a Town employee. Such records shall be considered public and, therefore, will be available in the Land Use Office for public inspection during normal office hours, subject to attorney-client privileges as applicable.
- **1.2.3** The ZEO shall report to the Commission at each regularly scheduled meeting, or more often if the Commission or ZEO deems it necessary, regarding the status of zoning violations.
- 1.2.4 The ZEO shall endeavor to be consistent when processing complaints and conducting enforcement activity. These Procedures shall provide the framework to achieve such consistency. It is understood that adherence to the Procedures in all instances may not be practical or entirely aligned with the intent of the Regulations or the Commission. The ZEO shall apply sound judgment in consideration of the same; and document any clear or significant deviation from established procedure within the record for the subject complaint.
- 1.2.5 The ZEO shall consult with Town Counsel, the Director of Planning, or the Commission Chair as needed in making determinations regarding the intent of the Regulations or the Commission or the protection of the interests of the Town. Town Counsel may only be used in accordance with procedures established by the Chief Administrative Officer and/or Board of Selectmen.
- **1.2.6** The ZEO may, as deemed warranted thereby, refer any enforcement matter, or portion thereof, to the Commission for guidance or determination.

### 1.3. ENFORCEMENT TEAM

**1.3.1.** The Assistant Town Planner has been appointed as Zoning Enforcement Officer by motion of the Commission on November 19, 2008. The Commission may designate a Deputy Zoning Enforcement Officer (Deputy ZEO). The ZEO shall bear the primary responsibility for zoning enforcement. The Deputy ZEO shall primarily act only in the absence of the ZEO. The ZEO and Deputy ZEO shall be referred to collectively in these procedures as the Zoning Enforcement Officer or ZEO.

**1.3.2.** The Commission places emphasis on inter-departmental cooperation wherever possible. Many times, zoning violations also involve building, health and public safety issues. When appropriate, the ZEO shall contact and meet with appropriate agencies or officials as necessary to carry out joint enforcement efforts.

# <u>SECTION 2 – STANDARD ZONING ENFORCEMENT PROCEDURE</u>

#### 2.1 COMPLAINT FILED

A complaint regarding one or more zoning violations may be filed by any person with the Land Use Office. A Zoning Complaint Form is included as Appendix B. The submission of a completed Zoning Complaint Form is a prerequisite to the processing of a complaint.

It is not the intent of the Commission, nor in the interests of the Town, to have Zoning enforcement be used, or attempt to be used, as leverage or retaliation in unrelated private disputes; or to serve as an escalator within such a dispute. Where the ZEO has reason to suspect that the same may be a primary motivation for, or probable outcome from, any complaint, then the ZEO is authorized to proceed with extra caution and deliberation, including suspension of enforcement activities, with respect to such complaint as deemed thereby to be consistent with the intent of the Commission and the interests of the Town

The ZEO shall determine the priority of all zoning enforcement actions and deal with them accordingly as follows:

- 1. Violations that pose immediate danger to the public health, safety, and general welfare of the community.
- 2. Violations related to development projects that are in the construction phase.
- 3. Proactive enforcement programs initiated by the Commission and/or Zoning Enforcement Official.
- 4. Reactive or complaint based enforcement programs.
- 5. Those deemed to be associated with an unrelated private dispute as set forth above.

### 2.2 PROPERTY RESEARCH

When a landowner is conducting a use that is presently not permitted under the zoning regulations, or authorized by the Commission, the ZEO shall perform a limited initial research to confirm the permit history, zoning district and if any variances have been granted. If the initial research is not conclusive, the ZEO shall ask the landowner to provide evidence that he or she is entitled to conduct such use. The inquiry shall be made in a cordial, nonthreatening manner to the property owner.

### 2.3 SITE INSPECTION

The ZEO shall conduct a site inspection to determine the validity of the complaint. The property owner may or may not be present during this inspection; however, the ZEO should not enter the property without permission. The ZEO shall investigate to determine if there are any relevant facts or issues that have not been included in the complaint.

# 2.4 OBSERVATION OF VIOLATION

2.4.1 After learning of a property that could potentially be in violation of the town's Zoning Regulations, the ZEO may issue an Observation of Violation letter to the alleged violator. If the alleged violator is not the owner of record, an Observation of Violation shall be sent to both the owner and the alleged violator. This Observation of Violation process serves to inform the recipient(s) of what "appears to be" a violation of the Regulations, to request information to determine if a violation exists, to open up a dialogue, and to potentially obtain compliance voluntarily without moving to a more formal enforcement step A sample Observation of Violation can be found in Appendix C.

2.4.2 If the violation involves the grading of land, removal of earth or soil erosion and sediment control, or is determined to be an emergency, egregious in nature, or increasingly difficult to correct or undo if allowed to continue, an Enforcement Order (§2.8) and/ or Citation (§2.12) may be issued, to be effective immediately, without prior issuance of an Observation of Violation letter or a Notice of Violation ((§2.6).

# 2.5 FOLLOW UP INSPECTION

- **2.5.1** The Observation of Violation shall specify a grace period to allow for voluntary compliance. That grace period shall not be greater than 30 days, depending on the severity of this violation. Public health, safety and welfare shall guide the ZEO's decision regarding the length of the grace period.
- **2.5.2** Upon expiration of the grace period, the ZEO shall conduct a follow up inspection to determine if compliance has been achieved. If substantial progress has been made toward the correction of the violation, the ZEO may extend the grace period for <u>no more than 30 additional days.</u>
- 2.5.3 Should the violation be confirmed or unresolved, the ZEO may have the discretion to move directly to Section 2.12.

# 2.6 NOTICE OF VIOLATION (NOV) AND REQUEST FOR VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE

2.6.1 After inspecting the site and confirming that a zoning violation exists, the ZEO shall initiate a dialogue with an alleged violator by placing a telephone call, making a site visit, or sending an email or a Notice of Violation letter to the alleged violator. In all cases, voluntary compliance shall be requested. In the case of a phone call, site visit or an email, a Notice of Violation letter shall be sent and shall summarize the conversation and understanding between parties in order to document the activity. If the alleged violator is not the owner of record, a Notice of Violation shall be sent to both the owner and the alleged violator. A sample Notice of Violation can be found in Appendix D.

#### 2.7 FOLLOW UP INSPECTION

- 2.7.1 The Notice of Violation shall specify a grace period to allow for voluntary compliance. That grace period shall not be greater than 30 days, depending on the severity of this violation. Public health, safety and welfare shall guide the ZEO's decision regarding the length of the grace period.
- 2.7.2 Upon expiration of the grace period, the ZEO shall conduct a follow up inspection to determine if compliance has been achieved. If substantial progress has been made toward the correction of the violation, the ZEO may extend the grace period <u>for no more than 30 additional days</u>.

### 2.8 ENFORCEMENT ORDER

- **2.8.1** If the first or second follow up inspection reveals that the property is still in violation, or if the violation and violator comprise a repeat offense and repeat offender, the ZEO may issue an Enforcement Order (a.k.a Cease and Desist Order).
- **2.8.2** If the violation involves the grading of land, removal of earth or soil erosion and sediment control, or is determined to be an emergency, egregious in nature, or increasingly difficult to correct or undo if allowed to continue, the Enforcement Order shall require the violation to be corrected immediately. For all other violations, the Enforcement Order shall provide the violator with no greater than 30 days to correct the violation. This is an order to correct the zoning violation. A sample Enforcement Order can be found in Appendix E.

# 2.9 APPEAL OF ENFORCEMENT ORDER

2.9.1 After the receipt of an Enforcement Order, the violator may appeal the enforcement action to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) in accordance with Section 8-7 of the Connecticut General Statutes and with any rules adopted by the ZBA. The appeal shall be taken on a form prescribed by the ZBA and shall be filed with the ZBA and with the ZEO or the Commission not later than 30 days after the receipt of the Enforcement Order being appealed. The Zoning Board of Appeals application form is included as Appendix G.

**2.9.2** The Commission may review all decisions of the ZBA in which the ZEO is aggrieved and may authorize the filing of an appeal to the Superior Court.

#### 2.10 COURT RELIEF

**2.10.1** If the violator fails to comply with the Enforcement Order, the ZEO is authorized to institute an enforcement action in court pursuant to Section 8-12 of the Connecticut General Statutes. The ZEO shall consult with Town Counsel to discuss instituting such an enforcement action. Town Counsel and the ZEO shall report to the Commission concerning instituting an enforcement action, and Town Counsel's report shall include his advice and recommendations.

#### 2.11 ENFORCEMENT OF THE COURT ORDER

The ZEO shall seek the advice of Town Counsel in the implementation of court orders that result from enforcement actions instituted pursuant to Section 2.9 of these Procedures. The ZEO also has the ability, under Chapter 248-10 of the Canton Town Code to issue a Citation (§2.12).

# 2.12 ENFORCEMENT BY CITATION

- 2.12.1 If an order of the ZEO has not been remedied within 10 days of the date of compliance specified in the order or 10 days of issuance of the order, whichever is later, the ZEO may issue a Citation in accordance with Section 8-12a of the Connecticut General Statutes to the violator. If the decision that the regulations were violated is challenged by way of an appeal as permitted by municipal ordinance or state statute, the time to issue a citation shall be extended to 10 days after any decision of the applicable entity confirming or determining that the applicable regulations have been violated. A sample Enforcement Citation (First and Second Notice) is attached as Appendix F.
- **2.12.2** The First Notice shall specify a grace period to allow for compliance or the payment of the fine. That grace period shall not be greater than 30 days, depending on the severity of this violation. Public health, safety and welfare shall guide the ZEO's decision regarding the length of the grace period. The First Notice shall specify the amount of the fine and the manner and location of which payment is to be made.
- **2.12.3** If the First Notice is unpaid or the violation is not corrected, the ZEO is authorized to issue multiple first notices at a suggested re-occurrence of one every month of the intervening 30 days of violations.
- **2.12.4** After a citation has been issued and the fine has not been paid, nor the violation corrected, the ZEO shall send a Second Notice (addressing all First Notices sent) to the alleged violator promptly (and no later than 12 months after the expiration of the final period for the uncontested payment of fines, penalties, costs, or fees for any citation).

Such notice shall inform the alleged violator of the following:

- a. The allegations against the alleged violator and the amount of the fines, penalties, costs, or fees due.
- b. That the alleged violator may contest his or her liability before a hearing officer by delivering in person or by mail written notice within 10 days of the date of the original notice to said alleged violator that he or she desires to contest his or her liability before a hearing officer.
- c. That if the alleged violator does not demand a hearing, an assessment and judgment shall be entered against him or her.
- d. That such judgment may be issued without further notice.

# 2.13 HEARING PROCEDURE

**2.13.1** Any alleged violator who requests a hearing shall be provided one in accordance the citation hearing procedure set forth in Chapter 15, Citations, of the Canton Town Code.

# 2.14 CLOSURE

Once the violation has ceased and the violator is in compliance and any related administrative and judicial appeals have been finally resolved, the ZEO can close the case.

# <u>SECTION 3 – STANDARD PROCEDURES FOR PROCESSING CERTIFICATES OF</u> ZONING COMPLIANCE

# 3.0 CERTIFICATES OF ZONING COMPLIANCE

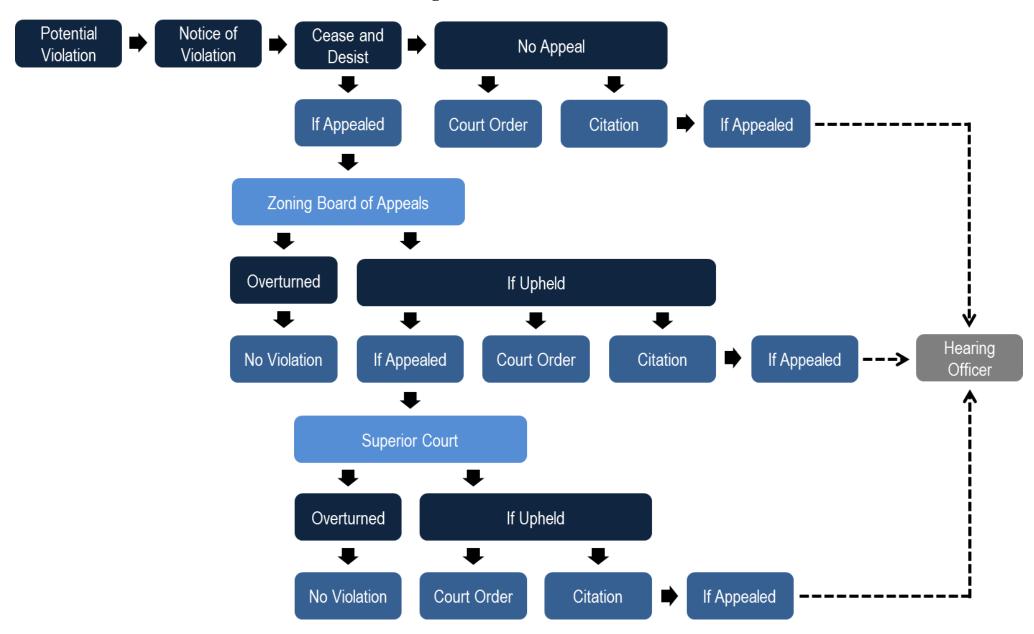
The ZEO shall review and issue Certificates of Zoning Compliance in accordance with the Town of Canton Zoning Regulations, Section 9.8 – Enforcement.

# **APPENDIX**

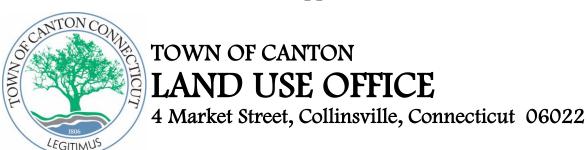
- A. FLOWCHART
- **B.** COMPLAINT FORM
- C. OBSERVATION OF VIOLATION
- D. NOTICE OF VIOLATION
- E. ENFORCEMENT ORDER
- F. ENFORCEMENT BY CITATION
- G. APPEAL FORM (ZBA)

# **Appendix A**

**Town of Canton Standard Zoning Enforcement Procedure Flow Chart** 



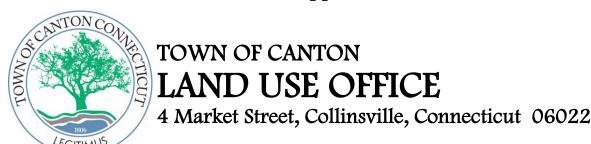
# Appendix B



# **ZONING COMPLAINT FORM**

Date:	Time:	
Location of Complaint:		
Anonymous Complaint (Yes or (If The Complaint Is Anonymous,	No): No Follow-Up Comm	nunication Will Ensue)
Person/Entity Filing the Compla Address:		nous):
Phone:		E-Mail:
Person Filling Out Form:		
Phone:		E-Mail:
Date Activity Occurred:		Time Activity Occurred:
Name of Alleged Violator:		
Owner: Tenant:		
Phone: Mailing Address:		
	STAFF SE	ECTION
Date of Initial Inspection:		Time of Initial Inspection:
Date of Follow-Up Inspection(s	):	<del></del>
Possible Violation of Section(s)	):	
Resolution:		

# Appendix C



Note to Commission: This is a notice reworded to inform the owner of what "appears to be" a violation of the Regulations, to request information to determine if a violation exists, to open up a dialogue with the owner, and to obtain compliance voluntarily. This will avoid triggering a right of appeal to the ZBA and will enable the ZEO to put the burden on the owner to provide information about compliance and also provides a method of obtaining compliance short of a cease and desist order.

DATE

PROPERTY OWNER NAME MAILING ADDRESS TOWN, STATE, ZIP

RE: OBSERVATION OF POTENTIAL ZONING VIOLATION STREET ADDRESS, CANTON, CT PARCEL ID # \_\_\_\_\_

Dear PROPERTY OWNER:

It has come to the attention of our office that the above referenced property appears to be in violation of the Town's Zoning Regulations.

### DESCRIBE DETAILS AND SECTION #

It is my duty to inform you of this possible violation. This letter is a request that you bring your property into compliance with the Zoning Regulations by (explain possible resolutions). You may also provide this office with any information that would allow for a determination to be made that such violation does or does not exist.

This is <u>not</u> a Notice of Violation, but failure to remedy this situation within [ ] days may lead to the issuance of such a notice. This does not constitute a decision by the Zoning Enforcement Officer and is not an appealable action. If a Notice of Violation is issued and you fail to comply with it within an additional [ ] days, the Town may consider legal action in issuing a Cease and Desist Order. We trust that you will take advantage of this opportunity to avoid such future actions and costs.

Your anticipated cooperation in this matter is greatly appreciated. Please call me at (860) 693-7892 so that we may discuss the situation further.

Sincerely,

STAFF NAME STAFF TITLE 4 Market Street P.O. Box 168 Collinsville, CT 06022 STAFF PHONE STAFF E-MAIL www.townofcantonct.org

# Appendix D



DATE

# **CERTIFIED LETTER**

PROPERTY OWNER NAME MAILING ADDRESS TOWN, STATE, ZIP

RE: NOTICE OF VIOLATION AND REQUEST FOR VOLUNTARY COMPLAINCE

STREET ADDRESS, CANTON, CT

**COMPLAINT ID #2009-00?** 

Dear PROPERTY OWNER SALUTATION:

On **DATE**, I observed the following violation(s) of the Canton Zoning Regulations at the above referenced address:

- SECTION # AND DETAILS
- SECTION # AND DETAILS

I am charged with the responsibility of informing you that **this/these** violation**(s)** exist**(s)**, and that **it/they** must be corrected. This letter is a notification and request that you bring your property into compliance with the Canton Zoning Regulations.

This is not a Cease and Desist Order, but failure to remedy this situation within <10, 15, 30> days will lead to the issuance of such an order. If a Cease and Desist Order is issued, and you fail to comply, the Town may consider legal action in accordance with Section 8-12 of the Connecticut General Statutes. Section 8-12 authorizes the institution of a lawsuit to enforce the zoning regulations and provides for the assessment of fines, penalties, and costs. Fines may range from not less than ten nor more than one hundred dollars for each day such violation continues, and civil penalties may be awarded up to \$2,500.00.

Your anticipated cooperation in this matter is appreciated. Should you wish to discuss this matter in detail, please call me at the above noted phone number.

Sincerely,

INSERT STAFF NAME
INSERT STAFF TITLE
INSERT STAFF CONTACT INFO

cc: Town Counsel

First Selectman

Chief Administrative Officer

Town Planner

Planning and Zoning Commission

Zoning Board of Appeals

# Appendix E



DATE

# **CERTIFIED LETTER**

PROPERTY OWNER NAME MAILING ADDRESS TOWN, STATE, ZIP

RE: ENFORCEMENT ORDER

STREET ADDRESS, CANTON, CT COMPLAINT ID #2009-00?

Dear INSERT PROPERTY OWNER SALUTATION:

PLEASE BE ADVISED that you are found to be in violation of the Canton Zoning Regulations as follows:

- SECTION # AND DETAILS
- SECTION # AND DETAILS

On DATE I mailed you a <u>Notice of Violation and Request for Voluntary Compliance</u> (copy enclosed) for the above referenced property a.k.a. Assessor's INSERT MAP #, Lot INSERT LOT # regarding the above listed violation(s). A subsequent inspection revealed that you have not brought the property into compliance with the Zoning Regulations within the timeframe specified in the Notice of Violation and Request for Voluntary Compliance.

You are hereby ordered to cease and desist the activity (ies) identified as zoning violations within 10 days of your receipt of this Order. Your attention is directed to Connecticut General Statute §8-12, which authorizes the institution of a lawsuit to enforce the zoning regulations and provides for the assessment of fines, penalties, and costs. Fines may range from not less than ten nor more than one hundred dollars for each day such violation continues, and civil penalties may be awarded up to \$2,500.00. In addition, if the court finds that the offense is willful, the court may assess a higher fine of not less than one hundred dollars no more than two hundred and fifty dollars for each day that such violation continues.

You may appeal this Order to the Canton Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) in accordance with Section 8-7 of the Connecticut General Statutes and with any rules adopted by the ZBA. The appeal shall be taken on a form prescribed by the ZBA and shall be filed with the ZBA and with the Zoning Enforcement Officer in the Land Use Office at Town Hall, in accordance with officer hours published. The appeal shall be filed not later than 30 days after your receipt of this Order. You may obtain an appeal form at the Land Use Office. Failure to appeal this Order or correct the violation within the timeframe prescribed herein will result in the referral of this matter to Town Counsel with a recommendation to initiate immediate legal action.

Should you wish to discuss this matter in detail, please contact me at the above noted phone number.

# Sincerely,

**INSERT STAFF NAME INSERT STAFF TITLE** INSERT STAFF CONTACT INFO

Town Counsel cc:

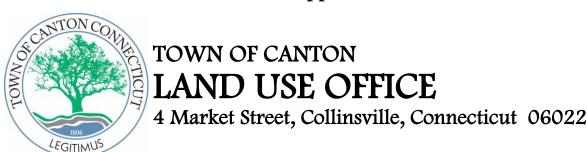
First Selectman

Chief Administrative Officer

Town Planner

Planning and Zoning Commission Zoning Board of Appeals

# Appendix F



# **MUNICIPAL CITATION (FIRST NOTICE)**

Citation #	Amount of Fine:		
Violator:	Date:		
Property:			
Violation(s):			

You are hereby fined for violating the above Zoning Regulations of the Town of Canton. As indicated in Chapter 15 of the Canton Town Code, pursuant to Section 8-12a of the Connecticut General Statutes and in addition to the remedies provided in Section 8-12 thereof, your violation has caused a fine to be levied against you.

You have thirty (30) days to make full payment by mail or in person to the Town of Canton Land Use Office, 4 Market Street, Collinsville, CT 06019. If full payment is not made on or prior to that date, a second citation notice will be issued that will include information regarding your rights to request a hearing to contest liability. If uncontested payment of all fines set forth herein is made without demand for a hearing, such payment shall be inadmissible in any proceeding, civil or criminal, to establish the conduct of such person or other person making the payment.

Issued by:

STAFF NAME STAFF TITLE 4 Market Street P.O. Box 168 Collinsville, CT 06022 STAFF PHONE STAFF E-MAIL www.townofcantonct.org

Please make checks payable to: TOWN OF CANTON.



# **MUNICIPAL CITATION (SECOND NOTICE)**

Citation #	Amount of Fine:
Violator:	Date:
Property:	
Violation(s):	

On [insert date of first notice] you were cited for violating the Zoning Regulations of the Town of Canton based on the allegations set forth above. As indicated in Chapter 15 of the Canton Code and pursuant to Section 8-12a of the Connecticut General Statutes Rev. 1958, as amended, and in addition to the remedies provided in Section 8-12 thereof, your violation has caused a fine to be levied against you.

Having not received payment within the thirty-day uncontested period as set forth in the notice of citation dated [ insert date ], I am hereby notifying you of the allegations against you described above and that you have the right to contest liability before a hearing officer appointed by the Board of Selectmen, by delivering, in person or by mail, within ten days of the date of the notice, a written demand for a hearing and that if you do not demand such a hearing, an assessment and judgment shall be entered against you and that such judgment may be issued without further notice.

Issued by:

STAFF NAME STAFF TITLE 4 Market Street P.O. Box 168 Collinsville, CT 06022 STAFF PHONE STAFF E-MAIL www.townofcantonct.org

Please make checks payable to: TOWN OF CANTON.

# Appendix G



# **TOWN OF CANTON**

4 Market Street PO Box 168 Canton, CT 06019

Land Use Department (860) 693-7856 (860) 693-7884 (fax)

OFFICE USE ONLY				
FILE #:	FEE AMOUNT: _		CASH / CHECK	
DATE SUBMITTED:				
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS APPLICATION				
<ul> <li>Variance: \$210.00</li> <li>Appeal: \$135.00</li> <li>Suitability of Motor</li> </ul>	or Vehicle Location: \$	135.00	se make checks payable to "Town of Canton"	
			QUIRED INFORMATION IS PROVIDED /ALS ARE OBTAINED.	
PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY				
Property Address:				
Assessor's Map: F	arcel:	Zone:	Lot Size:	
Land Record Reference to	Deed Description: Volu	ume:	_ Page:	
Property Owner:			Phone:	
			Phone:	
Mailing Address:				
Email Address:				
ACTION REQUESTED:				
Variance from Sec Appeal from decis Approval of Motor License/Location:	ion of the Zoning Enfort Vehicle Department	cement Officer	oning Regulations _ Repairer Limited Repairer	
VARIANCE INFORMATION:				
The variance relates to:	yard dimension _ street frontage _	heightarea	number of family units other	
Describe briefly:				

(a) Stric	ict application of the regulations would produce	e undue hardship because:				
(b) The	The hardship created is unique and not shared by all properties alike in the neighborhood because:					
(c) The		ne neighborhood because:				
	AL INFORMATION:					
The dec	The decision of the Zoning Enforcement Officer datedis APPEALED because:					
	DVAL OF MOTOR VEHICLE DEPARTMENT I					
Previous	us applications have been filed with respect to t	hese premises as follows:				
	Name: C	Owner Signature:				
		pplicant Signature:				
Date:						

# PLEASE NOTE:

Application will not be accepted unless:

- A. It is signed by the applicant or agent.

  B. It is accompanied by the proper filing fee.

  C. It is accompanied by three copies of certified plot plan if required.

  D. It is accompanied by Motor Vehicle Department forms if applicable.

Requirement for abutter notices and land use sign for items requiring a public hearing