



April 26, 2025

**To: Town of Skaneateles Zoning Office
24 Jordan Street, Skaneateles, NY**

**NARRATIVE
For
1781 Russells Landing
Skaneateles, NY**

The property located at 1781 Russells Landing has been owned and occupied by Jim and Emily Johnson since 1995. This property has 75' of lakefront bank which is made up of a decomposing shale cliff roughly 25' in height and in the 30 years that they have lived there they have suffered both, higher than typical maintenance as well as damage due to the collapsing shale cliff face.

Over the years this deteriorating and receding bank has made the use of the former access, a spiral staircase, no longer a safe structure or location in which to continue to make access to the improved lakefront.

In 2024 the Johnson's entered into an agreement with LakeCountry Construction and Contour, LLC to replace and stabilize some of the existing structures and reestablish access to the lakefront.

It should be noted that LakeCountry is a multi-generational company that, among other things, has been providing lakefront improvements including access stairs and repairs for decades.

The process of reestablishing access to the lakefront became an exercise in the 'least worst option' for gaining structural attachment to the bank, cliff, and lakefront below. We are confident that the locations chosen for the landings & stairs from the existing deck to the shore are the only reasonable solution.

Unfortunately, this solution resulted in a convoluted path that expanded beyond the simple repair that had been intended. And although the only benefit provided by this project simply provides another path to the lake, it has resulted in additional coverage as well as it takes this path closer to the property line than the zoning code provides for.

We would like to identify that:



- This necessary improvement creates no additional patio, deck or dock area and will not provide for any additional intensity of use.
- There was no change of grade within 100 feet of the Lake Line (as would be required per 148-7-1, G., d. & 148-7-1., K., 2., c.)
- In that stair access is similar to the adjacent properties as well as typical for improved lakefronts that have an elevation change to top of bank, this presents neither a change in character or a detriment to nearby properties
- This solution provided the only feasible way, given the natural conditions, to achieve a new path of access to the lake. To construct a headwall and bridge to a stair tower in the lake would have not only been disruptive to the existing grade, an environmental detriment to the lake bottom, and visually obstructive to the view from the lakefront and the lake itself, this too would have likely required variances.
- Given the essential need for this improvement to continue the unchanged use or expansion of existing decks & dock, this is not a sustainable ask.
- The improvements proposed provide little to no physical impact and therefore no adverse environmental effect on the site, neighborhood or district
- This hardship was not self-created, but rather a result of the ongoing natural deterioration of the lake bank.

Given the purpose of this work was the minimum necessary, for ‘the safety of the occupants of the property’ and their guests, we ask that this expansion be allowed as provided for per 148-7-1., G.

