1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	Stratham Zoning Board of Adjustment Meeting Minutes September 8, 2015 Municipal Center, Selectmen's Meeting Room 10 Bunker Hill Avenue Time: 7:00 PM		
12 13 14 15 16 17	Members Present:	Arol Charbonneau, Chairman Bruno Federico, Selectmen's Representative Garrett Dolan, Member Chris Cavarretta, Member Deidre Lawrence, Alternate	
18 19 20 21 22	Members Absent:	Chris Brett, Member Jim Elliot, Member Phil Caparso, Alternate	
22 23 24	Staff Present:	Audrey Cline, Code Enforcement Officer	
25			
26	1. Call to Order/R	oll Call.	
27	Mr. Charbonneau	ı took roll call.	
28	2. Review/Approv	al of Meeting Minutes.	
29	a. June 09, 201	5	
30 31		b made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from June 9, 2015. Mr. a seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.	
32	b. July 14, 2015	;	
33	Board motion	ns to continue to approve the July 14, 2015 meeting minutes to the September 22,	

- 34 2015 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.
- **3.** Public Hearing(s)
- a. Case #627: Patrick & Elissa Simpson, for property owned by Andrew & Christine
 VanDerslice, located at 18 Union Road, Stratham, NH, Tax Map 10, Lot 139. A Special
 Exception application pursuant to Stratham's Zoning Ordinance Section 5.4 ACCESSORY
 APARTMENTS. The applicant proposes to construct an accessory apartment within an existing
 single family dwelling.

1 Ms. Cline noted Mr. and Mrs. VanDerslice sent an email 9/8/15 asking to be the applicant as 2 well as the owner on Case #627 application.

Mr. Dolan made a motion to accept the application by Andrew and Christine VanDerslice, as amended, located at 18 Union Road, Stratham, NH, Tax Map 10, Lot 139; Special Exception application pursuant to Stratham's Zoning Ordinance Section 5.4 ACCESSORY APARTMENTS. The applicant proposes to construct an accessory apartment within an existing single family dwelling. Ms. Lawrence seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

8 Mr. VanDerslice explained the applicants were potential buyers of their property and wanted the 9 apartment for their mother-in-law to move into the existing space. Since the application was submitted, the sale has fallen through but they would like to go forward with the application for 10 11 future use. Mr. VanDerslice explained the construction would be in the existing space, there will be no change to the exterior, and they would like to add a kitchen and a partition wall. Ms. Cline 12 13 confirmed that the floor plan submitted as "proposed addition" was built back in 2006 and that this is the area of the apartment. Mr. Charbonneau stated the apartment looks to be roughly 700 14 15 SF, which Mr. VanDerslice confirmed. Mr. Charbonneau reminded the board that the living area is 3,949 which is well below the 1/3 and in between the 400-1,000 SF allowed. Mr. Cavarretta 16 17 confirmed with Mr. VanDerslice that they are just going to add a full kitchen. Mr. Federico 18 questions Ms. Cline if the egress and the entrances meet all codes; Ms. Cline stated that it 19 appears to meet all codes. Mr. VanDerslice explained one entrance is through the front entry, 20 which is a 36" door, and the other entrance is through the screen porch, which is a double French 21 door. Ms. Cline questioned the area on the "proposed" layout which has the check marks. Mr. 22 VanDerslice explained it is a closet. The kitchen will be where the existing closet is and the 23 builder proposed moving the closet over to the southwest corner. Ms. Cline asked where the 24 door marked "entry" goes into; Mr. VanDerslice stated that it goes out to the screened porch. 25 Ms. Cline would like to clarify that the Approval for Construction of the septic system is the 26 original approval and was amended when a hair dressing salon was approved for the property. 27 The flow per day increased to 785 which is adequate for this apartment since there is no longer a 28 hair salon there. Mr. Charbonneau questioned whether the hair salon ever existed. Ms. Cline 29 and Mr. VanDerslice cannot confirm its existence. Ms. Lawrence questioned whether Mr. & 30 Mrs. VanDerslice will be putting in the kitchen; Mr. VanDerslice stated that they are selling the 31 property in the near future and many people interested in the house are interested in an in-law 32 suite so they would like it as an available option. Ms. Cline and Ms. Lawrence questioned 33 whether there is a specific timeframe which a Special Exception needs to be acted upon if 34 approved. Ms. Cline will confirm the answer and Mr. & Mrs. VanDerslice will be restricted to 35 that time period.

36 Mary Godfrey, abutter, questioned why the zoning is different regarding what Mr. & Mrs. 37 VanDerslice are asking for, as opposed to what they currently have, and what will happen in the future when they leave. Ms. Godfrey is in favor of families supporting families, but not in favor 38 39 of having dual income rental apartments in the neighborhood. Mr. Federico and Ms. Lawrence 40 explained to Ms. Godfrey what an Accessory Dwelling is. Ms. Cline will give Ms. Godfrey a 41 copy the conditions which need to be met in order to approve an Accessory Apartment. Mr. 42 Charbonneau explained to Ms. Godfrey that the nature of this application is to make it legal and 43 separate for a family member versus a rental, which gives that member their own living space as 44 opposed to just a bedroom. Kathy Stranger, abutter, asked if the property is monitored as owner-

1 occupied versus being rented out. Mr. Federico explained the code enforcement officer would, if 2 brought to her attention. Kevin Godfrey, 5 Christie Lane, spoke as a member of the Wiggin Way 3 Homeowner Association which manages the community water system for 43 homes. Wiggin 4 Way Homeowner Association is currently under strict orders from the NH Department of 5 Environmental Services not to add any new homes to the system. The system ran out of water in 6 May 2015 which resulted in the association having to ship in 9,000 gallons of water to get 7 through that period and they also ran out of water in July 15, 2012 which they had to purchase 8 water for as well. The Well Board Members of the Home Owners Association are not in favor of 9 adding any customers at this time. Ms. Cline asked that the order from NH DES be verified whether they mean homes or dwelling units; if it is dwelling units this might impact this 10 application. Mr. Godfrey stated the Town's ordinance 5.4.3.i reads "all owners shall provide 11 12 evidence that there is adequate potable water according to the standards of the State of New 13 Hampshire. The Building Inspector shall indicate his approval in writing to the ZBA". Mr. 14 Charbonneau stated that it would have to be a condition of the approval, but due to the unclear nature of what the NH DES meant it will have to be verified. Mr. Godfrey stated the Home 15 16 Owner's Association is not in favor of adding any more users at this time. Ms. Cline requested a copy of the NH DES letter from Mr. Godfrey so she can follow up with the water issue. Mr. 17 Federico would like confirmation on the gallons per day that the system puts out; Mr. Godfrey 18 19 explained it is in the letter. Ms. Cline would like to know if the Association has put any 20 restrictions on the use of water; Mr. Godfrey said yes and they are looking at ways to produce 21 more water. Mr. Dolan would like the water issue addressed and determined before the board 22 makes a decision on granting a Special Exception. Marcy Francis, relator and neighbor of the 23 VanDerslices' understands and agrees with the concerns of the other abutters, but this property is 24 unique in that it already has a 700 SF addition and every potential buyer that has looked at it 25 wants it for the in-law apartment.

- Ms. Cline will follow up with the State of NH DES and will get something in writing to submit 26 27 to the board. The Board discusses Ms. Godfrey's concerns regarding future use of the in-law. 28 The accessory apartment is not limited to in-laws or family members and is limited to 3 persons. 29 The purpose of a special exception for an accessory apartment is to create smaller living 30 scenarios that don't have a big impact like a duplex where the size is relatively the same. Peter Grey, 20 Squamscott Road, questioned the special exception definition regarding Special 31 32 Exception for an Accessory Apartment. Mr. Dolan read the guidelines as follows: "An accessory 33 apartment shall be allowed to continue to be used as such as long as all the requirements of 5.4.3 34 are maintained. If any of the conditions set forth in Section 5.4.3 are not maintained such 35 apartment shall cease to exist. To reestablish use of such apartment the home owner must 36 reapply for a permit." Ms. Francis questioned whether adding a second kitchen without getting a special exception is allowed. Ms. Cline responded that adding a second kitchen tends to lean 37 38 towards a second dwelling unit, but there are no rules against having two kitchens in a home.
- Mr. Cavarretta motioned to continue Case #627 to September 22, 2015. Mr. Dolan seconded the
 motion. Motion carried unanimously.
- b. Case #626: Oxland Builders, LLC c/o Bradford Sawler, for the property located at 240
 Portsmouth Ave, Stratham, NH, Tax Map 22, Lot 89. A Variance application request from
 Stratham's Zoning Ordinance Article 3.6 (TABLE OF USES). The applicant proposes to use a
 portion of the existing building for a business use.

Mr. Dolan motioned to accept the application for Case #626: Oxland Builders, LLC c/o Bradford
Sawler, for the property located at 240 Portsmouth Ave, Stratham, NH, Tax Map 22, Lot 89. A
Variance application request from Stratham's Zoning Ordinance Article 3.6 (TABLE OF USES).
The applicant proposes to use a portion of the existing building for a business use. Mr. Federico
seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

6 Attorney Colby Gamester submitted additional pictures for Case #626 and explained that the 7 history and ownership of this property is important to this case. Attorney Gamester gave a 8 history of the property. In 1980 Douglas & Cheryl Tessier put a bicycle shop in which, at that 9 time, was owned by Irene & Robert Tessier. In 1995 Douglas bought the property and the bicycle shop remained until 2006. In 2007, Bradford Sawler, Oxland Builders began operating a 10 11 woodworking shop under a Special Exception for Home Occupation granted by this board and 12 Mr. Sawler was residing on the property. It's important to note that the woodworking shop is sporadically used; has zero normal hours of operation and Mr. Sawler only uses the shop for 13 14 specific projects, such as making custom cabinets on an as-needed basis. When the shop is being 15 used there is never more than 1-2 employees, and it is a very rare occasion that a client ever meets at the shop with Mr. Sawler. The shop occupies the portion of the property which is 983 16 17 SF, contains no running water, or heat. Not noted in the memorandum is that from the western 18 driveway entrance, heading west, the abutting property's driveway, located at 236 Portsmouth 19 Avenue, is roughly 213 feet away; with a wooded area and power lines in between. From the 20 eastern driveway, heading east towards Portsmouth, the abutting property's driveway is located at 248 Portsmouth Avenue is roughly 380 feet away with woods and large yards in-between. 21 22 The abutting property across the street, 235 Portsmouth Avenue, has its property set back at least 300 feet from the road. The closest cross street, Jason Drive, is approximately 200 feet away, 23 24 traveling east, and its neighborhood is wooded from Route 33. Now that Mr. Sawler no longer 25 resides at the property, to continue the use of the woodworking shop, he needs relief from Article 3.6 of the Zoning Ordinance, where the operation of a woodworking shop is not specifically 26 27 permitted by the RA zoning district. As the board is aware, for this board to grant this, the applicant must satisfy the list as in RSA 677-33. The proposed variance would not conflict with 28 29 the basic objective of the Stratham Zoning Ordinance for which the district is to promote and 30 protect residential and agricultural uses. The property is primarily used, and will continue to be used, for residential purposes, which currently has two occupied residential units. There are 31 32 several properties, in close proximity, which have commercial uses. From the property traveling 33 west on Portsmouth Avenue, .2 miles away at 223 Portsmouth Avenue, is or was formally 34 Executone Network Research and Control which Attorney Gamester cannot tell if the business is 35 still there, but it has a sign on the front of the property. .3 miles away at 217 Portsmouth 36 Avenue, Mr. Morin's Antique Furniture and Restoration business, which also has a sign on the 37 property. .4 miles away at 216 Portsmouth Avenue is Barker's Farm Stand. Traveling east from 38 the property on Portsmouth Avenue, .2 miles away at 257 Portsmouth Avenue is the Kevin Roy 39 Building Co. and Portfolio Kitchen and Home Store and office. .2 miles away at 261 Portsmouth 40 Avenue there appears to be a property with commercial use, which has separate buildings and a 41 service vehicle parked out front that appears to reside there. .4 miles away is Stratham Hill Park, 42 and .5 miles away is the former college school property, which on their 90 acres they are listing 43 as having several permitted uses, not just agricultural and residential. Mr. Federico interjects 44 that the college parcel is a separate zone. These highlighted properties and associated uses are 45 far more intense relative to the applicant's proposed use, which is barely noticeable. The proposed use generates no noise, light, or traffic issues and is in harmony with the surrounding 46

1 character of the district and residential and agricultural properties. There would be no public 2 interest or benefit in denying this request. The building has been used for commercial purposes 3 for decades and has no heat or running water, which generally limits its potential uses. The spirit 4 of the ordinance would be observed by granting the variance because there are no structural 5 changes being proposed or requested, the use in its current and historical form over the past 8 6 years is the same, there will be no change in the central character of the neighborhood, and since 7 2007 the woodworking shop has existed without complaint from any abutter or on-site tenants. 8 As for the substantial justice test, the granting of the variance does substantial justice, by 9 weighing any loss to the individual from a denial against any gain to the public which, in this insistence, we feels the test highly favors the applicant. A denial would mean the dismantling 10 and removal of the woodworking shop, which the photos submitted show the extent, and also 11 12 would require significant modifications to that piece of property to make it residential and more 13 conforming. There would be no dominion of describing properties by granting this request for 14 the property values. Upon informational and reasonable belief surrounding properties in the area 15 have increased their values since 2007 and the woodworking shop has been there, in limited 16 operation, since that time. More importantly it's believed that no supporting evidence to the contrary could be presented. In order for the applicant to show a denial of the variance would be 17 an unnecessary hardship, it must be proven that owing to special conditions of the property that 18 19 distinguish it from other properties in the area, that no fair and substantial relationship exists 20 between the general public purposes of the ordinance provision, and the specific application of 21 that provision to this property, and that the proposed use is a reasonable use.

22 First, the property cannot be reasonably used in strict conformance with the ordinance and the variance is, therefore, necessary to enable the reasonable use of it. In this instance the denial of 23 24 the proposed use would result in an unnecessary hardship. The area of the building in subject 25 has been used for commercial purpose for decades and is now a limited woodworking shop. It was constructed for commercial purposes and it is ideal for commercial purposes given its rough 26 27 and unfinished interior features. Second, there is no fair and substantial relationship between the 28 general purposes of Article 3.6 and its strict application to the use proposed. The building in 29 which the woodworking shop is attached is still primarily residential and will remain that way. 30 The proposed use is unchanged from 2007 with the applicant's special exception and it is not, 31 and will not, change or alter the residential and agricultural character of the surrounding area, nor 32 would it interfere with the surrounding properties uses which generally contain mixed 33 development. This use would be permitted as long as it proposed by a resident living in that 34 building. This variance request satisfies the criteria to grant the variance. It is an extremely 35 reasonable commercial use in the area that contains far more intense commercial uses within that 36 same district. The woodworking shop is, once again, sporadically used for specific purposes on 37 an as-needed basis. It does not have regular hours and few people use the shop when necessary. 38 Finally, it has drawn zero complaints from the surrounding properties, including the tenants on 39 site.

Mr. Charbonneau would like the definition of sporadic. Mr. Sawler explained, if there are 2,000 work hours in a year he may work at the shop 400 hours, or 20%, of the time. Mr. Sawler confirmed that he is not living in the residence, but has two tenants. Ms. Lawrence questioned when Mr. Sawler moved out of the residence; Mr. Sawler responded in 2008. Mr. Dolan and Ms. Lawrence respond that Mr. Sawler has not been in compliance with the special exception for 7 years. Attorney Gamester stated the town brought this to Mr. Sawler's attention once they

1 realized what happened and told him to apply for a variance. Mr. Charbonneau questioned 2 whether the space was always used for commercial purposes. Mr. Sawler said the space was 3 constructed long before Mr. Sawler was around, his step-father opened a bike shop in 1980 and 4 before that it was a farm stand and cider press. Mr. Cavarretta is concerned that recently a very 5 similar application was denied, due to a similar situation of not being an owner-occupied 6 business. Attorney Gamester stated that they would distinguish use of the woodworking shop 7 will be tied to the variance and Mr. Sawler's use would not change because his use has been 8 established over the last 8 years and his business has grown. Attorney Gamester stated this 9 property generates no additional light, traffic, etc. which makes it a reasonable proposed use for 10 this variance. Mr. Charbonneau is concerned with granting an open variance of how it could be used going forward. Ms. Cline mentioned that if a commercial use is approved by the board then 11 12 that building would need to comply with commercial building and fire codes and would require 13 some type of work on the property that isn't there now. The Board discussed the business would 14 require a bathroom, if there are workers and employees on site, so they have access to a 15 bathroom; it would require a site plan review; and would need to meet building and life safety codes. Mr. Sawler questioned whether that is different from a special exception. Ms. Cline 16 confirmed it is regarding the building and life safety codes. Mr. Sawler questioned why he did 17 not have to go through the process when he originally received his special exception; Ms. Cline 18 19 explained that a Home Occupation was put into place for those that had small businesses at home 20 so they didn't have the burden of meeting the other requirements, which are the standard. Mr. 21 Federico questioned how it came to Ms. Cline's attention. Ms. Cline came upon the issue 22 through the Home Occupation renewal process. Ms. Lawrence stated they are going to have the 23 same issue in regard to whether it is keeping with spirit of the zoning ordinance, which is 24 residential. Mr. Charbonneau stated his concern regarding the hardship due to it coming about 25 by Mr. Sawler moving out. Mr. Federico explained it has not been commercial, it has always 26 been a home occupation. Mr. Sawler stated his step-father did not live there, and Mr. Federico 27 replied thing slips through the cracks because people take advantage of situations and it became a Home Occupation since before zoning was in place. The board questioned whether this was 28 29 the only cabinet making facility; Mr. Sawler confirmed yes, there are two other offices, but the 30 cabinets are made in Stratham only. Ms. Cline asked whether there is a showroom and Mr. 31 Sawler responded no. Ms. Sawler confirmed there are very minimal customers that come to the 32 shop. Mr. Federico asked whether there are employees and Mr. Sawler confirmed there are. Mr. Federico explained that the board is under strict review each time they grant a variance due to the 33 34 past 3 years trying to make the Rt. 33 corridor a commercial zone and the town has denied it 35 each time. Dave Roberts, a tenant of 240 Portsmouth Avenue, questioned whether Mr. Sawler could throw out one of his tenants and continue the business as it is. Mr. Charbonneau stated 36 37 anyone could do that even though it's not legal. Mr. Sawler explained he has small children, he 38 has no desire to raise his kids on Rt. 33 nor throw out a tenant to say he occupied the residence. 39 Peter Grey spoke regarding an identical situation, very recently, which was originally approved 40 but then got denied. If the situation is compared, that case is identical with an owner, a renter, and wanting to run a business, which was denied. Mr. Dolan questioned whether the board could 41 stipulate that the building remain in its current state and be granted a variance as a woodworking 42 shop. Ms. Cline does not believe the ZBA has the authority because the building and life safety 43 44 codes are state law RSA. There is a continuum of how much building, life safety, and fire codes 45 one has to meet based on the proposed use.

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- 1 The Board discusses the criteria:
 - i. The variance will not be contrary to the public interest:

Mr. Dolan stated that the town has voted 3 times to limit commercial development on Portsmouth Avenue, the public interest is in keeping with the residential zone active along the Portsmouth Avenue corridor and would not be in the public interest. Ms. Lawrence added that the concept of creating an illegal situation and then resorting to the myriads to fix something is entirely within the property owner's control and is not consistent with the public's interest. Mr. Federico explained the intensity of use is different and does not see the woodworking shop as a commercial operation, but the problem may occur if Mr. Sawler receives a variance for a commercial use and then sells the business, the next owner can go to the site plan review and as long as it meets the criteria it meets the use. Mr. Cavarretta agreed it's a great piece of property and Kevin Roy's place is much more commercial than they anticipated, but in the future if the variance is granted anyone could take out the residential and turn it into a showroom or whatever they choose. Mr. Federico stated if it is approved without conditions it would be contrary to public interest. Mr. Federico questioned whether the board could add a condition such as "intensification of use", there have been several cases over the past several years, where it can only be a woodworking shop with no retail foot traffic or additional parking. Mr. Charbonneau would like to know how that is monitored. Attorney Gamester explained that it will be monitored by Mr. Sawler's tenants, abutting properties, and Ms. Cline driving up and down the road. Mr. Cavarretta asked if there are any plans to expand business. Mr. Sawler explained it used to be himself and one other person, now he has 11 guys, but he doesn't have the physical capacity in that space to expand. Ms. Cline questioned Mr. Sawler whether he ceases work in the winter or continues to work in the shop without heat. Mr. Sawler explained they work in there pretty minimally. Mr. Grey spoke to Ms. Cline regarding the monitoring and that most residents no nothing about the zoning ordinance nor do they care, they assume that those legislating the ordinance are also enforcing the ordinance. Mr. Grey has been concerned with the property in the past but didn't feel it was his responsibility to call. Ms. Cline agreed that the non-conformity has to get really big, really bother somebody, or be a hazard before the office hears a complaint, and at that point it takes a lot to rectify back to its approvals. Mr. Dolan and Mr. Charbonneau do not think it's in the public's interest to grant the variance.

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The board has determined that the variance will be contrary to the public interest by a 4-1 vote. Mr. Federico was in favor as long as conditions were attached.

ii. The spirit of the ordinance is observed:

37Mr. Charbonneau does not believe the spirit of the ordinance is observed. It is primarily38a residential/agricultural district primarily for residential uses and the town has made that39clear. Mr. Dolan agrees that the spirit of the ordinance is not being met. The Board40agreed.

1 2		The vote is unanimous by the board that the spirit of the ordinance is not observed by granting the variance sought.
3	iii.	Substantial justice is done:
4 5 6 7 8		Mr. Dolan stated Ms. Lawrence made a valid point that the situation devolved when Mr. Sawler moved out of the property, it no longer was a permitted use by special exception. This is a situation that evolved from action of the property owner so Mr. Dolan does not believe substantial justice can be done by granting a variance for a problem that was self-inflicted. The Board agreed.
9 10		The vote is unanimous by the board that substantial justice would not be done by granting the variance.
11	iv.	The value of surrounding properties are not diminished:
12 13		Mr. Charbonneau does not see an impact either way on the properties along Portsmouth Avenue. The Board agreed.
14 15		The vote is unanimous by the board in the affirmative that the value of the properties would not be diminished if the variance was granted.
16 17	v.	Literal enforcement of provisions of the ordinance would result in an unnecessary hardship:
18 19		1. For purposes of this subparagraph, "unnecessary hardship" means that, owing to special conditions of the property that distinguish it from other properties in the area:
20 21 22		a. No fair and substantial relationship exists between the general public purpose of the ordinance provision and the specific application of that provision to the property; and
23		b. The proposed use is a reasonable one.
24 25		Mr. Charbonneau believes there is a substantial relationship between the spirit of the ordinance and how it is impacted and affects this property. The Board agreed.
26 27 28 29 30		2. If the criteria in subparagraph 1 are not established, an unnecessary hardship will be deemed to exist if, and only if, owing to special conditions of the property that distinguish it from other properties in the area, the property cannot be reasonably used in strict conformance with the ordinance, and a variance is therefore necessary to enable a reasonable use of it.
31 32 33 34		3. The definition of "unnecessary hardship" set forth in this section shall apply whether the provision of the ordinance from which a variance is sought is a restriction on use, a dimensional or other limitation on a permitted use, or any other requirement of the ordinance.

1		Ms. Lawrence states the property has been used in conformance with the ordinance
2		for decades and could continue to be, and there are no special conditions
3		distinguishing it from other properties in the area. It can still be used as an owner
4		occupied business, it can be used for rental property. The Board agreed.
5		The vote is unanimous by the board that no unnecessary hardship exists.
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7		Ms. Lawrence made a motion to DENY the request for a variance at 240 Portsmouth Avenue on
8		the basis for failing to satisfy the criteria under Section 17.8.3 of the Town of Stratham Zoning
9		Board. Mr. Dolan seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.
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11	4.	Adjournment
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13		Mr. Dolan motioned to adjourn at 8:50 pm. Mr. Cavarretta seconded the motion. Motion carried
14		unanimously.
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