



CITY OF WATERTOWN
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
WATERTOWN ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
149 MAIN STREET
WATERTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02472

Melissa M. SantucciRozzi, Chairperson
David Ferris, Clerk
Christopher H. Heep, Member
Alexander Dale, Member
Sarah Baker, Member
Gregory Girard, Alternate
Samuel Odamah, Alternate

Telephone (617) 972-6427
Facsimile (617) 926-7778
www.watertown-ma.gov

MINUTES

On Wednesday evening, May 28, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber of the Administration Building, the Zoning Board of Appeals held a public hearing. The meeting and public hearing were conducted in a 'hybrid' format with options for public participation both in-person and via remote means, in accordance with applicable law.

Members in attendance (In-person): Melissa SantucciRozzi, *Chair*; Sarah Baker, *Member*; David Ferris, *Member*, Alexander Dale, *Member*.

Member(s) in attendance (Remote): Samuel Odamah, *Alternate*;

Members Absent Chris Heep, *Member*; Gregory Girard, *Alternate*.

Staff present (in-person): Gideon Schreiber, *Director of Planning and Zoning*; Sameena Pirani, *Principal Dept Assistant*; Matthew Neubacher, *Planner*; Tony Mancini *Zoning Enforcement Officer*;

Chair SantucciRozzi opened the meeting. She introduced staff, noted the members in attendance and reviewed the agenda and order of cases. She stated that votes would be by roll call as one member was remote. She explained how the meeting and methods of participation from the public could be accessed remotely.

The motion to approve the April 23, 2025 meeting minutes was made by Member Dale and seconded by Member Baker. Motion was approved (4-0) with Members Dale, Baker, Odamah and Chair SantucciRozzi voting in favor.

5 Bancroft St- Continuance to June 25, 2025

Member Ferris moved to continue the matter to the June 25, 2025 meeting. Motion was seconded by Member Dale. Motion was approved by roll call vote (5-0) with Members Dale, Baker, Ferris, Odamah, and Chair SantucciRozzi voting in favor.

The above minutes represent only a summary of the public hearing. For a more detailed account of the meeting, please visit the Watertown Cable Access Corp channel at, vodwcatv.org/CablecastPublicSite/gallery/47?channel=3 where a video of the hearing can be viewed.

237 Warren St-Continuance to June 25, 2025

Motion to continue to the June 25, 2025 meeting was made by Member Ferris, seconded by Member Dale. Motion was approved by roll call vote (5-0), with Members Ferris, Baker, Dale, Odamah and Chair Santucci-Rozzi voting in favor.

42 Frank St-Open and Continuance to June 25, 2025

Member Ferris read the legal notice.

Motion to continue to the June 25, 2025 meeting was made by Member Ferris, seconded by Member Dale. Motion was approved by roll call vote (5-0), with Members Ferris, Baker, Dale, Odamah and Chair Santucci-Rozzi voting in favor.

72 Fitchburg St

Member Ferris read the legal notice.

Steve Daly representing NEDC introduced himself. He was accompanied by the owners/petitioners Jean and Steve Garbier. He described the scope of the project and nature of relief sought. The single-story addition within the right-side set back would add potential living space and a bathroom on the lower floor. A covered deck would replace the patio.

Jean Garbier provided the rationale for the proposed project. They wanted to make the home more flexible for both their future needs and extended family—grandchildren. Having resided in Watertown for more than 30 years they wished to stay in the neighborhood. She noted the letter of support signed by several neighbors (included in the petition documents).

Steven Garbier said that by not moving the addition closer to Springfield St, they were minimizing the visual impact on the public.

Chair SantucciRozzi opened the discussion to the Board.

Member Ferris had a few questions. He asked if the tree in the rear yard would be preserved. Steve Daly said that they were planning to use pin piles (instead of a full poured foundation), which would be less disruptive to the soil and tree roots. It would also help with site drainage.

Member Ferris asked how the new siding would relate to the existing white vinyl siding. The new siding would be vertical board and batten. It would be in a similar tone to the existing so the change would be mostly textural, not color based. The material would be durable and rot resistant.

Member Dale expressed his appreciation for the letters of support, especially from close abutters. Also, the multigenerational aspect of the project.

The above minutes represent only a summary of the public hearing. For a more detailed account of the meeting, please visit the Watertown Cable Access Corp channel at, vodwcatv.org/CablecastPublicSite/gallery/47?channel=3 where a video of the hearing can be viewed.

Regarding Member Odamah's question about not going with a two-story design, Steve Daly said it was mostly budget driven. There wasn't a functional need for additional space upstairs. The goal was to expand the ground floor to support aging-in-place.

Member Odamah asked if the design was influenced by similar homes in the neighborhood. Jean Garbier noted that there were similar types of rear additions in the area. The overall design was function-driven, aiming to make the most of a tight space.

Chair confirmed that the 10-foot separation between buildings did not apply to the proposed deck.

Chair opened the meeting to comments from the public.

Sam Ghilardi, 22 Springfield St, expressed support for the project.

Gerard Gilkie, 178 Orchard St, stated his support for the project.

Joseph Mccusker, 62 Fitchburg St stated his support for the project.

Justin Gordon, 84 Fitchburg St said he was in favor of the project. He had done similar board and batten siding.

Member Ferris recommended some design refinements. He clarified the material proposed below the siding line and asked if the lattice finish could match the foundation, so it blended better. He suggested reducing the overhang slightly, so the shadows cast were not too heavy.

Following the resolution of comments and questions from the Board, and requesting the revision of Condition 4 to (a) specify the board and batten siding, noting that it would be in a tone similar to the existing siding and (b) clarify that the lattice at the base of the addition should be a similar color as the foundation of the main house.

Motion to approve the application for alteration of the non-conforming structure was made by Member Ferris, seconded by Member Dale. Motion was approved 5-0 with Members Dale, Baker, Ferris, Odamah and Chair SantucciRozzi voting in favor.

Willow Park

Chair stated that Willow Park would need a simple majority. The voting members would be Members Dale, Baker, Odamah and Chair SantucciRozzi.

Mel Miller introduced herself and her colleagues attending in person including, POAs Senior Vice President Cory Mian, Executive Director for Watertown Housing Authority Jacqueline Sullivan, as well as team members attending remotely from Mass Design Group, Copley Wolff, Nolan Sheehan Patten LLP, Nitsch Engineering and Howard Stein Hudson.

Mel Miller covered the few follow-up items from the April meeting.

To show how the existing property did not conform to Zoning, two diagrams (hard copies shared with the Board prior to the hearing) were shared—1) showing 95-97 Nichols Ave as a separate

The above minutes represent only a summary of the public hearing. For a more detailed account of the meeting, please visit the Watertown Cable Access Corp channel at, vodwcatv.org/CablecastPublicSite/gallery/47?channel=3 where a video of the hearing can be viewed.

parcel illustrating non-conforming setbacks (front, side, rear), and 2) showing a combined parcel offering an alternate view with consolidated site control.

She said that based on feedback from the last hearing, the team and city staff had collaborated to revise several conditions. These conditions related to the vegetative screening appear aesthetically appropriate year-round. Also, they would be well maintained for long term effectiveness. Affordability Protections (Conditions 20B) were updated to document the project's affordability commitments and ensure legal protection for both current and future residents of the state's public housing replacement units.

Chair noted the legal review that had taken place to provide an extra layer of assurance for all parties involved.

In response to Member Baker's concern about the storage of e-bikes and the adequacy of parking, Mel Miller said that the current plan was to use external storage mainly due to concerns about the safety of lithium batteries indoors. They also anticipated that the space provided for the e-bikes was adequate. They remained open to adapting if regulations or safety practices changed

Chair Santucci Rozzi opened discussion to the public.

Giovanni Cimino (34-48 Dexter Ave) raised concerns about the ongoing rat problems and trash management, and installation of security cameras to help residents and neighbors feel safe and accountable. He stated that although a new building was being developed, the existing damage had not been addressed. He asked that future developments ensure that these issues are addressed appropriately.

Jackie Sullivan discussed the rodent mitigation measures, trash management and communication and accountability measures currently in place.

Chair asked the Housing Authority to take stronger, more proactive action to address the rodent infestation and prevent it from worsening during construction. She asked for ongoing transparency and accountability for rodent control and waste management, to keep the community informed and protected.

Mel Miller described both short term rodent control during construction and long-term improvements post construction to ensure sanitation, safety and security.

Chair SantucciRozzi thanked staff for the crucial role in the project, as well as the City's legal advisors for their guidance and involvement.

Chair outlined the two motions that the Board needed to consider—motion to grant the waivers and motion to approve the Comprehensive Permit.

1. Member Dale moved for **approval of the proposed waivers**, as set forth in the Waiver List, Section V.F, which includes waivers:

The above minutes represent only a summary of the public hearing. For a more detailed account of the meeting, please visit the Watertown Cable Access Corp channel at, vodwcatv.org/CablecastPublicSite/gallery/47?channel=3 where a video of the hearing can be viewed.

- A 1 through 4 - Use and accessory use;
- B 1 through 19 - Dimensional (accessory use façade, lot area per dwelling unit, setbacks, building coverage and floor area ratio);
- C 1 through 8 - Parking standards (parking spaces, car share parking and parking setbacks);
- D 1 and 2 - Non-zoning (historic review and inclusionary zoning)

Member Baker seconded the motion and, by roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0 (SantucciRozzi, Dale, Baker, and Odamah in favor).

2. Member Dale moved for **approval of the requested Comprehensive Permit**, subject to the Conditions listed below. Member Baker seconded the motion and, by roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0 (SantucciRozzi, Dale, Baker, and Odamah in favor)

75 Spring ST

Chair explained that as only 4 members were present a unanimous vote of approval was needed.

The project team (Ryan Wittig, followed by Phil Sima from Balance Architects) in response to the Board's prior concerns about the mass, scale and neighborhood fit gave an overview of both the zoning context and specific design changes. Included in the presentation were the driveway and visibility improvements, building modifications, landscaping and green space, and parking layout.

Also emphasized were the applicant's community outreach efforts reflecting the status of the neighborhood support for the project. The applicant stated that to date there was "almost overwhelming" support from the neighborhood—apart from one neighbor who was opposed to it.

Robert Michaud, MDM Transportation Consultants, presented vehicle maneuverability, dimensional compliance and parking design. The changes were framed as more accurate and conservative, assuming realistic traffic and parking conditions. Members asked if the model accounted for increasing SUV size. Michaud affirmed it did, noting compact SUVs dominate growth. Members discussed door clearance—loading kids, groceries. Chair SantucciRozzi confirmed the use of the raised granite curb to protect landscaping from vehicle overhang, and permeable pavers would still be used for vehicle maneuvering and these would remain within the shared driveway easement.

Robert Michaud noted that the previous turning radius design showed overhang outside of the easement. Adjusted modeling assumptions to reflect actual street conditions (parking on one side only) and typical turning behavior (from roadway center) meant that the vehicles could legally and practically turn into the site without encroachment.

Member Dale expressed general support for the project, noting that it aligned with the intent of the new Zoning.

Member Baker suggested maintaining the massing but pulling back the building 5 feet further from the curb to soften the visual impact. It would feel more integrated with its surroundings and improve pedestrian comfort.

The above minutes represent only a summary of the public hearing. For a more detailed account of the meeting, please visit the Watertown Cable Access Corp channel at, vodwcatv.org/CablecastPublicSite/gallery/47?channel=3 where a video of the hearing can be viewed.

Supporting this suggestion, Chair SantucciRozzi requested revising the building design to better fit the existing neighborhood context, especially in terms of setback and visual compatibility –not just zoning compliance. She asked for a deeper, more thoughtful explanation for the Special Permit showing how the project blended with the existing neighborhood.

Chair SantucciRozzi opened discussion to the public

Dan McAdam, 81-83 Spring Street, said he was not opposed to the idea or design of the project. However, he was worried about how the driveway and traffic would affect his property and safety. If these issues were not addressed before development proceeds, he may take further action.

Sam Ghilardi, speaking on behalf of the Housing for All Watertown Steering Committee asked the Zoning Board to approve the special permit application without reducing its size or making additional restrictions to help meet the city’s housing goals and vision for revitalization.

Chair also noted the limited actual green, ground level space in the project (313 out of 1300 SF) that provided any public benefit.

Chair acknowledged the letters of support/opposition received from the public (received from Beth Kantrowitz-business owners-renting-81 Spring St; Ellen Wineberg—renting-83 Spring St; Robyn Bolton- owners 5 Fayette St; Councilor-at-Large Tony Palomba, and Paul Passacantilli)

Motion to continue to the June 25, 2025 meeting was made by Member Dale, seconded by Member Baker. Motion was approved unanimously (4-0) with members Dale, Baker, Odamah and Chair SantucciRozzi voting in favor.

Motion to adjourn was made by Member Dale seconded by Member Baker. Motion was approved unanimously (4-0) with members Dale, Baker, Odamah and Chair SantucciRozzi voting in favor.

The meeting ended at approximately 8:52 PM

MINUTES APPROVED:-----

The above minutes represent only a summary of the public hearing. For a more detailed account of the meeting, please visit the Watertown Cable Access Corp channel at, vodwcatv.org/CablecastPublicSite/gallery/47?channel=3 where a video of the hearing can be viewed.