

## WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: July 09, 2025, PLACE: City Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED:7:00 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Public Hearing

PRESENT: Janet Buck, Chair; Payson Whitney; Jason Cohen; Sarah Scott  
Sameena Pirani, Clerk to the Board; Gideon Schreiber, Planning Director; Matthew Neubacher,  
Planner.

### ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Payson Whitney motioned to approve Minutes of 4/09/2025 meeting.

Jason Cohen seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0 In Favor

### CASES : 76 Hovey St

Janet Buck read the legal notice.

Petitioner Emil Jacob provided an overview of the project. The carriage house was associated with Unit #3 in a condo association. The applicant requested the conversion of the existing carriage house into a living space. Changes were mostly interior—he stated that there were no changes to the building footprint, parking layout and shared/common spaces (driving, gardening area etc.).

Staff provided the bounds of state law regarding Accessory Dwelling Units. This was a Site Plan Review -only project. The applicant had a legal right to undertake the project if it met zoning requirements---the Board could not deny the application. They could only impose reasonable conditions related to limited criteria allowed under site plan review. The project fell under the state's protected uses, like schools and daycares, but with even stricter limits on municipal control. Only a simple majority vote was needed. With 4 members present, approval from three members was needed to grant the petition.

Chair Janet Buck opened the meeting to the public.

The owner of 76 Hovey unit #1 Ms Williams, also presented a letter from the unit #2 owners who were out of state. Both were in opposition to the project. They had concerns about adding to the density which would erode the residential character of the neighborhood. They had concerns about the traffic and shared uses, construction noise, potential decline in property values and proximity to 82 Hovey St. The speaker also stated that neither unit 1 nor unit 2 formally agreed on the conversion. At the time of sale, ADU regulations were not finalized.

Stuart Wax, also resident of unit #1, living with Ms Williams (previous speaker) expressed objections to the project, including its impact on noise and mental health, and overall quality of life.

After confirming that there were no additional public comments, Chair Janet Buck closed the public hearing.

Staff discussed the key legal and procedural points. The condo association documents restricted use of the carriage house. Watertown did not review or enforce condo agreement ----that was a private legal matter. The city's role was limited to land use and zoning compliance. The applicant would need a building permit, which in turn would require showing legal authority. Consent to build the ADU must be worked out by the condo association. Also, the ADU must remain tied to one of the primary residential units.

Owner of #3 stated that he was unaware of any opposition from the condo association regarding a proposed conversion. They expressed surprise at the current objections, noting that they would not have purchased the property –at least not for the price they paid—if they had known this would be an issue.

In response to additional comments specific to condition 7, staff clarified that incomplete applications could be submitted, but no building permit would be issued without all necessary documentation, including condo owners consent.

Member Payson Whitney noted that the application stated that the carriage house would remain unchanged. However the applicant mentioned replacing the garage door with a glass sliding door, which would be an exterior alteration. This inconsistency was noted for the record to ensure the approval accurately reflected the actual plans.

Member Payson Whitney also said that when visiting the site, he had noted that the spacing between the homes was tight, typical of the neighborhood. The carriage house's distance to neighboring buildings was consistent with the surrounding context.

The board reiterated that their ruling was bound by state law and zoning regulations, not neighborhood density concerns or condo disputes.

Member Payson Whitney made a motion that the Planning Board conditionally approve the petitioner's request for the by-right Site Plan Review to install an accessory dwelling unit within the existing carriage house. Motion was seconded by Member Jason Cohen and approved unanimously (4-0), with members, Payson Whitney, Jason Cohen, Sarah Scott and Chair Janet Buck voting in favor.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:37

Meeting Minutes-----