



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

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

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MINUTES

The Zoning Board of Appeals held a public meeting on Wednesday, June 25, 2025, at 7:00 P.M. Held in the Council Chamber of the Administration Building, the meeting was conducted in a hybrid format so that participants could attend both in person and remotely, per applicable law.

Staff in Attendance: Gideon Schreiber, *Director of Planning and Zoning*; Antonio Mancini, *Zoning Enforcement Officer*; Matthew Neubacher, *Planner*; Thasfia Chowdhury, *Administrative Specialist*.

Board Members in Attendance: Melissa SantucciRozzi, *Chairperson*; Christopher H. Heep, *Member*; Alexander Dale, *Member*; David Ferris, *Member*; Sarah Baker, *Member (Remote)*; Samuel Odamah, *Alternate (Remote)*; Gregory Girard, *Alternate*.

Note: Member Baker only participated in the Continued cases.

Chairperson SantucciRozzi opened the meeting and outlined the evening agenda, stating that continued cases would be heard first, followed by 3 new cases. 42 Frank St, a continued case, would be heard at the July 23rd ZBA meeting.

Chair noted the agenda in this order: approval of minutes from last month, 75 Spring St (continued case), 5 Bancroft St (continued case), and 237 Warren St (continued case), 24 Chandler St, 177 Westminster Ave, and 8 Buick St.

Motion made to approve minutes from May 28, 2025, by Member Ferris, seconded by Member Dale. Motion was approved by roll call vote(7-0) with Member(s) Heep, Dale, Ferris, Baker, Girard, Odamah and SantucciRozzi voting in favor.

Case #1: 75 Spring St (continued case)

Petitioner Ryan Wittig described the plan updates since the last meeting. These included increased front and rear setbacks. The increased front setbacks would improve vehicle and pedestrian safety by offering better driver visibility. The 5-ft of space abutting the sidewalk will be designed in coordination with DCDP. Petitioner stated that the updated building footprint would align better with the streetscape and adjacent buildings, particularly north of Spring St. Other updates included relocation of staircases and trash. There were also some changes in the interior layout to accommodate the increase in front setbacks.

Chair SantucciRozzi opened discussion to the Board. Chair listed the voting members on this petition namely Members Dale, Baker, Odamah and Chair SantucciRozzi.

Member Baker appreciated the design changes particularly the 5-foot buffer from Spring St. It would improve the pedestrian experience and help ease the transition from historic buildings to the remodeled Watertown Square.

Member Dale confirmed that there were no changes to the parking layout.

Petitioner confirmed that the updated plans increased open space by 150 SF. Parking spaces would be sold with the units (not separately deeded) except one unit that did not have space. If rented, parking spaces would be rented separately from the units.

Chair SantucciRozzi stated that the public support for the project was largely positive. This would be reflected in the Decision.

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

Chair asked staff to ensure that the decision would reflect the updated plans and complied with the recent ordinance changes. Included in the decision would be the following:
Condition #18-- The 5 foot of space abutting the sidewalk (referred to as the Sidewalk Furnishing Zone) will be designed in coordination with DCDP to ensure public access and amenities;
Updated parking condition would reference the latest templates provided by MDM;
Staff would tighten and revise conditions to reflect updates to the new trash area.

Member Dale moved, seconded by Member Odamah. Motion was approved (4-0) with Members Dale, Baker, Odamah and Chair SantucciRozzi voting in favor.

Case #2: 5 Bancroft St (continued case)

Architect Brad Nederhoff (Nederhoff Architecture) described the design and architectural changes. These included the (a) modified roof plan, replacing the current gable roof to a hip roof to reduce massing (b) lowered roof height from the previous design to minimize visual impact, (c) exterior improvements, replacing the solid second floor railing with an open railing (d) removal of the

existing roof over the rear deck resulting in a decrease in FAR. The proposed changes would be within the character of the neighborhood.

Chair opened the discussion to the Board.

Member Baker said she found the proposal thoughtful, responsive and aligned with the neighborhood character. She had observed third floor additions and dormers in several homes on the street. She especially appreciated the open railings and noted that the lower position of the home on the hill reduced the visual impact of the increased roof height.

Member Girard expressed his support and enthusiasm for the project. He agreed with Member Baker that the project was modest relative to others in the area. He praised the integrity of the process.

Member Dale echoed appreciation for the scenario analysis and exploration of design alternatives. He noted the distinction between FAR and actual livable space as a valuable consideration for future cases. He asked about egress options from the new attic space under the hip roof.

Member Heep acknowledged the challenges of expanding space for a growing family in a two-family home. He felt that the updated presentation showed meaningful responsiveness to prior board feedback and expressed his support for the petition.

Chair stated that her comments had been covered by fellow board members. She especially appreciated the removal of the roof over the rear 2nd story porch and opening of the porch railings. She acknowledged the comments received from 12 Bancroft St and 9 Bancroft St. She noted that Condition # 6 would need to be revised to reflect the updated hip roof design in place of the gable. Also, the dormers and small rear gable end would have matching siding to blend with the original structure.

Member Dale moved, seconded by Member Heep. Motion was approved by roll call vote (5-0) with Members Dale, Baker, Heep, Girard and Chair SantucciRozzi voting in favor.

Case #3: 237 Warren St (continued case)

Hayley MacKenzie, accompanied by her father Frank Smith recapitulated the request, going over the original proposal from the April meeting, and presenting an analysis of a tandem driveway. They said that a side-by-side design versus a tandem alternative would be a safer and more practical alternative. It would allow easier access, more green space, a smaller driveway footprint in front of the house and have neighbor support. Pavers and landscaping would be used to enhance the appearance.

Chair SantucciRozzi opened the discussion to the Board.

Member Baker supported the side-by-side driveway solution as this alternative kept all car movement on their own property. It seemed to her a more practical, responsible and respectful alternative to the tandem parking.

Member Girard acknowledged the constraints of the situation. He was supportive and appreciative of the solution proposed.

Chair Santuccirozzi was not supportive of front yard parking. She preferred the tandem driveway as it aligned with typical conditions in Watertown-tight spaces, narrow driveways and minimal clearance. She noted that the tandem plan only slightly violated the setback requirements.

Member Heep said he was conflicted about the application given that it was a variance, not just a special permit finding, which made it harder to justify. The request was to allow parking for two cars in the front yard which was a common need but also problematic.

Member Dale shared the same concerns as Member Heep and Chair SantucciRozzi, particularly the two-car aspect, doubling the curb cut to fit two cars.

Staff clarified that the applicant could have one space by right, but to meet the requirement for two spaces, they needed a variance for a second space. The second space could either go in the front yard or in the side yard buffer (tandem style). A driveway in the front yard was allowed only if it led to a garage. Additional board discussion clarified that, in this case, the garage was removed, which meant that the front yard parking was no longer allowed by right. The side driveway met most zoning requirements and represented the kind of relief the board was comfortable granting. Front yard parking was only approved in extreme cases. This situation did not meet that threshold, given a side yard solution existed. The board did not want to set a precedent by approving a variance for front yard parking.

Chair stated that she was inclined to support the tandem parking alternative, which would be relief for the side setback. Member Heep expressed support for that as well, as it was consistent with prior practice. Member Baker agreed that consistency across all circumstances was essential.

After additional discussion and clarification, the Board granted a variance. The variance grants relief to allow a portion of the 8 ft wide driveway within a triangular area of the side driveway setback at the northerly corner of the driveway 1.5' from the property line and then continuing at an angle, 8 ft from the building, to where it meets the required 4' setback. At this point the driveway may be wider so long as it maintains the required 4' required side yard setback/landscape buffer. The variance provides for a total of two parking spaces with a total depth of 36 ft with only a 2' front driveway setback from the ROW.

Member Girard motioned to approve the petition, and Member Heep seconded, for a Variance under §9.14 from the requirements of §6.02(j), entitled "Location and design of off-street parking spaces." The Board approved the petition in a 5-0 vote, with Members Baker, Heep, and Dale, Alternate Member Girard, and Chair SantucciRozzi voting in favor.

Case #4: 42 Frank St

Motion to continue to July 23, 2025 was made by Member Ferris, seconded by Member Dale. Motion to continue was approved by roll call vote (5-0) with Members Ferris, Heep, Dale, Baker and Chair SantucciRozzi voting in favor.

Case #5: 24 Chandler (new case)

Member Ferris read the legal notice.

Jayson Stohl, son of the owner/ petitioner Beverley Stohl joined by Laura Gimby (both attending remotely on Zoom).

Jim, representing Three Sons Window (joining remotely), explained the scope of the project and relief sought.

Chair listed the voting members on this case. Alternate Member Girard would be voting in place of Member Baker.

The Board was unanimously supportive of the petition. Members described the proposal as “modest,” and “reasonable.”

Chair opened the discussion to the public.

Libby Shaw asked if the construction might damage mature trees or their root systems. The builder clarified that a large tree had already been lost due to a lightning strike (not related to the project). No existing trees or root structures would be affected by the proposed addition.

Member Heep motioned, and Member Dale seconded, for conditional approval of the requested **Special Permit Finding** under §4.06(a) to allow an addition to the rear of the first floor within the rear setbacks and the **Special Permit** under §9.05(b) for increasing the FAR, as the proposed project meets the criteria set forth in the Watertown Zoning Ordinance.

The petition was approved in a 5-0 vote, with Members Ferris, Heep, Dale, Girard, and Chair SantucciRozzi voting in favor.

Case #6: 177 Westminster Ave (new case)

Member Ferris read the legal notice.

Attorney Leitner explained the relief requested and the rationale for the relief sought—special permit to allow for increased FAR and a special permit finding for alteration of a preexisting nonconforming rear yard setback. One corner of the new foundation was too close to the lot line. The increase in FAR was due to the attic space on the third floor. If the property remained a single family this would not be an issue.

Chair opened the discussion to the Board.

Member Ferris clarified the nature and extent of the rear yard setback encroachment. It seemed to him that the nonconformity was not limited to the foundation. It also included the cantilevered overhang.

Member Ferris expressed concerns about inconsistencies and ambiguities in the drawings. He asked questions about the materials finish, especially the brick panel transition and roofline choices. He requested greater clarity and consistency between the drawings, actual construction and material finishes.

Member Dale sought clarification about the removal of the sheds, whether it was voluntary or necessary. Staff clarified that the removal of the sheds was required because the site was maxed out in terms of building coverage. Re-adding structures like the sheds would require additional permitting or zoning relief. Staff also confirmed that the curb cut on the other side of the property limited any additional driveway.

In response to Member Dale's questions on fire separation and code compliance, engineer Nalin Mistry from Mistry Associates stated that the project would have fire rated walls and doors, as per building code. Also, it would have flexibility to meet all legal two-family requirements.

Chair SantucciRozzi had two main concerns—She noted that matching the existing brick on the house was difficult. She was skeptical about the appearance of the brick panels versus the traditional laid brick. She was also concerned about the unusual two-foot cantilever off the foundation. Mistry stated that the original foundation was poured under the mistaken assumption that the fence marked the property line. Also, the cantilevered bump out was needed to fit a functional family room and kitchen space on the second floor. She confirmed that all plumbing was routed inside the building envelope.

Additional discussion focused on the window layout and attic space use.

Based on additional discussions, the Board requested revised architectural drawings to address all inconsistencies between plans and the building. These would include window placements and façade details as well as entryways, material specifications and finishes to ensure accurate representations and harmonious design.

Motion to continue to the July 23 meeting was made by Member Ferris, seconded by Member Heep. Motion was approved 5-0 with members Heep, Ferris, Dale, Odamah and Chair SantucciRozzi voting in favor.

Case #6: 8 Buick St (new case)

Member Ferris read the legal notice.

Viviane Maria DeOliveira (owner) and her husband Marcos described the scope of the project and the nature of relief sought. Marcos explained how due to a change in design during construction, work

was stopped. Zoning related issues related to an encroachment into the left side setback with modified flat roof design. The petitioners were asking the Board to approve what was already built, although it did not match the original permit. The second floor would be built directly above the existing first floor footprint, not increasing the nonconformity but continuing it vertically.

Chair opened the discussion to the board.

Member Dale noted the change in the roof design. The original design was better for managing snow, allowing it to slide off. He also noted that the neighbor most impacted by the encroachment expressed no objection.

Member Ferris noted some inconsistencies between notes versus the drawings and what the applicant reported--what was written in the plans and what was shown in the elevation drawings including the exterior materials and window types. Specifically, he noted that the petitioner's intended vertical board & batten siding was inconsistent with the horizontal siding shown in the project plans. He also observed that the second-floor plan included a "playroom" with no windows. The building code typically requires any habitable room (including playrooms) to have natural light and emergency egress. He suggested that the applicant consult with the building inspector to ensure code requirements. The plans also showed unusual door sizes.

Member Odamah asked questions about the garage usability and driveway capacity. The petitioner stated that the site could accommodate three cars—one inside the garage and two outside in the driveway.

Chair SantucciRozzi noted that the plot plan did not show the driveway clearly. She further noted that the decks being installed in the rear and abutting the garage appeared to be inconsistent with the plans regarding the specific height of the deck relative to the doors and site grading. She asked that everything proposed or built be shown accurately and consistently in the approved plans.

Member Ferris listed the updates he would like to see in the drawings which included correct window types, vertical siding on the front of the house, siding on the sides and rear, representation of any platforms, decks or landings, and changes to the playroom, garage and driveway dimensions, and corrected door sizes.

Chair opened discussion to the public

John Uremovich, 14 Buick St advocated for allowing the construction to move forward. He called the homeowners wonderful neighbors and emphasized the minor nature of the infractions.

The board agreed to approve the project with conditions that the homeowner could resume work while ensuring that updated and accurate architectural plans were submitted and reviewed. The applicant would review all drawings to ensure that the visual elevations matched the written notes and the actual materials, windows, landings, roofline etc. were clearly and accurately reflected in the drawings.

Chair SantucciRozzi affirmed that the Board expected the plans to be updated, as part of Condition #3, to accurately reflect the actual construction and materials, including siding, windows, and decks. She noted

additional conditions to allow a window to be in the playroom if required and for the record to include an updated plot plan or photos documenting the existing driveway.

Member Heep moved seconded by Member Dale. Motion was approved (5-0) by Members Heep, Ferris, Dale, Girard and Chair SantucciRozzi voting in favor.

Motion to adjourn was made by Member Heep, seconded by member Dale. Motion was approved (5-0) by Members Heep, Ferris, Dale, Girard and Chair SantucciRozzi voting in favor.