

## WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: March 11, 2026, PLACE: City Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED:7:02 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Public Hearing

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Janet Buck; Jason Cohen; Payson Whitney; Abigail Hammett; Rachael Sack; Sarah Scott.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

STAFF PRESENT: Sameena Pirani, Principal Departmental Assistant; Gideon Schreiber, Director of Planning & Zoning, Will Downie, Senior Planner; Matthew Neubacher, Planner.

### ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

#### Approval of Minutes:

Jayson Cohen motioned to approve Minutes of 2/11/2026 meeting.

Payson Whitney seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0 In Favor (Chair Janet Buck, Jason Cohen, Abigail Hammett, Sarah Scott and Payson Whitney---Abstained Rachael Sack)

Chair Janet Buck said she was changing the order of items allowing the ADU applications to go first

#### Cases

**108 California St:** The applicant represented by Patricia Welbourn (Off the Grid Architects), presented the plans for the ADU, including floor plans and egress. Board members asked questions about the roof design, drainage, and the inclusion of a bathroom in the attic space. Staff clarified that the project's building design and dimensional relief had already been reviewed and approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals. The Planning Boards review was limited to approving the ADU use, and staff will reference the related ZBA case in the ADU Decision document.

The Chair opened the floor for public comments—After confirming that there were no public comments in person and no hands raised on Zoom, Payson Whitney motioned and Jason Cohen seconded , for Conditional Approval of the petitioner's request to install a protected use Accessory Dwelling Unit as it meets the requirements set forth in the Watertown Zoning Ordinance and in Massachusetts General Laws c.40A, Section 3. The motion was approved 5-0, with Chair Janet Buck, Jason Cohen, Abigail Hammett, Rachael Sack and Payson Whitney voting in favor.

**649 Main St:** Jeremy McAdam of Backyard ADUs presented a proposal to construct an 806 SF detached accessory dwelling unit after demolishing an existing one-car garage.

Board members noted that the architectural plans shown during the presentation were not included in the hard copy packet. Staff explained that this was due to the new electronic permitting process and submission timing.

Board members asked questions about building height, size, parking and zoning compliance, which staff confirmed met the ADU requirements. Presenter explained that the unit was a modular ADU built off-site and placed on a foundation, designed for aging in place, and largely customizable. Additional clarifications included driveway access for installation, correction of a typo on the application indicating two new units and use of LP SmartSide siding with horizontal and vertical element. Board members generally viewed the proposal positively and noted that it was the first new detached ADU reviewed in Watertown.

Payson Whitney motioned and Abigail Hammett seconded, for Conditional Approval of the petitioner's request to install a protected use Accessory Dwelling Unit as it meets the requirements set forth in the Watertown Zoning Ordinance and in Massachusetts General Laws c.40A, Section 3. The motion was approved 5-0, with Chair Janet Buck, Jason Cohen, Abigail Hammett, Rachael Sack and Payson Whitney voting in favor.

### **Arsenal on the Charles (AOTC)**

Staff informed the Board about a proposed modification to Building 311 Arsenal St and 100 Talcott Ave that required review by the Massachusetts Historical Commission under the site's historic preservation requirements. The Commission had already reviewed and approved the proposal, and staff confirmed that the changes were consistent with the site's master plan. The item was presented for the awareness of the Board before issuing a formal determination letter.

Board discussion included general questions about site history, truck access and loading logistics for the building, issues such as window panels on another building, fence maintenance along North Beacon Street, and coordination among multiple agencies responsible for the property. No formal action was required.

### **Discussion of Planning Board Rules of Practice and Procedure**

The Board discussed petitioner presentations, public testimony and hybrid meeting procedures. Key points included requiring all changes since last submission to be clearly indicated to facilitate Board review, allowing Chair discretion for presentation length, especially for large projects, and ensuring all materials were uploaded to the city portal. Public testimony was for Board review, not Q&A, and cross-conversations were

discouraged. Written comments were due by 4PM the day before the hearing. Late submissions were included in the record but may not be reviewed. Staff would assist with hybrid meeting technology, coordinate slide presentation and implement pre-loaded laptops where feasible. Guidance documents for petitioners would be prepared, and Planning Board rules would be periodically reviewed to maintain clarity and consistency.

Meeting adjourned 8:24

Meeting Minutes-----