



**CITY OF WATERTOWN**  
**ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS**  
**PARKER BUILDING, 124 WATERTOWN ST.**  
**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

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## **MINUTES**

### **PRESENT:**

MEMBERS- Melissa M. SantucciRozzi, *Chair*; David Ferris; Alexander Dale; Sarah Baker; Gregory Girard, *Alternate Member (Voting)*; Samuel Odamah, *Alternate Member (Non-Voting)*.

STAFF- Gideon Schreiber, *Director of Planning and Zoning*; William Downie, *Senior Planner – Housing*; Matthew Neubacher, *Planner*; Hannah Jury, *Administrative Specialist – Zoning*.

### **PRESENT, REMOTE:**

MEMBERS- Alexander Dale.

### **ABSENT:**

MEMBERS- Christopher H. Heep.

STAFF- Antonio Mancini, *Zoning Enforcement Officer*.

On Wednesday evening, April 22, 2026, 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.

Chair SantucciRozzi opened the meeting at approximately 7:06 p.m. She introduced staff, noted the members in attendance, and reviewed the agenda.

## **1. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS**

### **A. APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY MINUTES**

#### VOTE

The motion to approve the March 25, 2026, meeting minutes was made by Member Ferris and seconded by Alternate Member Girard. The motion was approved 5-0 in a roll call vote with Member(s) Ferris, Baker, Dale, Alternate Member Girard, and Chair SantucciRozzi voting in favor.

## **2. CASES**

### **A. 43 BROMFIELD STREET**

Member Ferris read the legal notice, and Chair SantucciRozzi clarified the four Voting Members and one Alternate, Member Girard participating in the review of the proposal to replace a side entry with a closet addition.

#### PRESENTATION

David Farrar, property owner, briefly presented the plot plan with existing and proposed conditions, and architectural drawing with elevations and details confirming siding and roof will be consistent with the existing structure.

BOARD INQUIRY

ALTERNATE MEMBER GIRARD - Confirmed this discussion and hearing is only related to the proposed side addition, not the back addition proposed on the plot plan. He noted an inconsistency on the zoning table in the application, that the proposed front and side-yard setbacks are incorrect. Farrar noted he would speak with the Architect, Wayne Pelletier, on the error. Alternate Member Girard concluded that the detail and quality of the architectural drawings are inadequate to present as an as-built plan.

MEMBER FERRIS – Confirmed the condition that requires additional siding to be consistent and complementary with the existing structure.

MEMBER BAKER – Seconded the inconsistency in the application noted by Alternate Member Girard, and questioned whether the building coverage calculation includes the proposed addition in the back, to which it is. Chair SantucciRozzi clarified the note included by Staff which notes the Zoning Enforcement Officer confirmed the back addition may be constructed by-right.

CHAIR SANTUCCIROZZI – Raised concerns with the plot plan and inconsistencies between the application and the plot plan. The Chair confirmed condition no.5, which required submission of a certified plot plan showing existing and proposed conditions at the time of the foundation inspection. In the interest of the applicant, she requested the new plot plan be completed prior to filing the building permit. The Board agreed, and Staff confirmed the revision to condition no.5 would be made.

VOTE

Member Ferris motioned, and Alternate Member Girard seconded, for conditional approval of the Special Permit Finding under WZO §4.06(a) to construct the side addition with conditions as discussed. The petition was approved via roll call vote 5-0 with Members Ferris, Dale, Baker, Alternate Member Girard, and Chair SantucciRozzi voting in favor.

**550 ARSENAL STREET**

Member Ferris recused himself from the following hearing. Chair SantucciRozzi opened the hearing for 550 Arsenal Street at approximately 7:18 p.m. to approve a minor amendment to Special Permit ZBA-1974-1136, as amended by Special Permit 07-20, to remove condition no.12 mandating interior access between Target and the mall. Voting Members include Member(s) Dale, Baker, Alternate Member(s) Girard, Odamah, and Chair SantucciRozzi.

PRESENTATION

Nick O’Connor, representing property owner National Development introduced the representatives of the project present at the hearing: William York, *Attorney*; Rich Holworth, *VHB*; Ben Wakelin, *PCA*. Mr. O’Connor introduced National Development as a large firm in the Greater Boston area, and reviewed the historic vacancies of the Mall, plans for tenant repositioning, interior upgrades, proposed renderings, and exterior changes to the façade and sidewalk.

Mr. O’Connor acknowledged a comment from the Planning Board meeting, stating that planters will be added and improved, and all trees in the back of the site will be maintained. He explained that there are unfinished remnants from a previously approved master plan, which will be addressed/removed, with more intentional landscaping, circulation, and safe crossings in the parking lot.

BOARD INQUIRY

ALTERNATE MEMBER ODAMAH – Confirmed that interior kiosks within the Mall, not associated with a retail unit, will vacate the site.

MEMBER BAKER – Member Baker requested an explanation from the project team in how pedestrian is considered and maximized in the proposal. Rich Holworth, of VHB stated that improvements include a narrower roadway and improved definition in the parking lot for pedestrians that are walking long distances crossing through the lot. Member Baker suggested more crosswalks and traffic easing measures be added to encourage predictable pedestrian behavior. She also suggested working with Watertown Community Gardens or a local organization to ensure purposeful use of small, landscaped areas/divisions that are often disregarded in the parking lots of such developments, specifically requesting the strip in front of what is presently Best Buy be addressed. Member Baker emphasized heat island effect concerns, and noted that the project team should anticipate a more exterior orientation for shopper behavior, with visitors walking from store to store.

MEMBER GIRARD – Confirmed with Mr. O'Connor that there is no increase in traffic, and expressed doubts of the methodology for determining future traffic patterns on the site. Mr. Holworth explained that their method and counts are transparent and comply with national standards. While the counts are taken from 2022, those counts are comparable to full occupancy, rather than if they were from present day which has more vacancies. Chair SantucciRozzi clarified the project team was transparent in listing which counts were current estimations and from 2022.

MEMBER DALE – Requested care be taken for rear bicycle parking, and appreciates the retail strategy.

CHAIR SANTUCCIROZZI – Raised concerns with the front exterior, stating that compared to other projects led by National Development, the landscaping leaves much to be desired. The Chair requested more green space and dynamic plantings, softening of the exterior, and breaking up large amounts of paving and wide sidewalks. She noted the oversized travel ways of the parking lot may benefit from increased definition to encourage predictable pedestrian behavior. Staff noted their intention to discuss with other City Departments regarding the necessity of the emergency fire access lane and whether the wide dimensions are still necessary. The Chair asked whether the sidewalk along the emergency fire access lane may be straightened out and questioned the purpose of doubling the width of the sidewalk if there are not adequate measures taken to improve and soften landscaping. Members requested more formal, detailed plans to depict the exterior and landscaping improvements. Attorney York suggested that the Board may vote, and the project team can coordinate with Staff and add a condition for a landscape plan.

#### FINAL DELIBERATIONS

Chair SantucciRozzi proposed an additional condition no. 6 to return to the Board not as a formal public hearing with legal noticing, but as a minor modification or project update to discuss and approve plans for landscape improvements, pedestrian safety, and bicycle parking.

#### VOTE

Member Dale motioned and Member Baker seconded to approve the request for a minor amendment to Special Permit ZBA-1974-1136, as amended by Special Permit 07-20, to remove condition no. 12 mandating interior access between Target and the mall. The motion passed 5-0, with Member(s) Dale, Baker, Alternate Member(s) Girard, Odamah, and Chair SantucciRozzi voting in favor. Member Ferris was recused.

**3. OTHER BUSINESS**

**A. UPDATED RULES OF PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE, FILING DEADLINES**

Staff introduced the updated Rules of Practice and Procedure. Following a December meeting with the City Manager and City Council President, as well as an updated Administrative Code in April, all Boards and Commissions were directed to revisit their Rules of Practice and Procedure. Staff noted that revising the Rules presented an opportunity to improve filing deadlines for small-scale residential projects seeking approval of Special Permit Findings. The Board requested additional time to review the Rules and calendar, and suggested Staff send a Word Document of the Rules for the Board to send comments and suggestions individually and develop other drafts of the calendar to improve understandability.

**4. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**A. APPROVAL OF EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES**

At approximately 8:21 p.m. the Chair invited a motion to adjourn the public meeting as no further cases or business is to be discussed following the Executive Session. Member Baker motioned, and Member Ferris seconded to adjourn. The motion passed 5-0 with Member(s) Baker, Ferris, Alternate Member(s) Girard, Odamah, and Chair SantucciRozzi voting in favor.

MINUTES APPROVED:-----