



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- Christopher H. Heep, *Acting Chair*; David Ferris; Alexander Dale; Sarah Baker; Gregory Girard, *Alternate Member (Voting)*.

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

PRESENT, REMOTE:

MEMBERS- Samuel Odamah, *Alternate Member (Voting)*.

STAFF- Antonio Mancini, *Zoning Enforcement Officer*.

ABSENT:

MEMBERS- Melissa M. SantucciRozzi, *Chair*

On Wednesday evening, May 27, 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.

Acting Chair Heep opened the meeting at approximately 7:00 p.m. He introduced staff, noted the members in attendance, and reviewed the agenda.

1. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

A. APPROVAL OF APRIL MINUTES

DISCUSSION

Member Baker requested the Minutes note the specific location referenced in her specific suggestions to the 550 Arsenal St (Watertown Mall) Site/Landscape Plans. Member Ferris noted he did not read the 550 Arsenal St portion of the Minutes as he was recused.

VOTE

The motion to approve the April 22, 2026, meeting minutes with changes as discussed was made by Alternate Member Girard and seconded by Member Dale. The motion was approved 5-0 in a roll call vote with Member(s) Ferris, Dale, Baker, Alternate Member(s) Girard and Odamah voting in favor, and Acting Chair Heep abstaining.

B. BOARD REVIEW OF RULES OF PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE

DISCUSSION

Alternate Member Girard reviewed comments and suggestions for the Rules of Practice and Procedure, including corrections for spelling and grammar, opportunities for increased detail and definitions, and reordering some

subsections for clarity. Alternate Member Odamah inquired about whether Alternate Members will be upholding current responsibilities, and requested Staff consider specifying how Alternates participate in the Rules. Staff confirmed a new document with changes marked will be sent to the Board prior to the June meeting.

VOTE

Acting Chair Heep suggested postponing the vote on the Rules and Board Nomination and Consideration of Officers until Chair SantucciRozzi is in attendance.

2. NEW CASES

A. 67 CAPITOL ST

Member Ferris read the legal notice, and Acting Chair Heep clarified the four Voting Members and one Alternate, participating remotely, in the review of the proposal for a dormer addition within a nonconforming third floor. Acting Chair Heep confirmed the Members Voting as Alternate Member Odamah, Member(s) Ferris, Dale, Baker, and Acting Chair Heep.

PRESENTATION

Leslie Saul, Architect, provided an overview for the rationale of the project, to support aging-in-place, and reviewed the plans.

BOARD INQUIRY

ALTERNATE MEMBER GIRARD – Stated that the plans were well prepared, the dormer thoughtfully placed, and inquired about whether compromises were made in the size. The applicant confirmed there were compromises with size and location of laundry machines.

MEMBER FERRIS – Confirmed that the siding of the new dormer will be consistent with the rest of the house. The Architect confirmed that it will match and combine under windows.

MEMBER DALE – Noted the letters of support from neighbors but raised concern that the back neighbors would be the most impacted. The applicant explained that they were unable to establish contact, but a significant back setback and tree canopy screens the view between houses.

MEMBER BAKER – Echoed all previous comments, and stated that rear and side elevations showing existing conditions would have been helpful for review of the plans.

ALTERNATE MEMBER ODAMAH – Expressed appreciation for the architectural drawings, and inquired about the letters of support and relationships to the neighbors.

ACTING CHAIR HEEP – Stated that this project embodies the modest, reasonable, and thought out approach the Board looks for in applications for Special Permit Findings.

No public comments were heard.

VOTE

Member Ferris motioned, and Member Dale seconded, for conditional approval of the Special Permit Finding under WZO §4.06(a) to allow the construction of the dormer addition to increase non-conforming third-floor area with a main roof over 35'. The petition was approved via roll call vote 5-0 with Members Ferris, Dale, Baker, Alternate Member Odamah, and Acting Chair Heep voting in favor.

B. 235 MOUNT AUBURN ST LOT A

Acting Chair Heep opened the hearing for 235 Arsenal St Lot A at approximately 7:32 p.m. for the request to approve a new two-family use in a single-family zoning district. Voting Members include Member(s) Ferris, Dale, Baker, Alternate Member(s) Girard, and Acting Chair Heep.

PRESENTATION

Kelly Boucher, Architect, presented the project, explained the delineation between Lots A and B, and showed a preliminary Landscape Plan that was not included in the formal submission. Property Owner, Bob Purdy, discussed continued correspondence and agreements with neighbors for fences, trees, and arbor vitae. Architect Boucher stated that any additional fences may be subject to approval by the Historic District Commission (HDC), to which Acting Chair Heep noted that it is interesting that a vacant lot is under the purview of the HDC.

Staff clarified the lot delineation following a question from Acting Chair Heep.

BOARD INQUIRY

ALTERNATE MEMBER GIRARD – Requested further clarification on the lot delineation between Lots A and B, confirming that the garage is in Lot B, which is not the Lot under review for this hearing. Alternate Member Girard confirmed means of egress from the basement bedrooms.

MEMBER FERRIS – Commended the architectural design of the project, asked whether the deck can project further into the setback, and whether light wells for the basement impact the setback. Zoning Enforcement Officer Antonio Mancini stated these are treated the same as bulkheads. Member Ferris called attention to the trees along the lot line, and windows facing the lot line, and inquired whether the structure could be pushed closer to Lot B than the existing neighbor's property. Plan A101 was also noted to rearrange the windows on the left side elevation for consistency. In consideration of neighbors, Member Ferris suggested the exterior color be muted, requested the curb be repaired and a street tree added, and asked to condition or otherwise document coming to a resolution on the treatment of the property line with neighbors.

MEMBER DALE – Asked if it could have been allowed by-right, why did the team decide to propose a two-family, to which the applicant responded that it was too large as a single family, although the structure could have been even larger. A multi-family was not considered for utility, building code, neighborhood cohesion, and parking. Member Dale inquired about the heating and cooling system, and encouraged the applicant avoid gas, to which Mr. Purdy confirmed not connecting to gas is the more cost-efficient choice.

MEMBER BAKER – Appreciated the request for more housing. Architect Boucher stated the siding material under the porches will be mahogany lattice behind shrubs, and that the porch is shared. Member Baker emphasized the tree canopy as a public good, and is transformative to not only residents, but drivers and pedestrians alike.

ALTERNATE MEMBER ODAMAH – The applicant summarized conversations and relationships with abutters for Member Odamah, emphasizing the intention to collaborate. The applicant intends to follow requests of their Walnut St neighbor, but awaits an actionable, consistent proposal.

ACTING CHAIR HEEP – Referenced the preliminary landscape plan and confirmed that the strip along the lot line and garage is adequate with Staff, to which Staff responded it must be a pervious surface not suitable for vehicles, and plantings are not necessarily required. He questioned the location of the waste receptacles, which

are in between patio areas. The Architect clarified that fencing and enclosures would be prepared to screen the waste receptacles, subject to approval by the Historic District Commission. Acting Chair Heep concluded that a condition considering thoughtful treatment of trash and recycling location/screening would be worthwhile to include.

PUBLIC COMMENT

A resident from 32 Center St expressed concern with privacy for the garage on Lot B that the Petitioner previously indicated may become an Accessory Dwelling Unit. The resident requested fencing for privacy on both the garage and new two-family, as well as rodent mitigation during construction.

A resident from 21 Walnut St, which abuts the proposed two-family property, also raises privacy concerns. They requested the chain link fence be removed and stated that an arborist evaluated the trees and was concerned about the stability of some trees posing danger.

FINAL DELIBERATIONS

Member Ferris stated that the following topics of concern may be settled between applicant and Staff, including inquiring whether the property may be moved north. He noted that screening for waste receptacles is a good idea, although to ensure window wells are not excessively blocked. There were conflicting preferences between the Board and an abutting resident regarding trees which the Board should discuss, and Member Ferris requested that a walkway to the sidewalk be added to the landscape plan, damaged portion of curb replaced, and a street tree added. Staff clarified the curb and street tree are under the purview of the City in a reconstruction project with MassDOT encompassing Mount Auburn St and some intersections in the proximity, which may include this portion of Walnut St. If there is a portion of the curb missing, the Zoning Ordinance requires it be replaced in new construction of a two-family.

Member Dale mentioned a possible precedent for stronger language for maintaining trees, and Member Baker suggested stronger language to condition arborist review to clearly designate which trees are worth maintaining. Acting Chair Heep suggested adding to condition no. 6 *Landscape Plan*, that adequate screening and protection be provided to nearest abutters. Member Baker suggested the condition also include if fences are installed, it is a consistent material or style, although heights may vary.

Acting Chair Heep summarized the suggested conditions which included: walkway to the sidewalk, updated landscape and fencing plan for Staff review, updated landscape plan condition for cohesive fence style and stronger language for arborist review to preserve trees as determined safe, consideration of shifting proposed property north, and screening of waste receptacles.

VOTE

Member Ferris motioned, and Member Dale seconded to approve the request for a Special Permit in accordance with WZO §5.01(a) to allow a new two-family use in the SC (Single-Family Conversion) Zoning District. The motion passed 5-0, with Member(s) Ferris, Dale, Baker, Alternate Member Girard, and Acting Chair Heep voting in favor.

The Chair invited a motion to adjourn the public meeting. Alternate Member Girard motioned, and Member Dale seconded to adjourn. The motion passed 5-0 with Member(s) Baker, Ferris, Dale, Alternate Member(s) Girard, and Acting Chair Heep voting in favor.

MINUTES APPROVED:-----