

Lowell Zoning Board of Appeals Minutes

4/27/2026 at 6:30 P.M.

Note: These minutes are not completed verbatim. For further detail, contact the Division of Development Services, 375 Merrimack Street, Lowell, MA or refer to video recordings available online at www.LTC.org.

Members Present: Chairman Pech, Vice Chair Callahan, Member McCarthy, Member Briere, Member Procope, Member Hovey, Member Shanahan

Members Absent:

Others Present: Peter Cutrumbes, Assistant Planner

The following represents the actions taken by the Zoning Board of Appeals at the 4/27/2026 meeting. This meeting was held in the City Council chambers. Attendees had the ability to participate via Zoom as permitted by Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025, signed into law on March 28, 2025.

Chairman Pech called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

I. Continued Business

II. New Business

ZBA-2026-13

Petition Type: Variances

Applicant: Kazanjian Enterprise, Inc

Property Located at: 297 University Avenue, 01854

Applicable Zoning Bylaws: Section 5.1

Petition: The Lowell Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing to hear all interested persons relative to an application by Kazanjian Enterprise, Inc to convert an existing eight (8) bay garage into four (4) townhouse residential units. The property is located in the Traditional Two-Family (TTF) zoning district. The project requires Variance approval under Section 5.1 for relief from maximum number of stories, minimum usable open space per dwelling unit, and for any other relief required under the Lowell Zoning Ordinance.

On Behalf:

Attorney John Geary, the applicant's representative. David Fieldsend from Landplex, the engineer. J. Geary summarized the proposed project. It is currently an 8-bay garage. The applicant is seeking to convert it to four (4) townhouse units. The total lot size is almost 12,000 square feet. Variances needed for maximum stories, minimum usable open space, and minimum lot area per dwelling unit. Project exceeds the 2.5 story maximum as the parking is underneath the building in the rear. However, they are still under the maximum height limit. The required LA/DU is 4,000 square feet per unit. They are short about 1,000 square feet per lot. The building is not crowded on the lot. Regarding the lack of usable open

space, it is common for condo complexes not to have much open space. The decision for pavement in the rear of the building was made to create easy access for vehicles to the garage. Staff comments are generally supportive. They said the conversion to a residential use matches the neighborhood and aligns with the Lowell Forward plan.

D. Fieldsend briefly described the site plan. There will be subsurface infiltration for the roof runoff. They are closing the 81-foot curb cut and reducing it to 15 feet. He pointed out on the plan where snow can be stored.

J. Geary stated that the project improves the public good and does not derogate from the intent of zoning.

Speaking in Opposition:

Dewey Paquette of 122 Dracut Street. Abuts the property to the rear. He owns two garages on this property. Concerned about the parking being at the rear of the property. Cars will come near his garages. He would like to see a guardrail installed behind his garage to prevent auto damage. Similarly he expressed concerns about the plows navigating the rear of the property. The field on the current site absorbs a lot of run off. Has concerns about the new pavement and foundation creating water runoff onto his property.

Debbie St. Armand of 130 Dracut Street. Has similar concerns to Mr. Paquette. Also concerns about keeping the area quiet and private as it is currently.

Phuong Tran of 307-309 University Ave. Concurred with the concerns around quiet and privacy. Thinks the townhouses may be too big. Concerns about water runoff because the driveway is on her side. She has seen leaks into her basement and increased impervious surface may make that worse.

Speaking in Favor:

None

Discussion:

J. Geary responded to some of the resident concerns. Believes what the applicant is proposing is in character with the neighborhood. There is a similar development a block away. They believe they may be able to alleviate some privacy concerns via plantings. The intent of the developer is to sell the units to first-time homebuyers, not rent to students. There is a recharge system that will capture runoff from the property. The City's Transportation Engineer had said she is not in favor of the garages to be in front of the units.

D. Fieldsend said the grading is angled towards the grass areas where the water will be infiltrated.

G. Procope asked how they plan to address the privacy issue. J. Geary said they can use landscaping via working with DPD and the neighbors. G. Procope asked about the grading for the runoff. D. Fieldsend said it is angled towards the swale and recharge on the side of the property. G. Procope asked if they plan to include privacy landscaping, will they need a new site plan? J. Geary said this could be a condition of approval.

M. Briere said he is surprised this parcel has not been developed previously. It is a very good size. He is supportive.

D. McCarthy noted that the new grading improves the drainage pattern on the site. He noted the building sits about 25 feet from 307 University Ave. The structure there is about 8 feet from the property line. There will be about 33 feet total between the buildings. Believes this is a large improvement to the existing garages. This dramatically improves the streetscape. They are also providing much needed shade trees. The forgiveness being asked for is fairly minimal. Would like to condition on Engineering approval. J., Geary noted that they met with the Engineers this morning and that some of their comments from the memo may be changing.

S. Callahan stated his support for the project and that it is an improvement for the neighborhood.

T. Hovey said he empathizes with the neighbors. It is a big change to a neighborhood that has been the same for a while. However, there are only two items in front of them tonight—relief for the stories and the open space. The stories is an easy ask, as they are below the height maximum. It is also common for condos to not have open space. It is about 47 feet from the rear of the proposed building to the property line. The project fits on the property.

D. Shanahan likes the conversion of a seldom used commercial property into residential. They have addressed the water runoff issues. He does not believe the landscape buffering is necessary as the building is so far away. Thinks the Variances are reasonable.

V. Pech concurred with his colleagues. Appreciates the neighbors coming out to speak. Runoff has been addressed and will help in the long run. This is a better use of the property.

Motion:

D. McCarthy motioned to approve the Variances with the following conditions:

1. The applicant work with DPD to provide landscaping and/or fencing material along the northern property line
2. The applicant provide final revised plans to the City Engineer's office for approval.

Seconded by G. Procope. The vote was unanimous (5-0).

ZBA-2026-14

Petition Type: Variance

Applicant: Dan Tenczar

Property Located at: 69 Baltimore Ave, 01851

Applicable Zoning Bylaws: Section 5.1

Petition: The Lowell Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing to hear all interested persons relative to an application by Dan Tenczar to construct an addition at 69 Baltimore Ave. The property is in the Traditional Single-Family (TSF) zoning district. The proposal requires Variance approval per Section 5.1 for relief from the maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR), the minimum side yard setback, and for any other relief required under the Lowell Zoning Ordinance.

On Behalf:

Attorney Dan Tenczar, the applicant. He is seeking to construct an addition at 69 Baltimore Ave. Has lived there for over 30 years. It is a small lot, leading to the FAR variance requirement. The addition is at ground level and is to help he and his wife age in place, as their bedroom and bathroom are currently on the

second floor. The full bath in the addition will be accessible. He provided letters of support from his neighbors.

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Speaking in Favor:

None

Discussion:

M. Briere expressed support.

D. McCarthy noted that the unfinished basement and half story were not counted toward the FAR, so the FAR is lower on the plan. Would just like to require a revised site plan to be submitted with the correct FAR number on it as a condition. Fully in support of aging in place.

S. Callahan stated the proposal makes total sense and is a modest ask. No concerns.

T. Hovey said projects like this allow them to use their judgement. He has no concerns. The building is on an undersized lot. No encroachment on neighboring properties. Neighbors support. This is a great project.

D. Shanahan said the Variances are very reasonable. The renderings look great. He is supportive.

G. Procope and V. Pech concurred with their colleagues.

Motion:

D. McCarthy motioned to approve the Variances with the following condition:

1. The applicant shall submit a revised site plan showing the correctly calculated FAR of .64 and .71

Seconded by S. Callahan. The vote was unanimous (5-0).

ZBA-2026-15

Petition Type: Variance

Applicant: TLGLE, LLC

Property Located at: 123 University Ave, 01854

Applicable Zoning Bylaws: Section 6.1

Petition: The Lowell Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing to hear all interested persons relative to an application by TLGLE, LLC to convert the existing building at 123 University Ave into two (2) ground floor commercial units and twelve (12) studio apartments. The subject property is located in the Traditional Mixed-Use (TMU) zoning district. The proposal requires Variance relief from the Zoning Board of Appeals under Section 6.1 for minimum parking requirements, and for any other relief required of the Lowell Zoning Ordinance.

On Behalf:

Attorney Brian Akashian, the applicant's representative. Representing TLGLE, LLC and its principal Jack Tran. Seeking a Variance for parking. There are 12 studio apartments targeted towards students. The applicant is not expecting tenants to need significant parking. There is also public transportation and

transportation provided by UML shuttles. They are trying to increase the housing stock. When the building previously operated as the Pawtucketville Social Club, the parking strain was greater.

Speaking in Opposition:

Richard Crawford of 55 Mammoth Road in Windham. He owns 68-72 Gershom. His property is directly across from the site. Parking is a tremendous issue in the neighborhood. He rents to students. They almost always have cars. Parking is difficult in summer and is a disaster in winter. A new tenant cannot be stopped from having a vehicle. The municipal lot across the street is almost always full. His tenants already struggle with places to park.

Speaking in Favor:

None

Discussion:

B. Akashian said that the applicant owns two other businesses in the City. He anticipates one of the businesses to be a cafe. There will be an internal trash room that could be privately picked up.

D. McCarthy said applicants who need this much parking relief usually come to the Board with a legal parking arrangement with other properties in the neighborhood. The City parking study for this neighborhood indicated how tightly congested the parking is. Suggested trying to reach an arrangement with site nearby and returning back to the Board after a continuance. The project may be too dense. It would not make sense for him to support.

S. Callahan said the parking is a large issue. He is in full agreement with D. McCarthy regarding obtaining a private agreement, but there really aren't any usable parking lots. S. Callahan asked about the length of the rentals. B. Akashian said one-year rentals that follow the academic calendar. S. Callahan agreed that some students may not have cars, but others will.

T. Hovey said students drive frequently. You can see it in the traffic patterns of the City. The City lot on Gershom is a metered lot, not overnight parking. The property owner was unable to find nearby properties to enter into parking agreements with. It would be even more difficult for a student. The last thing the City wants to do is to have cars parked in front of the businesses that don't turn over and allow parking for customers. He cannot support.

D. Shanahan said there is essentially no open parking. Students will definitely have cars. Much of the student body live in the City but still have to drive to UML.

G. Procope agreed with his colleagues regarding the parking. Would not be supportive of the project as is.

M. Briere asked if the petitioner would be amenable to a continuance. B. Akashian concurred.

V. Pech said he cannot support. They will need to figure out a solution regarding the parking. Aside from the parking this is a good project.

D. McCarthy noted that the units are large for studios.

Motion:

D. McCarthy motioned to continue to the 6/8 meeting. M. Briere seconded. The vote was unanimous (5-0).

III. Other Business

Minutes for Approval:

4/13/2026

D. McCarthy motioned to approve. S. Callahan seconded. The vote was unanimous (5-0).

S. Callahan, the Board's sitting member on the zoning re-write steering committee, mentioned that the first meeting is coming up soon.

Adjournment

D. McCarthy motioned to adjourn. G. Procope seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:57 PM.