



City of Lowell - Planning Board

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Monday, May 18, 2026, 6:30 p.m.

Mayor's Reception Room, 2nd Floor, City Hall

City of Lowell, 375 Merrimack Street, Lowell, MA

Remote Participation Optional via Zoom

Note: These minutes are not completed verbatim. For a recording of the meeting, visit www.ltc.org

Members Present

Vice Chair Frechette

Member Cheng

Member Walker

Member Tenczar

Associate Member Sar

Members Absent

Chairman Linnehan

Associate Member Cardoso Silva

Others Present

Mary Brundage, Associate Planner

A quorum of the Board was present. Vice Chair Frechette called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM

I. Minutes for Approval

5/4/2026

C. Cheng motioned to approve the minutes. T. Sar seconded. Motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

II. Continued Business

Site Plan Review and Special Permit - 297 University Avenue, 01854

Kazanjan Enterprise, Inc. has applied to the Lowell Planning Board and Lowell Zoning Board of Appeals for Site Plan Review, Special Permit, and Variance approval 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 application requires Site Plan Review approval under Section 11.4.2(2) to construct a

development with more than three (3) dwelling units and a Special Permit pursuant to Section 4.5.2(1) and Section 11.3.1 for change of non-conforming use. The project also 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:

John Geary, Geary & Geary, LLP

J. Geary stated that the request was for a Special Permit to convert the existing 8 bay garage to four townhouse residential units. He clarified that the proposal includes two lots – 297 and 297.1 University Ave., totaling 11,788 square feet of land. He stated that the proposal meets the criteria in changing from one non-conforming use to another non-conforming use if the new use is less detrimental to the neighborhood. The proposed residential use is more in line with the neighborhood than the garage. The additional four units align with the Lowell Forward Plan as it will offer home ownership at reasonable prices. The project will have less traffic. The engineering comments have been reviewed and the applicant does not have an issue addressing their concerns. The proposal would also eliminate the large curb cut with cars backing out onto University Ave. J. Geary stated that the proposal was well received from the ZBA on May 11 and the variances were approved with conditions of plan approval from the engineering department and obtain approval from DPD relative to the screening on the northern border, back lot line. To meet neighbor concerns of screening and safety. The applicant is proposing to add a six-foot-high white vinyl fence along the northern border of the property. He also mentioned that the existing chain link fence on the western border will be maintained.

Matt Hamor, Landplex

M. Hamor presented the plan to the Board pointing out where the existing eight bay garage with a continuous curb cut in front of the garage. He showed where the proposed entrance drive will be and parking. Each unit will have a garage and a parking space with ample room to back out. There will be walkway for each unit. The proposal will have subsurface draining. He also presented the architectural renderings and floor plans for the project.

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

C. Cheng stated that it's an improvement to what is currently there regarding traffic circulation. He asked about the sidewalk. M. Hamor responded that currently there is a sidewalk with no defined curb cut. The curb cut will now be defined as well as the replacement of curbing with granite curbing. C. Cheng asked about snow storage. M. Hamor pointed out that it is along the sides and rear of the property. There will also be landscaping with shade trees. C. Cheng asked about the big trees in the back and the arrangement for the new plantings. M. Hamor responded that the big trees will be removed and pointed to where the new plantings will be on the plan. C. Cheng asked about stormwater. M. Hamor responded that there will be a full infiltration system on site. The pavement will be regular bituminous pavement.

C. Cheng asked about vinyl fencing. J. Geary responded that there was a concern with an abutter, Mr. Paquette with potential damage to his garage. The fence will set back slightly into the lot so Mr.

Paquette can have access to the back of his lot. J. Geary stated that the chain link was in good condition and provided a barrier. He also stated that trash and recycling will be handled by bins. C. Cheng asked about lighting. M. Hamor responded that there will be a service light in front of each entrance and the rear will have downcast motion- sensor light. C. Cheng stated that he appreciated windows on the side of the building.

D. Tenczar stated that he liked the look of the plan and how it is the building is broken up architecturally. He asked if the units would be for sale. J. Geary confirmed that the units will be made into condos and for sale. D. Tenczar asked about the trees and shrubs on the plan. M. Hamor pointed out where there will be four 2-inch diameter shade trees on the plan. D. Tenczar mentioned the engineering comments that if there was any disturbance in the driveway would be required full width milling and repaving curb-to-curb. J. Geary stated that it may not be necessary and will work with the engineering department on what is necessary. D. Tenczar mentioned concern with patching and creating potholes.

L. Walker stated she liked the project and that is a vast Improvement on what is currently there. She asked if the applicant had communicated with the Lowell Fire Department. J. Geary responded that the fire department did not have any concerns on the comment memo.

T. Sar asked if the neighbor wanted the chain-link fence there and stated that it could be an eyesore. J. Geary responded that the fence is in good condition. T. Sar mentioned that the neighbor may not want to see a development next door of that size and there will be more people around. J. Geary responded that they have discussed with the neighbor and the thought was to keep the chain-link fence in place as it offers a safety barrier. J. Geary offered that it could be made a condition to add the vinyl fence to the western border.

J. Frechette stated he liked the articulation of the building. He stated that he would prefer cornice returns on the overhangs over the front doors rather than the V-shape overhangs. The applicant agreed to make the change. J. Frechette noted the LA/DU requirement was omitted on the zoning chart on the plans and noted the variance for LA/DU for four units was a big ask compared to three units with the current zoning. J. Geary stated that the four units fit well on the lot. J. Frechette asked about the landscaping plan. M. Hamor showed that the proposed landscaping on the architectural rendering with ornamental grasses and shrubbery in the front. J. Frechette strongly stated that a project this size should have a better landscaping plan. J. Frechette stated that the white vinyl fencing along the western side of the property would provide some uniformity J. Frechette noted stated that he did not see a landscaping plan submitted with this proposal and M. Hamor confirmed that they did not submit a landscaping plan with this proposal. M. Hamor clarified that the landscaping will be in front of each unit in the form of ornamental grasses, shrubs, and perennials in a four-foot-wide landscaping area. J. Frechette stated that the whole point of creating a special permit for reduced frontage was to allow the Board to have some say on how it was going to look.

J. Geary added in terms of the trenches, the trench to bring the utilities to the lot will be four feet wide and they intend to mill the width of the street, curb to curb, not the 80 feet of the frontage. D. Tenczar expressed concern with potholes and maintenance going forward and that the engineering note states that it will require milling for entire frontage of the property. J. Geary stated the applicant is agreeable to the vinyl fencing on westerly border. J. Frechette said there should be a condition for the shade trees and the landscaping in front of the units.

Motion:

C. Cheng motioned to approve the Special Permit with the following conditions:

1. The applicant to work with DPD to provide landscaping and/or fencing material along the northern property line;
2. The applicant to provide final revised plans to the City Engineer's office for approval;
3. The applicant to work with DPD on the landscaping plan which should include four (4) 2-inch diameter shade trees and a four-foot-wide landscaping area in front of each unit which should include ornamental grasses, shrubs, and perennials;
4. The applicant to work with DPD to provide a six-foot-high vinyl fence on the western side of the property; and
5. The applicant to update the architectural plans to replace the V-shape trim on the first-floor overhangs over the front door of each unit to cornice returns.

D. Tenczar seconded. Motion passed unanimously, (5-0)

C. Cheng motioned to approve with the Site Plan Review with the following conditions:

1. The applicant to work with DPD to provide landscaping and/or fencing material along the northern property line;
2. The applicant to provide final revised plans to the City Engineer's office for approval.
3. The applicant to work with DPD on the landscaping plan which should include four (4) 2-inch diameter shade trees and a four-foot-wide landscaping area in front of each unit which should include ornamental grasses, shrubs, and perennials;
4. The applicant to work with DPD to provide a six-foot-high vinyl fence on the western side of the property; and
5. The applicant to update the architectural plans to replace the V-shape trim on the first-floor overhangs over the front door of each unit to cornice returns.

D. Tenczar seconded. Motion passed unanimously, (5-0)

III. New Business

Site Plan Review and Special Permit - 130 West Jenness Street, 01851

Boston Gas Company has applied to the Lowell Planning Board for Site Plan Review and Special Permit approval for a proposed natural gas regulator. The property is located in the Suburban Single-Family (SSF) zoning district. The application requires Site Plan Review approval under Section 11.4.2(3) for construction or expansion of any parking lot with more than fourteen spaces or 4,000 square feet of impervious surface and a Special Permit under Article 12 and Section 11.3.1.

On Behalf:

None

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

J. Frechette stated that a written request to continue from the applicant has been received.

Motion:

J. Frechette motioned to continue to the 6/1 meeting. T. Sar seconded. Motion passed, (3-0) with D. Tenczar and C. Cheng abstaining.

Site Plan Revision - 190 and 198 Plain Street, 01852

The Lowell Planning Board will hold a public hearing to hear all interested persons relative to an application by Lowell Dev, LLC to revise their Site Plan. The property is located in the Regional Retail (RR) zoning district. On December 4, 2023, Site Plan Review and Special Permit approval was granted to construct 3 separate structures containing 3 separate restaurants. On June 6, 2025, amendments to the Special Permit and revised Site Plan were granted. The proposed revision includes replacing the middle building footprint identified as Building 2 on the previously approved Site Plan with a retail building consisting of 4800 sq. ft. of floor area. The proposal requires Site Plan Review approval from the Planning Board per Section 11.4 for commercial construction with a drive-through, and for the construction of a parking area with greater than 14 spaces.

On Behalf:

John Geary, Geary & Geary, LLP

J. Geary explained the current approval was to redevelop the site for three restaurants with drive through facilities in 2023. The total land area for the site is 87,828 square feet. In 2025, the plan was revised to replace the middle restaurant with a retail building of 4800 square feet to accommodate 2-3 storefronts. The two end buildings (building 1 and building 3) will remain the same. The initial plan called for 36 parking spaces, the revised plan from last year called for 43 parking spaces. The proposed revised plan will have 47 parking spaces. The traffic volumes with the proposed redesign will decrease by 44% for average day hours and by 74% during peak hours. Traffic mitigation measures incorporated in 2025 agreed to by the city engineer will still be in place. The change from the restaurant to the retail is less impactful to the site. The developer had the property tested for asbestos prior to demolition and has since been remediated. The construction is planned to begin this summer with the tenants moving in by the end of the year.

Chris Shea, Engineer, DiPrete Engineering

C. Shea presented the changes to the plan. She stated that previously there was a 2500-square-foot restaurant with a drive-through and the current proposal will replace it with a 4800-square-foot retail building. Despite having more roof area, there will be a decrease in impervious surface on the site because there will be less need for pavement for the drive-through and parking. She mentioned there would be more opportunities for landscaping. She addressed the comments from the memo dated May 11. With regards to stormwater, the slope for drainage will be increased to 1% as requested by the stormwater team. For wastewater, the sewage line slopes were requested for 2%, that request will be accommodated. As far as the oil/water separator comment from the stormwater team, a proprietary cascade unit will provide water quality treatment. On the water department comment regarding fire service lines, there is no need since there are no sprinklers required for the site.

J. Geary noted that the revised site plan continues to meet the site plan criteria.

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

D. Tenczar stated that he had misgivings with the three restaurants on the site and that the revised plan is workable. He asked about what type of business would go in the retail building. J. Geary responded that it would be a cell phone type of business or similar nature with less traffic. D. Tenczar asked about the changes in landscaping. C. Shea pointed out the landscaping on the plan with native plantings.

L. Walker stated that this was a small change and liked that there was a decrease in impervious area.

C. Cheng agreed that the change would be an improvement.

J. Frechette liked the additional landscaping for the site and less impervious surface.

C. Shea stated that the current parking grades to the neighboring VFW site. The plan takes care of that grading with an onsite infiltration system that would handle stormwater runoff.

Motion:

C. Cheng motioned to approve the site plan revision with the following conditions:

1. The applicant will comply with all transportation and engineering requirements from the comment memo dated May 11, 2026;
2. The applicant will provide an updated plan and approval from the LRWU; and
3. The applicant will obtain a stormwater permit from the LRWWU.

D. Tenczar seconded. Motion passed unanimously, (5-0)

Special Permit - 14 Jeanne D'Arc Street, 01854

The Lowell Planning Board will hold a public hearing to hear all interested persons relative to an application by Three Bridge Development, Inc to split the existing lot and construct a new single-family home at 14 Jeanne D'Arc Street. The subject property is located in the Traditional Single-Family (TSF) zoning district. The proposal requires Special Permit approval per Section 5.1.1 (7) of the Lowell Zoning Ordinance to reduce the required frontage.

On Behalf:

John Geary, Geary & Geary, LLP

J. Geary described the proposal. The property currently has a single-family cottage style residence on 17,835 square feet of land with a barnlike structure on it. It's located on a dead-end street with approximately five properties. The Special Permit is requested to split the lot into two lots with a reduced frontage by 8 feet for each lot. The proposed new home will be 3-bedroom, 2 baths with about 1600 square feet of living space. Lot 1 with the proposed new home will have 7,414 square feet of land area. Lot 2 with the existing home will have 10,421 square feet of land area. The only other relief associated with this redevelopment would be a variance for the maximum front yard setback from the ZBA. A neighborhood GIS exhibit plan shows there is a significant amount of lots that have less than 70 feet of frontage in the neighborhood. Regarding the engineering comments, some of the work has already been done. The applicant has already trenched in and brought the water and sewer service to the proposed lot. The applicant has no issue with conditions 3 and 4 of the memo. Regarding the Special Permit criteria, the proposal will create an additional housing unit within the city. The new home will be a market rate, energy efficient home. In addition, substantial renovations have been made

to the existing home. In terms of neighborhood character, both lots exceed the minimum required square footage of 7000 square feet of land area and the frontage proposed is consistent with the neighborhood. As far as environmental impacts, post development will be better because the existing home will now be tied to public sewer and not a private septic system. In addition, the proposal includes a recharge system for both properties. Both lots will be accessed by private driveway and will have sufficient off-street parking and fire access.

Matt Hamor, Landplex

M. Hamor presented the site plan and showed how the current driveway configuration which partially encroached the abutting property will be removed, and a new driveway will be created. The driveway will have two parking spaces in front of the property. The new asphalt will be mitigated by a drainage trench. The proposed dwelling will have a front porch entrance way extending to either side of the dwelling. There will be a new driveway formed for the existing dwelling and will also be mitigated with infiltration drainage as well. There will also be a walkway from the end of the driveway to the barn. M. Hamor also presented the house plans for the proposed dwelling.

J. Geary added that the property is two tax parcels right now and are being reshaped. The parcel closer to Columbia Road is a smaller lot.

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

J. Frechette read correspondence received 5/4 from Kiran Bala, 134 Columbia Road, into the record.

Kiran Bala (via Zoom), 134 Columbia Road

K. Bala asked how many feet the new house would be from her property line. She asked if the project is following the zoning rules. She asked when the construction would start and how long the heavy digging would take. She also stated she needed a fence and expressed concern about losing personal space.

J. Geary responded that they had received the letter and believed that most of the concerns had been addressed in the presentation. As far as setbacks go, the proposed house will be 15.4 feet from K. Bala's property line, and it meets all the other dimensional requirements except for the front yard setback. Construction will take about six months. In terms of the fence, K. Bala's property is elevated above this property and there is significant tree line there that won't change, offering natural existing privacy.

Discussion:

C. Cheng asked about the natural light and the trees and drainage. J. Geary responded that they are not proposing to remove many trees and will do so pruning and trimming. Natural light should not be affected. In terms of property value, he suggested that the construction of the new home and the rehab of the existing home will positively impact property values in that area. M. Hamor stated they are not proposing any plantings and there will be natural landscaping throughout time on the property. C. Cheng asked about the topography of the site. M. Hamor explained that the grading into the driveway will remain the same going down about a foot for the drive area so the drive area will be relatively flat. There will be a two-foot elevation difference from the driveway to front door. The basement will be 8 feet and will have walk out access from the rear. J. Frechette asked if the house would be elevated to the same level as the neighbor. M. Hamor explained that the neighbor's property will be at 82 feet in elevation and the finished first floor elevation of the proposed home will be at 93 feet. Both properties drop down in the rear.

K. Bala commented over Zoom, because this new house is being built right along my property backyard property line, our privacy is going to be completely lost. Request the board requires the builder to install a six-foot privacy fence along the property line as a condition for approving this project.

C. Cheng asked if the garage next to the driveway would be removed. M. Hamor stated that it already has been removed. C. Cheng stated he was supportive of the relief requested for frontage.

D. Tenczar stated that he liked what has been done to the property so far. He agreed that the GIS neighborhood exhibit showed that quite a few of the properties have similar or less than the frontage being requested. He asked if there were going to be any retaining walls by the driveway. M. Hamor responded that there will be. D. Tenczar stated that he liked the proposal and would like to add some trees as a condition.

L. Walker stated that she liked the proposal and what they had done with the existing bungalow on the property. L. Walker also stated that the proposal meets the minimum lot area required and is within the 15' of permissible relief for frontage.

T. Sar asked about the barn and if it encroaches on the neighbor's property. J. Geary that it does and that it will be corrected by either an easement or lot line adjustment. The neighbors are aware of it and are in discussions with the developer.

K. Bala commented via Zoom that she removed her red shed and requested that the property line be pointed out on the site plan. M. Hamor highlighted the property line.

J. Frechette stated the biggest challenge was the topography. He commented that there will be a certain level of privacy of leaving the trees there that will be beneficial. J. Frechette asked if the applicants have spoken with K. Bala before. J. Geary stated that his clients have spoken with her numerous times. He mentioned that there will be natural privacy from the trees and would be higher than a six-foot fence and not sure what benefit the fence would provide.

C. Cheng asked about adding additional natural screening. J. Frechette asked if the concern with the privacy around the driveway.

J. Geary offered that his clients could probably put up a six-foot white vinyl fence for a run of 20 to 30 feet and let the natural vegetation take over for the rest of the property line.

D. Tenczar mentioned that the landscaping on Lot 2 was sparse and suggested adding two shade trees as a condition.

Motion:

C. Cheng motioned to approve the Special Permit with the following conditions:

1. The applicant must provide as-builts of the drainage system with a Professional Engineer's stamp after the project is complete;
2. The applicant shall obtain a stormwater permit from the LRWWU;
3. The applicant shall provide a six-foot white vinyl fence from the street along the northern border of the property for approximately 20 feet; and
4. The applicant shall plant two shade trees on Lot 2.

D. Tenczar seconded. Motion passed unanimously, (5-0)

IV. Other Business

V. Further Comments from Planning Board Members

J. Frechette mentioned that the Rouke Bridge project is moving along, and you can see them making progress with the cranes. L. Walker asked if the video camera was set up on the city website. J. Frechette said he'd look into it.

VI. Adjournment

D. Tenczar motioned to adjourn. T. Sar seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 PM