

Lowell Zoning Board of Appeals Minutes

5/28/2026 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 Procope, Member Hovey, Member Shanahan

Members Absent: Member Briere

Others Present: Mary Brundage, Associate Planner

The following represents the actions taken by the Zoning Board of Appeals at the 5/28/2026 meeting. This meeting was held in the Mayor's Reception Room. 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 6:33 PM.

I. Continued Business

II. New Business

ZBA-2026-19

Petition Type: Variance

Applicant: Three Bridge Development, Inc.

Property Located at: 14 Jeanne D'Arc Street, 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 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 Variance approval per Section 5.1 of the Lowell Zoning Ordinance for exceeding the maximum front yard setback and for any other relief required under the Lowell Zoning Ordinance.

On Behalf:

John Geary, Geary & Geary, LLP

J. Geary explained the proposal. The proposal is to split existing lot into 2 lots. The subject property is on a dead-end street with about 5 properties on that street. Currently there is a cottage style home and barn with substantial renovations. The intent is to split the lot into two lots and construct a 3-bedroom, 2 bath home with approximately 1600 square feet of living area. Lot 1 has a proposed new home with 7,414 square feet of land area. Lot 2 has the existing home of 10,421 square feet. The relief requested is for the front yard setback. The maximum allowed for front yard setback is 25 feet. The proposal calls for 54 feet. J. Geary stated that where the proposed home is being situated aligns with the streetscape of the existing

homes in the neighborhood. The lot is otherwise dimensionally compliant. Special Permit approval was granted by the Planning Board to reduce the frontage to 61 feet for both lots. The approval had four conditions attached to it including providing as-builts, obtaining stormwater permit, providing approximately 20 feet of 6-foot white vinyl fence along the property line with the abutter on Columbia Street, and providing two shade trees on lot 2.

Matt Hamor, Landplex

M. Hamor presented the plan. He pointed out the driveway that will accommodate two vehicles. He also showed grading, vegetation, and infiltration on the plan. He explained that the proposed home would have a walk out basement. He pointed out the proposed driveway and walkway that would be at the rear of the property on Lot 2.

J. Geary shared a couple pictures of before and after the renovations of the existing home. He stated that he believes that the project meets the criteria for the variance. The relief requested would not be a detriment to the public good. In terms of hardship, the topography and geology associated would affect the current owner or any future owner. Benefit to the city would be to add another home, adding to the tax revenue along with hiring local contractors.

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Speaking in Favor:

None

Discussion:

G. Procope stated that was a nice project and well laid out. He does not see any detriment to the neighborhood. – think it's nice project. He appreciated the condition to add the shade trees.

D. McCarthy asked some questions regarding the building plans. He questioned the rear elevation showed four risers from the grade to the deck that enters the house, but the site plan shows a grade of roughly 12 feet lower than the finished floor. The side elevations are not showing that either. He wanted to know how the rear and side elevations were being treated aesthetically, will there be 8 or 9 feet of exposed concrete. He suggested having a condition that no more than 3 feet of exposed foundation provided by the applicant on the side and rear elevations. He stated that the ZBA should adopt the four conditions from the Planning Board along with the four conditions from the engineering department in the comment memo. He stated that the relief requested was not a big ask especially since the applicant is pretty much all the other requirements. He commented that the glacial erratic was a nice feature to the property that he would like to see maintained.

S. Callahan clarified that the relief requested was for the front yard setback. He mentioned that the layout would coincide with the setback of the existing residence and that it fits in with the character of the neighborhood.

T. Hovey stated that he watched the Planning Board meeting and heard the neighbor's concerns. He believed the applicant went above and beyond – watch the PB meeting. Heard neighbor concerns. Went above and beyond to address her concerns. The neighbor is higher than. Fence addressed. Great project. No problems with it

D. Shanahan stated that the variance requested was reasonable.

V. Pech stated that he had no other concerns and agreed that request was minimal. He asked if the applicant was agreeable to the conditions from the Planning Board decision, the engineering comments and no more than 3 feet of exposed concrete on the side and rear wall elevations. J. Geary stated that they were agreeable to those conditions.

Motion:

D. McCarthy motioned to approve the Variance for exceeding the maximum front yard setback with the following conditions:

- (1) The applicant shall provide no more than three (3) feet of exposed foundation on the side and rear elevations.
- (2) The applicant shall meet the four (4) conditions of the Planning Board decision dated May 25, 2026.
- (3) The applicant shall meet the requirements from the Engineering Department from the Comment Memo dated May 11, 2026.

S. Callahan seconded. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

ZBA-2026-20

Petition Type: Variance

Applicant: 71 Willie Street, LLC

Property Located at: 71 Willie Street, 01854

Applicable Zoning Bylaws: Section 6.1 and Section 5.1

Petition: The Lowell Planning Board and Lowell Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing to hear all interested persons relative to an application by 71 Willie Street, LLC to convert the existing building at 71 Willie Street to a 30-unit residential building. The subject property is located in the Urban Multi-Family (UMF) zoning district. The proposal requires Site Plan Review approval from the Lowell Planning Board per Section 11.4 for a use with greater than 3 residential units and a parking area with greater than 14 parking spaces. The proposal requires approval from the Lowell Zoning Board of Appeals per Section 6.1 for relief from the off-street parking requirements, per Section 5.1 for relief from the lot area per dwelling unit requirement, and for any other relief required under the Lowell Zoning Ordinance.

On Behalf:

John Geary, Geary & Geary, LLP

J. Geary explained the project. Relief is sought to convert an existing historic mill building to residential housing. The property sits on 22,505 square feet of land. There is an existing three-story unoccupied building on the property with an annex to that building that will be demolished. The proposal is to convert to 30 residential units – 15 one-bedroom units and 15 studio units. The layout provides 10 units, 5 studios, and 5 one-bedroom on each floor. The primary building access will be on the southernly elevation of the building through the parking lot and includes a vestibule for mail room and package delivery. To redevelop the property, relief is needed for lot area per dwelling unit pursuant to Section 5.1 and for parking pursuant to Section 6.1. The required lot area per dwelling unit is 1000 square feet unit. That would require a lot of 30,000 square feet, the lot size is 22,505 so approximately 7000 square feet or 250 square feet per unit is requested. J. Geary suggested that it was consistent with redeveloping larger existing buildings. Regarding parking, 2 spaces per unit are required. The site plan shows 31 parking spaces, so it

will be short of 29 spaces. Of those 31 parking spaces, 12 are dimensionally compliant, 19 are not dimensionally compliant. Additional relief would be required under section 6.1.10. Two spaces will be ADA compliant spaces. Given the size of units and applicant's experience with multifamily properties, the applicant feels strongly that the parking supply is adequate for this proposal. The developer has the flexibility to lease to tenants with only one car. In addition, the site is a ten-minute walk to the Gallagher Transportation Terminal and along bus routes. It is very walkable site. Staff comments were supportive of the project and pointed out that it is rehabbing a historic building and aligns with the master plan by producing additional housing. The applicant is agreeable to the proposed conditions in the comment memo. The applicant has already reached out to their transportation engineer consultant for a transportation demand management plan. As far as the Dumpster was concerned, it was originally going to be at the back to the west side of the building. It was moved to the front because it would be difficult for the truck to maneuver in back. Additional screening has been provided. The developer will remove snow as needed from the site. The proposal will be before the Planning Board on June 15 for Site Plan Review and Special Permit approval. A major permit from the Historic Board was received on February 9.

Mark O'Hara, O'Hara Engineering

M. O'Hara presented the project. The existing structure to be redeveloped is about 6,000 square feet. He pointed out that the accessory structure that was added on later will be removed. The remainder of the property is asphalt with concrete pads. The trees will be removed and there is a landscaping plan. The site drains east/west. There is sufficient water and sewer service in the street. He explained the drainage on the site and that he is working with the stormwater team to come up with a solution for overflow. The entire site is currently impervious surface, and the proposal included 3,000 square feet of green space which will reduce the rooftop runoff and will go into an underground drain system. As far as snow storage, it will be along the westerly property line. Snow will be trucked out on severe storm days. There is a small retaining wall for parking. The drive aisles meet the minimum criteria for width.

J. Geary also showed the color renderings of what the finished project will look like. He contends that the large unique building is not characteristic of the district in general. It's unique to the property and a literal enforcement of the bylaws would render it undevelopable. The project would add housing and tax base to the city. The relief requested would not denigrate the intent of the UMF zoning district which allows for seven or more units by special permit.

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Speaking in Favor:

John Tsoumas, 62 Willie Street

J. Tsoumas stated that he grew up in the area and has seen several owners over the years. The only improvement that has been made was the brick facade. He stated that the project would be good for the city.

Discussion:

D. McCarthy asked about the number of units on the plan. It appears to be missing a level. Jim Zorbas, 71 Willie Street, LLC, answered there will be three levels. There will be a split-level entry off of Willie Street. The third-floor plan would basically be a duplicate of the second-floor plan. D. McCarthy stated that the unit sizes make sense and he is comfortable with one car per unit. J. Zorbas stated that had success with a similar project and felt the units were an appropriate size for the type of person who would be interested in renting that type of unit and style. D. McCarthy asked about parking at the applicant's other sites. J.

Zorbas that dimensions have worked out fine at similar sites. D. McCarthy stated that he liked the landscaping plan and the mature trees. He asked about the grading and the retaining wall. M. O'Hara pointed out the retaining wall and stated that it was about 5% slope. D. McCarthy stated he would like to include the conditions in the staff comment memo. He asked about bike storage. J. Zorbas responded that it would be where the Dumpster was originally going to be and that it would be lighted, exterior storage. D. McCarthy stated that he liked seeing old buildings come back to life and it lends itself to residential. D. McCarthy asked if there is intent to screen any of the roof top units. J. Zorbas responded that the Historic Board did not want that.

S. Callahan stated it was a great repurpose of the building. He asked about the screening for the Dumpster. J. Zorbas pointed out the Dumpster access on the plan. He explained that there will be a fence and won't see it from Varnum St. S. Callahan stated that he liked the bike storage in the back area away from the street.

T. Hovey stated it was great project and the area is right for development. He expressed concerns about parking in the area. He did not have an issue with the non-compliant spaces but the lack of 29 spaces. J. Geary stated that taking into consideration the size of the units, it wouldn't be an issue. J. Zorbas said that his property management would control the parking and would only allow one car per unit. T. Hovey stated there was no space for guest parking and wiggle room.

D. Shananan stated that something needed to be done to the property and was happy to see this proposal. He agreed that parking can be a concern for visitors but that's the lot they have.

G. Procope stated that the plan is well laid out. He commended the work done by Mr. Zorbas on other properties in the area. He stated that parking will be difficult anywhere but with the layout of units being sized enough for one car, it makes sense.

V. Pech agreed that it was a great repurpose of the property and that housing is needed. He stated that 29 spaces is a huge gap, but he is confident with the transportation plan and the different kind of amenities available nearby, the traffic will be mitigated.

D. McCarthy pointed out that the condition for the Transportation Department Management Plan is subject to the approval of the Transportation Engineer. So, if the applicant does not receive approval, the permit will not be issued.

Motion:

D. McCarthy motioned to approve the Variances with following conditions for relief from the off-street parking requirements per Section 6.1.4 and 6.1.10 and for relief from the lot area per dwelling unit requirement per Section 5.1.

- (1) The applicant shall provide a Transportation Demand Management Plan subject to the Transportation Engineer's approval.
- (2) The applicant shall provide lighted, secure outdoor bike storage for residents.
- (3) The applicant shall comply with the Engineering Department comments.
- (4) The applicant shall obtain a stormwater permit and comply with the stormwater requirements of the LRWWU.

S. Callahan seconded. Motion passed (4-1). T. Hovey opposed.

III. Other Business

Minutes for Approval:

5/11/2026

D. McCarthy motioned to approve the minutes. G. Procope seconded.
Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Adjournment

D. McCarthy motioned to adjourn. S. Callahan seconded. Motion passed unanimously (5-0). Meeting adjourned at 7:32 PM.