



City of Lowell - Planning Board

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Monday, June 15, 2026, 6:30 p.m.

City Council Chamber, 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

Chairman Linnehan

Vice Chair Frechette

Member Cheng

Member Walker

Member Tenczar

Associate Member Sar

Members Absent

Associate Member Cardoso Silva

Others Present

Peter Cutrumbes, Assistant Planner

A quorum of the Board was present. Chairman Linnehan called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM

I. Minutes for Approval

6/1/2026

G. Frechette asked to edit or provide some kind of indication that Condition #5 on the 260 High Street portion of the minutes is incorrect. The conditions included the wrong comments from the City's Transportation Engineer. The incorporated comments were supposed to be specific about the vans pulling out forward. At this point, the condition is not exactly what was voted on at the meeting, but the spirit was met. The conditions can't be changed at this point, but asked for staff to indicate this in the minutes.

T. Linnehan motioned to approve. C. Cheng seconded. The vote was unanimous (5-0).

II. Continued Business

III. New Business

Site Plan Review and Special Permit - 123 University Ave, 01854

TLGLE, LLC has applied to the Lowell Planning Board for Site Plan Review and Special Permit approval 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 Site Plan Review approval from the Planning Board for the creation of a residential development with more than 3 residential units under Section 11.4 of the Lowell Zoning Ordinance, and Special Permit approval under Section 12.1 for the construction of 11 or more units in the TMU zone.

On Behalf:

T. Linnehan noted they are requesting a continuance until 9/10 in order to create a better parking plan.

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

Motion:

T. Linnehan motioned to approve. C. Chang seconded. The vote was unanimous (5-0).

Definitive Subdivision Plan – 202 Barker Ave, 01850

Danny Rivera has applied to the Lowell Planning Board for Definitive Subdivision Plan approval to split the existing lot and construct a new single-family home at 202 Barker Avenue. The subject property is located in the Traditional Single-Family (TSF) zoning district. The project requires Definitive Subdivision approval from the Planning Board under Lowell's Subdivision of Land Regulations.

On Behalf:

Attorney John Geary, the applicant's lawyer, and Matt Hamor, the applicant's engineer. J. Geary said they are seeking approval of a definitive subdivision plan. Would allow the lot at 202 Barker Ave to be split into two lots. Existing home connected to City water and sewer system. The new house would be as well. Each lot provides roof discharge and stormwater recharge. Applicant received the necessary Variances from the ZBA back in February. There is sufficient parking for each building. Sought the Special permit from the Planning Board to reduce frontage back in February. The Special Permit was 3-2 vote in favor, but Special Permits require a supermajority vote. Staff comments indicate the application meets the requirements of the subdivision application. Comments indicate shade trees should be maximized on the lot.

M. Hamor discussed the Site Plan. Plan shows the two lots that will have been created now that they received Variance relief. Existing site has two garages and a driveway, as well as a single family home.

The utilities are on Baker Ave and on By Street. It is a corner lot. Subdivision splits the lot into Lot 1 (6,800 sq ft) Lot 2 (4,200 square feet). ZBA conditioned that two trees be put on the lot. These are shown on the plan. The plan also shows the removal of the existing garages and gravel. The site plan also had the outline of the proposed home. Extensive infiltration system on site. Stormwater calculations included on plans. Standards met.

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

G. Frechette asked if there are any changes to what was presented to the Board with the Special Permit application back in February. J. Geary said there is more detail regarding utilities but everything else remains the same.

C. Cheng noted the facade of the proposed building has changed a bit. J. Geary said the Board felt at the time that one of the elevations should add some windows. The new elevations reflect this. C. Cheng asked about the trees on the south side of Lot 1. Will they be staying put? M. Hamor said yes. C. Cheng asked about how to differentiate between the two lots. A fence was discussed at the last meeting, but that G. Frechette had pointed out that it may make the lots feel smaller. M. Hamor said the improvements to the lots over time, such as plantings, will create a division. C. Cheng said that in a subdivision there is generally a landmarker. M. Hamor said they will be placing iron rods. C. Cheng asked to confirm if the roof drain is tied in. M. Hamor said yes. D. Tenczar said he liked the project previously and supports it still now. L. Walker and T. Sar had no comments.

T. Linnehan asked if ZBA gave frontage reduction. J. Geary confirmed.

G. Frechette noted that the minimum lot size in this zone is 7,000 square feet. Lot 2 is significantly lower than this at 4,200 square feet. This is lower than any of the other zones in the City. However, they have received all the Variances they needed. When the Special Permit was presented, he didn't see a pattern in the neighborhood of lots that were that small. J. Geary said the Neighborhood Exhibit they provided showed that the lot size of 4,200 square feet is characteristic of the neighborhood.

T. Linnehan said this project would certainly be an improvement on the lot.

C. Cheng asked if the ZBA gave conditions. J. Geary said the condition was to meet all the requests of the Engineering Department.

Motion:

C. Cheng motioned to approve the definitive subdivision plan with the same conditions as the ZBA. D. Tenczar seconded. The vote was (4-1) with G. Frechette voting in dissent.

1. Before pulling building permits, the applicant shall comply with all comments from the City Engineering Department on the staff comment memo.

Site Plan Review – 71 Willie Street, 01854

Willie Street, LLC has applied to the Lowell Planning Board for Site Plan Review approval 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.

On Behalf:

Attorney John Geary, the applicant's lawyer, Mark O'Hara, the applicant's engineer, Jim Zorbas, the principal, and Jeff Dirk, from Van Ness and Associates.

J. Geary described the project. They are seeking a Special Permit and Site Plan review. The property is approximately 22,000 square feet. There is an existing three-story building on the property. It was a former mill. Proposed project converts the vacant building into 30 units. This will be 15 studios and 15 one bedroom units. Each floor will contain 10 units, with an even split of studios and one bedrooms on each floor. The main entrance will be on the southerly elevation accessed through the parking lot. There will also be a mail and package area at that entrance. The project meets the Lowell Forward plan by expanding housing opportunity, reconvert mill buildings. It creates a newer and more efficient building, and it brings the building more into line with the district. This is why it also fits the Neighborhood Character criteria. It will improve the neighborhood by reinvigorating a vacant building. The property received Historic Board approval in February. Will increase tax revenue. Not expecting any negative environmental impacts. The site will meet the stormwater standards. The project will not create traffic issues. The access will be from Farnham Street. They are proposing 31 spaces and received a ZBA variance for parking. The ZBA approval was also conditioned on submitting a TDM plan to the Transportation Engineer for her approval. This has been done. Access to and around the building is sufficient for emergency personnel. Property will have fire boxes and sprinklers. Post-development will be safer for pedestrians and vehicles than the existing situation. Received and reviewed staff comments. They are supportive of the project. There are a few proposed conditions by staff and the applicant is amenable to all of them, besides the requirement for an interior bike rack. The project will have an exterior bike rack in a well lit and safe area. Staff suggested the dumpster be removed from the front of the property. Originally they had it on the west side of the property but it would be difficult for trash pickup to access. The dumpster remains at the front of the building on the plans, but will be well screened.

M. O'Hara went over the Site Plan. Designed the site for the developer. The existing site has two buildings, one of which is an accessory building to the vacant mill. The accessory building is being removed. Main building is being kept and renovated. The site is just over a half acre. Essentially all of it is impervious with the exception of the alleyway between the two buildings. They are proposing additional landscaped areas. No existing drainage on the site. They are improving this and meeting LRWWU standards. Using two catch basins. The overflow will go into the manhole on Willie Street. These are recently updated plans. Not sure if Board has seen. They will be working with LRWWU on utilities.

J. Dirk presented the Transportation Demand Management plan. The project did receive relief from the ZBA for parking. One of the key components of approval was that a TDM plan be approved by the City's Transportation Engineer. There are three pieces to the TDM plan. Program Management lays out the party that oversees the program. The building managers are responsible for overseeing the TDM plan.

They are the point of contact for the City. When residents move in, they will be given their information as well. The second point is promotional and incentive programs. They have multiple ways of informing residents of alternative transportation. The development is close to bus stops and the train station. Schedules will be provided to residents. State funding has allowed LRTA bus service to be free until the end of the month. If the state does not re-up this, tenants will be provided with a 1-month free transit pass for when they move in. This will allow them to get used to the service. There is also a ridesharing provision. Residents can sign up, and the transportation manager on-site can help connect tenants. .5 bike parking spaces per unit are being provided. 15 spaces total. Wayfinding signs within the site will also be provided to guide to the bike parking. The plan has also created a monitoring program. The building manager will have to demonstrate that all of these changes have been completed and provide documentation to the city. This task will be done at 90% occupancy. A subsequent assessment of how the TDM is working will also be conducted one year after the original documentation. There are corrective actions included in the TDM plan. If its provisions not met, the applicant will have to meet with the City, and the TDM plan will need to be expanded and adjusted. A subsequent report would indicate that those measures have been taken on.

Speaking in Favor:

John Sumas owner of 62 Willie Street. Has lived on the street for 6 decades. There have been multiple businesses at the site over the years. The building has been let go for a long time. It definitely needs an improvement. Mr. Zorbas reached out about 6 weeks ago. I was impressed. It will be good for the neighborhood. Impressed by what Mr. Zorbas did on Fletcher Street. Confident he will do a good job.

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

G. Frechette said he really likes the exterior look of the building. Major improvement from what's there. The skeleton of the building has the intention you can see on the plans. Noted that the site plan is different than the photos. J. Zorbas said he did the renderings himself. He had software limitations accurately depicting the corners of the streets. The building wouldn't be as squared off as it is in the rendering. The overall character is the same, the building is just slanted. G. Frechette said the dumpster would be in a different spot. He is looking to condition a high-quality fence around the dumpster. J. Zorbas said they intend to make it a feature to define the space between the parking and Farnham Street. Will also use granite curbing. G. Frechette said the landscaping in the renderings isn't what is being proposed on the plan set. J. Zorbas said there will be a retaining wall along the first floor but they fully intend to provide plantings. Their landscaping architect could not make it to the meeting tonight. M. O'Hara said they could put a one-foot planter but that may move the parking spaces closer to Farnham. They may lose a couple spaces. They want to spruce the site up as much as possible. G. Frechette said he was impressed with the TDM plan and especially the monitoring plan. This makes it a "living" document. Noted the off-site bike racks are not on the plans. J. Zorbas said it will be on the back left corner of the lot near some greenspace. It will be a lawn area. The area will be secured and have lighting. G. Frechette asked if there will be assigned parking. J. Geary said it is 1 space per unit. It is in the TDM Plan. G. Frechette said the language in the TDM plan is unclear so he'll want to condition it specifically. He is excited about the project.

C. Cheng said he noticed that the walkway in front of the parking is actually sidewalk. Could they work on the landscaping plan to ensure overgrowth doesn't block pedestrians? M. O'Hara said there will be a retaining wall so the plantings will be raised. C. Cheng asked if there could be steps down to the

sidewalk. M. O'Hara said that is possible. C. Cheng said he hates to not have as much vegetation, but that pedestrian safety is important. C. Cheng asked about the rear side of the property. He noticed some of the abutters park on the lot. M. O'Hara said that they have constructed the plan to leave them alone. There will a new fence put along the back. C. Cheng asked what kind of fence. J. Geary said the perimeter fence will be 6' white vinyl and the dumpster fence will be more upscale. C. Cheng asked about the treatment of the alleyway. M. O'Hara said the alleyway is going to be crushed stone. Right now it is a mess of various plants. The landscape architect said she was unsure she could get plants to grow back there due to the lack of light. She also said the crushed stone would help with drainage too. He also noted that the area is fenced off and they don't want to encourage people to use it. C. Cheng asked if the vinyl fence will extend across. J. Geary said yes. C. Cheng asked about lighting details. M. O'Hara said there will be one out front, another at the dumpster, and two more on the sides. Lights are down broadcasted. J. Zorbas said there will also be building lighting such as around the door. Nothing intrusive on the neighbors. C. Cheng said he likes the project a lot. Commended J. Dirk on the TDM plan. Appreciated that it was split into three parts. Formatting was more concrete. Asked if staff could work with Transportation Engineer to create something standardized. C. Cheng noted the parking spaces are a little more narrow. Generally they are 9x18 and these are 8x18. J. Geary said they also had to do this at the St. Louis School conversion. Did not have any issues there. This was the easiest method to increase the parking spaces. It received Variance approval.

D. Tenczar asked where the main entrance for the parking lot is going to be. J. Geary said there are two entrances. One is 57 feet wide at the top of Farnham Street. The other is about 27 feet wide towards the bottom of Farnham. Where you'd enter depends on where your space is. D. Tenczar said the concrete walkway sounds like it was a "bridge to nowhere" and may not really be used. Where are the entrances to the building? Is it near the handicap parking? M. O'Hara confirmed. There will be side and rear access doors general for emergencies. D. Tenczar asked about the vegetation on the border with the City parking area. M. O'Hara said those are going to be trees. D. Tenczar asked about the walkway. M. O'Hara said it is necessary for the retaining wall to block the cars in. J. Geary and J. Zorbas both said they are happy to plant there if possible. Both agreed it is a good idea. They can speak to the landscape architects. D. Tenczar said he likes the project. Would like to see some more green space if possible but is in favor.

L. Walker expressed strong support for the project. Loves seeing development projects in the Acre and adaptive reuse projects. She asked if we have the authority to approve the reduced parking spaces. J. Geary said the ZBA approved the number of spaces but as well as the dimensions.

T. Sar said he thinks it is an important project for the neighborhood. It is an upgrade.

T. Linnehan expressed support of the project. Won't be difficult to remove the addition. Supports each unit having an assigned parking spot. Thought the TDM plan was helpful. Thinks its important that it contains mitigation measures. Water Department said that fire service enters the back of the building not from Willie Street. M. O'hara said he was present on site and did see the service but it wasn't indicated on records that it was fire service. There is ample water service from Willie Street.

G. Frechette noted that the fencing around the dumpster on the renderings incorporates materials from the facade. He'd like for the real-life fence to maintain that. J. Zorbas said they will do stone posts and they will ensure it will match the facade. C. Cheng noted that the side door will also be heavily used, and said he would like to see it made as a regular secondary entrance for tenants so they don't have to go through a parking lot. J. Geary concurred.

Motion:

G. Frechette motioned to approve the Special Permit with the following conditions:

1. The applicant shall assign at least 1 off-street parking space to each unit;
2. The fencing material enclosing the dumpster shall incorporate similar material to what was presented including stone to complement the building facade;
3. The applicant shall remove excess snow that cannot be stored on-site;
4. The applicant shall construct an exterior bike rack at the rear of the property for at least 15 bikes;
5. The applicant shall work with DPD to finalize a Landscaping Plan for the area between the building and parking lot;
6. The applicant shall comply with the Engineering Department comments;
7. The applicant shall obtain a Stormwater Permit from the Lowell Regional Wastewater Utility (LRWWU); and
8. The Transportation Engineer shall approve the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan.

D. Tenczar seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous (5-0).

G. Frechette motioned to approve the Site Plan, incorporating all the conditions above. C. Cheng seconded. The vote was unanimous (5-0).

IV. Other Business

V. Further Comments from Planning Board Members

C. Cheng wanted to follow up on his comments regarding the remarks he made about standardizing TDM plans. He asked staff to report back.

VI. Adjournment

D. Tenczar motioned to adjourn. L. Walker seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:08 PM.