



The City of Worcester

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS OF THE CITY OF WORCESTER

Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 16, 2026

Worcester City Hall – Levi Lincoln Chamber,

with remote participation options available via Zoom online at:

**<https://worcesterma.zoomgov.com/j/1604564634> and
call-in number 1-669-254-5252 (Access Code: 160 456 4634#).**

Attendance:

Zoning Board Members Present:

Jordan Berg Powers - Chair
Lawrence Abramoff - Vice Chair
George Cortes
Eric Torkornoo
Erik Bartenhagen – Alternate
Matthew Sacco – Alternate

Zoning Board Members Absent:

Staff Participating:

Michelle Smith, DPRS
Amy Beth Laythe, DPRS
David Horne, Inspectional Services Department

Call to Order:

Mr. Berg Powers called the meeting to order at 5:32 PM.

Requests for Continuances, Extensions, Postponements, and Withdrawals

Continuances/Postponements/Withdrawals

Postponements

Item #9 417 Cambridge Street (SP&V) (ZB-2026-015)
Request to Postpone the Public Hearing to April 6, 2026
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to April 28, 2026

Item #10 421 Cambridge Street (SP&V) (ZB-2026-016)
Request to Postpone the Public Hearing to April 6, 2026
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to April 28, 2026

Withdrawals

Item #2 269 Brooks Street (SP) (ZB-2026-013)

**On a motion by Mr. Bartenhagen, seconded by Mr. Cortes, the Board voted 5-0 to
approve the Postponements.**

Planning & Regulatory Services Division

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On a motion by Mr. Bartenhagen, seconded by Mr. Cortes, the Board voted 5-0 to approve the Leave to Withdraw.

Old Business – Public Hearings

1.	56 Pleasant Street (ZB-2026-004)		
Variance:	For relief from the minimum front yard setback requirement for a high-rise multi-family building in the CCOD (Article IX, Section 6. A. 1.).		
Petitioner:	56 Pleasant Street LLC		
Present Use:	Presently on the premises of 56 Pleasant Street and O Aldrich Place are vacant lots.		
Zone Designation:	BG-6.0 (Business, General) zoning district, in the Commercial Corridors Overlay District - Downtown (CCOD-D) and the Downtown/Blackstone Canal Sign Overlay District (BSOD).		
Petition Purpose:	The applicant proposes to construct a ±220,142.3 ±19-story, high-rise multi-family dwelling with ±225 units, with two ground-floor commercial spaces (2,906.6 SF) and to conduct associated site improvements.		
Exhibits:	Exhibit A:	Application; clerked 12/22/2025; prepared by Donald J. O’Neil, Attorney	
	Exhibit B:	Survey; dated 9/2/2024; prepared by Merrimack Engineering Services	
	Exhibit C:	Site Plan; revised 2/20/2025; prepared by BL Companies	
	Exhibit D:	Shadow Study; dated 12/22/2025; prepared by Frank J Quatela, Architect	
	Exhibit E:	Architectural Plans; revised 2/19/2026; prepared by Frank J. Quatela, Architect	
Testimony Date:	1/12/2026	Constructive Grant Deadline:	4/1/2026

Donald O’Neal, representing 56 Pleasant Street LLC, presented a request for relief from the front yard setback requirement for a proposed mixed-use building in a Commercial Corridors Overlay District. Because the existing sidewalk is 6–7 feet wide (rather than the 8 feet required for no setback), the applicant is seeking 3.05 feet of relief to effectively create an 8-foot sidewalk, including granting an easement to the city. The project includes ground-floor commercial space and residential units above, with final size dependent on financing.

Since the previous meeting, the applicant held a large neighborhood meeting, pulled the building back 5 feet from the alleyway, clarified ground-floor uses, and incorporated pedestrian and landscaping improvements. The applicant agreed to most staff conditions with minor wording changes and requested two waivers, noting that full design details will be reviewed later through site plan

Michelle Smith, Planning Division, emphasized the need for a sidewalk easement so the additional space can function as part of the public realm. Additional conditions were discussed, including extending the sidewalk with appropriate materials, improving the building’s window-to-wall ratio on one elevation, and adding more street trees. Many remaining details, such as landscaping, construction management, and further design refinements, will be addressed during the site plan review phase.

Public Comment:

Randall Ormo, a Worcester resident, expressed qualified support for the proposal. He emphasized concerns about adequate parking, noting past development failures in Worcester, such as Worcester Center, which he attributed in part to insufficient parking. While acknowledging recent reductions in parking requirements, he stressed the importance of ensuring enough capacity for residents.

He also spoke more broadly about Worcester's growth, arguing that the city needs to evolve and become more urban while still being mindful of neighborhood impacts. He stated that the proposed building is consistent with nearby development and is an appropriate use of an oddly shaped, long-vacant parcel. Overall, he supported the project as a good opportunity for housing expansion, provided that key issues such as parking, affordability, and safety requirements are properly addressed.

Neil Smith, a Worcester resident living a few blocks from the proposed site, raised concerns about traffic flow and street congestion. While he acknowledged that the lot has been vacant and is difficult to develop, he warned that placing multi-residential units directly along the street could create issues similar to nearby congested intersections, particularly with traffic backing up and limited space for vehicles.

He specifically questioned how the design would accommodate pick-ups, deliveries, and accessibility needs, noting that there may be no adequate space for ride-shares, delivery trucks, or individuals with mobility challenges. He emphasized that sidewalks could become overcrowded and that the current plans do not clearly address how traffic and curbside activity would function. He urged the board to consider these concerns as part of the setback discussion and future planning review.

Candace Smith, a Worcester resident, expressed support for the project overall, stating that a high-rise apartment building in that location would be a positive addition. However, she raised concerns specifically about pedestrian conditions and sidewalk space, emphasizing the importance of the setback along Pleasant Street.

She highlighted issues experienced during winter, where snow accumulation made sidewalks impassable, and noted ongoing problems with vehicles blocking sidewalks, particularly from deliveries and drop-offs. She stressed that as the city grows and more residents rely on walking, ensuring adequate and accessible pedestrian space will be critical. She suggested that the setback could help address these concerns and should be carefully considered in the design.

Mr. O'Neal, stated that no formal snow removal plan has been developed yet, as those details would be addressed during the site plan review phase. However, they acknowledged that maintaining clear sidewalks is a requirement and indicated that snow would be removed from both the sidewalk and surrounding ground-level areas, with the possibility of adding this as a formal condition if the board requests it.

He also addressed parking concerns, noting that a traffic engineer has reviewed nearby parking availability. They pointed to nearby garages, including adjacent and municipal options, that have capacity and could serve residents. They emphasized that while downtown zoning does not require parking, the development team would work to ensure tenants who need parking can access it, as this is essential for leasing the units.

Emma Morrison, a Worcester resident from the neighborhood, expressed support for the proposal, specifically endorsing the plan to provide eight-foot sidewalks for the development.

Fred Nathan, a Worcester resident, expressed strong support for the project, emphasizing the urgent need for housing. He downplayed parking concerns, suggesting that available garages and lots nearby are sufficient and that securing parking should be the responsibility of residents or developers. He concluded that increasing housing supply should be the priority, even if it requires residents to park a few blocks away.

Board Comment:

Jordan Berg Powers emphasized that while the project raises valid concerns—particularly around snow removal, traffic flow, and curbside management for pick-ups and deliveries—these issues fall outside the zoning board’s primary scope and should be addressed during the Planning Board review process.

He characterized the zoning decision as relatively straightforward, focused on the setback relief request, and expressed support for moving the project forward. At the same time, he encouraged the applicant to develop clearer plans for how the building will function day-to-day, especially regarding drop-offs, accessibility, and package handling, as those details will be critical in later stages.

Lawrence Abramoff expressed support for the project, highlighting the importance of increasing residential density downtown to help revitalize the area and support local businesses. He was not particularly concerned about parking but noted that logistical issues, especially package deliveries and pick-up/drop-off activity, would need to be carefully addressed during the Planning Board phase given the scale of the development.

He also characterized the setback request as relatively minor in the context of a large, costly project, suggesting the board’s decision is a small but necessary part of the process. Additionally, he emphasized that snow removal should be thorough, including not just clearing sidewalks but also removing excess snow from the site to maintain accessibility.

George Cortes stated that the proposal is generally straightforward but raised concerns about the sidewalk width and setback design. He noted that this issue has been a recurring point during review and emphasized the importance of ensuring adequate pedestrian space.

He suggested that there may be alternative design solutions, referencing examples from other cities where buildings are set back at the lower levels to widen sidewalks, with upper floors extending outward above. He encouraged consideration of such approaches as a way to both meet setback requirements and maintain the project’s overall design and functionality.

Mr. O’Neal explained that the project’s design already incorporates street-level façade treatments to engage with the pedestrian environment and align with surrounding buildings. He argued that further increasing the setback by an additional three feet could create structural complications and negatively impact the building’s overall design.

He emphasized that the proposal achieves the functional equivalent of the required sidewalk width, meeting the intent of zoning standards. Additionally, he noted that maintaining the current alignment preserves a consistent streetscape, whereas pulling the building back would disrupt that alignment and expose less desirable adjacent structures. Overall, he supported keeping the design as proposed.

Staff clarified that even with alternative design approaches, the project would still require the same setback variance, so the request before the board remains unchanged. They explained that the current design already incorporates a recessed ground-floor façade, creating an area that functions like an extended sidewalk.

They noted that while the narrowest point of the sidewalk is just over 8 feet, other portions, due to the recessed design, feel significantly wider, in some areas approaching 14 feet. This variation provides additional pedestrian space beyond minimum requirements. Staff also emphasized that further recessing the building could negatively impact the streetscape experience, making the upper floors feel disconnected and exposing less desirable adjacent structures, such as a parking garage.

In response, Mr. Cortes acknowledged that while alternative designs are possible, they would require significant redesign, and he understood the rationale behind the current proposal.

Eric Torkornoo expressed strong support for the project, stating that the setback issue is relatively minor compared to the overall scale of the development and not a concern. He indicated comfort with the proposed modifications, including changes to Condition 1C. He also noted that drop-off and delivery traffic could be accommodated from High Street, and emphasized his enthusiasm for the project, strongly welcoming it as a positive addition to the city

Erik Bartenhagen expressed support for moving the project forward, stating he is comfortable with the proposed changes to Conditions 1C and 1H, including allowing flexibility in the window-to-wall ratio subject to structural constraints. He emphasized that the development is a needed use for the uniquely shaped parcel and contributes to addressing the city's housing demand.

He also noted that most concerns raised are more appropriate for Planning Board review, not Zoning. Regarding the setback, he disagreed with calls for design changes, arguing that the current proposal provides adequate sidewalk width (8–12 feet) and maintains a strong aesthetic streetscape alignment. Overall, he supported advancing the project to the next stage.

Matthew Sacco had no additional comments.

On a motion by Mr. Bartenhagen seconded by Mr. Cortes, the Board voted 5-0 to close the public hearing.

On a motion by Mr. Bartenhagen seconded by Mr. Cortes, the Board voted 4-(Torkornoo and Sacco ineligible to vote due to the Mullin Rule) to approve the application with conditions, recommendations, and waivers.

New Business – Public Hearings

2. 75 Quinsigamond Avenue (ZB-2025-086)

Special Permit: To modify the parking dimensional, layout, and/or landscaping requirements, loading requirements, and/or the number of required parking spaces. (Article IV, Section 7.A.2)

Amendment to:

Special Permit: To allow an automobile refueling station in a BG-3.0 Zone (Article IV, Section 2, Table 4.1, Business Use #17).

Special Permit: To allow a food service use with a drive-thru in a BG-3.0 zone (Article IV, Section 2, Table 4.1, Business Use #6)

Petitioner: Tarek Yatim

Present Use: Presently on the premises is a ±5,785 SF convenience store, with a food-service drive-thru component, and an automobile refueling station with ±29 surface parking spaces.

Zone Designation: BG-3.0 (Business, General) zoning district and within the Floodplain Overlay District.

Petition Purpose: The applicant seeks to amend the original approval (ZB-2021-061) to modify site access and circulation and to conduct associated site improvements, including improvements to Quinsigamond Avenue.

Exhibits:	Exhibit A:	Application; clerked 2/4/26; prepared by Tarek Yatim
	Exhibit B:	Site Plan: “Access/Egress Improvements”; dated 1/30/2026; prepared by MDM Transportation Consultants, Inc.
	Exhibit C:	Transportation Memo; dated 1/9/2026; prepared by MDM Transportation Consultants, Inc.
	Exhibit D:	As-Built Survey; dated 1/28/2025; prepared by Control Point Associates, Inc.
	Exhibit E:	Zoning Board decision (ZB-2021-061); recorded WROD Bk: 67547, Pg: 296
	Exhibit F:	Planning Board decision (PB-2021-079) and approved plans (dated 7/12/2022; prepared by Bohler Engineering)
Public Hearing Deadline:	4/10/2026	Constructive Grant Deadline: TBD

Robert Michaud, a transportation consultant representing the applicant, presented proposed traffic and access improvements to address safety and circulation issues at the site. He explained that current problems include illegal turns, confusing driveway access, and vehicles (including fuel trucks) encroaching onto sidewalks, causing damage and safety concerns. To fix this, the proposal includes modifying the median to allow safer left turns, widening the driveway, improving traffic flow, and redesigning internal circulation, particularly around the drive-thru and EV charging area. These changes aim to reduce conflicts, improve clarity for drivers, and enhance overall safety. He also noted minor impacts, such as a small reduction in green space and the need to replace missing trees, but emphasized that the improvements would significantly benefit both the site and surrounding area.

Michelle Smith, Planning Division, explained that the applicant is seeking amendments to two existing special permits (gas station and drive-through use) and one new special permit. The new request is needed because the applicant proposes to expand a driveway from 24 feet to 35 feet, exceeding the city’s standard maximum of 30 feet. She noted that the changes aim to address safety concerns, particularly vehicles traveling incorrectly due to confusing access and high traffic speeds in the area. The proposal also includes restriping the parking lot to improve circulation, though she acknowledged that driver behavior may still present challenges. Additionally, she highlighted environmental considerations, including the site being in a flood-zone and heat island area, with a slight increase in impervious surface. To mitigate this, conditions include adding tree plantings. She concluded that this review is the final approval, as the proposal does not require further Planning Board review.

Public Comment:

No Public Comment.

Board Comment:

Jordan Berg Powers expressed strong opposition to the project as proposed, citing concerns about the original approval of a gas station in a flood-prone area and questioning the overall appropriateness of the use. He also noted that Worcester already has a high number of gas stations, suggesting the project may not align with broader city needs. However, he indicated he could support the proposal if a key safety change is made. Specifically, he asked for a required physical barrier (not just painted striping) to prevent illegal left turns and unsafe vehicle movements at the site. Without this modification, he remained opposed, but stated he would vote in favor if the barrier is included.

Mr. Michaud agreed with the concern about safety and supported adding a physical barrier to prevent illegal turns. He noted that the applicant would likely not oppose this and suggested using stanchions or similar physical features, subject to DTM review and approval.

Lawrence Abramoff discussed concerns about driver behavior and site access, acknowledging that despite signage, drivers may still attempt illegal left turns out of convenience. He noted from personal experience that confusion at the site makes it tempting for drivers to ignore restrictions.

The applicant clarified that the design allows safe left turns at the newly expanded driveway, rather than at the existing exit-only driveway. There was general agreement to add a physical barrier (e.g., stanchions or curbing) at the exit-only driveway to prevent illegal turns, subject to DTM approval. While Abramoff remained somewhat skeptical about full compliance, he ultimately indicated support for the project, especially with the added safety measures in place.

George Cortes expressed overall support for the project, commending the applicant for proactively identifying issues and proposing solutions to improve site safety and circulation. They agreed with adding a physical barrier instead of striping to better prevent unsafe vehicle movements.

Eric Torkornoo stated no comment.

Erik Bartenhagen confirmed that the 21 conditions of approval are generally acceptable, with minor adjustments. The applicant requested flexibility on the curb radius (Condition 8), allowing it to be determined in coordination with DTM rather than fixed at a smaller size.

The board agreed to add a new condition requiring a physical barrier at the northerly driveway to prevent illegal turns, with final design subject to DTM and DPW approval to account for safety and maintenance needs (e.g., emergency access, snow plowing). The applicant also confirmed acceptance of the required waivers, and overall, the board signaled readiness to move forward with approval.

Matthew Sacco stated no comment.

On a motion by Mr. Bartenhagen, seconded by Mr. Cortes, the Board voted 5-0 to close the public hearing.

On a motion by Mr. Bartenhagen, seconded by Mr. Cortes, the Board voted 5-0 to approve the application with conditions, recommendations, and waivers.

New Business – Public Hearings

3. 149 Plantation Street (ZB-2026-003)

Special Permit: To allow a low-rise multi-family dwelling use in the RL-7 zone (Article IV, Section 2, Table 4.1, Residential Use #11)

Special Permit: To modify the parking dimensional, layout, and/or landscaping requirements, loading requirements, and/or the number of required parking spaces. (Article IV, Section 7.A.2)

Petitioner: Ram Hill Avenue Investments & Developments, LLC

Present Use: Presently on the premises is a vacant, wooded lot.

Zone Designation: RL-7 (Residence, Limited) zoning district.

Petition Purpose: The applicant seeks to construct two, 3-story, low-rise multi-family dwellings, each with ±24 units (total of ±48 units), to construct an ±88-space parking facility, and to conduct associated site improvements.

Exhibits:
Exhibit A: Application; clerked 2/3/26; prepared by James Tetreault, Engineer
Exhibit B: Site Plan; dated 11/30/25, revised 2/2/226; prepared by Expedited Engineering, LLC

Exhibit C:	Architecture Plans; dated 12/22/25; prepared by Stockton Design
Exhibit D:	Survey; dated 4/26/23; prepared by H.S.&T. Group, Inc
Exhibit E:	Drainage Report; dated 11/30/25; prepared by Expedited Engineering, LLC
Exhibit F:	Fire Turning Plan; dated 1/6/26; prepared by Expedited Engineering, LLC
Exhibit G:	Test Pit Memo; dated 10/3/22; prepared by Yankee Engineering and Testing, Inc.

Public Hearing Deadline:	4/9/2026	Constructive Grant Deadline:	TBD
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James Tetreault, representing the applicant, presented a proposal for a special permit to construct two 3-story multifamily buildings on a 2.7-acre site at 149 Plantation Street. The development would include 48 total units (24 per building) and a private access road with a turnaround, along with stormwater management systems to handle drainage. The project proposes 87 parking spaces (below the required 96) but maintains a ratio of about 1.8 spaces per unit, which the applicant believes is sufficient. Tetreault also emphasized that the project would generate minimal traffic, with only modest increases during peak hours, and that the site has good visibility and access. He noted that the surrounding area already includes a mix of housing types, including multifamily buildings, making the proposal consistent with the neighborhood context. The applicant indicated willingness to comply with staff and transportation (DTM) recommendations as part of the approval process.

Michelle Smith, Planning Division, explained that the proposal at 149 Plantation Street requires two Special Permits: one to allow multifamily use in the RL7 district and another to deviate from driveway design standards. She noted that while the site could be developed in other ways (e.g., single-family or smaller-scale housing), the applicant is proposing 48 units across two buildings, largely due to site constraints like ledge and groundwater. She raised several planning concerns, including the site layout, where buildings are set back behind parking rather than closer to the street, and encouraged exploring alternatives to improve design and reduce grading impacts. She also highlighted the large driveway/turnaround area, recommending design changes (like a landscaped island) to reduce impervious surface and improve circulation. Additional comments focused on pedestrian accessibility and building design, suggesting features like a more visible entrance or portico. She noted that while the area includes a mix of housing types, it is not a targeted growth area due to limited transit access. The project will still require site plan review, where many of these design details can be further addressed.

Mr. Tetreault responded that the current building placement is driven by site constraints, particularly drainage and ledge conditions. Placing the building closer to the street would require either significant elevation changes or extensive excavation, making construction more difficult. He also noted that setting the building further back better fits the scale of the site and minimizes disruption, while still taking advantage of the property's topography and views.

Public Comment:

Leonard Shaffredo, speaking on behalf of the Brown Square Neighborhood Association and Crime Watch, acknowledged Worcester's need for more housing but raised concerns about the scale and density of this proposal. He argued that while the east side has already accepted a significant amount of higher-density housing, approving this project would further change the character of the neighborhood, which he described as primarily single-family and two-family homes. He also said that granting this special permit could set a precedent for similar projects on nearby lots. In addition, he raised concerns about parking and winter conditions, questioning where overflow vehicles would go if on-site parking proves insufficient and noting that street parking and snow removal on Plantation Street are already difficult. Overall, he urged the board to review the project carefully and consider whether the density could be reduced.

Mr. Tetreault responded to concerns about density by stating that the project complies with zoning requirements, including frontage and lot area standards for the number of units proposed. They emphasized that the density is within what is permitted under zoning, not an overbuild or exception beyond those limits.

Ms. Smith clarified that while the applicant no longer needs relief related to driveway width if conditions are accepted, they still require a special permit for reduced parking. Specifically, the proposal includes about a 10% reduction in required parking, resulting in approximately 1.8 spaces per unit.

Paul Samara, a Worcester resident and abutter, expressed strong opposition to the project, arguing it would significantly alter the character of the neighborhood. He emphasized that the scale of the development is inconsistent with the surrounding area, which is primarily single-family and small multifamily homes. He also raised several specific concerns, including the need for blasting due to ledge, potential impacts on nearby properties, and the lack of details on lighting, buffering, and environmental protections. Additionally, he questioned the traffic analysis, construction impacts (such as truck routes, idling, dust, and noise), and overall quality-of-life effects. He urged the board to carefully consider these impacts before approving the project.

Mr. Tetreault clarified that a lighting plan has not yet been submitted, but it will be included and reviewed during the site plan approval process. In response to concerns about impacts on abutters, he explained that the parking areas are located at a lower elevation than neighboring properties. Because adjacent properties sit higher, they argued that headlights and lighting from vehicles will have a reduced impact on those homes.

Staff explained that many concerns such as construction impacts, blasting, lighting, and traffic will be handled during site plan review or are already covered by existing regulations. A lighting plan has not yet been submitted but will be required, along with details on haul routes, construction phasing, and worker parking. Blasting would require a permit and a pre-blast survey, and issues like idling and construction hours are already regulated and enforceable. She also clarified that the 1.8 number refers to parking spaces per unit, not traffic volume. No formal traffic study was submitted, but general estimates suggest relatively low traffic during peak hours. The board requested that a traffic study be provided as part of the next stage of review.

Councilor Bilotta expressed opposition to the project, focusing on concerns about extensive blasting due to ledge conditions and the potential impacts on nearby homes, including risks to foundations and prolonged construction disruption. He emphasized worries about the scale of excavation and the possibility of the site becoming a long-term disturbance for the neighborhood. He also raised broader concerns about neighborhood character, noting that the area is primarily made up of single-family homes, duplexes, and smaller multifamily buildings. He said that the proposed density and building scale are not appropriate for the location and would contribute to ongoing changes already occurring on the east side.

Board Comment:

Jordan Berg Powers expressed support for key elements, including the inclusion of two-bedroom units and what he sees as adequate parking (87 spaces). He also acknowledged that concerns raised about blasting, lighting, haul routes, and construction impacts are valid, but emphasized that these issues fall outside the Zoning Board's scope and should not set a new precedent for review. While he noted that the 2.7-acre parcel can support 48 units, he questioned whether low-rise apartment buildings are the best design approach compared to other potential layouts that might better align with the neighborhood. He indicated he is undecided, open to input from other board members, and weighing both the need for housing and community concerns.

Lawrence Abramoff asked for clarification on the waivers.

Mr. Tetreault stated that he has no objection to the condition requiring a landscaped island in the driveway area. He confirmed the applicant is willing to coordinate with staff on the size, design, and landscaping details to ensure it meets the Planning Division's expectations.

Mr. Abramoff expressed that he is conflicted. While he is not concerned about the parking reduction, he emphasized that the more significant issue is the request to allow low-rise multifamily use and how it fits within the surrounding neighborhood. He noted concerns raised by residents about neighborhood character and design, describing the current proposal as architecturally unremarkable and potentially not well integrated with the area. He stated he would like more time to review the site and context before making a decision, a sentiment that was supported by another board member who agreed further consideration is needed.

George Cortes expressed mixed views on the proposal. He emphasized concerns about neighborhood character, aligning with residents who feel the scale and style are inappropriate. He also raised drainage concerns, particularly about runoff flowing toward neighboring properties downhill, and asked for more clarity on how impacts to abutters would be mitigated.

In response, the applicant explained that a drainage plan has been submitted, with runoff split between Plantation Street and Orient Street, and that detention systems are designed to reduce peak flow to neighboring properties. Despite this, Cortez remained not inclined to support the project in its current form.

Eric Torkornoo agreed with prior comments and stated that the applicant should engage further with neighbors to develop a proposal that is more acceptable to the community. He emphasized the importance of finding a compromise that balances both neighborhood concerns and the project goals before moving forward.

Erik Bartenhagen expressed that his main concern is the scale and nature of the development in relation to neighborhood feedback. He is not concerned about parking or drainage and agreed that issues like blasting and lighting are outside the Board's scope. His focus is on whether granting the Special Permit for multifamily use is appropriate for this location. He emphasized the need to balance developer feasibility with neighborhood character, noting that the board has limited ability to verify claims about financial viability. He suggested that if the project is continued, the applicant should provide clearer justification that this is the only feasible option, or demonstrate that alternative, less intensive designs were considered. Overall, he is open but seeking more information before deciding.

Matthew Sacco stated that, based on personal experience living nearby, the proposed development does not match the character of the neighborhood at all. While he acknowledged that the land should be put to use, he emphasized that the current proposal does not fit the area and expressed concern about moving forward with it in its current form.

On a motion by Mr. Abramoff seconded by Mr. Cortes, the Board voted 5-0 to continue the hearing for 149 Plantation Street to April 27th, and set the constructive grant deadline for May 19th

New Business – Public Hearings

4. 28 Harrington Way (ZB-2026-006)

Special Permit: To modify the maximum allowed floor area for an accessory garage (Article IV, Section 8.B.2)

Petitioner: Joseph M. Paldino

Present Use: Presently on the premises is a two-family detached dwelling.

Zone Designation: RL-7 (Residence, Limited) zoning district.

Petition Purpose:	The applicant seeks to construct a ±1,296 SF detached garage that is larger the ten (10%) of the lot area maximum permitted by the Ordinance, with an ADU on the second story.		
Exhibits:	Exhibit A:	Application; clerked 2/25/26; prepared by Donald J O’Neil, Attorney	
	Exhibit B:	Survey; dated 1/6/2026; prepared by HS&T Group, Inc	
	Exhibit C:	Architecture Plans; dated 7/27/25, revised 10/10/25; prepared by JR Associates Design Services	
Public Hearing Deadline:	5/1/2026	Constructive Grant Deadline:	TBD

Donald O’Neal, representing the applicant, presented a request for a Special Permit to construct a ±1,296 sq ft garage on a residential lot in an RL7 zone. The lot exceeds minimum requirements for both lot size and frontage, and the proposed garage meets setback guidelines, with significant distance from property lines and the existing house. He stated that the applicant is generally agreeable to staff conditions and requested waivers, with one modification. Specifically, they requested flexibility regarding the driveway design, allowing either a turning analysis for the proposed layout or an alternative driveway configuration if needed. He also agreed to narrow the curb cut to 22 feet and emphasized the goal of ensuring safe and direct access to the garage.

Amy Beth Laythe, Planning Division, explained that the applicant is seeking approval for a ±1,296 sq ft detached garage, which exceeds the allowed 10% lot coverage, and is also proposing an ADU above the garage that will require a separate Planning Board Special Permit. Staff’s main concern is the driveway and parking layout, ensuring that the existing requirement of four parking spaces for the two-family home is maintained while accommodating the three garage spaces. They also suggested a simpler driveway design to reduce impervious surface. Additionally, she noted that if construction disturbs more than 10,000 sq ft, the project would require review by the conservation commission.

Mr. O’Neal clarified that the applicant is flexible on the driveway design and is willing to commit to the proposed driveway layout shown in the plans if the board prefers certainty. He explained that they had initially left some flexibility, but are open to specifying the exact driveway configuration as a condition to address any concerns about access and parking

Public Comment:

No Public Comment.

Board Comment:

Jordan Berg Powers expressed support for the project, stating he is comfortable with the updated language allowing flexibility in the driveway design. He emphasized that the site has adequate space for parking and supported the addition of an ADU as a way to increase housing. Overall, he showed general agreement to move forward, allowing the applicant flexibility to finalize the layout while ensuring parking functionality is maintained.

Lawrence Abramoff stated he has no issue with the proposal and is generally supportive. He suggested a minor design change of relocating the garage doors to improve direct access from the driveway. He acknowledged there are still parking layout considerations but is comfortable allowing the applicant flexibility to work out the final configuration, as long as access and functionality are maintained.

George Cortes asked for clarification on the intended use of the garage, specifically to ensure it would not be used for any commercial or business purposes.

Mr. O’Neal responded that the garage is intended for personal use only, including vehicle storage and some general storage space. They added that the owner plans to live in the ADU above the garage and use the space for their own vehicles. Any details related to the ADU itself, including size or additional uses, would be subject to a separate Planning Board review and approval.

Eric Torkornoo stated no comment.

Erik Bartenhagen encouraged the applicant to choose a design option that reduces impervious surface, noting that the site already has a significant amount. They emphasized that minimizing pavement and hard surfaces should be a key consideration, even though related conditions are already included

Matthew Sacco stated no comment.

On a motion by Mr. Bartenhagen seconded by Mr. Cortes, the Board voted 5-0 to close the public hearing.

On a motion by Mr. Bartenhagen seconded by Mr. Cortes, the Board voted 5-0 to approve the application with conditions, recommendations, and waivers.

New Business – Public Hearings

5.	158 Austin Street (ZB-2026-007)		
Special Permit:	To allow a residential conversion from a three-family detached dwelling to a multi-family, low-rise dwelling in an RG-5 zone. (Article IV, Section 9)		
Special Permit:	To modify the parking dimensional, layout, and/or landscaping requirements, loading requirements, and/or the number of required parking spaces. (Article IV, Section 7.A.2)		
Petitioner:	Olusola Esan		
Present Use:	Presently on the premises is a three-family detached dwelling.		
Zone Designation:	RG-5 (Residence, General) zoning district.		
Petition Purpose:	The applicant seeks to convert the basement to an additional unit (total of 4-units), reconfigure the associated parking and conduct other site improvements.		
Exhibits:	Exhibit A:	Application; clerked 1/8/26, revised 3/13/26; prepared by Olusola Esan	
	Exhibit B:	Existing Conditions Survey; dated 10/30/25 (Unstamped); prepared by B&R Survey, Inc	
	Exhibit C:	Proposed Conditions Survey; dated 2/13/26; prepared by B&R Survey, Inc	
	Exhibit D:	Architecture Plans; dated 12/10/24, revised 10/15/25, revised 11/4/25, revised 11/15/25; prepared by Classical Homes LLC	
	Exhibit E:	Hydraulic Calculations; dated 12/2/25; prepared by Lawrence V. Roy, Engineer	
	Exhibit F:	Sprinkler Details; dated 12/2/25; prepared by Lawrence V. Roy, Engineer	
Public Hearing Deadline:		3/16/2026	Constructive Grant Deadline: 4/7/2026

Samuel Essan, the general contractor, presented a request to convert an existing three-family home at 158 Austin Street into a four-family dwelling by adding a two-bedroom unit in the basement. He emphasized that the work is primarily interior renovations, bringing the building up to code, with no major exterior or parking changes. He explained that the property is currently abandoned and that financing has been secured specifically for a four-family project, noting that a three-family with an ADU would be difficult to finance. The applicant is seeking zoning relief due to insufficient lot size and

frontage, falling short of requirements, and is requesting approval to proceed with the four-unit conversion.

Amy Beth Laythe, Planning Division, clarified that the applicant is not seeking variances, but rather two special permits. One is for a residential conversion from a three-family to a four-unit multifamily building, and the other is to modify parking, driveway, and landscaping requirements. She explained that the applicant is requesting several forms of relief, including one fewer parking space (7 instead of 8), a narrower drive aisle (24 ft required vs. 20 ft provided), reduced driveway width, and limited landscaping buffers along property lines. These adjustments are mainly due to site constraints, including the addition of a basement unit with a window well. She also noted that if the basement unit were classified as an ADU instead of a fourth unit, no relief would be required. Finally, staff recommended adding additional landscaping to reduce impervious surface and improve stormwater management.

Mr. Essan explained that adding the requested landscaping would create conflicts with site constraints, particularly the fire egress window well for the basement unit. They noted that increasing the landscaped buffer would further reduce the driveway width, making it even narrower than the already constrained proposal and potentially impacting access. He also emphasized that much of the site's current layout, including drainage patterns and existing impervious areas, has been in place for a long time. Additionally, he raised concerns that adding landscaping too close to the building could create structural or water issues near the foundation. Overall, he indicated he is limited in what changes can be made without creating new problems.

Public Comment:

No Public Comment.

Board Comment:

Jordan Berg Powers expressed strong support for the project, particularly the idea of converting basement space into additional housing, calling it a good and underutilized opportunity in Worcester. He supported staff's goal of adding some landscaping to reduce impervious surface, but were flexible on the exact size, suggesting it could be limited to the footprint of the window well rather than a larger requirement. He emphasized that the goal is to add some green space without unnecessarily restricting the driveway. He also stated that seven parking spaces are sufficient and not a concern, noting that similar properties manage with less. Overall, he was in favor of the project, with only minor adjustments to landscaping details to be worked out.

Lawrence Abramoff stated no comment.

George Cortes clarified that the project will need to meet building code requirements as part of the permitting process, including two means of egress and likely a sprinkler system for a four-unit building.

The applicant confirmed that the building already has two means of egress and that they are proposing to install a sprinkler system. Mr. Essan also explained that the layout of the basement unit is designed to ensure proper fire escape access, with windows positioned to meet safety requirements.

Eric Torkornoo stated no comment.

Erik Bartenhagen discussed the proposed landscaping requirement near the window well and questioned whether a 4-foot strip was necessary, especially since the actual window well is about 3 feet

wide. Members expressed concern that expanding landscaping further into the driveway could create practical issues, including reduced access and potential water intrusion near the foundation.

After discussion, the board agreed to amend the condition, ultimately deciding to remove the landscaping requirement (Condition 1C) in that specific area. They also confirmed the applicant’s agreement to the requested waivers and signaled readiness to move forward with a motion.

Matthew Sacco expressed his support

On a motion by Mr. Bartenhagen, seconded by Mr. Cortes, the Board voted 5-0 to close the public hearing.

On a motion by Mr. Bartenhagen, seconded by Mr. Cortes, the Board voted 5-0 to approve the application with amended conditions, recommendations, and waivers.

New Business – Public Hearings

6.	2 Northboro Street (ZB-2026-008)		
Special Permit:	To allow an extension, alteration, or change of a privileged pre-existing nonconforming structure and/or use (Article XVI, Section 4).		
Special Permit:	To modify the parking dimensional, layout, and/or landscaping requirements, loading requirements and/or the number of required parking spaces. (Article IV, Section 7.A.2).		
Variance:	For relief from the minimum front-yard setback requirement in an RL-7 Zone (Article IV, Section 4, Table 4.2)		
Variance:	For relief from the minimum exterior side-yard setback requirement in an RL-7 Zone (Article IV, Section 4, Table 4.2)		
Variance	For relief from the minimum off-street parking requirements (Article IV, Section 7, Table 4.4)		
Variance	For relief from the maximum dimensional Floor to Area Ratio (FAR) in the RL-7 zone (Article IV, Section 4, Table 4.2)		
Petitioner:	Rodney Haddad		
Present Use:	Presently on the premises is a ±2,950 SF building previously used as a dry cleaning business and a surface parking facility with 2-3 spaces.		
Zone Designation:	RL-7 (Residence, Limited) zoning district		
Petition Purpose:	The applicant seeks to operate a food service use and construct a ±3,050 SF second story addition, a ±9-space parking facility and to conduct associated site improvements.		
Exhibits:	Exhibit A:	Application; clerked 2/5/26; prepared by Matthew Eckel, Attorney	
	Exhibit B:	Survey; dated 2/4/2025; prepared by B&R Survey Inc.	
	Exhibit C:	Site Plan; dated 1/19/2026; revised 2/3/2026; prepared by Graves Engineering, Inc	
	Exhibit D:	Stormwater Report; dated 12/3/2025; prepared by Graves Engineering, Inc.	
	Exhibit E:	Architectural Plans; dated 10/3/2013; prepared by J. R. Associates Design Services	
Public Hearing Deadline:	4/11/2026	Constructive Grant Deadline:	5/16/2026

Matt Eckel, representing the applicant, presented a proposal to convert a former dry-cleaning site at 2 Northboro Street into a deli restaurant with renovations, including a second-floor addition and nine parking spaces. He explained that the property has been underutilized for years and the project aims to revitalize the site while introducing a small, locally operated business. The restaurant would have 30 patrons maximum (20 seats), with most business expected to be takeout, and operating hours from 6 AM to 9 PM (Mon–Sat) and 7 AM to 5 PM (Sun).

The applicant is seeking relief for setbacks, parking, landscaping, and floor area ratio, though some conditions are pre-existing. They also proposed landscaping, fencing, and buffering improvements, reduced occupancy and hours based on community feedback, and emphasized willingness to continue working with neighbors. Overall, they framed the project as an adaptive reuse that supports local business and fits within a mixed-use area near commercial zoning.

Michelle Smith, Planning Division, explained that the proposal involves multiple variances and special permits to convert a long-standing dry-cleaning building into a restaurant with a second-story addition. The building is already non-conforming, and the use is considered a continuation of a similar intensity, which allows it to be modified rather than treated as entirely new. She stated the applicant is seeking relief for several zoning issues, including setbacks, parking, landscaping buffers, and exceeding the allowed building size. In total, the proposal requires a reduction in required parking and adjustments to how the site meets dimensional and buffering standards. Staff noted that while the project pushes beyond typical limits, there are alternative approaches that could reduce the need for relief, such as lowering occupancy or modifying the building design. She emphasized that the project could move forward with conditions in place, including limits on seating and hours of operation, restrictions on outdoor activity, requirements for proper lighting and landscaping, and operational controls like snow removal to ensure parking remains usable. Overall, staff presented the project as workable but dependent on the board's willingness to grant multiple forms of zoning relief.

Public Comment:

Keith Johnson, abutter directly across the street, expressed conditional support for the project but raised several concerns. He noted that while he previously supported the proposal, he believes the applicant is now “pushing the envelope,” particularly with plans to operate seven days a week. His main concern is parking and traffic, explaining that the street already experiences congestion, especially during school bus pickup times and winter conditions. He questioned where employees would park and emphasized that nine spaces are insufficient for both staff and customers. He also pointed out existing issues with narrow street access and past problems when the previous business operated. Additionally, he raised concerns about ledge and likely blasting, noting the area's geology and potential construction impacts. Despite these concerns, he acknowledged that the building has been an eyesore for many years and needs redevelopment but urged the board to consider limiting operating days and addressing parking issues more carefully before approving the project.

Vicki Cavesis, a neighboring resident expressed strong concerns about the project's impact on safety, traffic, and quality of life. She emphasized that the area is primarily single-family homes on a narrow, dead-end street, and argued that the proposed restaurant with dine-in service and extended hours is too intense for the location. Her main concerns focused on parking and traffic overflow, noting that the proposed nine spaces are insufficient and that customers will likely park on nearby residential streets, particularly in front of her home. She also raised safety concerns, especially with parking spaces facing directly toward her yard where children play, and objected to the reduced landscape buffer, which she feels compromises privacy and protection. Additionally, she highlighted traffic congestion issues, including school bus activity and difficult street access even under current conditions, stating that a full-service restaurant operating seven days a week would significantly worsen these problems. While she acknowledged the site needs redevelopment, she urged the board to reject or scale back the proposal, suggesting that a smaller, less intensive use like a simple deli would be more appropriate for the neighborhood.

Lenny Shafredo, a Worcester resident, expressed frustration with the property remaining undeveloped, noting that the site has been an eyesore for many years and that he would like to finally see something done with it. He acknowledged ongoing discussions with the applicant over time and stated that while there is interest in redevelopment, parking remains a major concern, especially given past proposals that were seen as unworkable. He specifically requested that, if approved, the board include a condition prohibiting any residential component, citing neighborhood opposition and feasibility issues. He also referenced a prior proposal to demolish an adjacent property to create more parking, which he said is no longer possible, and asked staff to clarify whether any zoning or planning solutions exist to address that limitation. Overall, while critical of the property's history, he expressed conditional support for redevelopment, provided that parking and intensity concerns are addressed.

Ms. Smith explained that the property is located in a residential zoning district, and while it currently has a nonconforming commercial use, that use cannot be extended onto neighboring properties. She described this simply as the nonconformity being confined to the existing parcel. Even if the applicant owns adjacent land, they cannot "spread" that nonconforming use to those parcels through a Special Permit. The use can be modified or continued on the current lot, but not expanded beyond it.

Staff noted that one possible alternative would be to rezone the surrounding properties to allow the use more broadly, but this would require a city council approval with a supermajority vote and could take several months. While this option was discussed, the applicant chose instead to proceed under the current zoning constraints.

The project engineer, Mike Andrade, Graves Engineering, responded to neighbor concerns by explaining that the team has carefully evaluated site conditions, particularly regarding ledge and safety. He stated that while ledge exists, testing showed it to be relatively soft, meaning it may be removed without blasting, and the design minimizes excavation by following existing grades. Addressing concerns about parking facing a neighbor's yard, he noted that the site sits lower than the adjacent property, with a 2–4 foot grade difference, along with landscaping and a six-foot solid fence acting as barriers. He emphasized that this combination makes it highly unlikely for vehicles, lights, or visual impacts to affect the neighboring property.

Ms. Cavesis raised concerns about the proposed variance, noting plans for a six-foot fence with limited spacing between trees. She referenced recent incidents of cars crashing into buildings to emphasize safety risks and expressed concern for nearby residents, including her grandchildren. She urged the board to consider a stronger barrier than the proposed six-foot fence to better protect the area.

Board Comment:

Jordan Berg Powers discussed zoning and residential concerns, noting that adding a residential unit would not be possible without amending the existing Special Permit, as the property is currently limited in its use. He emphasized that while certain hypothetical risks or rare events should not drive decision-making, the board should focus on realistic, day-to-day impacts. Mr. Berg Powers highlighted concerns about increased density, limited parking capacity, and traffic flow, particularly on the narrow Northboro Street, as key issues for consideration. He acknowledged that while the landscape buffer, fencing, and vegetation exceed typical requirements, the primary concern remains whether the scale and intensity of the proposed changes are appropriate for the site.

Lawrence Abramoff asked for clarification on the staff recommendation of a 20-seat limit and reflected on the long history of the proposal, noting it had been approved multiple times in the past. He expressed concern that without action, the building could remain in its deteriorating state for years. While generally supportive of the proposal, Mr. Abramoff highlighted concerns about limited parking and the impact on the surrounding neighborhood. He suggested that a compromise on operating hours

may be necessary, noting that the proposed hours of 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. may be too extensive for the area, and indicated he would consider feedback from the petitioner and other board members before forming a final position.

George Cortes acknowledged that while the building has been vacant for a long time and revitalizing it would benefit the neighborhood, there are significant concerns that must be addressed. He emphasized parking as the primary issue, questioning whether there would be sufficient capacity and where employees would park, noting they would likely use nearby street parking. He also raised concerns about neighborhood impact, including privacy and safety for adjacent properties, suggesting the addition of fencing between parking areas and neighboring homes. Additionally, he pointed to the proposed operating hours as excessive and encouraged finding a more reasonable compromise. He stressed the importance of continued engagement with neighborhood residents to ensure the project aligns with community needs and concerns.

Keith Johnson, a neighborhood resident, stated that during the Brown Square meeting, no information was provided about the proposed operating hours. While residents were generally welcoming of the project, he emphasized that parking and traffic are longstanding issues on Northboro Street, based on his 32 years of living there. He described how the narrow street already creates congestion, especially during winter conditions, and expressed concern that additional cars would worsen accessibility and safety. Mr. Johnson also highlighted risks when backing out of driveways due to limited visibility and lack of traffic controls. Overall, he reinforced that parking, traffic flow, and the absence of communicated hours remain major concerns for residents.

Rodney Haddad, the property owner, acknowledged community concerns and stated that operating hours had been discussed, explaining that while the business holds a seven-day license, Sunday activity would be limited to occasional catering pickup. He emphasized his commitment to the neighborhood, citing his family's long history with the building and his intention to operate responsibly. Haddad recognized that parking is limited but noted efforts to manage flow through on-site use, potential signage, and possible coordination with the DPW for traffic improvements like a stop sign. He expressed openness to additional safety measures, such as barriers or fencing, to address abutter concerns. While acknowledging that the proposed hours of 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. are extensive, he explained they were intended to revive a traditional breakfast presence in the area. Overall, he conveyed a willingness to work with the board and neighborhood to reach a reasonable solution while also maintaining the viability of his business.

Mr. Berg Powers stated that he is not opposed to continuing the proposal but emphasized the need to set realistic expectations. He noted that requiring the applicant to pursue rezoning of a neighboring property is impractical, as rezoning is uncertain and requires City Council approval with a supermajority. He stressed that any conditions or oversight imposed by the board should be feasible and within their control, while still acknowledging and respecting the concerns raised by others.

Eric Torkornoo expressed strong support for the project, noting that based on his own observations of the applicant's existing Napoli location, the business operates primarily as takeout rather than dine-in, which reduces parking demand. He stated that he visited the site multiple times and observed that most activity involved quick pickups rather than extended stays. Mr. Torkornoo indicated that a 20-seat limit, use of the second floor for storage or office space, and the addition of fencing would be reasonable conditions. He also highlighted the applicant's positive track record operating in a residential neighborhood without issues, ultimately stating he would fully support the proposal.

Erik Bartenhagen expressed concerns about limited parking and the proposed operating hours, seeking clarification from the applicant about actual hours at their Shrewsbury location. After hearing that the business typically operates more limited hours (and is closed on Sundays), he suggested that similar hours could be considered for this proposal to help mitigate neighborhood concerns. While acknowledging that parking constraints are largely beyond the applicant’s control, he emphasized that adjusting hours could be a reasonable compromise. Bartenhagen also noted that he does not want the property to remain vacant for years and believes a middle ground is achievable, particularly if both the applicant and the board are willing to be flexible.

Matthew Sacco stated that there was little new to add but expressed support for the project based on personal experience with Napoli, noting it primarily operates as a quick takeout establishment where customers typically stay for short periods. He emphasized that the lack of alcohol service and the nature of the business reduce the likelihood of prolonged stays, suggesting that parking impacts may be less significant than anticipated. Overall, he indicated minimal concern and appeared comfortable with the proposal.

On a motion by Mr. Bartenhagen, seconded by Mr. Cortes, the Board voted 5–0 to continue the application for 2 Northboro Street to April 6, 2026, with a Constructive Grant Deadline of April 27, 2026.

New Business – Public Hearings

7.	76 & 78 West Mountain Street (ZB-2026-012)		
Special Permit:	To allow Motor Vehicle Service, Repair, Garage, Display use in a BL-1.0 zone (Article IV, Section 2, Table 4.1, Business Use #16)		
Petitioner:	Jonathan Nozzolillo		
Present Use:	Presently on the premises at 76 West Mountain Street is a ±4,880 SF commercial building presently used for Motor Vehicle Service, Repair, Garage, Display use (Business Use #16) and on the premises at 78 West Mountain Street is a ±2,638 SF single-family detached dwelling.		
Zone Designation:	BL-1.0 (Business, Limited) zoning district		
Petition Purpose:	The applicant seeks a special permit to construct a ±1,400 SF garage on 78 West Mountain Street, to be used for Motor Vehicle Service, Repair, Garage, Display use (Business Use #16), as an expansion of the existing operations on 76 West Mountain Street.		
Exhibits:	Exhibit A:	Application; clerked 1/27/26; prepared by Jonathan Nozzolillo	
	Exhibit B:	Architecture Plans; dated 11/20/25; prepared by BigTop Manufacturing	
	Exhibit C:	Existing Conditions Survey; dated 2/12/26; prepared by WDA Design Group	
	Exhibit D:	Proposed Conditions Survey; dated 2/12/26, revised 2/27/26; prepared by WDA Design Group	
	Exhibit E:	Engineer Letter; dated 2/13/26; prepared by WDA Design Group	
Public Hearing Deadline:		4/2/2026	Constructive Grant Deadline: TBD

Jonathan Nozzolillo of Worcester, owner of Joy’s Limousine, presented a proposal to install a Quonset hut at 78 Northboro Street. He explained that the structure would be used to store vehicles currently parked outdoors at 76 Northboro Street, protecting them from weather conditions and improving operations such as snow removal.

Amy Beth Laythe, Planning Division, explained that the applicant is seeking an amendment to a previously approved Special Permit (originally granted in 2000) to expand a motor vehicle storage use. The proposal would extend the use from 76 West Mountain Street to 78 West Mountain Street and include construction of an approximately 1,400 square foot storage facility for fleet vehicles. She clarified that no repair work would occur on-site, as the use is strictly for storage. She noted several staff considerations, including the need for additional landscaping to improve compliance with zoning requirements, particularly due to existing gravel surfaces. She also highlighted proposed site changes such as removing four parking spaces to create a two-way drive aisle for vehicle access, bringing the total parking count to 15. Additional questions from staff focused on potential lighting, paving, and ensuring proper separation between the storage use and the existing single-family home on the property.

Mr. Nozzolillo confirmed details of the proposal and responded to staff recommendations, stating that no additional paving or lighting would be added to the 78 West Mountain Street property. He agreed to enhance landscaping by adding shrubbery around the perimeter and to install slats in existing fencing where needed to improve screening.

The applicant clarified that the removal of four parking spaces would not negatively impact operations, as those spaces are rarely used, and vehicle storage would instead be shifted to the new facility. He emphasized that the use involves minimal on-site traffic, primarily employees and occasional visitors, and confirmed his request for a waiver as part of the application.

Staff requested that an additional fence be installed along the side yard to clearly separate the residential portion of the property from the rear area designated for vehicle storage. This condition is intended to ensure a clear distinction between the front residential use and the back commercial use, and the applicant was asked whether they would be amenable to this requirement.

Public Comment:

No Public Comment.

Board Comment:

Jordan Berg Powers expressed his support

Lawrence Abramoff had no additional comments

George Cortes discussed fencing requirements in detail, clarifying that the intent was not to require fencing around the entire property but to ensure appropriate screening and separation between residential and commercial uses. Staff explained that the applicant's plans indicated a proposed chain-link fence along the western lot line but recommended a more suitable material for a residential context. After some confusion, the Board clarified that fencing should primarily delineate the rear commercial storage area from the front residential portion, along with required landscaping. The applicant ultimately agreed to revise plans or comply with appropriate fencing standards as requested.

Eric Torkornoo had no additional comments

Erik Bartenhagen had no additional comments

Matthew Sacco had no additional comments

On a motion by Mr. Bartenhagen, seconded by Mr. Cortes, the Board voted 5-0 to close the public hearing.

On a motion by Mr. Bartenhagen, seconded by Mr. Cortes, the Board voted 5-0 to approve the application with conditions, recommendations, and waivers.

New Business – Public Hearings

11.	11 Hammond Street (ZB-2026-020)		
Variance:	For relief from the minimum parking requirements for a multi-family dwelling. (Article IV, Section 7, Table 4.4)		
Petitioner:	Main South Community Development Corporation		
Present Use:	Presently on the premises is a detached garage and surface parking lot with ±74 parking spaces.		
Zone Designation:	RG-5 (Residence, General) zoning district		
Petition Purpose:	The applicant proposes to raze the current site improvements to construct a ±48,700 SF, 5-story multi-family, high-rise dwelling with ±41 units, with a ±35-space surface parking facility, and to make associated site improvements.		
Exhibits:	Exhibit A:	Application; clerked 2/26/2026; prepared by Todd Rodman, Attorney	
	Exhibit B:	Survey; dated 12/15/2025; prepared by Feldman Geospatial	
	Exhibit C:	Site Plans; dated 2/5/2026, revised 2/19/2026; prepared by Graves Engineering	
	Exhibit D:	Architectural Plans; dated 11/25/2025; prepared by Dixon Salo Architects	
Public Hearing Deadline:		5/2/2026	Constructive Grant Deadline: 6/6/2026

Todd Rodman, representing Main South Community Development Corporation, presented a proposal to develop 11 Hammond Street into a five-story residential building with 41 units of affordable housing and 35 parking spaces. The project aims to transform a former funeral home parking lot into housing primarily for low-income residents and seniors, including four fully accessible units. He explained that the applicant is seeking a variance to reduce the parking requirement from 41 to 35 spaces, citing site constraints and financial feasibility. Rodman emphasized that maintaining 41 units is critical to securing sufficient tax credit financing, and that the reduced parking would still adequately serve residents given the target population, proximity to public transit, and availability of bicycle parking.

Amy Beth Laythe, Planning Division, stated that the applicant is requesting a variance to reduce the required parking from 41 to 35 spaces for the multifamily development. She noted that the applicant had addressed nearly all staff concerns, adding that the proposal also includes a required loading space at the front of the building. Ms. Laythe confirmed that the project has already received site plan approval and an inclusionary zoning special permit, with the current request representing the remaining six-space parking reduction.

Public Comment:

No Public Comments

Board Comment:

Jordan Berg Powers expressed his support for this project.
Lawrence Abramoff expressed his support for this project.
George Cortes expressed his support for this project.
Eric Torkornoo had no comment.
Erik Bartenhagen expressed his support for this project.
Matthew Sacco had no additional comment.

On a motion by Mr. Bartenhagen, seconded by Mr. Cortes, the Board voted 5-0 to close the public hearing.

On a motion by Mr. Bartenhagen, seconded by Mr. Cortes, the Board voted 5-0 to approve the application with conditions, recommendations, and waivers

New Business – Public Hearings

12. 1103 Millbury Street (ZB-2026-024)

Amendment to:

Variance: For relief from the maximum height dimensional requirement for a multi-family low-4.1, Residential Use #11).

Special Permit: To allow a multi-family low rise dwelling in an RL-7 zone (Article IV, Section 2, Table 7.A.2).

Petitioner: Asmyra Construction

Present Use: Presently on the premises is a wooded lot.

Zone Designation: The property is split zoned between the BL-1.0 (Business, Limited) and the RL-7 (Residence, Limited) zoning districts.

Petition Purpose: The applicant seeks to amend the prior approval for construction of a ±3-story multi-family, low rise dwelling with a ±40 units atop a drive under parking facility and a surface parking facility with a total of ±80 parking spaces across both parking areas (ZB-2025-095) to reflect that the low-rise multi-family dwelling is located partially within the RL-7 zoning district (as the zoning district boundary was shown incorrectly on the earlier plans); no changes are other proposed.

Exhibits:

- Exhibit A: Application; clerked 11/18/2025; prepared by Joshua Lee Smith, Attorney
- Exhibit B: Site Plan; dated 11/3/2025; prepared by Cresent Builders, Inc.
- Exhibit C: Architectural Plans; dated 10/24/2025; prepared by Dixon Salo Architects
- Exhibit D: Traffic Impact Study; dated 10/29/2025; prepared by Fort Hill Infrastructure

Public Hearing Deadline: 5/2/2026 Constructive Grant Deadline: 6/6/2026

Joshua Lee Smith, representing the applicant, explained that the project at 1103 Millbury Street is before the Board as an amendment to a previously approved special permit and variance due to an error in the zoning line. He clarified that the site is split between BL-1.0 and RL-7 zones, and the corrected zoning shows that part of the building extends into the residential zone. Mr. Lee Smith emphasized that the error was unintentional, identified by city staff, and that the amendment is procedural in nature, as the project itself remains unchanged. He reiterated key project details, including a 40-unit multifamily development with 80 parking spaces and a height variance, and noted that prior conditions and design enhancements remain in place.

Michelle Smith, Planning Division, clarified that the amendment is to correct an error in the zoning line shown on the original plans, which had incorrectly indicated the building was fully within the business district. In reality, a portion of the structure extends into the residential (RL7) zone, and the applicant is seeking to formally address this through the amendment. Staff noted that the project remains compliant—particularly regarding height, which is actually more permissive in the residential zone—and emphasized that the changes are largely administrative to “cross t’s and dot i’s.” Additionally, staff mentioned two minor modifications: maintaining flexible language around landscaping by adding “and/or” to allow design adjustments during site plan review, and confirming that riprap would not be permitted. Overall, staff indicated no major concerns and supported moving forward.

Public Comment:

Richard Anderson, a nearby resident, expressed general support for the developer but raised concerns about the project’s scale and zoning implications. He questioned whether the development would have been approved if the correct zoning—showing part of the building in a residential area—had been known from the start, and whether a zoning change would have been required. While acknowledging confidence in the developer, he emphasized the importance of the Board’s decision given the project’s size and its impact on a quiet residential neighborhood.

Board Comment:

Jordan Berg Powers responded that, in his view, the project would still warrant approval despite the corrected zoning, noting that the majority of the development remains within the business zone and aligns with the site’s location and overall context. He indicated that the zoning correction does not significantly change his position and that he would still be inclined to vote in favor. Mr. Berg Powers also reassured the resident that their concerns were valid and appreciated, emphasizing the importance of community engagement and encouraging further input from other board members before a final decision.

Lawrence Abramoff confirmed with staff that a Special Permit had already been approved for a low-rise multifamily dwelling in the RL-7 zone. Staff clarified that while the building itself was not originally understood to be within the RL-7 zone, other project elements—such as walkways and site features—were. Mr. Abramoff acknowledged that even with the corrected zoning showing a portion of the building in the residential zone, this does not change his position, noting that the project had already been approved and worked through with community input. He indicated continued support for the proposal.

George Cortes acknowledged the resident’s question as valid and important, but stated that the corrected zoning does not materially change the previously approved project. He indicated that his position remains unchanged and expressed continued support for the proposal as it stands.

Eric Torkornoo had no additional comment

Erik Bartenhagen asked whether the applicant was again requesting a waiver and if any conditions had changed. Staff clarified that the applicant proposed modifying Condition 1A by removing “landscaping,” but recommended instead keeping it and adding “or” to allow flexibility between landscaping and architectural elements. Staff also agreed to the applicant’s request regarding Condition 1D, with the stipulation that riprap would not be permitted. The applicant confirmed agreement with the revised language, explaining that due to site constraints—specifically a walkway—there is no space for landscaping in certain areas, so architectural elements would be used instead.

Matthew Sacco had no additional comment

On a motion by Mr. Abramoff, seconded by Mr. Bartenhagen, the Board voted 5-0 to close the public hearing.

On a motion by Mr. Abramoff seconded by Mr. Cortes, the Board voted 5-0 to approve the application with conditions, recommendations, and waivers

Other Business:

13. Communications

14. Discussion of Board Policies and Procedures

a) Elections for Chair and Vice Chair in new year

15. Approval of Minutes – 3/2/2026

Tabled until the next meeting

Adjournment:

On a motion by Mr. Bartenhagen, seconded by Mr. Cortes, Board voted 5-0 to adjourn at 11:00