

Schenectady Board of Zoning Appeals

Minutes

February 11, 2026

I. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Connely called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM

After calling the meeting to order, **Commissioner Connely** explained to the members of the public how the consideration of the applications would proceed. He stated that the applicants would have an opportunity to make their presentation to the Board, followed by any members of the public who would like to speak in favor of the application. Next, any members of the public in opposition to the application would be invited to speak, followed by any further discussion or questions the Board Members wished to put forth prior to the vote. He added that after the initial presentation of the proposal the applicant would not be given another opportunity to comment unless directly questioned by a Board Member. The meeting is being recorded.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Jim Gleason, Chair; Helene Lester; Nora Wallace- Zoning Officer; Assistant Corporation Counsel Andrew; Brendan Keller; Mary Zawacki; Mary D'Alessandro-Gilmore; Kristen Faubion

EXCUSED: Vice Chair Dave Connelly

III. CONFLICT OF INTEREST CHECK

None.

IV. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

The minutes were approved for the December 10th, 2025 meeting. The motion was made by **Commissioner D'Alessandro-Gilmore** and seconded by **Commissioner Keller**.

The motion carried unanimously.

V. New Business

- A. Wilfredo Hernandez** seeks an area variance for 121 Harborside Dr (tax parcel # 39.41-1-6.11) located in the C-3 Waterfront Mix Use district to permit the installation of four wall signs where 0 are permitted pursuant to **Schedule I Sign Regulations**.

B. Wilfredo Hernandez seeks an area variance for 121 Harborside Dr (tax parcel # 39.41-1-6.11) located in the C-3 Waterfront Mix Use district to permit the 416 square feet of signage where 0 square feet is permitted pursuant to **Schedule I Sign Regulations**.

Freddy Hernandez begins his presentation on behalf of the Hyett House for the area variances stated above. Mr. Hernandez states the property as zero frontage which per the code does not permit any signage for the property. He states the signage proposal is for four total signs to be installed on the hotel. Commissioner Keller asks the applicant why four signs are needed. Mr. Hernandez states four signs will increase the hotels visibility for foot traffic and those traveling by vehicle to identify the location of the hotel. Commissioner Connelly inquires what street is the building facing. Mr. Hernandez states the hotel faces Harborside Drive. Commissioner D'Alessandro-Gilmore asks the applicant if all four signs will be on the front of the building. Mr. Hernandez states there will be one sign on each wall of the building. Commissioner Keller asks the applicant if he is familiar with the site of the hotel. Mr. Hernandez states he has not visited the property in person and is not familiar with the site personally, but his coworker Steven has visited the site in person.

Steven begins to address the question to the boards questions and states each sign will be east, north, south, and west.

There is some confusion regarding the elevations provided to the board for review for signage. Commissioner Keller inquires if A,B and C on the elevations are representing the signage being proposed. The applicant continues to clarify the directional questions and provides clarity to the board. Steven then provides the board with a visual through a screen share to further clarify. Stating that the Hyatt standards requires one sign per elevation and the intention for the signage is for patrons locating the hotel to find it easier. Commissioner Keller states technically speaking there will be no patrons arriving from the river. Steven responds technically not but that sign will assist with visibility from Freemans bridge and Erie Blvd. Commissioner Keller inquires other than branding is there any other justification for having signs on all four elevations. Scott responds that the primary reason is the branding and for wayfinding for patrons. Commissioner Keller restates that foot traffic will not be coming from the river and asks how much frontage the property has. He then asks the applicant how many linear feet the building is. The Zoning Officer states the property has zero feet of frontage and the applicant does not have the linear feet of the building on hand

to respond to the question. Commissioner Keller asks what the size of the signage is. After his question is answered by the applicant he concludes the signs are all the same size. Public discussion is closed and the board continues to discuss the signage being proposed to be installed on the backside of the hotel. Commissioner D'Alessandro-Gilmore states it's a unique site and the signage along the river will inform boats that a hotel is there. Commissioner Connelly agrees with Commissioner D'Alessandro-Gilmore points. Commissioner Keller proposed to give the property signage that would be permitted for a property that has frontage. Commissioner D'Alessandro-Gilmore disagrees with Commissioner Kellers stance and reiterates the site is unique. Commissioner Keller doesn't want to approve signage that he doesn't believe is entitled to them. Steven states he knows the Hyatt believes the signage on the back of the building is very important and states sign D is the lowest priority for the Hyatt. Commissioner Keller is appeased by Stevens compromise.

SEQR RESOLUTION

Negative Declaration

Motion carried unanimously.

AREA VARIANCE

Commissioner Keller made a motion to APPROVE the area variances for signs A, B, & C seconded by Commissioner D'Alessandro-Gilmore.

Motion carried unanimously.

C. Renuka and Anushka Kalicharan seeks a use variance for 931 Altamont Ave (tax parcel # 49.73-1-12.1) located in the R-1 Single-Family Residential district to permit a "multifamily dwelling" which is not a permitted use for the district (Schedule A Use Regulations for Residential Districts).

Dan Morreli begins his presentation by stating the property has been a legal nonconforming multiple family dwelling for 37 years. He states there has been two dwelling units that have been there forever and then at one point the first-floor area was granted permission to operate an insurance agency and most recently a cleaning service business. Originally this commercial space was utilized as an Italian deli with the owners living up above in the upstairs apartment that eventually was split into a two unit. Mr. Morreli states the applicant is not looking to change

anything that isn't already existing and there will be no changes to the exterior of the building. He continues to highlight that there is off-street parking that will accommodate all of the tenants for each apartment and meets the zoning code requirement. Mr. Morelli continues to state the applicant has actively tried to fill the commercial space through online advertisements and at one point attempted to lease to a daycare operation but that was not a permitted use. During the time period the applicant was actively looking to lease the commercial space within the confines of what the zoning code permits the applicant was not successful. Ultimately resulting in the applicants need for the use variance to use the first-floor area for a dwelling unit. Mr. Morelli calls Renuka Kalicharan up to further detail the information he provided. Commissioner Keller claims from the information Ms. Kalicharan provided further establishes reason to state the property is a legal nonconforming three unit and does not need a use variance. Commissioner Keller makes a motion to overturn the Zoning Officer's determination.

SEQR RESOLUTION

Negative Declaration

Motion carried unanimously.

USE VARIANCE RESOLUTION

Commissioner Keller made a motion to OVERTURN the Zoning Officer's determination for 931 Altamont Ave (tax parcel # 49.73-1-12.1) and grants the property the status of a legal nonconforming three unit and/or "multifamily dwelling" Commissioner Connelly.

VII. **Other Business**

VIII. **Adjourn 8:00 p.m.**