

Schenectady Board of Zoning Appeals

Minutes

January 14, 2026

I. **CALL TO ORDER**

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

After calling the meeting to order, **Commissioner Gleason** 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. **Janelle Morris** seeks a use variance for 652 Sunset St (tax parcel # 49.46-1-7) located in the R-1 Single-Family Residential district to permit the property to be used as an "accessory parking area" which is not a permitted use for the district (**Schedule A Use Regulations for Residential Districts**).

B. Janelle Morris seeks an area variance for 652 Sunset St (tax parcel # 49.46-1-7) located in the R-1 Single-Family Residential district to permit ancillary parking that is not “contiguous to the lot which the principal use, being served by the ancillary parking area is situated” (§264-102).

Janelle Morris presents the use variance and area variance to the board stating she is proposing the variances to utilize the vacant lot across the street from her home. Ms. Morris states that the vacant lot has been a nuisance for dumping and not maintained for the last four years that she has lived on Sunset St. She states her property is a two-family dwelling and it has an existing shared driveway that is narrowed and shared with the neighbor that has a two-family dwelling as well. In addition, Ms. Morris details that Sunset St has alternate street site parking five days a week which makes parking difficult. Overall, being granted the use variance will allow an overgrown lot to positively contribute to the existing parking constraints and can create at least 6 off-street parking spaces.

Commissioner D’Alessandro-Gilmore asks the applicant how many off-street parking spaces will be created. Chairman Gleason inquires if the parking spaces will be rented out to her neighbors. Ms. Morris confirms that about 4-6 off-street parking spaces will be created for herself and her tenants. Commissioner Keller follows up with questioning the applicant how wide the lot is, and Ms. Morris states the lot is 100’ X 20’. Commissioner Keller confirms with the Zoning Officer a buildable lot is required to have 40’ of frontage in the R-1 districts.

Chairman Gleason asks the applicant if she will surface the lot with blacktop and Ms. Morris confirms asphalt will be installed to the current code specifications. She further elaborates that she intends on meeting the zoning code requirements for a landscape buffer and will utilize existing trees at the back of the lot but intends on planting arborvitaes on sides of the property abutting with the neighbors. Chairman Gleason asks if the property has an existing curb cut and the applicant states there is an existing curb cut. Commissioner Keller inquires if Ms. Morris owns the lot, she states she does not and is in contract with the city contingent that the variances are approved. Commissioner Lester follows with asking the applicant if she has talked to the two neighbors. Ms. Morris states she has not talked to the neighbors. Chairman Gleason confirms with the Zoning Officer that the letters to the surrounding neighbors received the formal neighbor letters that are sent out.

Trisha Pedro speaks in favor of the variance applications by stating approving the variances will create more parking for all the surrounding neighbors.

The board closes the public comment and begins to talk amongst themselves. Commissioner Keller inquires with the Zoning Officer if the area variance is needed, she confirms it is because Ms. Morris's lot is not contiguous with the property she owns. The Zoning Officer then reminds the board that the SEQR vote is needed as the board is the lead agency for the use variance. Commissioner Keller inquires and confirms with the Zoning Officer this is a Type II SEQR and begins to make the motion for a vote.

SEQR RESOLUTION

Negative Declaration

Motion carried unanimously.

AREA VARIANCE & USE VARIANCE RESOLUTION

Commissioner Keller made a motion to APPROVE the area variance and use variance as presented seconded by Commissioner D'Alessandro-Gilmore.

Motion carried unanimously.

- C. **Dawn Calhoun** seeks an area variance for 1191 Eastern Ave (tax parcel # 49.28-1-29) located in the R-2 Two-Family district to permit the construction of a single-family dwelling on a lot with 35 ft of frontage where 40 ft of frontage is required (Schedule C Lot Development Standard).

Dawn and Glen Coffman presents the area variance to the board stating the couple is requesting a 5' variance on a lot with 35' of frontage where 40' of frontage is required. If granted the area variance the proposed project is to construct a single-family cape cod style modular home that will include a driveway for off-street parking. Mrs. Coffman states the proposed structure will have 10 foot side yard setbacks on either side meeting the 5' side yard setback requirements (Schedule C) and then concludes the presentation.

Commissioner Keller asks the applicants how long the lot was vacant for and Mrs. Coffman states it had been vacant since 2017. She adds that during a rehab of the original structure the foundation failed, and it was demolished. Mr. Coffman clarifies to the board the basement foundation collapsed. He states that the property is outside of the one-year timeframe allowed to rebuild on a nonconforming lot but adds that the neighboring properties frontage is consistent with the 35' of frontage of the lot the variance is needed for. The board discusses the location the property is on Eastern Ave and confirm it is near the Horses Lounge bar. Mr. Coffman confirms the location and states approving the area variance will put this vacant property back on the tax map and improve the property value of the surrounding area.

Commissioner Zwacki asks the applicants if the property is under contract and the applicants confirm it is under contract. She follows up with inquiring if the applicants intend on utilizing the

modular home to live in, rent, or to sell the property after construction. Mrs. Coffman confirms they intend on selling the property.

The board begins to discuss the application after closing the public comment portion with a few minutes of discussion the board moves to vote.

SEQR RESOLUTION

Negative Declaration

Motion carried unanimously.

AREA VARIANCE RESOLUTION

Commissioner Keller made a motion to APPROVE the area variance for 1191 Eastern Ave (tax parcel # 49.28-1-29) located in the R-2 Two-Family district to permit the construction of a single-family dwelling on a lot with 35 ft of frontage where 40 ft of frontage is required (Schedule C Lot Development Standard) seconded by Commissioner D'Alessandro-Gilmore.

- D. Armin Hrelja** seeks a use variance for 60 Cheltingham Ave (tax parcel # 49.69-4-3) located in the R-1 Single-Family Residential district to construct a multifamily dwelling (four unit) which is not a permitted use for this district.

Dan Morelli presents the use variance to the board stating the property owner is proposing to construct a multifamily dwelling in an R-1 district and reminds the board the application was tabled in November. Mr. Morelli states he and the applicant believe the zoning district is not compatible with the existing features. He continues on to identify the surrounding property's uses and the full market value of each property. Highlighting the smaller portion of single-family dwellings in comparison to the volume of multi-family dwellings and mixed-use buildings. He states to the board that this R-1 district is misclassified and allowing a multifamily dwelling will not have an adverse impact on the surrounding area. For his closing argument Mr. Morelli states the applicant when considering the cost of construction for a single-family dwelling will not be able to make a reasonable return the only way to make a reasonable return post construction is constructing a multifamily or townhomes.

Mr. Morelli invites the applicant Armin Hrelja to comment on the proposed variance to the board. Mr. Hrelja states he obtained appraisals for single-family homes within the last two years and the average is \$205,000 which includes four of the property's on Cheltingham Ave. Chairman Gleason asks the applicant if he owns additional properties on this street and he confirms he owns the properties to the right and left of the property in discussion.

USE VARIANCE RESOLUTION

Commissioner Keller made a motion to DENY the use variance to construct a multifamily dwelling (four unit) in a R-1 Single-Family Residential district seconded by Commissioner Zawacki.
Motion carried 3 – in favor of the motion and 3 - opposed.

VII. **Other Business**

VIII. **Adjourn 7:55 p.m.**