

Planning & Sustainability - City of Northampton

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The Northampton Zoning Board

Minutes of Meeting

February 26, 2026 (Approved on March 26, 2026)

Zoning Board Meeting 5:30 PM VIA ZOOM Teleconference

Members Present:		Time
Y	David Bloomberg, Chair,	5:30 PM
Y	Elizabeth Silver, Vice Chair	5:30 PM
Y	Maureen Scanlon, Member	5:30 PM
	Sherry Taylor, Associate Member	
Y	Erinn Ervin, Associate Member	5:30 PM
Staff Present		
	Carolyn Misch, Director, Office of Planning and Sustainability	
Y	Nathan Chung, Land Use Planner, Office of Planning and Sustainability	5:30 PM

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Board Opens the Hearing for 29 Columbus Ave

Four out of five board members were present, achieving a quorum of three people required for the hearing.

5:32 PM Bloomberg announced that the meeting is being Video Recorded. Bloomberg introduced the board members – Silver, Scanlon, and Ervin - and staff member Chung. Bloomberg opened for general public comments not about the specific agenda item. There were no public comments.

Silver disclosed knowing Jody Barker, who is applying on behalf of the owners of 29 Columbus Ave.

5:35 PM Bloomberg opened the public hearing for a Findings Permit Application to continue the nonconforming side setback by Jody Barker at 29 Columbus Ave, Map ID 38B-145. Record ID LU-26-2 (<https://northamptonma.portal.opengov.com/records/4153>).

- Findings Permit: Simple Majority Vote Required 2 out of 3 Members. This is a discretionary permit. The Board must find that the proposed changes are not substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing non-conforming aspects of the house.
- Applicable Code Sections: 350-9.3A(7) (Link: <https://ecode360.com/11957619>)
- Hearing Publication Dates: February 12 and February 19, 2026.

Bloomberg explained the difference between the two findings applications and the special permit application before the board, where special permit has the same standard but requires more votes due to increasing the nonconformity.

Jody Barker at 32 Willow St in Florence, applying on behalf of the owners, presented. Barker shared the existing and proposed site plans. Barker described the right side (looking at the house from Columbus Ave) nonconforming setbacks and other dimensions.

Board Asks for Public Comments

Chung noted that one neighbor wrote a letter of support and no comments came from other departments. No one had public comments.

Board Closes the Hearing and Deliberates

5:46 PM Silver made the motion to close the public hearing. Scanlon seconded. The voting board members consisting of Bloomberg, Silver, and Scanlon unanimously voted yes by roll call.

Board Votes to Approve

5:47 PM Scanlon made the motion to approve the finding permit for 29 Columbus Ave as presented. Silver seconded.

The City of Northampton Zoning Board of Appeals determined that the proposed changes have met the requirements for a findings permit under zoning ordinance 350-9.3A(7).

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1. The Board determined that the proposal to continue the nonconforming side setback is not substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing nonconforming structure. The proposal is respectful of the space and is appropriate; it fits with the neighborhood; and it makes the property better suited for residential use.

The board voted unanimously by roll call to approve.

Board Reviews Minutes and Other Matters

Since the board had time remaining between hearings, it proceeded to handle other matters.

5:51 PM Silver made the motion to approve the 2/12 minutes. Board discussed potential edits and decided on Scanlon's proposal to correct Bloomberg's misspelled name. Scanlon seconded the motion, adding the proposed edit. The board consisting of Bloomberg, Silver, and Ervin unanimously voted yes by roll call except for Scanlon who experienced technical difficulties.

Chung explained that no new applications have come in, so there would be no hearings in March.

Bloomberg and Silver noted future unavailable dates:

1. **4/23 - Bloomberg and Silver will be unavailable.**
2. **5/14 - Silver will be unavailable.**
3. **5/28 - Bloomberg will be unavailable.**

Board Opens the Hearing for 488 Elm St

6:00 PM Bloomberg opened the public hearing for a Findings Permit Application to continue the nonconforming side setback by Denise Ippolito at 488 Elm St, Map ID 23D-025. Record ID LU-26-5 (<https://northamptonma.portal.opengov.com/records/4195>).

- Findings Permit: Simple Majority Vote Required 2 out of 3 Members. This is a discretionary permit. The Board must find that the proposed changes are not substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing non-conforming aspects of the house.
- Applicable Code Sections: 350-9.3A(7) (Link: <https://ecode360.com/11957619>)
- Hearing Publication Dates: February 12 and February 19, 2026.

The board, including Scanlon, agreed that three voting members will be Bloomberg, Silver, and Ervin due to Scanlon having technical difficulties.

Owner-Applicant Denise Ippolito presented. Ippolito was proposing to add 280 SF of living space that is set back eight feet from the side lot when the existing nonconforming setback is six feet.

Board Asks for Public Comments

There were no comments. Applicant described neighbors supporting the plan.

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Board Closes the Hearing and Deliberates

6:08 PM Ervin made the motion to close the public hearing. Silver seconded. The board unanimously voted yes by roll call.

Board Votes to Approve

6:09 PM Silver made the motion to approve the findings permit for 488 Elm St. Ervin seconded.

The City of Northampton Zoning Board of Appeals determined that the proposed changes have met the requirements for a findings permit under zoning ordinance 350-9.3A(7).

1. The Board determined that the proposal to continue the nonconforming side setback is not substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing nonconforming structure. The proposal is a welcome addition to the neighborhood and benefits the longevity of the house as a principal residence.

The board voted unanimously by roll call to approve.

Board Opens the Hearing for 29 Fort St

6:20 PM Bloomberg opened the public Hearing for a Special Permit Application for a rear addition to worsen the nonconforming side setback by Valley Home Improvement at 29 Fort St, Map ID 38B-184. Record ID LU-26-4 (<https://northamptonma.portal.opengov.com/records/4179>).

- Special Permit: Super Majority Vote Required 3 out of 3 Members. This is a discretionary permit. The Board must find that the proposed changes with new zoning violations are not substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing non-conforming aspects of the house.
- Applicable Code Sections: 350-9.3 A(10) (Link: <https://ecode360.com/27190013>)
- Hearing Publication Dates: February 12 and February 19, 2026.

Ervin continued voting in place of Scanlon.

Mitch Parker from Valley Home Improvement at 340 Riverside Dr, Florence, presented. Parker described the proposed addition. Parker explained that the survey showed that the addition would encroach 0.2 feet further into the nonconforming setback due the house line and the lot line not being in parallel.

Silver commented on the change from a findings permit to a special permit due to a small change.

Bloomberg appreciated professional plans by the applicant.

Scanlon asked about the neighbor's fir tree on the right side of the subject property, looking at the property from Fort St. Subject property owner Janis Totty expressed appreciation for the tree and noted that this project will not impact the tree. Totty noted that the neighbor with the tree wrote a letter of support. Board discussed whether the ordinance on significant trees would apply. Chung noted that the

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ordinance would apply if the applicant were removing one's own significant trees as a part of the application. Chung noted that in general, construction shall not negatively affect the neighbor's property, including trees on the neighbor's property.

Ervin noted that the neighborhood has many nonconformities. Bloomberg noted the density.

Board Asks for Public Comments

No one was present for public comments.

Board Closes the Hearing and Deliberates

6:30 PM Silver made the motion to close the public hearing. Ervin seconded. The board unanimously voted yes by roll call.

Board Votes to Approve

6:30 PM Ervin made the motion to approve the special permit as presented. Silver seconded.

The City of Northampton Zoning Board of Appeals determined that the proposed changes have met the requirements for a special permit under zoning ordinance 350-9.3A(10).

1. The Board determined that the proposal to further encroach into the nonconforming side setback is not substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing nonconforming structure. The proposal will enhance the use of the property for residential purposes, and the 2-inch setback encroachment is insubstantial.

The board voted unanimously by roll call to approve.

Board Votes for Chair and Vice Chair

6:35 PM Silver made a motion to nominate Bloomberg as the chair. Scanlon seconded. All four present voted yes by roll call.

6:36 PM Scanlon nominated Silver as the vice chair. Ervin seconded. Board discussed. Bloomberg noted that as a succession plan, it might be helpful for members to get experience by volunteering as acting chairs. **Bloomberg asked Chung for informational materials.** Silver noted that past practice of holding hearings for certain findings applications at 4 PM with one board member as the zoning administrator. Scanlon suggested bringing up people on consistent procedure, including such residential findings led by one member. Silver proposed putting it on the agenda. All voted yes by roll call to vote Silver as the vice chair.

Chung will notify Taylor of the voting results.

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Board Adjourns

6:45 PM Upon motion by Silver and second by Ervin, the whole Board voted unanimously by roll call to adjourn.

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