

# TOWN OF HINGHAM

## Zoning Board of Appeals



### MEETING MINUTES

**DATE:** January 27, 2026

**PLACE:** Remote Meeting via Zoom

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Acting Chair Paul Healey, Regular Member Jed Ruccio, Associate Member Lauren Galvin

Acting Chair Healey called the duly noticed meeting to order at 7:00 PM. In attendance were Acting Chair Paul Healey; Regular Member Jed Ruccio; Associate Member Lauren Galvin; Zoning Administrator Jennifer Oram; Land Use and Development Coordinator Donna Thompson; Paulette O'Connell, OCO Architecture and Design; John Alessi; Brendan Sullivan, Merrill Engineering and Land Surveying; Kimberly McDowell, 55 Whiton Avenue, LLC; Christopher McDowell, Skybox Development; as well as interested members of the public. The Acting Chair noted for the record that the proceedings were being recorded by the Board and asked that others who may wish to record the meeting announce this in order to inform others in attendance of the meeting.

### HEARINGS

**Hearing:** 25 Free Street  
**Applicant:** John Alessi

Acting Chair Healey opened the hearing for **John Alessi** who filed an application on December 10, 2025 for a Special Permit A1 under Section III-I.1.c to construct a conforming addition to a pre-existing nonconforming garage (that will be reconstructed due to being destroyed by a storm) at **25 Free Street** in Residence District A.

This is the first hearing on this matter.

Acting Chair Healey invited Paulette O'Connell, OCO Design, to present the application materials. Ms. O'Connell reviewed the application materials and plans.

The Acting Chair opened the meeting to the Board for questions. Board members asked whether the ADU met all applicable requirements, and Zoning Administrator Jennifer Oram confirmed that it does. The Board and Ms. O'Connell engaged in discussion regarding the three-bay garage and the associated garage doors.

The Acting Chair opened the meeting for public comment. There was none.

#### FINDINGS:

1. **The proposed use will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning By-Law for the following reasons.** The proposed uses within the addition, a three-bay garage and an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU), are allowed uses in the Residence A District. The extension of a nonconforming structure is allowed by a Special Permit A1.
2. **The proposed use complies with the purposes and standards of the relevant specific sections of the By-Law.** The proposed ADU is a permitted use under §III-A, 1.9 of the Schedule of Uses, the proposed addition meets §IV-A – the Schedule of Dimensional Requirements, and the ADU meets §V-K – Accessory Dwelling Units of the Zoning By-Law.
3. **The specific site is an appropriate location for such, structure, or condition, and is compatible with the characteristics of the surrounding area.** The uses, a garage and an ADU are uses that are designed to have a residential design and thus are compatible to the neighborhood.
4. **The use as developed and operated will create positive impacts or the potential adverse impacts will be mitigated.** The proposed ADU will provide smaller scaled housing for the community. The proposed addition will be off the reconstructed shed that is located further back on the lot. The proposed garage will allow for more parking, keeping vehicles off of the street.
5. **There will be no nuisance or serious hazard to vehicles or pedestrians.** The proposed construction will not impact vehicles or pedestrians.
6. **Adequate and appropriate facilities exist or will be provided for the proper operation of the proposed use.** The existing garage has electricity, the existing septic system can support the additional bedroom in the ADU as one of the bedrooms within the primary structure will be removed.
7. **The proposal meets accepted design standards and criteria for the functional design of facilities, structures, stormwater management, and site construction.** The property is served by public water and on-site sewer. The proposed project has been designed by an Architectural Designer.

#### DECISION

Upon a motion made by Jed Ruccio and seconded by Lauren Galvin, the Board voted unanimously as follows:

To **FIND** that the proposed alteration, extension, or structural change will not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing nonconforming structure and **GRANT** to John E. Alessi, a Special Permit A1 under Section III-I.1.c of the Zoning By-Law, to construct a conforming addition to a pre-existing nonconforming garage, at 25 Free Street, in Residence District A, subject to the following condition:

1. The work shall be completed in accordance with the application and approved plans, any other applicable provisions of the Zoning By-Law, and the representations made during the public hearing.

**The motion was MOVED by Jed Ruccio and seconded by Lauren Galvin.**

**The motion passed unanimously upon a roll call vote. (Roll call vote: Galvin – aye; Ruccio– aye; Healey – aye.)**

**Meeting Documents:**

1. [25 Free Street Application](#) - stamped December 10, 2025
2. [Site Plans](#) - dated December 4, 2025
3. [Architectural Plans](#) - dated December 5, 2025

**Hearing: 55 Whiton Avenue**  
**Applicant: Christopher McDowell**

Acting Chair Healey opened the hearing for **Christopher McDowell**, who filed an application on December 10, 2025 for a Special Permit A1, Under Section III-C, 7 of the Zoning By-Laws, and such other relief deemed necessary, to construct a 106' long dock, with access stairs and attached gangway / float at 55 Whiton Avenue, in Residence District A.

This is the first hearing on this matter.

The Acting Chair invited Brendan Sullivan, Merrill Engineering and Land Surveyors to present on behalf of the Applicant. Mr. Sullivan reviewed the application materials and plans.

The Acting Chair opened the meeting to questions from the Board. Board members inquired about the length of other piers in the neighborhood. Mr. Sullivan stated that there are nine docks in the area and all are approximately the same length. The Board asked whether the float was permanent, and Mr. Sullivan clarified that both the float and the ramp are not permanent structures. In response to a question about lighting, the Applicant confirmed that the dock would not be lit. When asked whether the dock would be gated, Mr. Sullivan explained that access is only available through public property and therefore no gate is planned.

Donna Thompson, Land Use and Development Coordinator, confirmed the correct names of property owner and Applicant. Kimberly McDowell stated that the property is owned by 55 Whiton Avenue, LLC, and that she serves as the manager of the LLC. She further confirmed that she authorizes Christopher McDowell and Skybox Development to submit the application on the owner's behalf.

The Chair opened the meeting for public comment. There was none.

FINDING:

1. **The proposed use will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning By-Law for the following reasons.** The proposed use complies with the purposes and standards of the By-Law as set forth in Sections I-A and Section I-B of the By-Law.
2. **The proposed use complies with the purposes and standards of the relevant specific sections of the By-Law for the following reasons:** "Docks, piers, duck walks and boat landings" are an allowed use under the Floodplain Protection Overlay District within Residential Districts under Section III-C, 7.a.
3. **The specific site is an appropriate location for such use, structure, or condition, and is compatible with the characteristics of the surrounding area.** There are several similar piers/docks in this residential area. In addition, the property has direct access to the ocean, making it an appropriate location for recreational water use and recreational boating.
4. **The use as developed and operated will create positive impacts or potential adverse impacts will be mitigated.** The residential use will be improved by providing better recreational access to the bay as has been done at nearby properties.
5. **There will be no nuisance or serious hazard to vehicles or pedestrians for the following reasons:** The project is located at the rear of the property and is for recreational water use. It will not impact vehicles or pedestrians as the project is not located near any roads, highways, vehicles or pedestrians. In addition, this dock will not extend far enough to impact boat traffic.
6. **Adequate and appropriate facilities exist or will be provided for the proper operation of the proposed use for the following reasons:** The proposed dock and seasonal structures are designed in accordance with the Massachusetts building code, Department of Environmental Protection regulations, and Hingham Conservation Commission rules and regulations which require the appropriate facilities for proper operation of the dock.

7. **The proposed project meets accepted design standards and criteria for the functional design of facilities, structures, stormwater management, and site construction.** The dock and seasonal structures, as proposed, are intended to meet design standards as described in the local, state, and federal regulations.

## **DECISION**

Upon a motion made by Jed Ruccio and seconded by Lauren Galvin, the Board voted unanimously as follows:

To **GRANT** the application of **Chris McDowell and Skybox Development** for a Special Permit A1, Under Section III-C, 7., of the Zoning By-Law to construct a 106' long dock, with access stairs and attached gangway / float at 55 Whiton Avenue, in Residence District A **subject to the following conditions:**

1. The Applicants shall construct the project in a manner consistent with the approved plans and the representations made at the hearings before the Board.
2. No davits shall be placed on the dock or float
3. No lights shall be installed on the dock other than lights with amber lenses for safety while walking on the dock.
4. No ornamentation (flags, lights, windsocks etc.) shall be erected or placed on the dock.
5. No rafting of vessels shall be permitted.
6. No vessels shall be tied or moored at the pier except directly to the float.

**The motion was MOVED by Jed Ruccio and seconded by Lauren Galvin.**

**The motion passed unanimously upon a roll call vote. (Roll call vote: Galvin – aye; Ruccio– aye; Healey – aye.)**

## **Meeting Documents:**

1. [55 Whiton Avenue Application](#) - stamped December 16, 2025
2. [Plans](#) - dated November 20, 2025

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Minutes will be considered at the next hearing.

**Next meeting date is Tuesday, February 10, 2026.**

## **ADJOURNMENT:**

**Acting Chair Healey accepted a motion to adjourn by Jed Ruccio. The motion was seconded by Lauren Galvin.**

**The motion passed unanimously upon a roll call vote. (Roll call vote: Galvin – aye; Ruccio– aye; Healey – aye)**

**The meeting adjourned at 7:28 PM.**