

Poultney Development Review Board
Hearing Minutes
Wednesday, March 25, 2026 – 6:00 PM
Poultney Town Offices, 9 Main Street | Hybrid via Zoom

Board Members present were Jaime Lee (Chair), Jonathan Andrews, Margaret Mug, Ben Thirkield, and Mark Teetor.

Also present were Jeff Biasuzzi, Zoning Administrator; Karen Gutmann of the *Poultney Journal*; Charles Colvin, neighboring property owner to Application 26-08; Travis Baptie and Kimberly Baptie, Applicants for Application 26-08; Mary Sue Reed, member of the public; and Cyndy Shaw and Chris Senecal, Applicants for Application 26-06. Appearing via Zoom was Jeffrey Crandall, neighboring property owner to Application 26-06.

1. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM. Chair Lee discussed procedure, and interested parties were sworn in (Cyndy Shaw, Chris Senecal, Travis Baptie, Kimberly Baptie, Jim Crandall, Jeff Biasuzzi, Charles Colvin).

2. Public Hearing – Application 26-06: Chair Lee opened the public hearing for Application 26-06 and summarized the request as a setback variance to construct a screened-in porch on a nonconforming structure, as well as to address construction initiated prior to permit approval.

Testimony and Discussion

Applicants Cyndy Shaw and Chris Senecal described existing site conditions, noting that the property is constrained by steep slopes and limited usable flat area. The Applicants stated that the proposed porch is intended to create a safer, level outdoor space for family use, citing prior falls on the property and the presence of both elderly and young family members. The Applicants emphasized that the project is not intended for commercial use and has received Vermont Shoreland Protection approval.

The Applicants acknowledged that the proposal does not meet required setbacks and stated their belief that the project would not adversely affect neighboring properties or increase noise or activity levels.

Jeffrey Crandall, an abutting property owner, testified via Zoom. Mr. Crandall stated that he and his spouse are generally supportive of the project but expressed concern regarding the proximity of the proposed structure to the shared property line. Mr. Crandall testified that, based on prior surveys and field measurements, the structure may be as close as approximately four (4) feet from the property line at its nearest point. Mr. Crandall requested that, if approved, the project be modified to increase the setback by approximately three (3) feet, resulting in a reduced porch depth.

Discussion between the Board and parties addressed discrepancies between measured distances on the site plan and field observations, including differences between approximate measurements of 5 feet 6 inches and 4 feet at varying points along the structure.

The Board discussed the challenges of verifying property line locations and measurement accuracy based on the materials submitted, noting that the site plan was prepared by the Applicant and not by a licensed surveyor.

The Board also discussed the statutory criteria required for approval of a variance and the need to evaluate the application against those criteria.

Further discussion addressed the purpose of the proposed structure, including whether the project relates to safety concerns associated with steep site conditions and how the proposed porch would function relative to the existing dwelling.

Zoning Violation Acknowledgment

The Applicant acknowledged that preliminary construction had occurred prior to obtaining a zoning permit. The Applicant stated on the record that she takes full responsibility for initiating the work and described the action as a temporary and exploratory effort to understand the scale and function of the proposed structure. The Applicant issued an apology to the Board for proceeding without prior approval.

Public Comments

Chair Lee opened the hearing to public comment. No additional public comment was offered beyond that of Mr. Crandall.

Board Action

The Board determined that additional on-site information is necessary to evaluate the application, including verification of setbacks, property line relationships, and site conditions.

Margaret Mug made a motion to recess the public hearing to allow for a site visit. The motion was seconded by Jonathan Andrews.

Oral vote unanimous; motion carried.

The hearing was recessed to March 30, 2026 at 5:00 PM for a site visit, to be followed by continuation of the public hearing.

3. Public Hearing – Application 26-08: Chair Lee opened the public hearing for Application 26-08 and summarized the request as a change of use to convert the second floor of an existing commercial building into six one-bedroom dwelling units.

Testimony and Discussion

Applicants Travis and Kimberly Baptie described the project as a conversion of an underutilized upper floor into six one-bedroom apartments, noting that the building has historically housed a variety of uses. The Applicants stated that the project is intended to contribute to local housing availability and that preliminary coordination has occurred with state housing programs.

A neighboring property owner, Charles Colvin, spoke in support of the project, stating that the proposal would be a positive addition to the building and the community.

The Zoning Administrator noted that the application represents an initial step in a larger process that will include additional state-level permitting, including fire safety and building code compliance. The Zoning Administrator identified off-street parking as a potential consideration and discussed the availability of a rear parking area, as well as the possibility of shared or off-site parking arrangements.

Discussion between the Board and Applicants addressed:

- The size and layout of the proposed units (approximately 600 square feet each);
- Parking availability and configuration, including on-site and on-street options;
- Loading and access considerations for commercial deliveries;
- Existing infrastructure capacity, including water and sewer;
- Fire safety requirements, including sprinkler systems and egress;
- Potential coordination with historic preservation requirements;
- Participation in housing programs supporting affordability.

The Board reviewed the applicable Conditional Use standards, including impacts on municipal services, neighborhood character, traffic, infrastructure capacity, and housing needs. The Board noted that the project is located within Poultney's Designated Downtown and is consistent with the mixed-use character of the district.

Public Comment

Chair Lee opened the hearing to public comment. Charles Colvin reiterated his support for the project.

Mary Sue Reed reminded the Applicant of the Dark Sky Initiative and encouraged consideration of exterior lighting that minimizes light pollution and preserves nighttime visibility.

No further public comment was offered.

Board Action

Mark Teetor made a motion to close the hearing to further testimony and enter Deliberative Session, with the Zoning Administrator invited to be available during deliberations for the limited purpose of providing technical and procedural guidance. The motion was seconded by Margaret Mug.

Oral vote unanimous; motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Jaime Lee, DRB Chair