

TOWN OF FARMINGTON
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
MEETING

January 20, 2026

Present for the hybrid meeting were Chair Schoenhorn, Commissioners Grady-Benson, Callahan, Cloud, Gemski, Walsh, and Alternate Commissioners Dess-Santoro, Subramanian and Mambrino. Assistant Town Planner Daigle and Clerk Hansen were also present. The meeting was called to order at 7:14 p.m.

Present in the Council Chambers were all members along with Assistant Town Planner Daigle and Clerk Hansen.

Secretary Cloud read the legal notice into the record.

PUBLIC HEARING

Chair Schoenhorn explained the public hearing process and opened the hearing at 7:16pm. Assistant Town Planner Daigle described the rehearing for the 3 Poplar Hill Road application including the requirement to wait the six month period after the original hearing back on June 16, 2025 to reapply for the same application, but with an updated hardship explanation.

Andrew & Caroline Ricci – 3 Poplar Hill Road

Application for variance to reduce the side yard setback from 40 feet to 17 feet to construct a garage and mudroom on an existing single-family home at 3 Poplar Hill Road, R80 zone.

Mr. Ricci presented to the Board the request to reduce the side yard setback to 17 feet to construct a 2-bay garage addition along the west side of the home. Mr. Ricci shared that the main reason for the garage addition is to have direct entrance to the main floor of their home, stating that the steep topography of the site, the configuration of the property boundary, and concerns for safety and emergency access is the updated hardship case for consideration. He stated that 42% of the property is encumbered by the setback requirements. Photos of the current yard conditions, topography, and the home were presented along with a 3D rendering depicting the proposed new 8ft wide mudroom and 24ft x 25ft garage. Mr. Ricci explained that five mature trees over 10” in diameter will need to be removed. He noted that two of the trees are located within the 150’ ridgeline setback, two trees are outside the review area, and one tree has declining health that could pose a risk for falling on the home and new addition if approved. Mr. Ricci then described that his home is the only residence in the neighborhood in which the driveway is not at grade with the main level of the house. Assistant Town Planner Daigle showed a comparison of the other homes in the neighborhood utilizing the GIS mapping and street view images. The other homes are set further back on each property to accommodate the change in topography. The Board asked about the application for two garage bays as opposed to only one. Mr. Ricci stated that the other homes in the neighborhood have two car garages facing the street and that this proposal is in keeping with the consistency of other homes in the neighborhood.

There was a question asked about the future use of the current two car garage located beneath the home on the east side. Mr. Ricci responded that at this time they are planning on utilizing the area for storage and not for the conversion into more living space. Mr. Ricci also clarified for the Board that the existing driveway will remain, and they propose to construct a new driveway and curb cut for the

proposed addition. The Board asked about the rationale for safety as part of the hardship explanation. They also inquired about the description from Mr. Ricci's submitted into the record hardship letter regarding strict enforcement of the current code resulting in diminished property value. Mr. Ricci responded that the current zoning requirements prevent reasonable vehicular access to the main living floor, thereby impeding essential ingress and egress for emergency services. Mr. Ricci also went on to clarify that the value of the property could be diminished because of the combination of steep grades and non-standard configuration of the lot creating a hardship not experienced by other properties in the neighborhood. The Board then discussed the evolution of the neighborhood development. Assistant Town Planner Daigle reviewed the property cards for the surrounding neighbors to determine the original end of the Poplar Hill Drive cul-de-sac. The Board discussed the property elevation for the distance to the ridgeline, the distance to the wetlands located on the adjacent Town of Farmington property, and the route of the Metacomet Blue-Blaze Hiking Trail located in the vicinity.

Assistant Town Planner Daigle informed the Board that Mr. Ricci may also need approval from the Town Plan & Zoning Commission since the property is within the 150ft setback from the Ridgeline Protection Zone.

Chair Schoenhorn asked for any public comment in favor or in opposition to the application.

Carl Raimond of 11 Poplar Hill Drive spoke in favor of the application as presented, and noted that he had submitted a letter of support for the initial public hearing in June 2025.

Marcus Josefsson of 15 Poplar Hill Drive spoke in favor of the application noting that the proposed addition would look balanced with the other homes in the neighborhood.

John Healey of 8 Poplar Hill Drive spoke in favor of the application noting the limited environmental impact and even with the removal of the five mature trees, the neighborhood is heavily wooded.

Neranjana Perera of 124 Mountain Road offered public comment online in favor of the application, with no concerns for the proposal as presented.

Commissioner Cloud asked to acknowledge on record gratitude to John Healey for his service as Chief of Staff to the Senate Republican Office.

The public hearing closed at 8:04 p.m.

Upon a motion made and seconded (Callahan/Grady-Benson) it was

VOTED: 5 in favor (Grady-Benson, Callahan, Cloud, Gemski, and Walsh) and 1 opposed (Schoenhorn) to approve the Andrew and Caroline Ricci application for variance to reduce the side yard setback from 40 feet to 17 feet to construct a garage and mudroom on an existing single-family home at 3 Poplar Hill Road, R80 zone as presented and on file in the Town Plan and Zoning Office.

NEW BUSINESS

By-Laws

Chair Schoenhorn opened the discussion for any potential edits to the bylaws and reminded members that the bylaws can be amended once per quarter. The Board did not have any suggested amendments to the bylaws at this time. Assistant Town Planner Daigle informed the Board that January, April, July, and October are the months in which the bylaws can be amended.

Freedom of Information (FOI) Workshop

Commissioner Gemski and Assistant Town Planner Daigle shared with the Board the information for the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Public Official Workshop scheduled for Thursday January 22, 2026 at 7:00pm. in the Council Chambers and over Zoom. The workshop will also be recorded and posted on the town website for review and to reference in the future.

MINUTES

Meeting Minutes

Upon a motion made and seconded (Walsh/Cloud) it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve November 17, 2025 Zoning Board of Appeals meeting minutes.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.