



TOWN OF  
**STONEHAM**  
MASSACHUSETTS  
Town Hall  
35 Central Street  
Stoneham, Massachusetts 02180  
**BOARD OF APPEALS**  
**781-279-2695**

**Stoneham Board of Appeals Minutes**  
**Thursday, September 25, 2025**  
**Town Hall Hearing Room**  
**6:00 PM**

Members of the Board present: Chair Tobin Shulman, Vice Chair Robert Saltzman, Eric Rubin, R. Michael Dufour, Kevin McLaughlin and Associate Member Bill Sullivan.

Also present: Town Clerk Maria Sagarino acting as Clerk to the Board of Appeals, Attorney Charles Houghton and Ian Gasco-Wiggin from JM Corcoran & Company.

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 PM by Chair Tobin Shulman. He introduced the board members and explained the procedure the board follows for public hearings. Mr. McLaughlin led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Board confirmed the next meeting dates of October 30, 2025, November 20, 2025 and December 18, 2025.

Mr. McLaughlin made a motion to approve the minutes for August 7, 2025 which was seconded by Mr. Saltzman. Four members present voted in favor 4-0 with Mr. Rubin abstaining.

Mr. Shulman invited Ian Gasco-Wiggin of JM Corcoran & Company to give an update on The Devon at Weiss Farm project including information on the pump station, weir dam, construction progress and signal timing for roadway stipulated in the final comprehensive permit. Mr. Gasco-Wiggin explained that the engineers and their environmental people had been out to the site and performed an inspection of the pump and the weir dam. The Board is in receipt of the August 2025 report provided by Hancock Associates detailing the monthly environmental report. They confirmed there were no issues and the pump is operating to design. Mr. Sullivan asked if they were keeping track of the pump's operation and the levels. Mr. Gasco-Wiggin indicated that they do chart it. Mr. Sullivan asked if the Board could have a copy of the charting for the last few months. Mr. Shulman didn't believe there would be much data as it hadn't rained much.

Mr. Gasco-Wiggin Moved onto the signal timing and indicated that the signal boxes are not functioning properly. The Town has to complete some upgrades that aren't likely to happen soon as DPW Brett Gonsalves had indicted to them that there was no funding right now. Mr. Gasco-Wiggin expected to speak to the Traffic Commission to get their thoughts on the matter.

Mr. Shulman recognized abutter Martin Wantman of 20 Gerald Rd. Mr. Wantman expressed his ongoing concerns about the water on his property. He thought that the weir dam might be leaking from beneath with the water coming onto his property. Mr. Wantman continued to explain that

Saul Weiss had maintained the weir dam but since 2006 it was pulled up from its position when the pump was off and not operational. He stated that his property historically has water but never during drought conditions like there have been lately.

Mr. Saltzman indicated that the Board would like to help, so they'd see if they can get anything done with DEP in the next month.

### Public Hearing

#### 72 Central Street

Mr. Shulman read the meeting notice for the sole public hearing of the evening into the record as follows:

“You are hereby notified that the Stoneham Board of Appeals will hold a Public Hearing THURSDAY EVENING, September 25<sup>th</sup> 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in the Hearing Room, Town Hall to hear all persons interested in the application by Right Whale Development LLC, of 18 Brick Kiln Road, Chelmsford, MA 01824 prospective purchaser pursuant to a purchase and sale agreement, dated June 12, 2025, with 72 Central Street LLC, a foreign Limited Liability Company, registered to do business in Massachusetts, with a Massachusetts office address of 272 Main Street Suite 4 Stoneham, MA, to demolish the existing structure and to construct three (3) residential condominium units on the property. Section 4.6.3.2: Dwellings are allowed on the first floor provided 50% of the gross floor area of the first floor is used for a use allowed in Section 4.6.2. The proposed condominium units will be 100% residential on the first floor. Plan filed with the application entitled “Proposed Conditions Plan located at 72 Central Street Stoneham, MA,” dated 09-03-2025, prepared by George C. Collins Professional Land Surveyor, prepared for 72 Central Street LLC, shows the proposed 3 Unit Condominium Building. Plan may be seen daily except Friday afternoon in the Town Clerk's Office”.

Mr. Shulman invited Attorney Houghton to speak on behalf of his client the prospective buyer of the property that had been owned by the Gallagher family until June 2022. Mr. Houghton told the Board that his client would rehab this house built in 1789 but it is not safe. The fieldstone basement has crumbled. It was not taken care of over the years and the foundation is now unstable. The foundation is falling in and it isn't safe Mr. Houghton showed the Board some photos of the basement which they had not seen on their site visit to the property during the last application process.

He explained the recent history of the property. He had gone to Town Meeting a few years ago to fix the split zone as the property was partially in Residence B and partially in Central Business District. Town Meeting rezoned the parcel as Central Business District. He is before the Board to seek a variance for the Commercial Space required for the portion of the front floor facing Central Street which is required in the Central Business District. His client would like to build all residential units.

Mr. Houghton continued to explain that his client is the prospective purchaser of the property. 72 Central Street LLC a Delaware LLC had been before the Board earlier. The LLC is ow registered

in Massachusetts. The prospective owner is looking to build three residential units instead of the four units that the Board previously heard before the matter was withdrawn without prejudice.

He continued on to say that the hardship is the structure. He believes that it serves the public good as it fits better in the neighborhood.

Mr. Shulman asked the Board if there were any questions. Mr. McLaughlin asked how tall? Mr. Houghton responded that it says 45 but that's measured to the peak. It would really be about 37.5 when you calculate the mean of the peak. The top is just attic space. Mr. McLaughlin asked if the attic would hold mechanics. Nick Noon of Right Whale Development responded that they intended to put some mechanical on the first floor but also HVAC up there in the ceiling to create a second zone.

Rob Liekweg the other partner for the project further explained the foundation. He is part of the Brick Mason's local out of Boston and he had a colleague walk through. They would usually look to re-engineer, but this foundation is a lost cause. The foundation is crumbling. It was never maintained over 200 years. The hope was to salvage the fieldstone and reuse it in another project. So it would be recycled.

Mr. Houghton continued to talk about the project being designed to have a garage under each unit to provide parking. The last application had the parking on the street. They modelled their design off of a 2 unit project and a three unit that was approved in the last few years. Mr. McLaughlin asked if those were Mike Santullo's projects. Mr. Houghton responded that yes they were. Mr. Noon proceeded to explain that the best use of the property would not be a single family home for the money it would take to rehab. The new construction will be energy efficient with spray foam. There will be a better esthetic in the neighborhood. Mr. Liekweg added that it will have better curb appeal and will no longer be an eye sore.

Mr. Shulman stated in terms of what you are asking for, it's just a variance for the use on the first floor not being 50% commercial. Why not build the 50% commercial and add another unit? Mr. Houghton explained that the last application was four units and the Board didn't seem to be pleased with it. Mr. Shulman continued to ask why not build the commercial space on the first floor. Mr. Houghton responded that they thought all residential was a better use and had reduced it to three from the four as the Board had denied the four. Mr. Saltzman clarified that the Board had not denied anything. The petition was withdrawn. Mr. Saltzman explained that at the time, it seemed large but the building would have been salvaged.

Mr. Saltzman next said that he's looking at the pictures provided and all he sees is a bunch of rocks. He cannot deduce from that the house would need to come down. Mr. Saltzman asked if there was ever an estimate sought for the foundation. Mr. Liekweg reminded him that he walked through with a colleague and they both agreed it wasn't fixable. That was off the record but he can get something in writing. Mr. Noon added that he has a fieldstone foundation on his house and it does last, but with proper maintenance. It needs to be re-pointed. You'll see the mortar turn sandy and fall to the bottom. That's one of the first signs. There will be bowing on the outside. The foundation can be maintained and the life extended. In this situation, it was not maintained. With this house, you'd have to jack it up and pull out the foundation and replace it.

He did not believe the ends would justify the means. It would be hard to sink so much money into a house knowing it would be worth a lot less than the money you needed to put into it.

Mr. Saltzman said that this is the first proposal before the Board that looks like it will actually go forward. There was no movement over the last year and a half. The Board walked through the house. He acknowledged that they did not go through the basement but stated that the house was in surprisingly good shape for being 240 years old. He then mentions having lived in Charlestown with all of the hills. The basements weren't in the best of shape. If you took out the lally columns it would all crumble. Everything was held up with structural engineering. Mr. Saltzman continued to explain that he didn't know from what he was looking in the pictures provided that something couldn't be done. Mr. Noon agreed that anything can be done. Mr. Saltzman asked if they thought of doing something. Mr. Noon responded that he has 20 years of experience. With knowing the cost of building today, it's not feasible. He described a house from 1795 in Tyngsborough that their Historical Commission expected to be torn down but he decided to keep because of the beautiful wide pine plank floors and detailed dental crown molding. He restored the beauty to that house with a fireplace in every room. He is all for bringing the beauty back but does not see it with this house.

Mr. Saltzman believed with all of that in mind, he is one member of the Board that would be willing to grant a little more relief for something in order to make it work. He is disappointed that the first thing they walk in with is to know it down. Mr. Liekweg took exception. He responded that they purchased the property in the hopes of rehabbing. They thought it would be a 6-8 month project. After walking through, however, they realized that it was structurally unsound. In running data and financial impacts for the cost per square foot in this area, the numbers don't work. This would never work even if you bought this for your personal house. Mr. Houghton reminds the Board that there are recent cases for financial hardship. They'd love to save it but to go back and try to add four units or even put commercial on the first floor is a disservice to the neighborhood.

Mr. Shulman opened the meeting up to the public. Dolly Wilson, Chair of the Historical Commission asked what else could be done besides knocking the building down. It's probably the fourth oldest house in Stoneham. She is well aware that the Historical Commission has no tools to prevent the house from being taken down. She would prefer they do something else instead a tear down.

Joe Mangano of 70 Central Street had no objection. There have been problems with the house lately. He stated that it has been vacant for four years and there were squatters in the last month or so.

George Ricardelli owns the property next to 80 Central Street which he bought in 1974 with it in rough shape. He replaced the foundation. Town Counsel lived there years ago. He's had the same tenant for eight years. He indicated that he was upset about the deteriorating chain link fence. He also indicated there was Japanese knotweed growing which was very invasive. Mr... Shulman asked Mr. Ricardelli if he was in support of the project. Mr. Ricardelli responded that he is not in favor of the proposed project. Mr. Shulman asked what he'd like to see. Mr. Ricardelli indicated he liked what was done with the two units across the street at 85 Central Street.

Mr. Shulman asked if lifting the house and replacing the foundation would be an option. He understands there is an expense, but the desire to keep the structure might get the Board to grant relief. Maybe to offset the burden of the foundation, an additional unit might be considered. At this point Mr. Shulman asks Mr. Houghton and his clients how they'd like to proceed. The Board can close the public hearing and deliberate or the matter can be continued to consider alternative proposals.

The Board took a five minute recess at 7:02 PM. The meeting resumed at 7:08 PM. Mr. Houghton asked that the meeting be continued until October 30, 2025 at 6PM at Town Hall. Mr. Saltzman made the motion to continue which was seconded by Mr. McLaughlin. All members present voted in favor 5-0.

Mr. Saltzman made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Mr. Rubin and Mr. Dufour. All members voted in favor 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 7:09 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Maria Sagarino  
Town Clerk

Documents and other exhibits used by the Board of Appeals during this meeting to be made part of the official record but not attached to these minutes:

Hancock Associates Weiss Farm Apartments Monthly Environmental Report for August 2025.

Plan entitled "Proposed Conditions Plan located at 72 Central Street Stoneham, MA," dated 09-03-2025, prepared by George C. Collins Professional Land Surveyor.

Photos of the basement of 72 Central Street.