

Zoning Board of Adjustment Meeting Minutes

Location: Strafford Town Hall Conference Room

Date & Time: April 16, 2026 6:30PM

Board Members Present:

Ashley Rowe – Chair
Aaron Leff
Jean Chartrand-Ewen

Alternate Board Members Present:

Others Present:

Lisa Murphy, Strafford Regional Planning Commission, Regional Planner
Robert Fletcher, Minutes Recorder

Upon the arrival of enough Board members for a quorum, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:51PM and indicated the closing date for new applications to be filed for the agenda for the regular May 21, 2026 meeting is Thursday, April 30, 2026. He recognized Board members Aaron Leff and Jean Ewen as present.

New Business

Special Exception, 441 First Crown Point Road, (Tax Map 19, Lot 48). Joseph and Laura Pomerleau, Blue Winds Lavender Farm, are requesting a Special Exception under Article 1.3.8 Signs of the Zoning and Land Use Ordinances in order to erect a 5-foot by 5-foot sign identifying their farm in an existing wooden frame. The sign would be up to 19 square feet larger than current ordinances allow.

Laura Pomerleau presented the request. She indicated that their property has large frontage on First Crown Point Road where they've improved drainage and reconstructed a stonewall which was buried and overgrown with poison ivy. This effort was necessary to improve the esthetic look of their property in support of their lavender farm, a seasonal agrotourism business and hobby. Their current sign is located further back on the property and is not readily visible and difficult to read for passing motorists. She referenced several pictures provided with the application and noted the construction of the wooden structure that will hold the seasonal 5-foot by 5-foot sign which be replaced with a large wreath during the off-season. The sign will help delineate the entrance to their property from First Crown Point Road. Joe Pomerleau noted that the structure to hold the sign is actually a planter box with no lighting and it is their desire to maintain the rural character and dark night sky of the area.

The Chair addressed the Special Exception criteria by reading each and asked for a response from the applicants as follows:

1. The proposed sign meets the requirements for placement and design (please note that flashing or animated signs are prohibited; signs shall be constructed out of durable natural materials to the greatest extent possible and shall be maintained in a high state of repair) because:

The frame for the sign is built from durable, natural materials, specifically hemlock, and sits on natural stone base. The sign is non-flashing, non-illuminated and durable. It will be placed to ensure clear visibility and safety.

As a Finding of Fact, the Board agreed that the applicant met this Special Exception criteria.

2. The sign is not detrimental or offensive to owners of adjoining property or to the Town, does not adversely affect nearby property values, does not cause any hazard to health or safety (does not obstruct vision along or onto a public right of way, obstruct traffic signs, etc.), and does not adversely affect the character of the area in which the use will be located because:

The sign will be set back from the roadway behind the stonewall and does not obstruct visibility, traffic signs, or the right-of-way, and poses no hazard to health or safety. The sign will enhance the character of the area and several neighbors are in support of the application.

The Chair noted that this location on First Crown Point Road is a DOT stretch with a drive permit requirement. He asked Matt Messenger, Town of Strafford Road Agent who was in attendance, if the sign or stonewall location would present any sight distance impediment. Mr. Messenger responded that they would not be an visual impediment.

As a Finding of Fact, the Board agreed that the applicant met this Special Exception criteria.

3. The sign is illuminated only by continuous indirect external white light (Article 1.13.12 C). External lighting is shielded and aimed downward so as to prevent glare because:

The sign is not illuminated and therefore produces no glare or light spillover.

As a Finding of Fact, the Board agreed that the applicant met this Special Exception criteria.

The Chair opened the meeting for a Public Hearing at 7:02PM, and there being no comments, closed the Public Hearing at 7:02PM. He noted the applicant's plan to display the sign seasonally, did not see any need to specify any display conditions and asked for a motion on the application. Jean Ewen made a motion with reference to the above Findings of Fact to approve the Special Exception which was seconded by Aaron Leff and voted upon verbally in the affirmative by all voting Board members. The motion passed.

Other Business

The Chair asked the Board to review the minutes from the November 20, 2026 meeting. He noted that Aaron Leff was the only member in attendance at that meeting, and if Mr. Leff was satisfied with the minutes as written, he had no problem with the Board accepting them. Mr. Leff indicated that the minutes were fine and Jean Ewen made a motion to accept the minutes as written which was seconded by Aaron Leff and voted upon verbally in the affirmative by all Board Members. The motion passed.

Even though the number of Board members in attendance was limited, the Board agreed to vote on officer positions. Arron Leff made a motion for Ashley Rowe to serve as Chair and Katrina Labrecque to serve as Vice Chair which was seconded by Jean Ewen and voted on in the affirmative by all Board members with Ashley Rowe abstaining. The motion passed.

There being no further business before the Board, the Chair called for a motion to adjourn. Aaron Leff moved to adjourn which was seconded by Jean Ewen and voted on in the affirmative by all Board members. The motion passed and the meeting adjourned at 7:06PM.

Minutes Prepared by Robert Fletcher