



**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
URBANA ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS**

APPROVED

DATE: April 15, 2026

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

PLACE: Council Chambers, City Building, 400 South Vine Street, Urbana, Illinois

MEMBERS ATTENDING: Adam Rusch, Nancy Uchtmann, Charles Warmbrunn, Harvey Welch

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Joanne Chester, Ashlee McLaughlin

STAFF PRESENT: Olivia Jovine, Director of Community Development Services | Zoning Administrator; Aimirou Sy, Planner II; Kate Himick, Planner I

OTHERS PRESENT: Dennis Cummins

A. CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL

Chair Welch called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present.

B. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

C. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Minutes of May 21, 2025 Regular Meeting

Ms. Uchtmann moved that the Zoning Board of Appeals approves the minutes of the May 21, 2025 regular meeting as written. Mr. Rusch seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes as written was passed by unanimous voice vote.

D. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

- Housing Needs Study Community Survey Flyer

E. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

F. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

ZBA-2026-MAJ-01 – A request by Jenna Joo, on behalf of the City of Urbana’s Public Works Department, for a Major Variance from the requirements in the Urbana Zoning Ordinance to provide shade trees within parking areas at 706 South Glover Avenue in the IN-1 (Light Industrial/Office) Zoning District.

Chair Welch swore in members of the audience who wished to speak to the Zoning Board of Appeals and opened Case No. ZBA-2026-MAJ-01.

Aimirou Sy, Planner II, presented the case to the Zoning Board of Appeals by stating facts from the written staff report. Mr. Sy began by stating the purpose for the major variance request. He discussed the location, current use, and zoning of the subject property as well as the surrounding area. He noted that the proposed project is part of a set of improvements to the Public Works’ campus. As the City of Urbana continues to grow, the need for Public Works’ staff and equipment has increased. These improvements include upgrades to the building systems, expansion of the fleet facilities, new salt storage for winter operations, and parking circulation improvement for vehicles and employees. The parking improvements support the modernization of the Public Works campus.

Mr. Sy talked about the proposed parking configuration. He noted that it includes 150 parking spaces. The site currently contains 77 existing parking spaces. This project would add 73 new parking spaces. Under Article VIII of the City’s Zoning Ordinance, parking lots with more than 20 parking spaces must provide one shade tree for every nine parking spaces. In this case, the applicant proposes no interior shade trees. According to the applicant, interior shade trees would interfere with the maneuverability of large municipal vehicles. Vehicles with large wheelbases require large turning radii. These vehicles include snowplows, vector trucks and other municipal vehicles.

Mr. Sy stated that the Public Works facility also includes material storage, salt storage, and detention areas which reduce available space. Maintaining unobstructed large, paved areas is necessary for operational efficiency and safety.

He reviewed the six criteria for granting a variance from Section XI-3 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance and explained how the proposed major variance satisfied each criterion. He found that five (5) out of the six (6) are satisfied. However, he concluded that the criterion requiring the variance to represent the minimum deviation from the requirements of the Zoning ordinance was only partially satisfied because the applicant proposed to eliminate all required interior shade trees rather than provide a reduced number of shade trees or an alternative landscaping plan.

He read the options of the Zoning Board of Appeals and presented staff recommendation for approval with the following conditions:

1. *Construction must be in general conformance with the Site Plan.*
2. *Landscaping shall be provided along the perimeter of the expanded parking area where feasible. The number of shade trees shall be generally based on the number of new parking spaces added as part of the project. Based on the 73 new parking spaces, up to eight (8) shade trees should be provided, depending on the site constraint. Final tree placement and feasibility shall be determined by the Zoning Administrator in consultation with the City Arborist and City Engineer.*

Chair Welch asked if the Zoning Board of Appeals members had any questions for staff.

Mr. Warmbrunn stated that staff are recommending up to 8 shade trees, so if only 4 shade trees can fit on there correctly, then that would be allowed. Mr. Sy said yes.

With there being no other questions for staff, Chair Welch opened the hearing for public input. He invited the applicant to speak.

Dennis Cummins, of the Farnsworth Group, approached the Zoning Board of Appeals to speak on behalf of the applicant, the City of Urbana Public Works Department. He stated that the plans include a sizeable addition to the Public Works building and more parking to accommodate their expanding needs. There will be a total of 150 parking spaces scattered throughout the lot. The largest group of 67 parking spaces will be in the northeast corner of the lot, another 26 spaces in the northwest corner, and the other lots are smaller than 20 spaces each. The site has been designed to accommodate the large apparatus that Public Works has, including a fire truck apparatus and their vector truck amongst other vehicles that are large. He noted that there is a large area given for storage of salt on the site. So, all these things have precluded the City from being able to put trees throughout the lot.

Mr. Rusch asked as part of the proposed plan, has the applicant identified places where trees might be installed or is this something that will be determined when the project is finished. Mr. Cummins replied that when looking at the site, they formed some ideas of where trees might go, but some of the existing trees that they take out may be replaced with new trees. He pointed out that the current site has several trees located towards the front of the lot for screening. So, one lot in the northwest corner of the site could have some small trees put around it. He said that there is not very much space left between the building and the parking lot and between the parking lot and the street. There are also some overhead lines along the west side of the lot and east side of Glover Street. So, these preclude the City from making plans to scatter some trees throughout there. He added that they maximized the use of the site at the request of the Public Works Department. By doing so, they tried to gain as many parking spaces as possible.

Mr. Warmbrunn asked if there are two site plans in the packet or two pages to one site plan. Mr. Cummins said two pages for the one site plan because the information does not fit on one page.

Mr. Warmbrunn asked if the dark area is concrete. Mr. Cummins explained that the dark area around the northwest and around the building is asphalt. The center entrance would be concrete. The north entrance would be concrete, and the lighter shade three parking lots along Glover are alternates.

Mr. Warmbrunn asked about the turning radius being located in the middle of the “backwards C”. Mr. Cummins said that the whole area is slated to be open for Public Works to use in turning their apparatus (end loader, backhoe, and long trailers).

Chair Welch asked if there are any additional comments from staff.

Olivia Jovine, Director of Community Development, mentioned that one of the many goals of the Public Works facilities expansion and improvement is to allow all of the Public Works’ staff to be together in one location with the absence of the landscape recycling facility, which is obviously location specific. Public Works is also looking to expand staff; so, there is a need for additional parking spaces.

Mr. Warmbrunn asked if required trees would be in the parking lot areas or could they be anywhere on the site. Mr. Sy stated that the trees cannot be planted within the parking lots, so Public Works is requesting to eliminate the requirement for interior shade trees. Depending on the site constraint, the Zoning Administrator, the City Arborist, and the engineers would identify the best areas for the shade trees.

Mr. Rusch noted that the proposed variance is a reasonable request given that Public Works is maximizing use of the existing site and expanding the existing site as opposed to getting a new site, which would be the alternative. So, it makes sense to weigh the benefits of utilizing an existing site and not having to find a different site, which adds weight to the case for the proposed variance.

Mr. Rusch moved the Zoning Board of Appeals forwards Case No. ZBA-2026-MAJ-01 to the City Council with a recommendation for approval of the major variance with the following conditions:

1. Construction must be in general conformance with the Site Plan.
2. Landscaping shall be provided along the perimeter of the expanded parking area where feasible. The number of shade trees shall be generally based on the number of new parking spaces added as part of the project set at 73 new parking spaces, resulting in up to 8 shade trees. Final tree placement and feasibility shall be determined by the Zoning Administrator in consultation with the City Arborist and City Engineer.

Mr. Rusch bases his motion on the findings in the written staff report. Mr. Warmbrunn seconded the motion. Roll call on the motion was as follows:

Ms. Uchtmann	-	Yes	Mr. Welch	-	Yes
Mr. Warmbrunn	-	Yes	Mr. Rusch	-	Yes

The motion passed by unanimous vote 4-0.

Mr. Sy stated that Case No. ZBA-2026-MAJ-01 will be forwarded to the Committee of the Whole for their review on Monday, May 4, 2026.

G. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

H. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

I. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none.

J. STAFF REPORT

Olivia Jovine, Director of Community Development, presented the following:

- Introduction of New Planning Staff – She introduced herself as the Director of Community Development Services and Interim Principal Planner; Aimirou Sy, Planner II, and Kate Himick Planner I, as the new planners for the City. She noted that staff profiles were included in the

meeting packet. She gave a brief background on her experience and education and asked that Mr. Sy and Ms. Himick to do so as well.

- Principal Planner – She stated that a new Principal Planner is expected to join the department at the end of the month.
- Statement of Economic Interest – She noted that annual filing of this form is mandatory for all commissioners with zoning approval authority, and the deadline is May 1, 2026. She emphasized that significant fines may be assessed for late filing and encouraged commissioners to submit the form promptly to the City Clerk's Office, the County Office, or by email.
- Urbana Housing Needs Study – She mentioned that the survey is currently underway in partnership with the Regional Planning Commission. A QR code linking to the community survey was handed out. She explained that the study will combine quantitative data with qualitative input from residents including tenants, homeowners, and unhoused individuals to assess current housing conditions and identify gaps in the local housing market. Survey responses will be accepted through April 30, 2026. She noted that the study is a key implementation item from the Comprehensive Plan adopted in July 2025 and that its findings will be of significant interest to City Council and staff.

Mr. Warmbrunn noted that for the past two years he has raised the need to update the Zoning Board of Appeals' Bylaws. He stated that previous delays were due to the absence of legal counsel, followed by limited staff capacity. He expressed concern that the current Bylaws, now four to five years old, do not address issues such as member attendance, which recently became a problem. He asked how staff wished to proceed and whether commissioners should submit suggested revisions. Ms. Jovine thanked him for raising the issue and stated that staff would ask commissioners to review the bylaws and bring comments or suggested changes to a future Study Session. She explained that a study session can be scheduled even if there are no active cases, and that the Board could hold a meeting solely for bylaw review, if needed.

She noted that the future new Principal Planner will determine which staff will serve as the Board's permanent secretary, after which communication regarding bylaw revisions can be directed to that person. In the meantime, she encouraged commissioners to mark up a copy of the Bylaws and identify areas for discussion. Staff would then compile the feedback and prepare materials for a Study Session. She added that the City Attorney could review any legal questions, with the understanding that such review may require several weeks.

Ms. Jovine also reported that the Board currently has vacancies, and Staff will begin recruitment efforts. She noted that no cases were scheduled for the next meeting but that commissioners would be notified if any applications were received before the deadline.

Mr. Rusch inquired as to who the official members are on the Zoning Board of Appeals. Ms. Himick confirmed that the following individuals are officially serving on the Zoning Board of Appeals: Joanne Chester, Ashlee McLaughlin, Adam Rusch, Nancy Uchtmann, Charles Warmbrunn, and Harvey Welch.

K. STUDY SESSION

There was none.

L. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Olivia Jovine

Olivia Jovine, Secretary
Zoning Board of Appeals