

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS OF RIDGEFIELD
MINUTES OF MEETING

September 8, 2025

NOTE: These minutes are intended as a rough outline of the proceedings of the Board of Appeals on Zoning of Ridgefield held on September 8, 2025. Copies of recordings of the meeting may be obtained from the Administrator.

The Chair called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m. Sitting on the Board for the evening were: Terry Bearden-Rettger, Robert Byrnes, Alexander Lycoyannis, Joseph Pastore and Michael Stenko.

ROTATION OF ALTERNATES

The rotation for this meeting was first, Mr. Byrne, second Mr. Cole; third, Mr. Stenko. Mr. Seavy was unable to attend and asked Mr. Stenko to sit for him. Thus, the rotation for the next meeting will be remain the same: first, Mr. Byrne; second, Mr. Cole, third Mr. Stenko.

CONTINUED APPLICATION

Kyle Stupi
Application 25-009
16 Midrocks Road

Applicants asked for a continuance until the September 15 ZBA meeting.

NEW APPLICATIONS

Daniel DeWoskin and Rebecca Cao
Application 25-013
19 Ned's Lane

Applicants both appeared for the hearing. A garage was located within the setback of their property at the bottom of the driveway. The application was to allow that garage to be expanded, vertically and horizontally and create an accessory dwelling unit. The garage structure was legally nonconforming in the RAAA zone and located within the required 50 ft setback at 10' from the property line. Ms. Cao stated that they purchased the house in 2020. The property was run down and many renovations were done. The lot was on a high elevation, 930 sq ft. Property was over 8 acres, but applicants stated only approximately 2-3 acres of the property was buildable due to the terrain and elevation. The driveway was 1300 ft. long and was very steep. Ms. Cao said in the winter months snow and ice made the driveway unusable. The garage expansion and ADU were requested for more parking and use during inclement weather. Plans showed the garage structure expanded inward back towards the property not towards the roadway. A second story was also planned. The existing foundation would be used. Landscaping to screen the structure from the street was planned.

Ms. Bearden-Rettger asked if any other location on the property could be used for the structure. Ms. Cao replied that due to the high elevation and sloping topography, there was no other viable location. Applicants presented to the Board a terrain map that showed the property elevations. Mr. Stenko asked about one of the concerns a neighboring property expressed in a letter to the Board regarding the parking of construction vehicles for the proposed project. Ms. Cao stated that they plan on using the same construction company they have used for past projects and the vehicles can park at their house and walk down the driveway to do the work needed.

Mr. Lycoyannis asked why the applicants did not just build a second story on the existing structure to avoid any further expansion in the setback. Mr. Cao replied that the garage gutters would take up additional square footage, so a second-floor addition would be too small and not cost effective especially since a new septic system would be required for the project. Some Board members expressed concerns that the structure would completely be within the 50' required setback for the RAAA zone. Ms. Cao replied that

the addition would be built primarily into the hillside, away from the property line. Landscaping was planned to shield the structure from the roadway.

Neighboring properties at 12, 24, and 34 Ned's Lane submitted letters and appeared for the applications, reading those letters into the record. All neighboring properties expressed concerns about granting the variance primarily about the propose structure being out of character with the neighborhood, light pollution, Ned's Lane being very narrow roadway. Neighbors also stated they doubted the applicants claim that the driveway was unsafe in inclement weather and suggested there were other alternatives to the structure being close to the property line.

The Board suggested the applicants revisit their plans and possibly revise them to address some of the concerns the Board and neighbors have with the proposed project. The applicants agreed. A continuance was granted until the next ZBA meeting on September 15.

27 Catoonah Street Associates, LLC
Application 25-014
27 Catoonah Street

Attorney Robert Jewell represented the applicants. Company representative Tish Vredenburg was also present. The application was to allow a 2016 sq ft building in the CBD zone to be fully converted into residential units, bypassing the lower level and first floor retail requirement for the zone. Mr. Jewell stated a potential purchaser of the building wanted to use the building solely for residential. Mr. Jewell submitted both old and new photographs of the building. Overlay zoning maps were also added to the file and presented to the Board. The applicants purchased the building in 2006. The building was built in 1920 and was primarily apartments. When purchased in 2006 it was still being used completely for residential. Applicants decided to refurbish the building, making it fully ADA compliant. A 2007 zoning regulation change stated that properties in the CBD (Central Business Zone) can no longer have 1st floor residential. The property would have been grandfathered into the former regulations but the owners decided to get a special permit to use the property for retail. Applicants however stated they did not want to abandon the fully residential use.

Hardships were listed as the CBD designation close to residential zones and the location away from the heavy commercial areas of the CBD off Main Street. Ms. Vredenburg stated they were unable to find any commercial tenants for the property due to the location away from retail areas on Main Street and into more residential area on Catoonah Street. Mr. Jewell further stated that no exterior alterations were planned for the building, it was on public sewer and water with 14 parking spaces.

Mr. Pastore asked why a zone change from CBD zone to a residential zone was not made. Mr. Jewell replied that the Town currently has a multifamily moratorium in effect and predicted such request would not be feasible. He further stated that a variance for a multifamily residence would still be needed for a residential zone which only allows single family residences.

Board members questioned if the hardships presented were solely financial since sale amounts and rental prices were not disclosed. The property was surrounded by other businesses. Ms. Vredenburg stated that only very low rental and sale prices were offered.

Neighbors at 22, 31, 31A Catoonah Street appeared for the applications. Several letters from residents and neighbors were also submitted to the file. Most appearing had questions regarding the project and supported the conversion of the building to residential. Bruce Yuen, the former commercial tenant of the property also appeared in favor of granting the variance.

A continuance was requested and granted to allow the applicant to provide more information to the Board regarding the property's rental and sale viability along with case law and additional information regarding the Town's moratorium.

A continuance was granted to the September 15 meeting.

ADMINISTRATIVE

The Board voted for approval of the August 4, 2025 meeting minutes.

As there was no further business before the Board, the Chair adjourned the hearing at approximately 10:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Ryan
Administrator