



Land Use Committee Report

City of Newton In City Council

Tuesday, February 24, 2026

Present: Councilors Kelley (Chair), Leary, Irish, Block, Farrell, Golden, Lucas, and Roche

Also Present: Councilors Wright, and Malakie

City Staff Present: Senior Planner Sondria Berman, Deputy Chief Planner Cat Kemmett, Deputy City Solicitor Jonah Temple, and Planning Associate Zach Melcher

All Special Permit Plans, Designs, Plan Memoranda and Application Materials, both past and present, can be found at the following link: [NewGov – City of Newton Land Use Committee Special Permit Search](#).

The full video of the February 24, 2026, Land Use Meeting can be found at the following link:

#92-26 Request to vertically extend nonconforming front setbacks at 55 Auburndale Avenue

JOHN AND ANNA MURNANE petition for SPECIAL PERMIT/SITE PLAN APPROVAL, to raise the roofline of the existing attic by 5.25 feet, allowing for habitable space and vertically extending nonconforming front setbacks at 55 Auburndale Avenue, Ward 3, Newton, on land known as Section 44 Block 17 Lot 88, containing approximately 8,262 sq. ft. of land in a district zoned SR2. Ref: Sec. 7.3.3, 3.1.3 and 7.8.2.C.2, of Chapter 30 of the City of Newton Rev Zoning Ord, 2017.
55 Auburndale Avenue -<https://newtonma.portal.opengov.com/records/906217>

Action: **Land Use Approved 8-0; Public Hearing Closed**

Note: Zach Melcher, Planning Associate joined the committee to discuss the request to raise the roofline of the existing attic by 5.25 feet, allowing for habitable space and vertically extending nonconforming front setbacks at 55 Auburndale Avenue. The property is on a corner lot with two front setbacks, and the surrounding properties are two or two-and-a-half-story single-family homes.

Mark Lewis, Architect for the Petitioner, explained the design process and the challenges they have had working with the roof. The proposed design includes extending the roof by 5.2 feet, adding two dormers in the front and another dormer on the back. He emphasized his respect for the Special Permit Process and the delicate approach he has taken during the design process.

The public hearing was opened.

Mary Reardon Lewis, 42 Auburndale Avenue, expressed her support for the project, highlighting the importance of keeping families in the community.

John Murnane, the petitioner shared his family's need for additional space.

Mr. Lewis presented a memo of support from a number of the neighbors.

Councilors expressed their support for the project.

Councilor Lucas motioned to close the public hearing which passed unanimously.

The committee discussed the draft council order. Councilor Lucas motioned to approve which passed unanimously.

#93-26 Request to further increase nonconforming FAR at 1445 Commonwealth Avenue

ADAM AND ROSSANNA HENNESSEY petition for SPECIAL PERMIT/SITE PLAN APPROVAL, to construct additions to the front and rear of the dwelling which further increase the nonconforming FAR at 1445 Commonwealth Avenue, Ward 3, Newton, on land known as Section 32 Block 33 Lot 09, containing approximately 23,893 sq. ft. of land in a district zoned SR1. Ref: Sec. 7.3.3, 3.1.3, 3.1.9, and 7.8.2.C.2, of Chapter 30 of the City of Newton Rev Zoning Ord, 2017. 1445 Commonwealth Avenue -

<https://newtonma.portal.opengov.com/records/906865>

Action: **Land Use Approved 7-0-1(Councilor Roche abstaining)**

Note: Sondria Berman, Senior Planner, joined the committee to discuss the request to construct additions to the front and rear of the dwelling which further increase the nonconforming FAR at 1445 Commonwealth Avenue. The property is a 23,893 square foot corner lot in a single-residence one district, with a 2.5-story single-family dwelling and an attached garage constructed in 1920. The proposed additions include a one-story mudroom addition and a two-story rear addition, increasing the non-conforming FAR from 2.6 to 3.5. Ms. Berman noted that the proposed additions are consistent with and not in derogation of the size, scale, and design of other structures in the neighborhood.

Laurence Lee, Attorney for the petitioner shared the site plan, floor plans and elevation, emphasizing the modest increase in FAR and the minimal relief for the rear addition. The proposed additions are designed to be unobtrusive and consistent with the existing structure.

The public hearing was opened and with no member of the public wishing to speak the public hearing was closed.

Councilors expressed their support for the project.

The committee discussed the draft council order. Councilor Lucas motioned to approve which passed 7-0-1 with Councilor Roche abstaining.

#94-26 Request to exceed FAR at 11 Richfield Road

PETER TSE petition for SPECIAL PERMIT/SITE PLAN APPROVAL, to raze the existing single-family dwelling and construct a new two-story single-family dwelling with relief for floor area ratio at 11 Richfield Road, Ward 3, Newton, on land known as Section 32 Block 04 Lot 13, containing approximately 10,256 sq. ft. of land in a district zoned SR2 . Ref: Sec. 7.3.3, 3.1.3, and 3.1.9, of Chapter 30 of the City of Newton Rev Zoning Ord, 2017.

11 Richfield Road – <https://newtonma.portal.opengov.com/records/910118>

Action: Land Use Held 7-0 (Councilor Farrell not voting); Pulic Hearing continued

Note: Sondria Berman, Senior Planner, joined the committee to discuss the request to raze the existing single-family dwelling and construct a new two-story single-family dwelling with relief for floor area ratio at 11 Richfield Road. The property is a 10,256 square foot lot in a single-residence two district, with a single-family dwelling constructed in 1950. There were questions raised by Councilors around the discrepancy on the size of the lot between the applicant's number and the Assessor's database. The proposed new dwelling would exceed the maximum allowable FAR of 3.8, with a proposed FAR of 4.6. Ms. Berman explained that the petitioner will need to come back to the committee asking for additional relief or will need to come back with a new set of plans.

Peter Tse, the petitioner explained that the intent of the project is for generational living purposes. Robert Williamson, the architect, explained that he was brought on to the project to help with scaling down the project from when it was initially proposed in September of 2025. The proposed design includes a walk-out basement, a first-floor mudroom and a second-floor addition with four bedrooms and a bedroom on the first floor. The petition asks for a total of 6 bedrooms and 6.5 bathrooms.

The public hearing was opened.

Barry Abramson and Chris Chu, 113 Chestnut Street presented a letter signed by neighbors that expressed concerns about the proposed dwelling's size and impact on the neighborhood.

Harvey Fenton, Fairview Terrace, raised concerns regarding the runoff and drainage issues, as well as the impact on neighboring properties.

Councilors raised concerns regarding the size of the proposed dwelling, noting that the petitioner should come back with a petition that more aligns with the city's Zoning Ordinances.

Councilors also had questions regarding the discrepancy of the lot size between the applicant's figures and Assessor Database.

Councilor Lucas motioned to hold which passed 7-0 with Councilor Farrell not voting.

The Committee adjourned at 8:21 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Andrea Kelley, Chair