Zoning Board of Appeals
City Council Chambers
Woburn City Hall
Wednesday, March 12, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.

Present: Chair Margaret Pinkham, Member Daniel Parrish, Member Anne Chatfield, Member Richard Clancy, and Alternate Member Mark Cavicchi. Absent: Member John Ryan

1. **City of Woburn, 10 Common St., Woburn, MA, Petitioner and Landowner, seeking Variances from Section 6.1 of the 1985 Woburn Zoning Ordinances, as amended, for a reduction of the front yard setback from 25 feet to 12 feet and a reduction of a side yard setback from 20 feet to 12 feet to build a fire station at 38 Central St., Woburn, MA:** Representing the applicant were City Solicitor Mark Salvati, Mayor Michael Concannon, Fire Chief Donald Kenton, and Richard Rice, DiNisco Design Architects + Planners, 99 Chauncy St., Ste. 901, Boston, MA. City Solicitor Salvati said the city is seeking two variances for the replacement of fire station #4. He said the locus is a corner lot. He directed board members to a slide on the projector that shows the existing building. He said the variances are for a reduction to the front yard setback from 25 to 12 feet, and for a reduction in a side yard setback from 20 feet to 12 feet. He said the fire station is located in an R-2 zoning district and qualifies as an "other permitted use" in the zoning table. He said the city is citing the shape of the lot and the topography as the hardships. He said the new building will meet the zoning requirements for the front setback on Central Street and the rear setback. He said the lot slopes to the rear. He said if the building was turned the other way it would push it too far back. He said about 50 feet of room is required for the fire trucks. He said there is about a 5-foot drop to Utica Street. He said it would be almost impossible for a fire truck to safely exit onto Utica Street. He said Utica Street is also slightly narrower than Central Street. He said the safest exit is on to Central Street. Chief Kenton said a larger building is needed. He said the location is perfect but they need more apparatus and more manpower. He said they plan on putting another ambulance and five more firefighters at station #4, to meet the growth of East Woburn. Chair Pinkham asked if the intent is to double the size of the front part of the existing building. Chief Kenton answered affirmatively. City Solicitor Salvati said the proposed increase in size is just about double. Chair Pinkham asked how many fire trucks will be parked there. Chief Kenton said there will be three trucks – an engine, a ladder truck and an ambulance. Chair Pinkham asked if the trucks have to be parked side by side. Chief Kenton said the proposed building will be the minimum size for housing three vehicles. He said the vehicles do need to be parked side by side. Chair Pinkham asked if the trucks could come in the back door and leave from the front. Chief Kenton said he does not think there is enough depth for a building that size. Mr. Rice said the depth of the front and back drive-through area at WFD headquarters is 75 feet. He said the East Woburn site does not have those dimensions. Chair Pinkham said the change in elevation does not seem that severe. Mr. Rice said the problem is there are 64 feet plus or minus required for elevation at both doors. Chair Pinkham said she has a hard time trying to figure out how an ambulance can't drive up and down Utica Street. Mr. Rice said Utica Street has an elevation of 64.5 feet that slopes to 70 feet. He said the problem is you would have to account for that increase in slope in about 20 feet of distance. Chair

Pinkham said she understands now. She asked if headquarters are 75 feet in depth so all the fire equipment can enter from the back and leave from the front. Mr. Rice said the number of pieces at headquarters required a front and back drive-through configuration. He said there was level space that was created. Chair Pinkham asked how long an ambulance is. Chief Kenton said an ambulance is about 26-28 feet long. City Solicitor Salvati said ambulances can't be stacked. Chair Pinkham asked how long the proposed building is. Mr. Rice said it will be about 96 feet north to south. Chair Pinkham asked what the depth is. Mr. Rice said he does not know the depth off the top of his head. He said he believes it is between 60-65 feet front to back. Chair Pinkham asked if the city considered flipping and turning the building. City Solicitor Salvati asked the chair if she meant the front of the building would face Utica Street. Chair Pinkham said she means what if the rectangle was flipped. City Solicitor Salvati said the doors would not be facing Central Street. Mr. Rice said the proposed design is a very compact shape that's functional. He said the station was designed as small as possible to accommodate a dormitory and fire trucks. He said the challenge is the change in grade across the site. He said the challenge is how to negotiate the 5-foot change in elevation. Member Parrish asked if that is why the original building has access to Central Street. Mr. Rice said the Central Street access is relatively flat and wide. He said the Utica Street side has several contours. Member Parrish said the design of the new building makes sense to him. He said he sees topography issues on the right side. Chair Pinkham asked if the new building could slide closer to Central Street. City Solicitor Salvati said there needs to be a 50-foot apron at the entrance to the station. City Solicitor Salvati presented a letter in support of the variances from Brian Noonan, 40 Central St., Woburn, MA. Chair Pinkham asked if anyone in the audience wished to address the board in regard to the petition. Brian Noonan, 40 Central Street, said he thinks the new fire station is going to be good for the city. Mayor Concannon said he appreciates the board's careful review of this petition. He said this is an exciting time for the city of Woburn. He said there are plans to build two new fire stations. He said station #4 is a little further along in the process than station #5. He said the new stations will require a significant expense. He said he can assure the board the city has been working for more than a year to come up with the best design. He said every inch of this building has been engineered for efficiency. He said what the board sees is a result of study and input. He said the City Council supported this design. He said the goal is to use this design at station #5. He said this was a result of careful analysis. He said he feels confident this is the best option. He said he believes the slope of the land does create a hardship. Motion made by Member Parrish and seconded by Member Clancy to grant the variances; approved, 5-0.

2. **Citizens Bank c/o Heather Dudko, 27 Old Meetinghouse Road, Auburn, MA, Petitioner, and Haytayan Realty Corp., 29 Juniper Hill Road, Waltham, MA, Landowner, seeking Variances from Section 13.4.1 and Section 6.1 of the 1985 Woburn Zoning Ordinances, as amended, for a reduction in the front yard setback from 25 feet to 1.2 feet and a reduction in a side yard setback from 25 feet to 10.4 feet to install a free-standing sign at 6 Russell St., Woburn, MA:** Representing the applicant was Heather Dudko, 27 Old Meetinghouse Road, Auburn, MA. Ms. Dudko said she is seeking variances to install signage at Citizens Bank on Russell Street. She said the variances are for front and side setbacks. She said there was originally a Woburn National

Bank at that address and the existing sign was installed about 35 years ago. She said she could not find a deed or a copy of the sign application. She said Citizens Bank took over and altered the signs, but the foundation and the pole did not change. She said Citizens Bank is now doing a re-branding, and they want to remove and replace the sign. She said they can't use the exact same spots. She said the proposed sign will be 1.2 feet from the front setback and 10.4 feet from the side yard setback. She said the existing sign is 3.2 feet from the front setback and 7.2 feet from the side setback. She said the new sign will be in a similar location but slightly closer to the street, in a landscaped area. She said the new sign will have a new look. She said a wall sign was recently repaired. She said if Citizens Bank was to abide by the zoning requirements, they would have to reconfigure the parking lot. She said the proposed sign will comply with the size and height requirements. Chair Pinkham said the plot plan shows the location of the entrance and exit sign. She said it looks like there is a pathway between the entrance and the exit sign. Ms. Dudka said there are two entrances to the site. Chair Pinkham said her unsolicited feedback is font on the entrance and exit signs should be bigger. She asked why the sign can't be put where the walkway is and comply with the setbacks. She said that is her suggestion. She said she really has a hard time with the idea that the board is going to allow the sign to be closer to the setbacks. She said she thinks it's too close. She said she agrees the new sign looks nice, but she does not see any hardship for moving it closer. Alternate Member Cavicchi said it seems like the body of the sign is getting close to the power lines. He asked why not just put the Citizens logo centered on the pole. He said the sign would be farther away from the wires. Chair Pinkham said the sign is very visible and there are no trees around it. Member Clancy said the design of the lot is challenging. He said there are two paths and an island. He said if you're going around the back it is kind of unclear if you're supposed to stay left or right. He said he likes the new sign but he wouldn't want it closer. He said he would prefer the new sign to be in the same footprint or further back. Member Parrish said he agrees with his colleagues. He said he recalls a similar petition for a sign outside a gas station on Salem Street that made him uneasy. He said he has the same feeling about this petition. Chair Pinkham asked if anyone in the audience wished to address the board in regard to the petition. There were no respondents. Chair Pinkham said it does not appear any member of the board is going to make a motion. She said Ms. Dudko can request a continuance until the board's next meeting to confer with her client. Ms. Dudko said she would like to request a continuance. Motion made by Member Parrish and seconded by Member Clancy to continue the hearing until the board's next meeting on Wednesday, April 16, 2025; approved, 5-0. Ms. Dudko said she will get some ideas from Citizens Bank.

3. **Mark and Laurie Reddy, 6 Catarina Lane, Woburn, MA, Petitioners and Landowners, seeking a Variance from Section 6.1 of the 1985 Woburn Zoning Ordinances, as amended, for a reduction of a side yard setback from 12 feet to 9.9 feet to build an addition at 6 Catarina Lane, Woburn, MA:** Chair Pinkham asked if the applicants are seeking a variance for a reduction of a side setback. Mr. Reddy answered affirmatively. Chair Pinkham said the board needs to make a finding there is a hardship. Mr. Reddy said the topography of the lot creates a hardship. He said the lot is not square. Chair Pinkham said the applicants have a bump out addition on the other side of the structure. She asked if the applicants have considered flipping the orientation so

they could build an addition that would comply with the zoning ordinance. Mr. Reddy said there are two bedrooms on top of each other. He said the bathroom would no longer have a window and that would lead to mold. Chair Pinkham asked if anyone in the audience wished to address the board in regard to the petition. There were no respondents. Member Parrish asked the applicants to describe the addition. Mr. Reddy said it is two floors up and down. Chair Pinkham asked if the applicants considered building a smaller addition to comply with the side setback. Mr. Reddy said it is not as simple as coming back a foot. He said they would have to make it six feet shorter. Chair Pinkham said she was referring to the width. Mr. Reddy said that would look awkward. Member Parrish said that would also probably incur a financial burden. Motion made by Member Parrish and seconded by Member Clancy to grant the variance based on the shape of the lot; approved, 4-1, with Chair Pinkham opposed.

4. **Serrato Signs, 15 Dewey St., Worcester, MA, Petitioner, and Madison Woburn Holdings LLC, 369 Washington St., Woburn, MA, Landowner, seeking a Variance from Section 13.10 of the 1985 Woburn Zoning Ordinances, as amended, for secondary wall signs at 369 Washington St., Woburn, MA:** Representing the applicant was Sean McGlone, Serrato Signs, 15 Dewey St., Worcester, MA. Mr. McGlone said he was before the board in November for the same application. He said there was a little bit of confusion between the applicant and Building Commissioner Thomas Quinn. He said he proposed a sign package and the ZBA suggested removing the blade sign from the side of the building that faces the street. He said the 6-foot Siren sign is permitted and they are allowed 66.4-square-feet of signage. He said he is asking for approval of secondary signs on the south elevation that consist of another Siren sign and Starbucks lettering. He said the Woburn Zoning Ordinance indicates the secondary signage can't exceed the square footage of the primary sign. He said he is also looking for approval for a third secondary sign along east elevation. He said four signs are one more than what is allowed. He said that fourth sign will be on the back of the building. Chair Pinkham said the plot plan does not show the whole site. She said the assessors map shows the whole site. She said the Starbucks location is the building that is numbered 395. She said right now there is a Siren sign facing Washington Street. Mr. McGlone said that sign has a 6-foot diameter with 64.66 square feet. Chair Pinkham asked if the sign out front could be two times as big. Mr. McGlone answered affirmatively. Chair Pinkham asked if Starbucks kept the primary sign small to have larger secondary signs. Mr. McGlone said Starbucks wants to keep it consistent. Chair Pinkham asked if there is another Siren sign there. Mr. McGlone said there is another Siren sign toward the front corner. Chair Pinkham said the channel signs are toward the back corner, and now Starbucks wants to put another Siren sign on the opposite side of the building. Mr. McGlone said the second sign would face the hotels. Chair Pinkham asked if there will be three secondary wall signs instead of two. Mr. McGlone said technically, yes, according to Commissioner Quinn. Chair Pinkham asked how big the Siren sign on the back of the building is. Mr. McGlone said the Siren sign on the back of the building is 28.2-square-feet. Chair Pinkham asked if the sign is still going to comply with the zoning ordinance. Mr. McGlone said the two signs will be 45.44-square-feet. Chair Pinkham said the signs are too big. She said the applicant is going to have to pick one to make smaller if the board does not grant a variance. Alternate Member Cavicchi asked if it is accurate to say the applicant has two signs on

the south side of the building and wants a variance for square footage. Mr. McGlone said there is a sign facing Washington Street and they are looking for one facing east. He asked what the purpose of both signs was on the main entrance. He asked if the applicant has considered just going with the channel letters. Mr. McGlone said Starbucks wants to draw attention to customers coming off Washington Street as well as customers in the hotels in the back of the lot. Alternate Member Cavicchi said sometimes too many signs create a safety hazard. Member Chatfield asked if Starbucks can just do channel letters. She said she drove around the parking lot and said you can see the channel sign. Alternate Member Cavicchi said he is concerned about safety. Chair Pinkham said she had the same reaction. She asked what is the hardship that Starbucks needs to have four signs. Mr. McGlone said the hardship is the topography based on the layout of the building, and traffic. Chair Pinkham said she had the same reaction as Member Chatfield. She said to her, pick one sign on the on the south side. She said she can't see how having two signs on the south side helps at all. She said she thinks it's overkill. She said she thinks the zoning ordinance allows Starbucks to put enough signage on the building. She said she thinks Starbucks can comply with the zoning ordinance. Member Chatfield said she agrees with the Chair. Chair Pinkham asked if anyone in the audience wished to address the board in regard to the petition. There were no respondents. Member Clancy said he has sympathy for the petitioner, but he thinks Starbucks can get decent visibility with what is permitted by right. Mr. McGlone said in November the discussion was about the south elevation being the side for the primary sign and the other signs were secondary. Chair Pinkham said she has no memory of those two signs being one primary wall sign. She said she senses the applicant is in a similar situation as he was in November. She said four members need to vote in favor to approve a variance and she does not get a sense there is enough support. She asked if anyone on the board is inclined to allow Starbucks to have four signs. There was no affirmative support. Chair Pinkham asked if anyone on the board is inclined to say they would entertain approving a variance to increase the grant total square footage of the signage. There was no affirmative support. She said she thinks the board and Starbucks are where they were in November. She said if the board takes a vote tonight and the variance application is denied, Starbucks is going to have to wait two years before asking for similar relief or come back with substantial changes. She asked if Mr. McGlone wants to check with Starbucks or talk with Commissioner Quinn again. Mr. McGlone requested a continuance. Motion made by Member Parrish and seconded by Member Clancy to continue the hearing until the board's meeting on April 16, 2025; approved, 5-0.

5. **Approval of minutes from meeting of February 19, 2025:** Motion made by Member Parrish and seconded by Member Clancy to approve the minutes of February 19, 2025, as presented; all in favor, 5-0.

6. **Any other matters that may be legally before the board:** Member Parrish asked about the status of the new versions of the applications for variances and special permits that the board approved last year. Clerk said he communicated with Member Ryan and Chair Pinkham about this issue earlier in the week and he hopes to have the new versions available soon.

7. **Motion made by Member Parrish and seconded by Member Clancy to adjourn**; all in favor, 5-0. Chair Pinkham adjourned the meeting at 7:12 p.m.

ATTEST: _____
Gordon Vincent
Clerk of the Zoning Board of Appeals