

Town of Exeter
Zoning Board of Adjustment
January 20, 2026, 7 PM
Town Offices Wheelwright Room
Final Minutes

I. **Preliminaries**

Members Present: Chair Robert Prior, Vice-Chair Laura Davies, Laura Montagno, Kevin Baum, John Dal Santo - Alternate

Members Absent: Clerk Esther Olson-Murphy, Martha Pennell - Alternate

Assistant Town Planner Barb McEvoy was also present.

Call to Order: Chair Robert Prior called the meeting to order at 7 PM.

I. **New Business**

- A. The application of Christopher Howlett DBA Epping Road Properties, LLC for a variance from Article 4, Section 4.4 of the Exeter zoning ordinance to permit a 7' deep farmer's porch/entry to be constructed on the front of the existing structure. The subject property is located in the C-3, Epping Road/Highway zoning district. Tax Map Parcel # 47-10. ZBA Case # 25-11.

Jason Marquez of Diamond Hill Builders spoke representing applicant Christopher Howlett, who was not present. Mr. Prior asked if the Board needs a letter of authorization for him to speak, but Ms. McEvoy said no, since he's from the same company.

Mr. Marquez presented the Board with plans of the property showing the setback before and after the proposed renovation. He said they're looking to add a farmer's porch onto the front of the building for safety, water control, and front building protection. They will have clients coming in, so they want to make sure they are safe from water coming off the roof. They also want to improve the overall appearance and make it look more like a commercial building than a house. Mr. Prior asked if it was built as a house. Mr. Marquez's assistant said they just acquired the building, and previously it was a commercial outfit; it does look like it was originally a home. Mr. Marquez said the majority of the house is within the setback now. He referenced a 2008 approval for the building next door which is closer to the road than the proposed addition; that is 23 feet off the road and they're looking to be 29 feet off the road.

Mr. Prior said the building looks better in the plans. He asked if the primary entrance is through the front, and Mr. Marquez said yes. There is a double door in the back for employees and a single door for access to the basement. Ms. Davies asked if this is a home for their company or if they're just the renovation vendor. Mr. Marquez said it would be the home for their company. It would have offices for staff upstairs and a small showroom on the first floor.

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Mr. Prior asked the Board to comment.

Ms. Montagno said she was going to ask how many feet of setback relief there would be, but she can see from the plans that it's six feet. She asked if they were losing any parking, and Mr. Marquez said no. The intent is to retain the parking.

Mr. Dal Santo said the application was very easy to understand, and asked if they had prepared it themselves. Mr. Marquez said yes, it was done in-house.

Mr. Prior asked for public comment, but there was none. Mr. Prior closed the public session and entered Board deliberations.

Mr. Prior said this was a very clear application and doesn't see a need to query it further. Mr. Baum said this is in line with the building next door. They can't push the building back because of the wetlands behind. There's parking in the rear, which is better aesthetically. It will look a lot better than it does now. Mr. Prior said the form-based zoning we're using for projects now, for example on Portsmouth Ave, encourages buildings to be towards the road. Ms. Davies said this will look a lot more professional. Mr. Prior said he didn't see a need to go through the variance criteria.

Ms. Davies made a motion to approve the application for the property at 151 Epping Road as presented and grant the variance for the front setback. Mr. Dal Santo seconded. Mr. Prior, Ms. Davies, Ms. Montagno, Mr. Baum, and Mr. Dal Santo voted aye, and the motion passed 5-0.

II. Other Business

A. Retirement of Barb McEvoy

1. Mr. Prior thanked Ms. McEvoy, who is retiring, for her years of service.

B. Approval of Minutes: December 16, 2025

Mr. Dal Santo made a motion to approve the minutes of December 16, 2025 as presented. Ms. Davies seconded. Mr. Prior, Ms. Davies, and Mr. Dal Santo voted aye, and the motion passed 3-0.

III. Adjournment

Mr. Dal Santo moved to adjourn. Ms. Davies seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 7:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary