**Town of Sandown** 1 **Zoning Board of Adjustment** 2 **Minutes 4/25/13** 3 4 5 6 **Meeting Date:** April 25, 2013 7 **Type of Meeting: Public Hearing** 8 **Method of Notification:** Public Posting - Sandown Town Hall, Sandown Post Office, 9 Sandown Website, Eagle Tribune 10 **Meeting Location:** Sandown Town Hall 11 Members present: Chairman - Steve Meisner, Vice Chair - BJ Richardson, 12 Lauren Cairns, Dave Ardolino, Donna Green - Alternate, 13 Christopher True - Alternate, Tom Tombarello -14 Selectman's Liaison 15 Absent: Curt Sweet 16 17 18 **Opening:** Mr. Meisner opened the meeting at 7:05 p.m. 19 20 Mr. Meisner noted there would be a full board for both cases. There would be different members 21 appointed for each case. 22 23 Review of 3/28/13 Minutes 24 The approval of the 3/28/13 minutes is deferred to the next meeting because Mr. Sweet wasn't 25 present. 26 27 Review of 4/3/13 Minutes 28 MOTION: Ms. Green made a motion to approve the 4/3/13 minutes. Mr. Richardson seconded 29 the motion. Ms. Green, Mr. Richardson, and Mr. Meisner voted in favor. Ms. L. Cairns, Mr. True 30 and Mr. Ardolino abstained. The motion passed. 31 32 Mr. Meisner asked the board if they would consider switching the order of cases putting the 33 Ryder case first. Ms. Green felt it would be appropriate since they had attorney's present. The 34 Board agreed. Mr. Loader, the other applicant, had no objection going second. 35 36 Mr. Meisner noted the Board members for the Ryders case would be Mr. Ardolino, Mr. Meisner, 37 Ms. L. Cairns, Mr. Richardson and Ms. Green. 38 39 Case # 01 – M5 L22-03, 1 Rowell Lane 40 James and Catherine Ryder are requesting a variance from Article II, Section B of the Town of 41 Sandown Zoning Ordinance to permit relocation of Yogamatters LLC to a different location 42 within dwelling with no other changes to the business. The property currently has a special 43 exception which was granted in 2004. The variance application is being reheard as a result of the 44 ZBA's March 7, 2013 vote. 45 46 Mr. Meisner asked that the Ryders and their representative step forward. Mr. Meisner asked that 47 they confine their arguments to new information since it is a rehearing and they have all the 48 information from the previous hearing. 49

Mr. John Ratigan from Donahue, Tucker & Ciandella, PLLC was representing for the Ryders.
 James and Catherine Ryder were also present.

Mr. Meisner confirmed the Board received his letter requesting the rehearing which also addressed the new answers to the variance criteria questions.

Mr. Ratigan requested that the photographs and map of the home be incorporated into the new case as well as the minutes from the prior meetings.

Mr. Ratigan gave a history of the property and the case. He discussed the limits imposed as a result of the special exception. He noted that functionally the use of the yoga studio will be the same and will be subject to the same conditions imposed with their previous special exception. He included a set of conditions that he believes mirror the conditions imposed by the Board. They don't propose that any differences be imposed to the function of the business with the exception of the space to be used.

Mr. Ratigan reviewed his letter dated March 20, 2013, which addressed the variance criteria. He feels the Board has the authority to grant the variance and asked that they do grant the variance.

Mr. Meisner asked if the Board had questions for the applicant.

Ms. Green questioned their statement for the "unnecessary hardship" question that their property was distinguished from other properties in the area because they had a special exception. Mr. Ratigan noted that was correct. He noted RSA 674:33 which defined the hardship criteria. He noted that the legislature rewrote the law and used the term "property." If they had used the term "land" it would have meant the parcel of property, but because they used the term "property" it incorporates the physicality of the land and all structures used on that land. So he feels the special exception distinguishes them in the way they are able to use their property.

Mr. Meisner pointed the Board to the area in the NH Board of Adjustment Handbook where they explain the questions in detail.

Mr. Richardson noted that when the Ryders applied for the special exception to put on the addition, they were asked if they would use that property for the business and they answered no. He doesn't see how there would be hardship when they already have an existing space to operate the business in. Mr. Ratigan noted that the new space is better with more heat, better windows, no poles or obstructions and a higher ceiling. Their request is simply to flip from one side of the basement to the other and they feel it is a reasonable request.

Mr. Richardson questioned the consent decree which restricted the space where the business was to be operated. Mr. Meisner read from the consent decree noting that the basement space to be used is 18x22 (395 sq. ft.). Mr. Ratigan agreed that was accurate, but reminded them of paragraph 12 which stated they could go to the ZBA to seek modifications. They are lawfully executing their right to seek modification; being sensitive to the consent decree, they are imposing all the other conditions from that consent decree onto the variance for the new space.

Mr. Richardson questioned if the Ryders would only utilize the 18x22 area of the basement or the entire basement. Mr. Ratigan noted they would relinquish their right to use the 18x22 space for the business and would restrict the business to only the new space.

Mr. Richardson questioned was what currently being used for the business. The Ryders noted that only the 18x22 room was being used. Mr. Richardson asked if there was an additional waiting room area. The Ryders noted only that room was being used.

Mr. Meisner reviewed the differences between the conditions on the consent decree and the conditions proposed in Mr. Ratigan's letter.

Mr. Meisner noted that number 4 on the consent decree which states "all events/services shall be led/provided by a resident of the home" was not in Mr. Ratigan's letter. Mr. Ratigan noted they would agree to add that condition. Mr. Meisner confirmed that the commercial sign was gone.

Mr. Ratigan confirmed it was.

Mr. Meisner read number 6 on the consent decree which requires the Ryders to complete and file annual renewal applications under the provisions of the In-Home Occupation sections of the Sandown Zoning Ordinance so long as said provisions are in the Ordinance and require annual filings. He noted that wasn't something the 2004 special exception imposed and asked if the Ryder's want that to be included as well. The Ryders noted they were willing to still do that.

Ms. Green asked if there was a provision being carried over from the consent decree regarding the fine for not complying with the terms of the consent decree. Mr. Meisner noted that was up to the town and Code Enforcement Officer to enforce and not part of the Zoning Regulations for a variance.

Ms. Green asked if the consent decree would be voided if the variance was granted. Mr. Meisner felt that in his opinion, it would be. Ms. Green wanted to make sure they were doing justice to the original consent decree. Mr. Meisner noted that the 2004 special exception and they consent decree would be null and void if the variance were granted because the Ryders would be giving up the 2004 special exception. He added that they could impose conditions on the variance.

Ms. Green asked if it was correct that they were not allowed to enlarge a non-conforming use.

Mr. Meisner felt, in his opinion, that it was not considered an enlargement of a non-conforming use, but an entirely new application.

Mr. Tombarello noted that in terms of the fines and monitoring of the property, the Board of Selectman has inspected the site and was granted permission by the Ryders to go there any time to see if there are violations. The Selectmen have gone there approximately 10 times to inspect the space and has no intention of going back there at this time.

Mr. Ratigan noted that it is a new request and they would not be expanding a non-conforming use. They would be relinquishing their special exception. To address the concerns of their neighbors, they would maintain the current operations of the business with all prior conditions in place.

Mr. Richardson noted that one of the conditions was that classes would be conducted by the Ryders. The Ryders confirmed that Ms. Ryder as well as their daughter, who lives in the home, were the only people conducting classes.

Mr. Richardson questioned if they were relinquishing the special exception, weren't they removing the allowance for the business in the non-conforming space. Mr. Meisner clarified that if they were taking the existing room they are in now and expanding that room, they would be expanding the non-conforming use. Instead, they are applying for a variance for a whole new

space. Mr. Richardson feels they expanded the home to allow for the business. Mr. Meisner clarified they expanded the space to allow for the accessory apartment.

Mr. Ratigan noted that there is no restriction on how many sq. ft. can be used for a business within the variance criteria.

Mr. Meisner noted that the Board can put reasonable restrictions on the variance. Mr. Richardson noted restrictions were on paper and whether they are enforced or abided by is something different. He noted that the Board of Selectmen are not going to revisit the space and the Code Enforcement Officer is already taxed. He doesn't feel that putting restrictions on this case is going to alleviate the greater good of the neighborhood or the town.

Mr. Meisner opened the meeting to the public at 8:03 p.m.

Bernard Campbell, attorney with Beaumont & Campbell Prof. Ass'n, Salem, NH
 Mr. Campbell was representing Brian and Cynthia St. Amand.

Mr. Campbell requested that all of the testimony and records from the January hearing be incorporated into that hearing.

Mr. Campbell noted that less than three months ago this board voted unanimously that the criteria had not been met and they have heard nothing that evening to change any of the facts. He felt the issue is one of compliance and the expansion of use. He feels it is clearly expansion of the use. He went back to the minutes of the 2004 hearing and noted that the Ryders stated they would only hold one class per day, but in the consent decree they stipulated two classes. The Ryders would not simply be swapping rooms since they would still use the existing space to walk through and would also use the bathrooms. His clients feel the waiting area and registration area were likely not going to be moved into the new area. They feel there is no effective way to enforce that the Ryders would not use the existing space. The Amands have provided video evidence to the town for review. They do not feel the current stipulations are being upheld and feel the best way to prevent further expansion and further impact on the neighborhood, is to keep the business in the current space.

Mr. Campbell addressed the five criteria outlined in his memo.

The Amands feel it would alter the essential character of the neighborhood. Granting the request would make it possible for them to have a maximum of 12 people in class at all times. They feel it would not do substantial justice to allow that business to expand and thrive in a residential area. The town has already gone through significant expense and there would be continued cost to the town due to enforcement. Mr. Campbell feels the abutters are qualified to determine if their property values have been diminished. He also feels it is an expansion of non-conforming use, which NH law is trying to eliminate.

Mr. Campbell noted that he feels hardship is associated with the characteristics of the land. The fact that there is a special exception should be disregarded when determining when a property is unique. If they got a special exception through their own actions, they can't use that to say their property is unique. He feels there is nothing different about the Ryder's property. It fails to meet all the statutory requirements for a variance, but particularly the hardship, substantial justice and the intent requirements.

Mr. Campbell noted that the Board did make a technical error in making a motion to approve the variance. Mr. Campbell noted they were asking the Board to make a motion to deny the request.

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- Brian and Cynthia St. Amand 2 Rowell Lane
- Mr. St. Amand clarified where the business operates out of and noted they are already using the new room. He noted they have violations on film and have asked the Board of Selectman to review it.

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Ms. St. Amand noted the business has grown continuously and feels it is going to continue to grow.

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Mr. Campbell requested the homes plans from Attorney Gorrow. He read a letter he received from Ms. Gorrow dated March 28, 2013 which accompanied the plans he requested.

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- Fred Murray, 3 Rowell Lane
- Mr. Murray feels it would definitely be an expansion of the business and it will diminish their property values even more.

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- Richard Funai, 4 Rowell Lane
- Mr. Funai questioned why the special exception for an in-home business was removed from the town's zoning regulations. Mr. Meisner explained that in its place came a new in-home business regulation, which has more restrictions in some respects and less in others. He is not aware of why they removed the special exception criteria though.

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Mr. Funai noted that the space would be doubling, which in itself would be an expansion. He feels the sign-in and waiting area would still be utilized.

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Mr. Funai also noted that he feels there are safety concerns. There are more cars entering and exiting the neighborhood. He and his son were playing in the cul-de-sac and had to move several times because of cars turning around.

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Jim Ryder Jr. – 258 Kent Farm Road, Hampstead

He doesn't understand how house values can go down because of yoga. He noted that the home is the first house on the right, so traffic shouldn't travel down the road. He also noted they are going to have the same amount of classes, so switching to another room would not impact the traffic.

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- Jennifer Stackard 1 Rowell Lane
- Ms. Stackard noted the addition was built for her and her family to live in. She grew up on the street and has young children and doesn't feel there are any safety concerns. She questioned at what point it should be considered harassment since the St. Amands have cameras on their home 24/7.

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8:39 p.m. – Mr. Meisner closed the hearing to the public

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Ms. Green questioned what percentage of the square footage is the new room to the entire residence. The Ryders couldn't answer that question. She noted that their business fits the criteria of an in-home occupation except for the creation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Members discussed whether they would qualify.

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Mr. Richardson asked if they applied for the in-home occupation permit this year. The Ryders noted they have done it every year, but have not done it this year yet.

Mr. Richardson questioned why the Ryders would relinquish the special exception when it grandfathers them. Mr. Ratigan noted they are voluntarily relinquishing the special exception because they don't need it anymore if they get the variance. They can apply for the variance because the law allows them to do so. Ms. Ryder clarified that they were giving up the special exception so they didn't have permission to run two businesses.

Ms. Green noted the Ryders agreed to import the need for them to apply for the in-home business every year. Mr. Meisner noted that they are likely required to do that so town officials could keep track of the business. Just by submitting the application, it makes the town aware, once a year, that there is a business being run there.

Mr. Meisner noted that the Board contacted LGC to determine if the Ryders could readdress the criteria questions and LGC stated that they could.

Ms. L. Cairns questioned if they should base their decision on the new answers since they are different than what was previously submitted. Mr. Meisner noted that was correct, they should base their decision on the new answers to the criteria questions.

Mr. Meisner closed the hearing to the public at 9:06 p.m.

Mr. Meisner noted that one of the reasons there is a rehearing is because the Board made a minor mistake in making a motion to approve the variance and that motion was not passed, so the Board took it to mean no. They need to make two motions, one to approve and one to deny, and the motion needs to pass with a majority of three votes.

Ms. Green requested more time to read through the material. Mr. Meisner noted they did not need to render a decision that evening and they could postpone their decision. He reminded the Board that they needed to be together in a public meeting to discuss the case. He also reminded the Board that they will need to explain why they voted the way they did.

**MOTION:** Ms. Green made a motion to defer the decision to a future meeting.

*Discussion:* Mr. True noted that the same members should be present for that meeting. Members discussed their schedules.

Ms. Green amended her motion and stated the decision would be deferred until May 9, 2013. Mr. Ardolino seconded the motion.

*Discussion:* Mr. Meisner polled the board to see if they were all available for May 9, 2013 and everyone was available.

The Board voted unanimously in favor. The motion passed.

The Board took a short recess

Case # 02 – M7 L17-6, 218 Main Street

Christopher Loader is requesting a variance from Article II, Part B, Section 2 of the zoning ordinance to allow two additional bays to the existing auto repair facility, for a total of four bays and display of up to six vehicles for sale on the site.

302 Mr. Meisner stepped down from the case. Mr. Richardson, Mr. Ardolino, Ms. L. Cairns, Mr. 303 True, and Ms. Green were appointed as the voting members.

Kevin Hatch a licensed land surveyor and owner of Cornerstone Survey Associates presented the application. Chris Loader – Chestnut Hill Auto was also present.

Mr. Hatch noted the property has a variance to allow the existing business. They are hoping to add two bays onto the existing facility to create four usable bays and display up to six cars. Adding additional bays will help them be more efficient by allowing them to keep cars in bays while they wait for parts. The business is on a main road in town so it would not alter the rural character of the neighborhood. They are aware they will need to amend the state highway permit for the entrance. Mr. Loader purchased the abutting property. They will need to adjust the lot line and do away with the old structure that is currently there. They plan to clean-up the property. He added that there is no direct abutter view of where the property is to be expanded.

Mr. Hatch noted that the variance would be the first step in the process. They would then go to the Planning Board for the lot line adjustment and because they would be expanding a commercial property. He noted they were adjusting the lot line because with the addition, the structure would be too close to the abutting lot line. They will also go to the NHDOT since the property is on a state road.

Ms. Green questioned if the Zoning Board could vote to approve the variance if the lot line adjustment hadn't been approved yet. Mr. Richardson felt they could approve the variance with the condition of gaining the lot line approval from the Planning Board.

Ms. Green asked if the driveway on the plans was the proposed driveway. Mr. Hatch confirmed it was and noted it had been expanded from what was there. He clarified on the plans where the driveway would go.

Ms. Green questioned how many cars they currently have on display. Mr. Loader stated there were two. He noted that he doesn't put flags on them, just small green tags and tries to keep the appearance neat and orderly. He doesn't want to look like a giant used lot, but wanted the freedom of displaying up to six cars.

Mr. Loader noted that they were only adding 1,200 sq. ft to the space. He is doubling the space, but doesn't feel it will double the amount of business they do, it will just make their current business more efficient. He plans to make the addition match the style of the home and garage currently there so there will be a continuous look to the home and maintain the rural area. He has put a lot of energy into the business and making the space look nice.

Ms. Green asked if the parking area was paved. Mr. Loader noted it was crushed stone and it wouldn't change much.

345 Mr. Richardson asked if their lot was zoned commercial. Mr. Hatch noted it was not.

Mr. Richardson asked how much road frontage there was for lot 7-17. Mr. Hatch estimated it was approximately 220-240'. Mr. Loader noted that his intention was to remove the home that is currently on that lot and eventually sell that lot. He noted that the deed for that lot states the driveway will be moved to Chestnut Hill road.

- Mr. Richardson asked if they had any plans to create a tree buffer at the proposed lot line. Mr.
- Hatch noted the site plan regulations have buffer requirements and assumes the Planning Board
- will require some sort of landscaped buffer. Mr. Loader noted he wants to make it an attractive
- residential lot and his landscape will take that into consideration.

Mr. Ardolino asked how many mechanics there will be. Mr. Loader noted currently it is himself, one full time and three part time mechanics and they would likely make one of the part time mechanics, full time. He noted his hours of operation are 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday and Saturdays they are open until noon. He has no intention of changing that. He tries to be respectful to the neighbors.

Mr. Richardson opened the hearing to the public at 9:49 p.m.

## Robert Menard – 222 Main Street

Mr. Menard is a neighbor and customer. He feels the property is well maintained, there is no junk or trash. He feels with plans to demolish the house next door it can only enhance the neighborhood and would be great.

Mr. Menard submitted a written letter to the Board in favor of the project. Mr. Richardson read the letter.

## Lisa Sears - 6 Chestnut Hill Drive, M17 L17-8

Ms. Sears will be an abutter when the project goes to the Planning Board for the lot line adjustment. She does not feel Mr. Loader meets the criteria for a variance. She used to sit on the Sandown Zoning Board and used to work for the board and is familiar with the criteria.

Ms. Sears noted she has no issues with Mr. Loader, but feels allowing a business in a residential neighborhood is contrary to the spirit of the ordinance. She feels the ordinance was intended for someone who has an office in their home. She noted Mr. Loader does not live at the home. She feels 6 cars and 4 bays should not be considered a small business.

Ms. Sears feels that hardship applies to the physical characteristics of the property and Mr. Loader's property does not meet the physical characteristics.

She feels the site line from the driveway to the road is unsafe and there will be an increase in traffic coming in and out of the driveway. She understands they will go through the site plan review and they will address that issue with the Planning Board and NHDOT. She noted she often crosses the road there and there is limited visibility. She has tried to get a crosswalk at that location several times.

She feels it is great that he wants to clean up the house next door but that should have no bearing on the case and shouldn't be considered.

Ms. Sears noted that the homeowner across the street had a permit to sell items with small engines and he displays them in his front yard. She feels by allowing Mr. Loader to display more cars, it would set precedence within the neighborhood.

Mr. Hatch noted that NHDOT will address any safety concerns with the driveway and highway.

He did note that they met the 400' safe sight distance. He also noted that the reason for not doing a crosswalk is likely because of liability. He noted that in terms of setting precedence for the resident across the street, the two businesses are very different and that resident sets his items on

403 the street in the state right of way. Mr. Loader noted that he has never had any violations with the 404 code enforcement officer. 405 406 Mr. Hatch also added that the state has changed the hardship requirement and it does not need to 407 be inherent in the land and the new variance application reflects the change in legislation. He 408 feels small essential services have always been part of a small town and by incorporating them 409 into residential areas, helps support the rural character. He does not feel the change in Sandown's 410 Zoning Regulations was ever intended to completely exclude business from the town. 411 412 Mr. Richardson read the variance questions and answers submitted by Mr. Loader. 413 414 1. Granting the variance would not be contrary to the public interest: It will allow 415 the existing auto repair facility to have additional working space to provide a 416 necessary service to the community. 417 418 2. If the variance were granted, the spirit of the ordinance would be observed 419 **because:** Granting the Variance will maintain the small New England town 420 character that Sandown's Zoning ordinance promotes. Small local business is the 421 historical basis for rural New Hampshire life. 422 423 3. Granting the variance would do substantial justice because: It will allow a local 424 business owner to keep his business in town providing services to people in town 425 without any detrimental impact. 426 427 4. If the variance were granted, the values of the surrounding properties would not be diminished: This is a well maintained shop located on a state road. The 428 429 shop is existing and the additional bays will have no effect on surrounding values. 430 The current business has the ability to display two cars for sale and the additional 431 parking will allow up to four more to be displayed with no adverse effects. 432 433 5. Unnecessary Hardship 434 435 a. Owing to special conditions of the property that distinguish it from other 436 properties in the area, denial of the variance would result in 437 unnecessary hardship because: 438 439 i. No fair and substantial relationship exists between the general 440 public purposes of the ordinance provision and the specific

application of that provision to the property because: Sandown

residents was not the intent of the ordinance.

has no desire for large commercial operations in a residential area,

but preventing small local business from providing service to local

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- ii. *The proposed use is a reasonable one because:* It will allow a local resident to continue providing a necessary service on his property with no negative impact to the surrounding neighborhood.

  b. *Explain how, if the criteria in subparagraph (A) are not established, an unnecessary hardship will be deemed to exist if, and only if, owing to* 
  - b. Explain how, if the criteria in subparagraph (A) are not established, an unnecessary hardship will be deemed to exist if, and only if, owing to special condition of the property that distinguish it from other properties in the area, the property cannot be reasonably used in strict conformance with the ordinance, and a variance is therefore necessary to enable a reasonable use of it: This property is located on a state road with no traffic, noise, or visual impact on the surrounding properties. It is currently permitted to operate as an auto repair facility, and is ideally suited for the use, unlike most other properties in town. Not allowing the owner a reasonable expansion of his business would be an unnecessary hardship.
  - Ms. Sears noted that she has lived there for three years. She has no issues with Mr. Loader or his property but has concerns if someone else was to buy the property and may not be as responsible.
  - Mr. Hatch noted that they are just at the beginning of the process. They still needed to go before the Planning Board. The Zoning Board could approve with conditions and include whatever they feel is necessary for the use of the property. Those conditions would have to be followed regardless of the owner of the business.
  - Mr. Richardson closed the hearing to the public at 10:11 p.m.
  - Ms. Green noted that the public pushback is mostly concerning the display of six cars and questioned if it was possible to limit the number of cars on display, she also noted they could limit the hours of operation.
- Mr. Meisner noted that the original variance has restrictions on hours and all business in town have the same restrictions for hours of operation.

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  - Ms. Green asked if the parking area would expand. Mr. Richardson noted that the Planning Board would determine that. Members discussed how many vehicles could be there.
  - Mr. True noted that he has concerns about that section of the road and doubling the size of the business potentially increasing the number of cars that would enter and exit the facility. He feels there are safety issues.
  - Members discussed the process of voting and whether they needed to fill out the forms first or vote first. Mr. Meisner noted that they could do either, but the forms did need to be filled out and they needed to give a brief explanation as to why they voted the way they did.
  - **MOTION:** Mr. True made a motion to postpone the decision until May 9, 2013. Ms. L. Cairns seconded the motion. Ms. Green, Mr. True, Ms. L. Cairns and Mr. Ardolino voted in favor. Mr. Richardson opposed. The motion passed.

496 **MOTION:** Ms. Green made a motion to adjourn, Mr. True seconded that motion.

497 Meeting adjourned at 10:25 p.m.

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499 Respectfully submitted,

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Andrea Cairns, Recording Secretary

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