

NASHUA CITY PLANNING BOARD
April 15, 2026

A special meeting of the Nashua City Planning Board was held on Wednesday, April 15, 2026 at 6:00PM in the 3rd floor auditorium in City Hall.

Members Present: Bob Bollinger, Chair
 Dan Hudson, City Engineer
 Ald. Amber Morgan, Alt.
 Larry Hirsch
 Benjamin Zoller, Alt.

Also Present: Matt Sullivan, Community Development Dir.
 Sam Durfee, Planning Manager

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

April 2, 2026

MOTION by Mr. Hirsch to approve the minutes, as written

SECONDED by Mr. Zoller

MOTION CARRIED 4-0-1 (Hudson abstained)

COMMUNICATIONS

None

REPORT OF CHAIR, COMMITTEE, & LIAISON

None

PROCEDURES OF THE MEETING

Given that there were no members of the public present, the Chair did not read the procedures of the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS - CONDITIONAL USE APPLICATIONS

A26-0013 ARBI Farms, LLC (Owner & Applicant) requesting conditional use and site plan approval for a 41,000 SF charitable gaming facility, five-story parking garage, and associated site improvements. The property is located at 11 Tara Boulevard. Map A. Lot 333. Zoned Park Industrial (PI). Ward 8. **(Tabled to the May 7, 2026 meeting)**

OLD BUSINESS - SITE PLANS

A26-0012 ARBI Farms, LLC (Owner & Applicant) requesting conditional use and site plan approval for a 41,000 SF charitable gaming facility, five-story parking garage, and associated site improvements. The property is located at 11 Tara Boulevard. Map A. Lot 333. Zoned Park Industrial (PI). Ward 8. **(Tabled to the May 7, 2026 meeting)**

NEW BUSINESS - CONDITIONAL USE PERMITS

A26-0026 John J. Flatley (Owner & Applicant) requesting conditional use approval for a flex space (office and warehouse building) with no outside storage. The property is located at L Shakespeare Rd. Map A - Lot 986. Zoned Park Industrial (PI). Ward 8. **(Postponed to the May 21, 2026 meeting by Applicant request)**

NEW BUSINESS - SITE PLANS

A26-0010 John J. Flatley (Owner & Applicant) requesting approval of a site plan amendment to move a proposed building forward 40' and update associated grading and site improvements. The property is located at L Shakespeare Rd. Map A - Lot 986. Zoned Park Industrial (PI). Ward 8. **(Postponed to May 7, 2026 by Applicant request)**

A26-0028 Bishop Guertin Highschool, Inc. (Owner & Applicant) requesting site plan approval for improved athletic fields and accompanying structures along with associated parking and site improvements. The subject property is located at 194-196 Lund Road. Map 106 - Lot 16. Zoned C Suburban Residence (R-9). Ward 6. (Postponed to May 7, 2026, by Applicant request)

OTHER BUSINESS

1. Review of tentative agenda to determine proposals of regional impact.

MOTION by Mr. Hudson that there are no items of regional impact

SECONDED by Mr. Zoller

MOTION CARRIED 5-0

2. Board of Alderman Referral R-26-019, Relative to Authorizing the Purchase of 14 Mulberry St

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

Mr. Sullivan said this property is next door to the abandoned Iglesias building at 11-13 Mulberry Street. This is currently a multifamily property. 18 Mulberry Street is the city's public health building, in close proximity.

Mr. Sullivan said reason that they city is moving to purchase this property is because over the past few years the city has worked to provide a winter overnight warming station at the Elm Street Middle School. This has been tremendously successful. We have realized another need, to establish something during the daytime to allow people to do laundry, take showers, and do other essential things that we all should have access to. The Public Health Dept. has worked over the last two years to build the scope for a resource and transitional housing center.

Mr. Sullivan said the city started looking for spaces in the downtown core with access to services. In late 2025 we hit a roadblock because we couldn't find a suitable space. In March 2026 this property came on the market and seemed to fit many of our needs. 14 Mulberry Street is about a 3,000-sqft structure, a 3-unit multifamily. With some renovation, we believe it will meet the needs for a warming station and resource center. We are also planning to offer a few units of transitional housing within the structure as well.

Mr. Sullivan said the asking price is \$730,000. The current assessed value is \$540,000; that wide of a gap is not uncommon in this market. The Planning Board has to answer the question of whether this property has strategic value to the city. This acquisition was contemplated by the Capital Improvements Plan in 2025 and 2026. This area is defined by multifamily residential uses, higher occupancy, and some service businesses. He feels this is in line with the Master Plan and Land Use Code.

Mr. Sullivan said there is an outstanding question whether transitional housing is allowed by the zoning ordinance as contemplated. If the Board recommends this purchase now and we find that we need a variance later, the city will have to pursue it. The Board is not saying this meets zoning requirements. This project received a score of 82/125 points or 3.42/5 as part of the 2027 CIP. It received a low score because we did not have a site selected, and we now do. He can't speak to the operational details, but he will try to answer those questions of provide a follow-up.

Mr. Bollinger asked if the city has the funds already programmed.

Mr. Sullivan said the funding is being considered at the Board of Aldermen tonight. They will also consider the costs of renovating the structure, which is estimated to cost \$3-4.5 million.

Mr. Bollinger asked if the structure is currently occupied. Are there existing leases?

Mr. Sullivan said it will take time to renovate the structure, which means we have time to work with the tenants to rehouse them. One is a longer-term lease, two are monthly. We are going to work to get these folks placed prior to any work being done.

Mr. Hirsch said he has concerns about this. The total cost of the project will be in the \$3 million-dollar range? That's an awful amount of money per the square footage. Has any sort of study been done? In addition to taking three units off the market you're going to lose the taxes also.

Mr. Hirsch said the building may not be physically appropriate for the use. It's an older building, it has a fair amount of inefficiencies built in. For the price you could tear it down and construct a new building. It seems like an awful amount of money for what you're getting.

Mr. Sullivan said we have done the analysis of whether a new building would save money, and likely no. It's close, but the demolition and time of construction are so impactful that we are not willing to take that on.

Mr. Sullivan said the cost is so high because this is an old multifamily residential building. Its systems are old, sized for residential uses. We cannot fully speak to the adequacy of the sewer, gas, or electrical service. We have done a preliminary review of the property, but have waived many of the contingencies that would customarily be associated with the sale. If the infrastructure is in good condition, it will be on the low end of the price range. In the event that we need to upgrade to full commercial plumbing, ADA restrooms and structures, that cost will rise to the high end to establish all three uses.

Mr. Sullivan said the city could find a property, wait, and deploy a bond to construct new. Our concern is finding a property. We could instead purchase this property, demolish, and build new, but that timeline could be 18 months. If we use the existing structure

that timeline would be 9 months. He feels that 9 months is critical timing.

Mr. Hirsch said he hears what Mr. Sullivan is saying. His problem is that they're looking at about \$1,000-dollars per square foot. That is a lot of money. Also, by the time they do the planning and engineering it will take at least 6 months to start construction. The reality is that this is at least a year out. From a cost point of view, it's totally crazy. Has anyone done an RFP? Some of the garage buildings downtown could be renovated.

Mr. Sullivan said we did an RFP for a warming station and received zero inquiries. He thinks there are things they could have done differently, but they received zero inquiries. The challenge there is we were also looking to lease than construct new, that's a different clientele. He can't disagree with Mr. Hirsch's perspective. This is a lot of money. But the need is so imminent and the location is so ideal that the Board of Aldermen will have to decide if it's of value.

Mr. Hirsch said he's aware of that and sympathetic to the homeless population. Why not go into an interim step and try it for a year or two? Like office trailers. To him this is an insane thing. He's walked around this building and it's a really tight situation. What if you can't do what you want to do with it? You're losing three units, you're losing tax revenue. It's rushing to something that hasn't been thought out completely.

Mr. Sullivan said they have explored portable classrooms and other options, and they all have costs above \$1 million-dollars. They were less expensive, but an investment. We had the same thought to try them for two years, but our perspective is that if there is going to be a \$1 million investment but the city is committed to this long term, are we not wasting the money? No one is going to say that this site is ideal, not even Public Health. They're excited because it offers the potential to do what they're talking about, but it's not a perfect fit.

Mr. Hirsch asked if they have done an architectural study of the property to see what can be done. How can they decide that this project makes any sense?

Mr. Sullivan said they have had an architect in there multiple times, that's where the price comes from. But we have not developed a detailed design plan. But our Fire Dept., Building Dept., and Police Dept. have all been to the site and believe we can

accomplish those uses there. The site is tight if you need parking, but there are other municipal facilities in close proximity. Right now, we're at a point where the resource center has been at the top of mind for two years, and if we don't act we won't do anything. We need to accept the imperfect solution in front of us or wait. He is concerned they will not find a more ideal location than this.

Mr. Hirsch said he is in real estate, looking at properties is what he does. He wants to know what kind of research and outreach has been done. These are crazy numbers. If he felt it had a lot of long-term value to the city he would support it, he just doesn't see it.

Mr. Sullivan said he understands his point, he is correct. We have been looking at properties and been close to lease negotiation for the past two years. We have looked at many properties, we've had many nonpublic sessions with Board of Aldermen. We haven't spoken about it publicly because it's been frustrating to try to find something. We have been trying and that is evidenced by the fact that we are accepting a location that is not ideal in many ways.

Mr. Bollinger asked if there has been any outreach to the surrounding property owners.

Mr. Sullivan said there has been some level of discussion with the neighbors. We have not conducted outreach of the two direct abutters to the east and south. They are aware the property is on the market. We have not done direct mailing because the city has not closed on the property. When we did the on-street warming station we had a large community meeting and he thinks that went well. They would look to do that here.

Mr. Bollinger said directly across the street to the north the Board approved residential at 11-13 Mulberry Street.

Mr. Sullivan said we have not had any direct engagement with them as part of this process.

Mr. Bollinger said whoever is rebuilding that is putting money in that would make this pale in comparison. Can we retouch the zoning element? How would this fit in with the code and zoning district?

Mr. Durfee said it's hard to put a point on it because there are a number of wish list items that we hope this facility will achieve. Until those get nailed down we can't really classify it from a use perspective. That said, we are obviously in a code

update. The current code is very rigid and we are exploring a much more flexible use category-based approach. In that model this would be a lot easier to classify. It may have a residential component, with offices and services. The new code contemplates a residential plus care class. We have not yet codified that, but the code update is ongoing and informed by developments such as this. It would be counterproductive to throw up a regulatory barrier.

Mr. Zoller said in regards to the aspect of providing housing he gets to thinking about the Fair Housing Act and ADA compliance. When you provide housing, you're opening yourself up to liability risk. An older building like this wouldn't be ADA compliant.

Mr. Sullivan said correct, despite the ADA ramp shown the structure woefully does not meet ADA code. One of the questions that feeds the redevelopment cost a lot is whether we would need an elevator or not. That is a major cost item. One way we think that could be provided for is having one transitional housing unit fully accessible on the first floor. We would have to make all of the community spaces and warming stations fully accessible. That's a huge driver of cost when it comes to renovation.

Mr. Zoller asked if we are there yet.

Mr. Sullivan said absolutely not.

Mr. Zoller asked how the transitional housing units would be managed. Are there nonprofits or other agencies that do this on a daily basis that can manage the units for the city?

Mr. Sullivan said it is the city's intent to contract with a nonprofit entity. The city does not intend to operate the transitional housing units. The one caveat is that is Public Health Director Bagley's position right now, that may change after discussion with the Board of Aldermen. But Public Health is not in the business of providing housing, they are looking for a partner.

Mr. Bollinger said we are not being asked to approve or disapprove, we are providing a recommendation. That said he has some reservations. It's being done a little hastily. The intent could not be better, there has been frustration establishing facilities like this in the past. But given the work that needs to be done he has some reservations. He doesn't think he can support this. The Board of Aldermen will undertake this matter regardless, but he has reservations as currently proposed and there are some outstanding questions regarding cost and zoning.

Mr. Hudson said he views this as enabling legislation. As opportunities to acquire property come up you have to move quickly, he doesn't think they can wait for the answers before they lose the opportunity. Sometimes these things don't work out, so we end up reselling the property. But maybe it's worth purchasing.

Mr. Hirsch asked if they have explored the potential to purchase an option to purchase the building to get a 60-90-day period.

Mr. Sullivan said the seller was not interested in an option. We would have preferred that for due diligence but the option was not presented.

Ald. Morgan said part of the agreement was that there is a closing date that has to happen by April 30th. That was a nonnegotiable.

Mr. Hirsch said for money it's amazing how things get changed.

MOTION by Ald. Morgan to favorably recommend R-26-19 to the Board of Aldermen, as proposed

SECONDED by Mr. Hudson

MOTION FAILED 2-3 (Bollinger, Zoller, Hirsch opposed)

Mr. Durfee asked the Board to now make a motion for an unfavorable recommendation.

Mr. Sullivan asked if the Board can include reasoning for the unfavorable recommendation as well.

Mr. Hirsch asked how to summarize, he could write a dissertation on it.

Mr. Bollinger said he doesn't want to call it scattered and premature development, but it's like that. There are cost considerations, there are currently tenants in there, it will take a long time to get this off the ground. And if we need to rephrase the motion, he wouldn't be opposed to that.

Mr. Hirsch said there are so many uncertainties.

Ald. Morgan said she would ask the Board to consider this project like it was coming from a different person, not the city, so that there is no bias. There were no abutters considered and the

timeline is rushed. She would recommend considering it through that lens.

Mr. Bollinger said he isn't going to go through the site plan criteria.

Mr. Sullivan said understood.

Mr. Zoller said his concerns are ADA compliance and liability for whomever owns the property. Updating old outdated housing to today's code has a significant cost.

Mr. Bollinger said this has nothing to do with the intent, everyone wants to get to a good place. He is not voting favorably because he feels we don't have enough information and that this is too hasty.

Mr. Hirsch said what you are putting into it is well and good, but the cost is so insane. He doesn't think there's enough room in that structure for an elevator.

Mr. Sullivan asked the Board for an unfavorable recommendation that everyone votes on.

Mr. Hudson asked for at least one finding that we all appreciate the need for the proposed use. We agree with the hastiness. The cost is a concern of course. We're all on record that we understand the need for such a use.

Mr. Bollinger agreed. He thinks the previous motion conveys to the Board of Aldermen that it is not a lack of understanding the problem or wanting to find a solution. Timing, finances, practicality of ADA compliance, the fact that some of the neighbors may not be aware, that gave enough members of this body pause.

Mr. Bollinger thanked the Board for their thoughts. He said he stands by the Board wanting a solution here, but we voted how we voted and he stands by his vote. He thanked Mr. Sullivan for his time and involvement in this process.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

None

NCPB

April 15, 2026

Page 10

MOTION to adjourn by Mr. Hirsch at 6:46 PM

MOTION CARRIED 5-0

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Kate Poirier - Taped Hearing