

Board of Appeals

Town Hall • 40 Center Street • Fairhaven, MA 02719

Meeting Minutes**I. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS****1. Quorum/Attendance**FAIRHAVEN TOWN CLERK
RCUD 2026 AUG 5 AM 10:20

Patrick Carr opened the July 7th, meeting at 6:00 PM. He introduced the board members and read the protocol for Zoning Board of Appeals meetings and Open Public Meeting Law.

For this meeting, the Zoning Board of Appeals convened in-person, as well as by telephone and video conference via Zoom as posted on the Town's website identifying how the public may join. The meeting was recorded and will be televised at a later date; some attendees participated by phone and video conference and used chat on Zoom.

Quorum/Attendance, Town Hall: Patrick Carr, Robert Hannan, Peg Cook, Kenneth Kendal, Kristen Russel, Derek Furtado

Recording Secretary: Present - Suzanne Vieira

Recused: Ruy daSilva, Daryl Manchester

Building Commissioner: Absent - Richard Forand.

Approval of Meeting Minutes: The minutes from the June 2nd, 2026 meeting were unanimously approved by the present attendees (6-0)

I Public Hearing:

REF# ZBA-026-016: 77 Adams Street, Map 25, Lot 30D, Book 347, Page 540. The applicant: David's House of Fairhaven, Owner: The Congregation of the Sacred Hearts requests a Special Permit for a change of use from a church rectory to an Educational Recovery Center for first responders. Pursuant to the Fairhaven Zoning Bylaw 198-15, Use Regulation Schedule C-1.

Meeting summary**Quick recap**

The Fairhaven Board of Appeals held a public hearing to consider a special permit application from David's House of Fairhaven to convert a former church rectory at 77 Adams Street into a 22-24 bed educational recovery center specifically for first responders. The applicant, Steve Miranda, presented plans for a facility that would provide intensive treatment programs including curriculum, mental health services, and support

services for first responders dealing with substance abuse and PTSD. The project faced significant opposition from parents of St. Joseph's School students who expressed concerns about safety and security, particularly given the facility's proximity to the school playground. Several supporters, including law enforcement officials and individuals with personal experience with addiction treatment, spoke in favor of the project, emphasizing the critical need for specialized treatment for first responders in their own community. The board heard testimony about safety measures, security protocols, and the educational nature of the treatment program, with Steve's legal counsel arguing that the facility qualified as an educational use under zoning bylaws.

Next steps

Matthew Bach

- Forward the email from the diocese and the link to the online petition to Suzanne at the provided email address.

Steve Miranda

- Develop and submit a detailed set of order of conditions addressing security, fencing, screening, visitor procedures, and coordination with St. Joseph's School, to be presented at the next meeting on August 4th.
- Work with the Fairhaven Police Department, St. Joseph's School, and the community to develop security and safety procedures, including protocols for patients leaving the property and coordination on school lockdowns.
- Consider and potentially implement additional security measures such as increased fencing (possibly 8-foot), privacy screening, and designated outdoor areas for patients, in consultation with the board and community.

Summary

Fairhaven Board of Appeals Meeting

The Fairhaven Board of Appeals held a meeting to discuss a special permit application for David's House of Fairhaven to convert a former church rectory at 77 Adams Street into an educational recovery center for first responders. The application, presented by engineer Dave Davignon and attorney Richard Burke, detailed plans to renovate the 2,777-square-foot building across four levels, including adding an elevator and realigning the parking lot to accommodate fire apparatus. The board chair established rules for an orderly meeting due to high public interest in the contentious issue, requiring participants to raise hands and speak through the chair.

First Responder Mental Health Facility

Steven Miranda presented plans for a 22-24 bed facility on Adams Street in Fairhaven for first responders seeking treatment for mental health and substance use disorders. The facility would operate as an educational center with a 30-45 day average stay, offering 7-8 hours daily of curriculum focused on mental health and substance abuse issues. Miranda emphasized that the facility would be licensed by BSAS as a special projects facility serving only first responders, with local staffing and operations, and would include transportation services and family programming.

First Responder Facility Zoning Hearing

Richard Burke, an attorney representing the project, argued that the proposed first responder treatment facility should be classified as an educational use under the zoning bylaw, citing a similar court case involving STAR where substance abuse treatment was deemed educational. The board discussed security measures, with the applicant confirming there would be cameras and alarm systems but no lockdown facility. Lindsay Markey, representing St. Joseph's School, opposed the project, arguing it violates zoning bylaws and is not covered by the Dover Amendment since it's a for-profit LLC rather than a non-profit organization.

First Responder Treatment Facility Proposal

The meeting focused on a discussion regarding a proposed treatment facility for first responders near St. Joseph's School in Fairhaven. Opponents raised concerns about safety, particularly the proximity of the facility to the school and potential risks to students, while supporters highlighted the need for such a program for first responders struggling with addiction and mental health issues. Several speakers, including law enforcement officials and community members, shared personal experiences with addiction and recovery, emphasizing the importance of supporting first responders while addressing safety concerns. The discussion concluded with no additional speakers, leaving the board to consider the special permit request.

David's House Facility Concerns

Matthew, a parent of two students at St. Joseph's School, expressed concerns about the proposed David's House facility being built near the school and mentioned an online petition with 659 signatures opposing the project. He also highlighted a discrepancy between what was communicated to parents. The board inquired about communications from the school administration and discussed the potential impact on safety and first responders in the community. Courtney Cardoso, the daughter of Mr. Miranda, defended her father's intentions and argued for supporting first responders and mental health services in the community, while the board debated the balance between safety concerns and the need for support services. The meeting focused on concerns about a proposed first responder treatment facility near a school. Town defended the project, emphasizing that participants would come voluntarily and highlighting the need for specialized care for first responders with PTSD and substance use issues. Residents expressed safety concerns about potential security risks and access to the school playground, with some questioning how voluntary the program would be and others arguing that the location posed unnecessary risks to children. The discussion included details about security measures like fencing and cameras, with Town promising additional safety improvements including a 6-foot fence and better property boundaries.

David's House Location Concerns Discussion

Jamie, who has experience in drug court facilities, expressed opposition to the proposed "drug addiction center" on Adams Street, citing concerns about property valuation and suggesting alternative locations. Tara Frost, principal of St. Joseph's School, raised questions about security measures, including the presence of security personnel and procedures for handling patients leaving against medical advice. Mr. Miranda addressed these concerns by explaining that security policies would be developed in consultation with local authorities and schools, and that cameras would be monitored by staff, with regular checks conducted throughout the day. Jennifer Cardoza inquired about who would monitor the facility's cameras and asked about an exit strategy if the center were to close in the future.

David's House Concerns Meeting

The meeting focused on concerns about a proposed first responder treatment facility near St. Joseph's School in Fairhaven. Town officials explained that any future property changes would require board approval and that medical licenses cannot be transferred with the property. Several residents expressed concerns about the potential impact on school enrollment and student safety, with some parents already withdrawing their children due to the facility's proximity. The discussion covered property boundaries, fencing requirements, and the 115-foot distance between the facility and school property line, with plans for a 6- or 8-foot fence to ensure privacy between the properties.

First Responder Mental Health Facility

The board requested that Mr. Miranda develop a detailed order of conditions addressing concerns about patient access to the property, smoking areas, visitor screening, and coordination with the school principal before the next meeting scheduled for August 4th.