



**BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2026**

On Wednesday, January 7, 2026, the Board of Zoning Appeals held a public hearing in the Fifth Floor Conference Room, 900 East Broad Street, at 1:00 p.m.; display notice having been published in the Richmond Legacy Newspaper on December 24 and 31, 2025 and written notice having been sent to interested parties.

Members Present:                    Rodney M. Poole, Chair  
    Mary J. Hogue, Vice-Chair  
    Bryce L. Robertson  
    Leigh V. Kelley  
    Charles L. Menges

Staff Present:                         Roy W. Benbow, Secretary  
    William C. Davidson, Zoning Administrator  
    Brian P. Mercer, Planner  
    Neil R. Gibson, Senior Assistant City Attorney

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The Chair called the meeting to order and read the Board of Zoning Appeals Introductory Statement, which explains the proceedings of the meeting. The applicant and those appearing in support of an application speak first, followed by those appearing in opposition.  
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Upon motion made by Ms. Hogue and seconded by Mr. Robertson, Members voted (3-0) to elect Mr. Rodney Poole as the Chairman and Ms. Mary Jane Hogue as the Vice-Chairman of the Richmond Board of Zoning Appeals for 2026, and appoint Mr. Rodney Poole as the Board’s representative to the Planning Commission for 2026.  
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BZA 01-2026

APPLICANT: M J Lennox LLC

PREMISES: 1320 WEST MAIN STREET  
(Tax Parcel Number W000-0451/021)

SUBJECT: A building permit to convert an existing first floor commercial space into a dwelling unit.

DISAPPROVED by the Zoning Administrator on November 10, 2025, based on Sections 30-300 & 30-433.2(8) of the zoning ordinance for the reason that: In a UB (Urban Business) District, the proposed use is not permitted as the commercial frontage requirement is not met. Dwelling units contained within the same building as other permitted principal uses are permitted, provided that such dwelling units shall be located above the ground floor of the building or to the rear of other permitted principal uses so as not to interrupt commercial frontage in the district. No commercial use is proposed along the ground floor as the entire building will be devoted to residential use.

APPLICATION was filed with the Board on November 10, 2025, based on Section 30-1040.3(5) of the City of Richmond Zoning Ordinance.

## APPEARANCES:

For Applicant: Erik LaRoach

Against Applicant: None

FINDINGS OF FACT: The Board finds from sworn testimony and exhibits offered in this case that the applicant, MJ Lennox LLC, has requested a special exception to convert an existing first floor commercial space into a dwelling unit for property located at 1320 W. Main St. Mr. Eric LaRoach testified that the entry to the building is not a street level and that there are 13 steps going up to the first floor. Further the façade of the building is not designed as a storefront but as a residential use. Mr. LaRoach indicated that the surrounding buildings are being utilized for residential purposes. Mr. LaRoach stated that they had hired a real estate broker from One South Commercial to market the property and they were unable to find a tenant interested in utilizing the property for commercial purposes. Mr. LaRoach noted that the 1300 block of Main Street as many storefronts and businesses that would benefit from the increase in residential occupancy that would result from the current request. Mr. LaRoach stated that no changes will be made to the exterior or interior of the building. Mr. LaRoach concluded by stating that there will be no negative impact on the surrounding

properties as a result of approval of the special exception. Finally, there were no objections to the requested special exception.

The Board is satisfied that the property was acquired in good faith and pursuant to Section 30-1040.3(5) of the zoning ordinance that the applicant has demonstrated that there is no purpose in providing for uninterrupted commercial frontage and that ground floor commercial space is either physically impractical or economically unfeasible, additionally increasing the dwelling unit floor area will increase residential occupancy thereby facilitating a mixed use character of the neighborhood and finally that any proposed alterations to the building will not be architecturally incompatible with the dominant character of building façades on the block.

RESOLUTION: NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS that a request for a special exception from the commercial frontage requirement be granted to M J Lennox LLC for a building permit to convert an existing first floor commercial space into a dwelling unit, subject to substantial compliance with the plans submitted to the Board.

ACTION OF THE BOARD: (5-0)

Vote to Grant Conditionally affirmative: Poole, Hogue, Robertson, Kelley, Menges

negative: None

Upon motion made by Ms. Hogue and seconded by Mr. Robertson, Members voted (3-0) to adopt the Board's December 2025 meeting minutes.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:10 p.m.

*R. Bestow*

Secretary

*Rodney M. Poole*

Chair