

Cazenovia Zoning Board of Appeals

Meeting Minutes

February 23, 2026

Members present: Thomas Pratt; David Silverman; Gary Mason; David Vredenburg; Luke Gianforte

Members absent: Michael Palmer, Alternate Member; Joseph Juskiewicz, Alternate Member

Others present: John Langey; Chuck Ladd; John Knutsen; Milton Sernett; Janet Sernett; Kelly Weaver; Michael Jauch; David Becker; Linda Becker

T. Pratt called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Roll was taken and all members were present except Michael Palmer and Joseph Juskiewicz.

Motion by L. Gianforte, seconded by G. Mason, to approve the December 15, 2025 meeting minutes was carried unanimously.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be Monday, March 23, 2026.

The next regularly scheduled work session will be Tuesday, March 17, 2026.

T. Pratt stated all requested information must be received prior to the work session for consideration.

T. Pratt asked that the rustling of papers, the clicking of pens, and other background noise be limited for the benefit of the recording.

T. Pratt said regarding public speaking, please come forward, provide one's name and address, present to the Board not the Applicant(s), refrain from asking questions but rather make statements, and refrain from repeating items if they have already been stated once during the time for public comment.

T. Pratt asked those in the audience to sign the sheet that had been provided to record attendance.

Maples of Madison County, LLC - #20-1291 – Special Use Permit Renewal – 2412 US Route 20 East,

T. Pratt explained this was a special use permit renewal in the Rural B Zone for a bandstand and for outdoor events originally issued in 2020. He asked Mr. Ladd if he had inspected the property.

C. Ladd answered the Owner had not submitted his renewal paperwork to date.

T. Pratt believed the expiration of the special use permit was approaching and expressed the need for the renewal to be addressed in March.

Motion by D. Vredenburgh, seconded by D. Silverman, to continue the file was carried unanimously.

Our Farm the Golubs, LLC - #22-1411 – Special Use Permit Renewal – 1590 Peth Road, Cazenovia

T. Pratt said this was a special use permit renewal for outside social events in the Lake Watershed first approved in 2022. He asked Mr. Ladd if he had performed an inspection and if there had been any complaints.

C. Ladd said he had performed an inspection and there had been no complaints.

Motion by G. Mason, seconded by D. Vredenburgh, to approve the special use permit with the original terms and conditions for another year was carried unanimously.

Lawrence, Charlene & Dusty - #24-1 – B&B Special Use Permit Renewal – 2545 Stanton Road, New Woodstock

T. Pratt explained this was a renewal for a Bed & Breakfast special use permit renewal in the Rural A Zone in New Woodstock which was originally approved in 2024. He asked Mr. Ladd if he had inspected the site and if there had been any complaints.

C. Ladd answered he had inspected the property and there were no complaints.

Motion by L. Gianforte, seconded by G. Mason, to renew the B&B special use permit for another year with the original terms and conditions was approved unanimously.

Knutsen, John & Lisa - #26-1614 – Special Use Permit/Short-term Rentals – 5260 Ridge Rd, Cazenovia (Gary Mason)

John Knutsen was present to represent the file.

T. Pratt explained the project was for the operation of a Short-Term Rental in the Rural A/Lake Watershed Zone. He said the General Municipal Recommendation Report (GML) from Madison County Planning Department was received today and was returned for local determination. He asked Mr. Ladd if he had reviewed the application.

C. Ladd affirmed he had reviewed the request and stated it was an acceptable application.

T. Pratt asked Mr. Knutsen to display the submitted floor plan and site plan drawing.

As J. Knutsen displayed the drawings he explained the structure was a ranch-style house so there was just the first floor and an empty basement.

G. Mason said the application had been reviewed at the Board's last work session. It was discussed that the septic system requirements had been met. He noted five (5) bedrooms would be utilized with two (2) guests per bedroom accommodated. He explained that five (5) parking spots were also required. Being a short-term rental, it would be rented for less than a month per booking. Garbage pick-up was also discussed. Safety features must be met, such as smoke detectors in each bedroom, an exit map, no open fires outside, etc., which would be verified by the Codes Enforcement Officer, Mr. Ladd.

T. Pratt stressed that even though the endeavor allows the Applicant to have an unhosted, short-term rental, the Applicant remains responsible for the people being hosted. If guests were disorderly or if there were issues, Mr. Knutsen would need to address and resolve those issues first, before the involvement of law enforcement or the Town.

J. Knutsen expressed understanding.

T. Pratt then explained any new exterior lighting at the property should be dark-sky compliant, low-level, and shielded.

T. Pratt said there were to be no events, no sign, and no outside music.

T. Pratt asked if there would be an agent for Mr. Knutsen and if Mr. Knutsen and his agent would be available within 30 minutes of a complaint or issue.

J. Knutsen answered, “Yes.” He said he, his wife, or his son would be available within five (5) minutes.

T. Pratt asked if they would be operating year-round.

J. Knutsen answered they would be advertising year-round, but they did not anticipate having many guests during the wintertime.

T. Pratt confirmed the Applicant was aware and agreeable to the subsequent inspection by the Code Enforcement Officer to confirm compliance to the Code.

J. Knutsen responded, “Absolutely.”

T. Pratt mentioned among the items to be addressed was the presence of fire extinguishers, signs for exiting, as well as a sign listing contact numbers in the event of problems.

J. Knutsen confirmed those items were provided.

T. Pratt explained carbon monoxide detectors were also necessary as well as the house address clearly posted outside the dwelling.

J. Knutsen expressed assent and added the house number was posted at the road as well.

T. Pratt asked if the electrical system had been recently inspected.

J. Knutsen answered it was inspected in January.

T. Pratt stated the fireplace would need to be to Code as well.

J. Knutsen responded it was an original fireplace.

T. Pratt suggested guests be instructed not to use the fireplace. He repeated that Mr. Ladd would be doing an inspection if Mr. Knutsen were approved for the special use permit as part of Mr. Ladd’s permitting process.

T. Pratt then asked if the Board had any thoughts or questions.

D. Silverman said he would defer until he had heard any comments or concerns from the public.

G. Mason believed Mr. Knutsen had met the requirements set by the Town Board for this endeavor.

D. Vredenburgh thought as the Board's first application for a short-term rental, it was a complete package. He thought it set a good example for the Board to follow, and Mr. Ladd would make sure all the items pertaining to the building would be satisfied.

L. Gianforte had nothing to add.

Motion by G. Mason, seconded by D. Silverman, to open the public hearing was carried unanimously.

T. Pratt invited comments at this time.

Milton Sernett of 5300 Ridge Road said he and his wife, Janet, live just to the north of this proposal. He questioned what would happen if the guests were to hunt the many deer in the area.

J. Knutsen answered the guests would be evicted immediately.

M. Sernett asked if they would call Mr. Knutsen.

J. Knutsen answered, "Absolutely." He elaborated that hunting would certainly not be allowed and that would be explicitly stated in the Airbnb advertisement.

M. Sernett's next question was regarding events such as wedding-after-parties.

J. Knutsen responded that it would be specifically stated that no events would be allowed during guest stays, and that would be part of the Airbnb contract as well.

M. Sernett said one of the reasons they came to 5300 Ridge Road in 1990 was because of the peace and quiet which has lasted all these years. He spoke of the Knutsen's being responsible people and recognized the subject property had been in need of repair, which the Knutsens had done.

Janet Sernett asked about quiet hours.

J. Knutsen answered quiet hours would be from 9:30pm – 7:30am. He elaborated that those hours would be posted in the foyer of the house, in the Airbnb contract, and were per the Town Code.

M. Sernett asked if there would be any other conditions for the rental other than the normal requirements by Airbnb and VRBO.

J. Knutsen responded that they were putting a minimum age requirement of 25 years of age to rent the house. To address the hunting issue, no weapons would be allowed on the property.

M. Sernett asked about pets.

J. Knutsen said they would allow two (2) dogs on the premises since they have two (2) dogs.

Kelly Weaver of 5200 Ridge Road read remarks on behalf of herself and her husband Michael Jauch. She said, “We've been living there since 2010 and are raising our two young daughters there. We also chose Cazenovia because of the same thing that Milt said, we like the quiet. We like the country, the rural beauty, and a strong sense of connection among the long-term residents. Our neighborhood has been stable and residential. Our people know each other and look out for each other for as long as we've been there, which is 16 years. So, a short-Term Rental would really change that dynamic. It would change the character in the neighborhood. It's zoned for residential use, not commercial. The constant turnover of short-term guests is not compatible with the purpose or spirit of the area that we signed up for when we bought the house. We had some safety concerns. A revolving door of unfamiliar individuals staying immediately next to our home with our two young daughters creates uncertainty and makes it difficult for neighbors to maintain the trust and awareness that permanent residents may rely on to feel comfortable and safe in their own homes. And then there's the issue of noise and disruption. No matter how you look at it, Short-Term Rentals have more outdoor gatherings, and more late-night activity, and more frequent arrivals than long-term neighbors. So, our last concern was that this would set a precedent for the area. Once you approve this for one house, what will happen to the community if everyone starts doing this? So, before you vote, we ask you to put yourself in our shoes. Would you want to live next door to an Airbnb?”

K. Weaver also had a concern regarding renting to anyone listed on the sex offender registry since they have two (2) daughters. They were able to check the registry prior to purchasing their home and wondered if a similar vetting was or could be part of the rental process. She concluded by thanking the Board for their service to the community.

David Becker of 5180 Ridge Road stated he was opposed to the Airbnb usage and agreed with Ms. Weaver's eloquently stated views. He said one would not know who would be renting the property. He commented that all the discussion of fire extinguishers and exit rules made the endeavor sound more like a hotel than a house. He said Airbnb may screen the person renting the property, but not the other nine (9) guests who may also be staying. He knows people will be on call, but he stated he did not want to have to police the property to make the call. He wanted it to be a nice neighborhood, the way it was when they moved in.

Linda Becker also of 5180 Ridge Road believed this would decrease the property value of her home in addition to the other concerns Ms. Weaver and Mr. Becker had mentioned.

J. Knutsen responded Airbnb and VRBO have rating systems for guests and each rental would have to be approved by the proprietors who are able to screen the guests. He and his wife live in Summerfields so they are only three (3) miles away, and only a 5-minute drive, in the event of an issue, so they would be able to respond immediately.

D. Becker asked again about the screening of the other nine (9) people who would be staying with an approved renter.

J. Knutsen spoke about his experiences as a renter.

D. Becker recounted his experience renting in Lake Placid, saying he could tolerate undesirable renters for a short period of time, but he would have a problem living near them.

J. Langey explained the reason the Short-Term Rental Law was adopted and stated that the way our law works was you have to renew these licenses to do these short-term rentals and if the Town received complaints about poor behavior at those places, there was a chance they would not be renewed. He also explained that the Short-Term Rental law was developed to address the many unauthorized rentals already occurring within the Town and across Madison County. He explained the sources used to develop the law and said this Town of Cazenovia law was based on is a model of a Short-Term Rental law that tried to balance the right of a private property owner to have the limited ability to lease out their property for a particular period of time against the impacts that the renters could have on that neighborhood. He said the law that the Town of Cazenovia adopted added more protection for the neighbors than many laws adopted elsewhere, and actually there were a fair number of complaints that the law was too restrictive, however, it was designed to balance the rights of the neighbors with the rights of a private property owner. He said, “I know the intention of the Town Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals is to keep a very short leash on anyone who's running a short-term rental.”

J. Langey recounted the process that the Board went through to develop the law and went on to say that as far as precedent, anybody that meets these rules can apply for a short-term rental. It does not mean it will be granted, and it certainly does not mean it will be renewed if there's a bad experience that the Town knows about. The renewal process was a “safety net” in case there were complaints.

D. Becker responded they were opposed to the law. He asked what the renewal period would be.

J. Langey answered it was two (2) years.

J. Knutsen said he attended the public hearing for the adoption of the law and he spoke in favor of it because they wanted to undertake this endeavor, but originally the response time for complaints was proposed to be an hour and it was his suggestion they change that to 30 minutes. He assured the neighbors he and his wife do not want any of the issues voiced to occur at the property. He also stated the reason they preferred short-term rentals versus long-term rentals was so they could use the property themselves.

J. Knutsen also said, “I hear your concerns, and I think the way that the town has addressed this—before it was just, kind of, I don't know, wild west. People can just list their properties, and you wouldn't even know it. And so, you know, with the notification, I wrote each of you an individual personal letter.”

K. Weaver then said another concern she has was regarding dogs being allowed with renters since there was no fence. She was concerned about her children and her own dog if the guests' dogs were allowed to be loose. She wondered if the Knutsens would consider not allowing dogs.

J. Knutsen agreed saying they would state there were to be no pets.

M. Sernett asked if there would be a problem regarding people turning around in the neighboring driveways trying to find the Airbnb.

J. Knutsen responded that the house number would be prominently displayed and felt with Google Maps as well as the distance between driveways that would not be an issue.

K. Weaver said another concern was with the proximity of the ski hill, she did not want the Airbnb guests crossing her property to ski in/ski out. She clarified that she did not mind neighbors doing that, but she did not want people she did not know doing it.

J. Knutsen stated guests would only use the access directly behind the Knutsens' house, not Ms. Weaver's.

J. Langey was reminded by Mr. Ladd that the law also allows him to suspend the Short-Term Rental License if there were complaints and if upon his investigation violations were found. He explained the violation process, but his point was that the neighbors would not have to live with an unpleasant situation for as long as two (2) years.

C. Ladd said issues could be addressed as soon as they happen and the Short-Term Rental permit could be revoked.

D. Becker asked if the Board has plans to “go after” the unlicensed Airbnbs within the Town.

J. Langey answered this Board would not initiate that, but the Town has a compliance procedure to be followed which he explained.

J. Knutsen asked if that has been pursued.

J. Langey answered a number of people have been contacted for running unauthorized Short-Term Rentals informing them they need to come into compliance.

C. Ladd added he's been dealing with this issue for 2-3 years.

M. Sernett asked if approved, when would Mr. Knutsen begin operating.

J. Knutsen answered, “Sometime this spring, probably May.”

T. Pratt explained the process involved another application and inspection to be completed by the Code Enforcement Officer.

C. Ladd elaborated that Mr. Knutsen would have to go through the Short-term Rental application with him before he would be granted a permit.

J. Langey added one needed to register with Madison County as well to pay the Occupancy Tax. He said different levels of government needed to be notified.

T. Pratt asked if the Board had other thoughts or concerns.

G. Mason acknowledged that some reasonable concerns had been raised. He thought concerns regarding renting to sex offenders was valid.

D. Vredenburg believed the registry was available to the public.

G. Mason said all guests would need to be known to the proprietors.

J. Knutsen thought as part of the Short-term Rental Contract he could require every individual be listed. He did not anticipate that being an issue for him to obtain.

D. Silverman thought addresses would be needed as well.

J. Knutsen was unsure if he could require addresses.

G. Mason repeated he understood the concerns he heard, but he felt having this process was better than not allowing Short-Term Rentals and then having unauthorized Short-Term Rentals.

J. Knutsen asked if the Board was aware of issues with the B&B's that required residency between 7pm – 7am.

C. Ladd answered he had not received any complaints.

D. Vredenburg said regarding pets, he believed there was a Leash Law in Cazenovia.

D. Silverman thought having no pets was a better than relying on renters' discretion.

L. Gianforte also believed there were valid concerns, but he felt if there were undesirable long-term renters using the home there would not be much recourse and the situation would be longer than a few days. He understood the concerns but felt there were more potential risks to long-term rentals. He said if the home were sold to unsavory buyers, the neighbors there have no control over that situation either.

T. Pratt asked if the Board was ready to close the public hearing at this time or if the Board wanted to continue.

D. Vredenburg believed the Board has heard from the closest neighbors.

L. Gianforte and G. Mason agreed.

D. Silverman said the Applicant has done a wonderful job presenting the file and there were residents that have legitimate concerns. He understood the need to be careful. He felt the neighbors and the Applicant conveyed their perspectives professionally.

Motion by G. Mason, seconded by L. Gianforte, to close the public hearing was carried unanimously.

J. Langey then led the Board through the Short Environmental Assessment Form (SEAF) for the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) for this Unlisted Action, finding all impacts to be either small or none.

T. Pratt said in review of the special use permit, the main question for the Board was whether it would have an impact upon the neighborhood – either environmental or physical.

T. Pratt said the following would be conditions if approved:

- 1) Number of guests to be 2/bedroom, not to exceed 12;
- 2) parking to accommodate all guests shall be provided on the property;
- 3) no events, no sign,
- 4) emergency contact phone numbers to be displayed;
- 5) someone must be able to respond to issues within 30 minutes and must be responsible for issues during rentals;
- 6) inspection will be done by Code Enforcement and anything that does not comply must be repaired or modified;
- 7) the septic system must be inspected, proof of capacity must be provided, and the system must be pumped every two (2) years;
- 8) no pets will be allowed;
- 9) all guests will be listed on bookings and the sex offender registry will be checked for each individual;
- 10) final approval for the operation will be conditioned upon Code Enforcement's approval;
- 11) no second notification of neighbors will be required during the permitting process since an initial notification has been completed.

D. Silverman believed it was stated that 10 guests would be the maximum for this property.

T. Pratt said the resolution would reflect 10 guests to be allowed for this 5-bedroom home.

T. Pratt noted Mr. Knutsen has made a conscientious effort to bring forth the necessary information to proceed with a short-term rental, but he reminded Mr. Knutsen the Town has the power to revoke the permit.

Motion by D. Vredenburg, seconded by L. Gianforte, to appoint the Zoning Board as Lead Agency for the purposes of SEQR, to affirm the Matter an Unlisted Action, and to make a Negative Declaration

based upon the Board’s review of the SEAF, and to approve the special use permit as most recently submitted and with the above-referenced conditions was carried as follows:

David Silverman	Voted	No
Gary Mason	Voted	Yes
David Vredenburgh	Voted	Yes
Luke Gianforte	Voted	Yes
Thomas Pratt	Voted	Yes.

T. Pratt explained a second application must to be submitted with the associated fee and the Code Enforcement inspection, saying this approval was pending Mr. Ladd’s approval.



Motion by G. Mason, seconded by L. Gianforte, to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 p.m. was carried unanimously.

Sue Wightman, Zoning Board of Appeals Secretary – February 24, 2026