ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS –REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING
MONDAY, APRIL 6, 2026, 7:30 P.M.
ZOOM MEETING PLATFORM (DRAFT)

I. Call to Order

Chair Isaacson called the meeting to order at 7:36pm.

II. Roll Call

Present: Jacqueline Isaacson, Chair; Pansy Archer, Alan Budkofsky, Stephanie Calhoun, Shelby Maybin, Seth Pitts.
Absent: Vivilyn Smith
Also Present: Alex Samalot, Zoning Enforcement Officer; and Rebecca Jones, Recording Secretary.

III. Approval of Minutes

a. March 9, 2026

Motion to approve the March 9, 2026 meeting minutes as amended made by Commissioner Pitts; seconded by Commissioner Archer and approved unanimously.

IV. Public Hearings

a. 180 Still Road—Applicant: Joshua Poteet, Owner: 180 Life Church Inc., for a Variance of the Zoning Regulations Section 3.7.B.1 Accessory Buildings in Residential Zones (front yard accessory structure prohibition) for a playground that would accommodate children in attendance.

Commissioner Pitts recused himself due to personal conflict. Commissioner Calhoun was seated as a voting member.

Mr. Joshua Poteet, Lead Pastor of 180 Life Church was present for discussion. The property is located in the R-40 Residential District (R-40). According to the official property card, the parcel is 2.96 acres. The property is developed with a House of Worship with associated parking and landscaped areas. There is floodplain elevation marked on GIS Mapping on the property, but no part of the proposed playground is within this area. Abutting properties to the north, east, and south are developed with residences or undeveloped residential land (R-40). Abutting properties to the South are residential but are in West Hartford.

Mr. Poteet stated that the existing building is located toward the rear of the property, leaving the front yard as the only practical and safe location for a children's playground. He further explained that there is space on the eastern side of the building, but it would significantly limit the size of the playground and would not accommodate the 80 to 100 children who regularly attend. Mr. Poteet explained that the hardship is unique due to the placement of the building on the lot combined with the church's use serving a large number of young families, which creates a need for space not typical of surrounding properties.

Chair Isaacson asked Mr. Poteet if he is willing to fence in the playground structure and he stated that he is, pending confirmation from church elders. Commissioner Budkofsky asked how deep the posts will be dug down. Mr. Poteet stated that he is unsure at this time. Commissioner Budkofsky also asked clarifying questions related to the sewer easement. Commissioner Archer

asked what type of fence would be installed, and it is likely going to be a black chain link fence. Commissioner Calhoun confirmed that the entire green space would not be fenced in. The playground will be open to all during daylight hours.

Mr. Samalot shared excerpts from his staff report. According to the GIS, the deepest portion of the flood zone is less than forty feet into the front yard of the property. The proposed location is greater than eighty feet into the property. There is no known direct impact to the wetlands and watercourses or easements. He showed a map depicting the same. A septic system is depicted on the existing survey, but is not in use or was never installed. MDC has provided confirmation that the property is connected to sanitary sewer service.

Mr. Samalot read a letter into the record from resident, Donna Mages, 901 Mountain Road. She opposed the variance and stated that this playground is not essential to the church's mission. She also pointed out missing details in the application, including fencing plans, hours of operation, and information about lighting and screening. Ms. Mages also expressed concerns related to quality of life. *A copy of Ms. Mages' comments were submitted for the record.*

Mr. Samalot reminded the Commission that the only direct conflict with the zoning regulations is whether the playground can be located in the front yard. Mr. Poteet confirmed that there will be no additional play structures including such as a basketball court or a pickleball court. There will be a picnic table or bench installed for parents.

Jacqueline McCarthy, 165 Still Road, West Hartford, spoke in opposition of the variance. She lives directly across from the church and raised concerns about potential noise disruptions, especially for those working from home, and questioned how the community would manage large numbers of children using the playground during peak times. Mr. Poteet stated that he does not anticipate having as many children and families on the playground during the weekdays. He also proposed landscaping buffers to further cut noise down. Mr. Samalot clarified that this was the only public hearing regarding the variance, which would determine if the playground could be located in the front yard, and that any subsequent plans would be handled directly between the applicant and town staff.

The Commissioners discussed safety concerns related to the proposed shrubbery. It was decided that the Commission does not recommend the installation of any privacy plantings. Commissioner Budkofsky requested that the applicant install a vinyl fence no higher than four feet tall.

The Commissioners asked additional questions related to service times and neighbor feedback. Commissioner Maybin noted that the Town of Bloomfield does have a noise ordinance and the Police Department can enforce it as needed. Mr. Poteet confirmed that he will reach out to Ms. McCarthy to further address her concerns unrelated to the variance.

Motion to close the public hearing made by Commissioner Budkofsky; seconded by Commissioner Calhoun and approved unanimously by a 5-0-0 vote.

Chair Isaacson reviewed the hardships related to this application.

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It was moved by Commissioner Calhoun and seconded by Commissioner Archer to grant the variance of the Zoning Regulations Sections 3.7.B.1 Accessory Buildings in Residential Zones (front yard accessory structure prohibition) for a playground that would accommodate children in attendance with the following conditions:

-The applicant must install a fence around the playground structure; and
-a Report must put forth to the Inlands Wetlands and Watercourses Commission and any other relevant Town agency for review.

The exceptional difficulty or unusual hardship on which the decision is based on is as follows: The shape of the lot is almost entirely front yard prohibiting the applicant from using much of the parcel; and there are some hydrologic receptors on GIS Mapping on the property. The motion was approved by a 5-0-0 vote.

V. Old Business

None.

VI. New Business

The Commissioners briefly discussed upcoming mandatory training requirements for land use board members, noting that virtual seats were limited. Mr. Samalot stated that reimbursement for mileage would be available for those attending in-person training.

VII. Adjournment

It was moved by Commissioner Budkofsky, seconded by Commissioner Pitts and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:38 p.m.

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