

**CANDIA ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT  
SITE WALK MEETING MINUTES OF  
April 21, 2026  
UNAPPROVED MINUTES**

ZBA Members Present: Judith Szot, Chair; Ron Howe; Tony Steinmetz; Bill Keena; Gale Pellegrino, alt.

ZBA Members Absent:

Board members, abutters, and other residents gather at Granite Hill Materials & Recycling at 1pm for a site visit.

Mr. Hill begins by explaining the approach to excavating the site, emphasizing the intention to avoid blasting towards the street and to be good neighbors through open communication. He highlights the significant investment in engineering, scientific, environmental, and legal expertise to ensure the project is done correctly. A key point raised is the company's donation of 23 acres to the State of New Hampshire for conservation, which still incurs taxes. This conservation area runs along the back of the property, separating it from neighbors and serving as a potential wildlife area, with the understanding that only forestry activities are permitted. Mr. Hill also mentions using their closest neighbor as a guideline for noise concerns and explains that the material is being brought into a commercial-industrial zone in Raymond to mitigate noise in the residential areas in Candia. The discussion touches on the elevation changes and the creation of a two-to-one slope to act as a noise barrier.

The discussion shifts to the existing topography, noting the presence of sand, wooded areas, and wetlands. Questions arise about whether the site will have flat areas and hills, and how it will generally slope towards the rear. C. Berry, project engineer, clarifies that the site will rise to a bottom area and then slope towards the rear, with the sides also sloping at a two-to-one ratio. The potential for developing housing at a later point is raised, with Mr. Hill stating that specific plans for housing or other projects have not yet been developed, but that developing the property is an end goal. He mentions that existing rock formations are a concern.

J. Szot agrees that the current situation is unsafe and needs to be addressed. Mr. Hill points out the tilting trees and the "back blast", which he describes as improperly done and a source of the problem, leading to issues with water, ice, and falling material. He explains that the goal is to lay down these slopes to prevent falling rocks, comparing it with proper blasting techniques used on highways where material is laid back to avoid rockfall. The material is described as sand that crumbles once washed out, and while it can make good gravel, the steepness is the issue, as it will eventually come down. Mr. Hill emphasizes that the erosion is due to the improper blasting and that rocks are already falling, indicating the need to reclaim the property for future development.

Questions are asked about the company that will perform future blasting, and Mr. Hill states he has not yet chosen one. A public commenter asks if fences, similar to those on major highways, could be used instead of blasting. Mr. Hill explains that this is the core issue: the Town's requirement to reclaim the property while also preventing further excavation.

J. Szot describes the conundrum where the owner needs to reclaim and also deserves to profit from the land, while the Town has needs and wants for safety and reclamation, but also restrictions on further excavation. She states that everyone will need to compromise. The primary focus is on reclaiming the property safely and meeting Mr. Hill's needs.

J. Szot states she would like the Town's engineer to review the plans, which would be at the cost to the applicant. She explains that while board members understand ordinances, they lack the geological expertise to assess the safety of the plans. The need for an engineer to review the plans and ensure the least amount of necessary work is done is emphasized. Mr. Hill counters that he hired a third-generation engineering firm to create the plans, which was costly. J. Szot acknowledges the expense but still questions if all of the proposed work is entirely necessary, as some of the rocks and slopes are original and not a result of the previous owner's improper blasting. C. Palucha, the applicant's legal representative, asks to redirect the focus to the five zoning variance criteria, stating that the application before the Board pertains to these criteria. J. Szot argues that meeting these criteria requires considering the Town's needs for reclamation and the restrictions on excavation. C. Berry expresses frustration, noting they have been working on this for nearly six years, have received a variance and an extension previously, and now face discussions about third-party engineering, feeling the goalposts keep moving. J. Szot explains that this is the first time this Board has visited the site and they are trying to be thoughtful and fair. She acknowledges Mr. Hill's efforts and expenses but reiterates the need for their engineer to review the plans to confirm the proposed actions are appropriate and not excessive. C. Berry suggests discussing this at the next meeting. J. Szot expresses concern that waiting would delay the decision further, which neither the Board nor the applicant want. C. Palucha suggests contacting Town Counsel to discuss this. The Board expresses understanding of Mr. Hill's situation and acknowledges the effort to do things correctly, while emphasizing the Board's need to be thorough.

Alternatives to blasting are mentioned again, and Mr. Hill explains that alternatives like back hammering are dangerous and risk damaging equipment, which is why blasting is used to drop material at an angle for removal. He mentions that the blasting company will be chosen once all necessary permits are obtained. J. Szot asks how the four-year reclamation timeline was determined, and C. Berry explains it's based on the amount of material that can be processed and removed, aiming to avoid prolonged work. He notes the seasonal restrictions for blasting determined by Fish and Game. It is clarified that blasting involves drilling multiple holes to bring down larger sections, requiring carting and processing of material, and typically occurs three times a season. The preparation for blasting takes about a week to a week and a half, followed by the blast itself and material clearing.

C. Berry addresses concerns about well safety, stating they have a monitoring program prepared and submitted to NHDES. Anyone not on the initial well-monitoring list can be added within reason. J. Szot asks if any board members have questions, and upon receiving no further questions, calls for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

B. Keena: **Motion** to adjourn. G. Pellegrino: **Second**. All in favor. **Motion passed**.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 1:46pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Megan Ross

Land Use Coordinator

cc: file