

**TOWN OF BELMONT
PLANNING BOARD**

2026 FEB 24 AM 9:56

CASE NO. 25-13

APPLICANTS/OWNERS: Huizhong Shao

PROPERTY: 316 Orchard Street

**DATE OF PUBLIC HEARING
CONTINUED** November 18, 2025
January 20, 2026

MEMBERS SITTING: Thayer Donham (Chair)
Alisa Gardner-Todreas
Andrew Osborn
Dan Barry
Steve Weinstein (Associate Member)

VOTING MEMBERS: Thayer Donham (Chair)
Alisa Gardner-Todreas
Andrew Osborn
Dan Barry
Steve Weinstein

This matter came before the Planning Board ("Board") of the Town of Belmont ("Town") acting as Special Permit Granting Authority under the Zoning By-Law of the Town of Belmont, Massachusetts ("By-Law") and Chapter 40A of the Massachusetts General Law ("Zoning Act"). The Applicant, Huizhong Shao, owner, requests two Special Permits and Design and Site Plan approval to construct a Two-Family Dwelling at 316 Orchard Street, located in General Residence zoning district. Special Permits 1.-Section 4.2.2 of the By-Law allows the Planning Board to grant a Special Permit to modify the minimum lot area per dwelling unit and/or the frontage requirements pursuant to §6D and 7.4 of the zoning By-Law to allow two family dwellings on lots having lot size less than 7,000 square feet with frontage less than 70'. 2.- §1.5.4-A-(3) of the Zoning By-Law allow a new two family dwelling in a General Residence Zoning District by a Special Permit. DSPR, §6D-2 of the Zoning By-Law allow a new two family dwelling in a General Residence Zoning District by Design and Site Plan Review Approval by the Planning Board.

Proposal:

The Applicant proposes to construct a Two-Family Dwelling at 316 Orchard Street, located in General Residence zoning district.

Public Hearing

Submissions to the Board:

- a. Application for Special Permit dated September 10, 2025.

- b. Application for Design and Site Plan Approval dated September 10, 2025.
- c. Project Narrative.
- d. Revised Construction Documents, dated December 30, 2025.
- e. Certified Plot Plan and zoning compliance checklist, dated April 15, 2025.

On November 18, 2025 the Board held duly noticed hearing on this case.

Mr. Chih-Ming Lee, architect and Huizhong Shao, owner, were in attendance for this case. Mr. Lee said that the applicant wishes to demolish an existing single-family and two-car garage in order to develop a two-family dwelling, as the current dwelling has a low ceiling and insufficient space. He added that the proposed construction would be harmonious with the neighborhood and that the proposed construction would have reduced scale in efforts to be less monolithic. There will be parking for two cars, for each unit.

Mr. Shao said that he loves Belmont for its schools, neighborhood, and environment yet his current house is old and unrenovated with poor insulation. Mr. Shao added that making repairs is no longer practical and that the proposed construction is not oversized, fits the neighborhood with its colonial style and would provide housing opportunities.

At this time, plans for the proposed construction were shared online. Mr. Lee said that the design height is 29.3' with a 29.9% lot coverage, 30% allowed. Open space 51%, minimum 40% required.

Chair, Ms. Donham inquired if it would be possible to move the proposed construction closer to Beech Street to best position the driveway. She added that the proposed construction seems tall. Mr. Yogurtian said that the ridge height is 35.3' and the midpoint is 29.3'. Mr. Yogurtian added that the midpoint limit is 32' and that there is no limit on ridge height in this district. Mr. Lee agreed to move the proposed construction closer to Beech Street by 2'.

Board member, Mr. Barry noted the two front entrances on Orchard Street and that the proposed construction is one structure stepped back in the center.

Board member, Mr. Osborn joined the meeting at 7:31 p.m. and said that he had no questions.

At this time, the meeting was opened for public comments.

Steve Savarese, 307-309 Orchard Street said that he has serious concerns about the proposed construction. Mr. Savarese said that he is concerned about stormwater management with the footprint coverage doubling, and might cause flooding at this intersection. He offered to share a video related to this issue, Ms. Donham mentioned that the applicant is required to manage stormwater on site.

Rachel Garber, 308 Orchard Street said that she did not know that the plans had been made public. She added that she had reached out to the owner with her concerns, that she is concerned about the trees, that the scale of the proposed construction is not in keeping with the character of the neighborhood, she is concerned about height, size, and traffic. She added that she had been negatively impacted by the construction at 285 Orchard Street. Mr. Ryan said that the plans for the proposed construction were viewable on the Town of Belmont website and explained that there is a given radius in which the residents receive notices of proposed construction.

Catherine Umina, 12-14 Benjamin Road said that she runs a daycare business and is concerned about the impact of the proposed construction in proximity to where there are children. Safety concerns will result from the noise, materials, and debris of the proposed construction. Ms. Umina said that the proposed construction is huge and will not fit the lot. Mr. Ryan said that he would look into the notification issue and agreed to have a discussion with the

applicant in his office.

Jack Keating, 285 Orchard Street inquired if any trees would be left. Mr. Ryan said that the landscape plan is online and agreed to discuss this with the applicant.

Rachel Garber, 308 Orchard said that she is still concerned. Mr. Ryan said that the applicant should have reached out to neighbors. Ms. Donham that the Planning Board has purview over zoning, not design and that the neighborhood in this district is zoned for two-family homes. Mr. Ryan cited the special permit criteria in Section 7.4.

With no further public comment, this portion of the meeting was then closed.

MOTION to continue Case #25-13, 316 Orchard Street to December 9, 2025 by Ms. Donham. seconded by Mr. Osborn. With all in favor, this motion then passed 5-0-0. The case was further continued, without hearing to January 20, 2026.

On the January 20, 2026, the Board continued the hearing on this case.

Revised plans were submitted to the Board and were available to be viewed online.

Mr. Lee said the front setback would be increased. Mr. Shao said that he had met with his neighbors to discuss the proposed construction. One neighbor was concerned about the proximity of the proposed construction to his house and nearby trees. In response, changes made to create additional space between the two structures.

With no additional public comments, this portion of the meeting was closed.

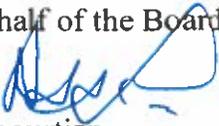
Deliberation and Decision

After the close of the public hearing, the Board deliberated on the Applicant's request for a Special Permit and Design and Site Plan Approval to construct a two-family dwelling at 316 Orchard Street located in a General Residence (GR) zoning district. The Board found that the revised proposed project was in keeping with the intent of the By-Law, it was not detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing and it was in keeping with the character of other structures in the vicinity.

Accordingly, **upon motion duly made by Ms. Thayer Donham and seconded by Mr. Andrew Osborn, the Board voted 5 in favor and 0 in opposition to grant the Special Permits and DSPR approval as requested.**

On Behalf of the Board

Date: February 24, 2026


Ara Yogurtian
Inspector of Building
Planning and Building Department