

HALIFAX COUNTY BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS
County Administration Building
Board of Supervisors Meeting Room
1050 Mary Bethune Street
Halifax, Virginia
November 18, 2025 / 11:00 a.m.

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Hunter Ford called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

B. INVOCATION

Board member Vice Chairman Larry Clark gave the invocation.

C. ATTENDANCE

Board Members in attendance: Mr. Hunter Ford, Mr. Willis Dunn, Mr. Larry Clark, Mr. Dennis Stewart, and Mr. Lawrence Wilkerson (arrived 11:02 a.m.)

Staff members attending were Mr. Detrick Easley, Zoning Administrator, Mrs. Nancy Kamp, Executive Assistant, and Ms. Nancy Spencer, Strategic Programs Coordinator.

D. PUBLIC HEARINGS

VARIANCE; DISTRICT 6

Hitachi Energy; Variance to Halifax County Code Section 53-383; **HEIGHT REGULATIONS**. The Applicant is seeking a height increase of **(80ft)** to construct a new addition to the existing facility.

Applicant: Haines Gibson and Associates
PRN: 25757
Address: 2135 Philpott Road
Proposed Use: New manufacturing facility

Mr. Detrick Easley provided an overview of the request submitted by Haynes Gibson & Associates on behalf of Hitachi Energy. The request concerns a height variance associated with Hitachi Energy's planned expansion. The property is zoned M-2 (Industrial), where the maximum building height permitted is 50 feet. The proposed expansion includes a building that will reach approximately 130 feet in certain areas, requiring an 80-foot variance.

Mr. Easley noted that elevation drawings were available in the meeting materials, illustrating the layout and highlighting the portion of the building that would reach the 130-foot height. He pointed out features on the east elevation, including visible piping, that demonstrate the proposed height.

Prior to the public hearing, Mr. Easley requested that a representative from Haynes Gibson & Associates or Hitachi Energy provide a brief overview of the request and explain the necessity of the

variance for the expansion.

Mr. Clay Lewis of Haynes Gibson & Associates, serving as the civil and structural engineer for the project, provided an overview of the proposed facility expansion for Hitachi Energy. He explained that the north elevation, visible from Philpott Road, represents the office component of the project, which will be four stories and designed with enhanced architectural features. The remainder of the building will consist of insulated metal panels, similar to the ongoing expansion currently under construction.

Mr. Lewis stated that the new facility will be located on vacant land to the right of the existing site when viewed from Philpott Road. The expansion will extend into the current parking lot and continue to the rear of the property, reaching the railroad tracks. The proposed facility will exceed 300,000 square feet and is intended to support the production of larger transformers than those currently manufactured at the site. Products will be shipped via rail from the rear of the property, while approximately 500–600 employees will park in the front. The front parking lot will be reconfigured to accommodate this separation of employee and visitor access from product transport.

He emphasized that the variance request pertains to the assembly area located at the rear of the site. At the time of submission, the exact building height was undetermined, as the project remains in schematic design. Current plans indicate assembly bays exceeding 120 feet in height, with the majority of the plant in the 90-foot range, consistent with the facility presently under construction. The building will utilize insulated metal panels, maintaining a similar appearance to the existing manufacturing components.

Mr. Lewis noted that the zoning maximum height for industrial property is 50 feet, and the variance request was part of the due diligence process to secure approval for the expansion. He explained that the increased height is necessary to accommodate large cranes and equipment required in the assembly area. He concluded by noting that Mr. Michael Johnson of Hitachi Energy was present to address any questions regarding the request. Mr. Detrick Easley inquired whether the plan remained to move the entrance westward. Mr. Clay Lewis confirmed that the plan was unchanged. He stated that no new curb cuts or driveways were proposed along Philpott Road. Work was already underway with the Virginia Department of Transportation to improve the existing signalized entrance to the west. The intent is to redirect all truck traffic through that entrance into the industrial park. Additionally, a new road will be constructed behind the facility to connect to the industrial park, ensuring trucks exit through that route.

Mr. Dennis Stewart raised a question regarding the proposed building height, noting that the structure would be approximately two and a half times taller than the current facility. He asked whether the strength of the materials used at higher levels would be the same as those at the ground floor, or whether additional reinforcement such as rebar would be required. Mr. Lewis explained that the facility would utilize insulated metal panels, similar to the expansion currently under construction. The panels serve as an exterior skin, while the interior structure is composed of steel. He clarified that the manufacturing processes and related materials would be located in the rear area of the site and would not be visible externally. Mr. Stewart expressed concern that taller structures sometimes appear less stable at higher elevations. Mr. Lewis assured that the building design was substantial, with deep foundations to support heavy loading. He noted that the facility would house a 375-ton crane, requiring significant structural support. He emphasized that the exterior insulated metal panels were cosmetic, while the interior consisted entirely of structural steel.

Chairman Hunter Ford opened the public hearing and asked if anyone wished to speak in favor of the application.

COMMENTS IN SUPPORT

Brian Brown

Mr. Brian Brown, Executive Director of the Industrial Development Authority, spoke on behalf of the Authority in support of the variance request. He noted that the company's expansion would bring approximately 825 new jobs to the community, contributing not only to industrial growth but also to increased demand for housing and childcare services.

Mr. Brown referenced the existing building on the far end of the property, which is approximately 70 feet in height, to provide perspective on the proposed height difference. He reiterated the Authority's support for the request and stated that he was available to answer any questions from the members on behalf of the Industrial Development Authority.

Mike Johnson

Mr. Mike Johnson, Project Manager for Hitachi Energy, addressed the board regarding the proposed expansion. He emphasized the importance of the project for the advancement of Hitachi Energy and the broader development of the community. Mr. Johnson expressed the company's desire for approval of the variance request in order to proceed with the project.

COMMENTS IN OPPOSITION

None

Chairman Ford closed the Public Hearing.

Motion made by Mr. Larry Clark, seconded by Mr. Willis Dunn, to approve the request for the variance relative to the height of this new building for Hitachi Energy be approved.

VOTE

Motion passed 5-0 by the following vote:

Ayes: Mr. Hunter Ford, Mr. Willis Dunn, Mr. Larry Clark, Mr. Dennis Stewart, and Mr. Lawrence Wilkerson

Nays: No one

Abstained: No one

Absent During Vote: No one

Absent During Meeting: No one

E. OTHER MATTERS

None

F. ADJOURN

Motion made by Mr. Larry Clark, seconded by Mr. Dennis Stewart, to adjourn the meeting.

VOTE

Motion passed 5-0 by the following vote:

Ayes: Mr. Hunter Ford, Mr. Willis Dunn, Mr. Larry Clark, Mr. Dennis Stewart, and Mr. Lawrence Wilkerson

Nays: No one

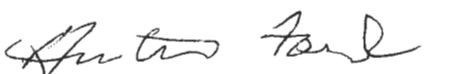
Abstained: No one

Absent During Vote: No one

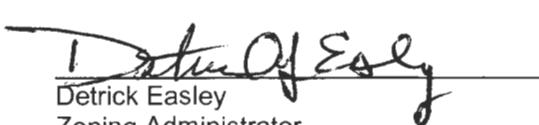
Absent During Meeting: No one

The meeting adjourned at 11:09 a.m.

ATTEST TO:



Hunter Ford
Chairman



Detrick Easley
Zoning Administrator