



Salisbury Planning Commission
March 12, 2026

MINUTES

The Salisbury Planning Commission met in session on Thursday, **March 12, 2026**. The meeting took place at 125 N. Division St, Room 301, with attendance as follows:

COMMISSIONERS:

David Chiddenton, Chair
Matt Drew, Vice-Chair
Latonia Ayscue, Open Meetings Delegate
Susan Rall
Mike Piorunski
Lynne Bratten
Anthony Dickerson (Absent)

CITY STAFF

Nicholas Voitiuc, Director of DID
Betsy Jackson, City Planner
Zachary White, Associate Planner
Scarlett Liberto, Associate Planner
Henry Pearson, Associate Planner
Laura Ryan, City Attorney

1. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Mr. Chiddenton called the meeting to order at 4:00PM. A roll call took place for the members of the commission. It was noted that Anthony Dickerson was absent from this meeting.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Chiddenton introduced a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting held on January 14, 2026. Mr. Matt Drew motioned to approve and the motion was seconded by Mrs. Lynne Bratten, and duly carried.

The minutes from the January 14th, 2026 meeting were **APPROVED (6-0)**.

Mr. Chiddenton introduced a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting held on February 12, 2026. Mrs. Lynne Bratten motioned to approve and the motion was seconded by Mr. Mike Piorunski, and duly carried.

The minutes from the February 12th, 2026 meeting were **APPROVED (6-0)**.

3. NEW BUSINESS

PUBLIC HEARING – TEXT AMENDMENT – Amending Title 17.216.050 of the Salisbury City Code to remove the time restriction on the display on political signs (H. Pearson)

Mrs. Laura Ryan read the public hearing notice and administered the oath.

Mr. Muir Boda approached the table. Mr. Henry Pearson read the staff report.

The city has received a request to amend the city code to remove the time restriction on the display of political signs. The existing city code stated that political signs may not be erected more than 90 days before nomination, election, or referendum, and must be removed within 7 days after the election of referendum. The amendment is to remove the time limit on the signs. This amendment was consistent with state case law on political signs, which have ruled that durational limits on political campaign signs are unconstitutional. Staff recommended approval of the amendment as proposed.

Mr. Muir Boda stated that there are a variety of signs that may be considered political and that trying to determine what constitutes a political campaign sign is difficult for enforcement officers. HCDD had stopped enforcing the code due to numerous issues arising.

Mr. Piorunski asked if the State of Maryland defines political signs. Mrs. Ryan stated that there is no definition of political signs. She said that the enforcement of sign regulations needs to be content neutral, and the code currently applied different standards to political signs.

Mr. Drew asked if there is a way to address abandoned signs. Mr. Boda said that signs on public property are removed, particularly signs on telephone poles. They do not abate signs on private property. Mr. Drew clarified that people can leave signs up indefinitely. Mr. Boda confirmed, but said that they do make people remove advertisements for commercial businesses in residential districts.

Mr. Chiddenton asked for public comments. Seeing none, he closed the public comment portion of the meeting. He asked for a motion to approve the text amendment.

Mr. Piorunski motioned to approve and the motion was seconded by Mrs. Bratten. All commissioners voted yes aside from Mr. Drew, who voted no.

The text amendment was **APPROVED (5-1)**.

ZONING RECOMMENDATION FOR ANNEXATION – GORDY RD/BEAGLIN PARK DR ANNEXATION – Salisbury Beaglin, LLC – Southwest Corner of Beaglin Park Drive and Gordy Road – Wicomico County R-20 Residential – M-0029, G-0024 P0312 - (Z. White)

Mr. Zack White approached the table and read the staff report:

The zoning in the county is R-15 residential and the property is located at Gordy Rd. and Beaglin Park Dr. The applicant is requesting annexation of 0.87 acres that were not annexed originally. They intend to develop the property. The report detailed the legal responsibilities of the planning commission as it relates to zoning recommendations for annexations. The property was within the city growth area and designated for residential. The report explained the details of the 5-Year law. The county planning staff determined that the annexation will not require a waiver and will not be subject to the 5-Year rule. The land is surrounded by the Aydelotte Farms PRD. The developer is proposing 59 fee-simple townhome lots. There is a lot on the property that will not be annexed into the city. This lot is afforded access through an easement. Fully enclosing the property is against Maryland annexation law. The petitioner

proposed that the area be zoned PRD No. 7. The staff agreed and recommended that the parcel be zoned PRD No. 7.

Mr. Chiddenton stated that the parcel should have been included in the original annexation but was not due to an error. Mr. Drew asked to be shown where the area in question was on the site plan. Mrs. Ayscue asked if it was due to an error that the parcel was left out of the original annexation. Mr. White stated that he was unsure if it was an error.

Mr. Brock Parker approached the table as the petitioner. He stated that the original annexation was part of the Aydelotte Farm annexation. Gordy Rd. was originally a straight road, but when the northeast collector was built, they put a bend in Gordy Rd. This parcel resulted from that curve. Mr. Drew asked if they considered annexing the remaining parcel. Mr. Parker stated that they tried but the property owner was resistant to any negotiations.

Mr. Drew asked about annexing to a PRD and if that was allowed. Mrs. Jackson stated that the PRD exists as a zone and the land was included in that PRD.

Mr. Chiddenton asked for a motion to approve the zoning recommendation of PRD No. 7- Aydelotte Farms. Mr. Drew motioned to approve and the motion was seconded by Mrs. Ayscue.

The motion was **APPROVED (6-0)**.

PRELIMINARY COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN – PATEL PROPERTIES APARTMENTS – Patel Properties, rep. by Parker and Associates – 900, 902, & 904 West Rd. – General Commercial – M-0038, G-0001, P- 0346, Lots 11, 12, & 13 – #25-024 (Z. White)

Mr. White read the staff report: The applicant proposed developing an unimproved lot on West Rd. with two apartment buildings with a total of seven 1600 square foot apartments. This property is associated with the West Rd. annexation. The annexation paperwork included a site plan but approval was not granted during the annexation process. 17 parking spaces are required and the development plan has 20 spots. Trash collection will be done on site. The project complies with the density and setback requirements. Staff recommended approval of the plan with a series of conditions listed in the staff report.

Mr. Chiddenton asked if the requirements will be required in the final comprehensive development plan. Mr. White confirmed that they will be.

Mrs. Ayscue asked if the community impact statement includes a notification to the surrounding neighbors. Mrs. Jackson stated that they are not required to notify the neighbors. Mr. Parker said that the neighbors were notified about the annexation itself.

Mrs. Bratten asked how the information about school facilities gets communicated to the Board of Education. Mrs. Jackson said that the staff has communication with the Board of Education.

Mr. Drew asked if the sidewalk on the plan will connect to existing sidewalk. Mr. Parker said that they are building the sidewalk and it will connect if there is a sidewalk there, but he does not know if there is a sidewalk there. Mr. Parker said that they have no problems with the conditions in the staff report.

Mr. Chiddenton asked for a motion to approve the plan subject to the conditions in the staff report. Mr. Drew motioned to approve and the motion was seconded by Mrs. Rall.

The motion as **APPROVED (6-0)**.

WORK SESSION – Consideration of proposed additions to the City’s growth area as part of the update to the Comprehensive Plan (B. Jackson)

Mrs. Jackson stated that the city received two growth area requests related to the comprehensive plan. Growth area additions must be included in the comprehensive plan. There are three parcels near Westwood Commerce Park that were asked to be designated commercial. This was brought up during the city’s comprehensive plan focus group sessions. There is another portion of a parcel on Pemberton Drive to the north of Pemberton Historical Park that would be designated low density residential. This parcel would need to be subdivided before annexation.

Mrs. Ayscue asked what low-density residential means. Mrs. Jackson said that in the current plan it means five or less units per acre but in the plan update, it is 10 per acre. It is the lowest density area compared to medium and high density.

Mr. Drew asked what city services would be needed if these sites were developed. Mrs. Jackson said that city services are already in the vicinity of the sites so minimal service expansion would be required. She said that the Pemberton parcel could be developed without city services but probably not at the same density. Mr. Parker said that they have done a study and determined that the parcel would not require a pumping station. He said that they are in the process of building a pumping station on the north side of the bypass near Westwood.

Mr. Drew asked what the proposed zoning for Westwood would be. Mrs. Jackson said that it is designated commercial and she is not convinced that it should be industrial. She does not think that annexations should come in as PRD but that it could be added later. There are environmental concerns with the paleochannel running underneath the site.

Mr. Drew said that he would love to see a day when enclaves are annexed whenever something from the outside comes into the city. Mrs. Jackson said that they are always thinking of ways to get enclaves into the city. She said that they try to do this through annexation and pre-annexation agreements whenever someone needs city water and sewer. Mrs. Jackson said that she knew that there were people in the crowd who would like to speak and asked if the chair would like to open the floor. Mr. Chiddenton opened the meeting to public comment.

Mrs. Carol Donahue, Board President of the Wicomico Environmental Trust, approached the podium. She was speaking on behalf of the both environmental non-profits in the city. She said that they will be filing detailed comments on the entire plan. She said that they generally strongly support its recommendations, but were concerned with the growth area proposal. She grew up in Salisbury and saw a delicate balance between the urban city and agricultural county. Any expansion of the growth area is a big issue. She believes that it is premature to ask the planning commission to decide on expansion of the growth area before they have had a chance to finish receiving comments on the plan. She thinks that this expansion could undermine the implementation of the plan. She believes that there

is no analysis of the need for these developments in these areas. She urged the planning commission to break away from the prior practice of routinely approving requests for the sake of efficiency.

Mr. Brock Parker approached the podium. He said that the commission is not being asked to approve any plans or developments. They are just determining whether or not they would like to have the option to annex the properties someday. He said that Bell Creek serves as a natural boundary for the city limits and it would be better to have the developments on city water and sewer instead of septic that close to Bell Creek. However, these conversations would happen later down the road. All they are looking at today is the ability to have the option to annex the properties.

Mr. Chiddenton closed the public comment portion of the public hearing. Mrs. Jackson asked the commission if they are interested in having the growth area expansion in the March 31st meeting. Mrs. Bratten asked how many parcels are being proposed – Mr. Pearson replied that there are 4 parcels. Mr. Drew asked how many additional properties were added to the growth area between the 2010 plan and this plan. Mrs. Jackson replied that they had not expanded the growth area at all between the 2010 plan and this one. Mr. Chiddenton stated that the consensus of the commission is to have staff bring them more information. Mrs. Jackson clarified that they are still in work session and the plan is far from finished. It still needs to go through the public hearing process.

WORK SESSION – Text amendment to reduce the location restrictions on cannabis growers and processors (S. Liberto & B. Jackson)

Ms. Scarlett Liberto approached the table. Mrs. Betsy Jackson read the staff report: Staff recommended a text amendment to the zoning code to reduce the distance requirements for cannabis growers in the Light Industrial and Industrial Park districts. The amendments would remove the 1000 ft. buffer between cannabis growers and a decrease of the 500 ft. distance buffer from schools and daycares to 250 ft. Growers would still need to be licensed by the state and abide by all code requirements. Cannabis growers and processors are only allowed in LI and IP districts. The buffer requirements limit the areas where these businesses can go. The state has distance requirements for dispensaries but not for growers or processors. Cannabis dispensaries are not allowed where growers and processors are. Industrial areas allow for the production and manufacturing of pharmaceuticals. Mrs. Jackson introduced Ms. Liberto.

Ms. Bratten said that she was in some of the meetings about dispensary locations and that the ruling about schools was very important. Mrs. Jackson and Ms. Liberto said that they should not know what is in the buildings. Mr. Piorunski asked about growing in a high tunnel. Mrs. Jackson said she was not sure and would have to research it. He said that in southern NJ or Denver, CO, if you walk by a building where they are growing cannabis, you can smell it. He said that in some areas, this may not be a bad thing, and that if you walk by the Purdue chicken plant, you smell that too. He likes the idea of having the cultivation facilities close together. He speculated on how much waste water would be produced by these operations. Mrs. Jackson said that they can look into additional restrictions on tunnels and water discharge.

Mrs. Bratten said that her main concern is the effect of breathable air around schools and churches. She said it is very important to her to reduce the smell around these areas. Mr. Piorunski said that the

processing side is the more lucrative side of the business. They are creating highly refined material and there is opportunity for growth.

Mrs. Bratten said that it would be beneficial to have access to professionals in the businesses and hear what they have to say about wastewater and ventilation systems. She said she does not know enough about the process. Mrs. Jackson said that the reason for removing the 1000 ft. distance is to allow growers and processors to pool their resources and remove limits on where they can go. Mrs. Bratten said that is a good idea. She does not agree with the 500 ft. school buffer being removed.

Mrs. Rall said that she thinks the city has a bad enough drug problem and bringing in more drugs is a bad idea. She said that the people who work at these places get pot as their bonuses. She is worried about the drug issue. Ms. Liberto said that it is illegal to give away cannabis. She spoke about the ventilation information included in the packet. She spoke to an architect that had worked with the cannabis industry, who said that growing has far more smell than processing.

Mr. Piorunski spoke on his experience with hops. He said that the cultivation process is far different than the refining process and that this is similar to cannabis. Mr. Drew mentioned that the previous planning commission had a GIS map that showed all of the buffers. He said that there are state requirements and they cannot be more restrictive than the state. Mrs. Laura Ryan confirmed that there are restrictions that ensure that local regulations are not too burdensome.

Mr. Drew said that there are not any growing or processing facilities currently in the city. He said that back when the issue was originally raised, they decided to be more restrictive and potentially loosening restrictions as they learn more.

Mrs. Rall said that a lot of children get their drugs from their parents. She thinks that if there are restrictions on the plants, the kids will not get to it. Mrs. Bratten mentioned that she also liked the GIS maps showing the buffers.

Mrs. Jackson said that she does not think that there is a consensus to approve the amendment and they need more information. Mr. Chiddenton said that they need to understand that this is a growing business that is not going anywhere and the city needs to figure out how it will accommodate it. He said that a map to see what they are looking at would be helpful.

Mr. Drew said that he does not think there is opposition to removal of the 1000 ft. buffer, but they are not as interested in removing the school buffers. Mrs. Jackson asked if they should amend the proposal or come back with a new proposal. She said that they should do both at the same time because of the public hearing and council process. It can be done separately but it makes more sense to do it all at once.

Mr. Piorunski said that this is a highly regulated industry and that licensing fees are expensive and run on a lottery system. Mr. Nick Voitiuc approached the table and said that they could potentially look into reducing the buffer by a smaller amount, to something like 300, 350, or 400 feet. Mrs. Bratten said that a map showing the different buffer distances would be helpful.

Mrs. Jackson brought up a map on the TV for the commissioners to look at. They explored a variety of school zones. They discussed the distance from the school zones and where the facilities could be located. Mr. Chiddenton suggested that the staff return with more mapping and information.

Other Business

Discussion– Text amendment to address inconsistent parking requirements in the Central Business and Riverfront Redevelopment Multiuse Districts.

Mrs. Jackson stated that the staff is planning to bring a text amendment forward to address the parking requirements in the CBD and Riverfront Redevelopment Districts, which also effects apartment parking standards. The goal is to remove contradictory language and make the review process more predictable. Parking must be anticipated and planned for as part of development process.

Mrs. Bratten asked how the changes will impact what has already been approved. Mrs. Jackson responded that this shouldn't impact things that already have approvals.

Mr. Voitiuc said that the developers need to be able to predict what the requirements will be before they come into downtown to develop.

Mrs. Jackson said that one option is to make the 1.5 parking space requirement consistent across all zones but providing a way to reduce parking, either through the code, through a waiver process, through the planning commission, or through a fee-in-lieu program. She asked for any feedback from the commission.

Mr. Piorunski asked how much parking they are seeking to create. Mrs. Jackson said that this will depend on the development. They have to create a rule that is specific to that use.

Mr. Drew said that he found something on the city website referencing the "Central City District Commission" which advises the mayor and council on matters pertaining to parking, bond financing, and the general betterment of the downtown area. This is not an active commission anymore. He said that this commission is a group that would answer a lot of the questions. Mr. Voitiuc said that this group is from the 60's and a lot of requirements have changed. Mr. Drew said he would like to reform that commission. The parking downtown is on the street, structured areas, and lots that are shaped among many different uses, which is very different than the rest of the city.

Mr. Voitiuc said that the commission may be the best way to go, but that does not change the fact that there is lots of conflicting language in the code. Mr. Drew agreed. He said that parking is like a living organism that must be constantly adapting. Mr. Piorunski mentioned that he used to be on the commission. He said that many of their conversations revolved around reviewing balance sheets for parking. Mayor Jim Ireton had tasked the commission with liaising with business owners in the CBD. They ran into an issue where many businesses had people who wanted to park right in front of the building but could not. Mr. Drew said that the CCDC could have a lot of power. Mr. Chiddenton said that tasking the planning commission with coming up with parking requirements would be difficult for them to do. Mrs. Jackson said that the planning commission has to approve all text amendments. Mrs. Ryan confirmed that they cannot delegate responsibilities to committees, but a committee could come before them to make a recommendation.

Mrs. Bratten said that there are still many contradictory codes and that they are the ones who can solve that problem. Mr. Voitiuc agreed. Mr. Drew said that the planning commission process for considering


parking could take a recommendation from the central city commission. Mrs. Bratten said that this would take a while to get into place. Mr. Piorunski said that parking loses the city money and the constantly changing parking makes the situation difficult. Mrs. Bratten said she is in favor of making the current code something that can be used and defended. Mr. Voitiuc said the goal is to propose a variety of changes and suggestions to the commission.


Department Update – Upcoming agenda items


Mrs. Jackson said the next meeting is a special meeting to discuss the comprehensive plan. Mr. Voitiuc joked that all the commission meetings are special meetings.


Adjournment:

Chair Chiddenton entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Rall entered a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Piorunski. The vote to adjourn was unanimous (6-0).


Dave Chiddenton, Chair


Betsy Jackson, Acting Secretary


Date


Date