Salisbury Planning Commission
June 11th, 2026

MINUTES

The Salisbury Planning Commission met in session on Thursday, **June 11, 2026**. The meeting took place at 125 N. Division St, Room 301, with attendance as follows:

COMMISSIONERS:	**CITY STAFF**
David Chiddenton, Chair	Judy Kuntz, Deputy Director of DID
Matt Drew, Vice-Chair	Betsy Jackson, City Planner
Latonia Ayscue, Open Meetings Delegate (Absent)	Zachary White, Associate Planner
Susan Rall	Scarlett Liberto, Associate Planner
Mike Piorunksi	Henry Pearson, Associate Planner
Lynne Bratten	Laura Ryan, City Attorney
Anthony Dickerson (Absent)	Skip Cox, Assistant City Administrator

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 and Latonia Ayscue were absent from this meeting.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mrs. Bratten moved to approve the meeting minutes from the March 31st, 2026 meeting. Mr. Drew seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Drew moved to approve the meeting minutes from the April 9th, 2026 meeting. Mrs. Bratten seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. DISCUSSION

PUBLIC HEARING – TEXT AMENDMENT – Amending Title 17, Zoning, Chapter 17.36, entitled "General Commercial District," Chapter 17.76, entitled "Light Industrial District," and Chapter 17.80, entitled "Industrial Park District," to alter location requirements for cannabis growers and processors. (S. Liberto)

Ms. Scarlett Liberto approached the table. Mrs. Laura Ryan read the public notice. She then read the oath for all those planning to testify. Ms. Liberto read the staff report. The proposed text amendment would remove the 1,000-foot separation requirement between cannabis businesses and add a special exception process that would allow the 500-foot buffer from primary and secondary schools, licensed child care centers, registered family child care home playgrounds, recreation centers, libraries, churches, and public parks to be reduced to 250 feet on a case-by-case basis. The amendment would also add cannabis processors and growers to the list of prohibited uses in the General Commercial District.

Mr. Chiddenton open up the public hearing asking for comment. Seeing none, he closed the public comment portion of the meeting. Mr. Drew stated that staff had done a great job and he had no questions.

Mrs. Bratten made a motion to forward a favorable recommendation to the city council. Mr. Piorunski seconded the motion. The motion was **APPROVED (4-1).**

Yay	Nay
David Chiddenton	Susan Rall
Mike Piorunski	
Matt Drew	
Lynne Bratten	

SIGN PLAN – VILLAGE AT SNOWFIELD – Snowfield LLC rep. by Devin Medd, DR Horton – Snow Hill Road – R-10A Residential – M-0048, G-0011, P- 0492, Parcel C– #22-008 (H. Pearson)

Mr. Devin Medd approached the table. Mr. Henry Pearson read the staff report. The sign will be along Snow Hill Rd. for the Villages at Snowfield.

Mr. Drew questioned the exact location of the sign. Mr. Pearson clarified the location.

Mr. Drew made a motion to approve the motion as submitted. Mrs. Rall seconded the motion. The motion was **APPROVED** (5-0).

2025 MDP ANNUAL REPORT – Maryland Department of Planning requires Planning Commissions to approve a report on growth in the jurisdiction for each calendar year. (H. Pearson)

Mr. Pearson read the memo. The annual report is submitted yearly to the Maryland Department of Planning. The memo contained a brief summary of the primary metrics in the report and how they differed from the prior year.

Mr. Chiddenton asked about the section regarding training. Mrs. Jackson said that they need to make sure that the planning commissioners have completed all online trainings. Mr. Chiddenton asked about the bicycle and pedestrian plan, which said it was due to be updated last year. Mrs. Jackson said that she does not have any further information about that.

Mr. Drew made a motion to approve the motion as submitted. Mr. Piorunski seconded the motion. The motion was **APPROVED** (5-0).

WORK SESSION – Text amendment to correct inconsistencies in the code with regards to parking requirements in Sections 17.24, 17.105, 17.168, and 17.196 (B. Jackson)

Salisbury Mayor Randy Taylor and assistant city administrator Skip Cox approached the table. Mrs. Laura Ryan explained the parking text amendment. She said that the goal of the amendment is to have a uniform parking standard to apply to all districts. This amendment would make the apartment standards apply to all apartments in all districts in the city by removing the separate standards for the CBD and Riverfront districts. They would also add 20% guest parking to the requirements. The other change would require mixed use buildings have parking standards apply based on the proportions of each use within the building.

Mr. Piorunski said that the commission needs facts on what parking demand exists in different parts of the city. He said that different multi-family structures in different areas have different requirements. Mr. Taylor said that the demand will be consistent across all developments and the difference is how they facilitate it because there may be street parking and other sources in some areas. He said that they need consistency on how they define this parking and who it is promised to, and that he thinks the amount of that parking is small. He said that they can have special cases where parking requirements can change. Mr. Piorunski said that they cannot have different parking requirements for people based on where they are in the pipeline.

Mr. Piorunski asked if the city has completed a parking study. Mr. Taylor said that new builds create new parking demand and eliminate an existing lot. He said that no matter where the building is, they need consistency.

Mrs. Bratten said that the mayor had a good point about promising the same spots to different developments.

Mr. Drew shared Mr. Piorunski's concern about the necessity of a parking study to determine supply and demand. He said that the commission has the ability to hire professionals on their behalf. He recommended that the commission hire and independent firm to conduct a parking study. He added that they should defer action on this amendment until that is done. He also stated that the Central City district commission has the ability to be the board of directors on the parking issue. He recommended that that commission be re-formed. He stated that changing these regulations could bar redevelopment due to the inability to comply with these off-street parking standards.

Mr. Taylor said that multiple developments were already approved without a parking study. He said that this is simple math game that they understand. Mr. Drew disagreed, saying that he has not seen a credible third party determine what the supply and demand are. Mr. Taylor stated that he can come to his office to see. Mr. Taylor said that the commission is getting away from what he wanted to discuss, which is creating consistency in the code.

Mr. Drew said that he worries about the unintended consequences of the change. He said that many buildings in the downtown could be unable to be redeveloped. Mr. Cox said that they are changing the requirements for residential only. Mr. Drew asked about situations where it is physically impossible to have off-street parking. Mrs. Jackson said that they need to have a clause that states that this would not apply to existing buildings.

Mr. Drew reiterated that he thinks the central city commission is chartered to deal with this issue. Mr. Taylor said that they are looking to do an honest accounting of the supply and demand of parking. Mr. Taylor asked how they can dynamically supply more parking if there is no land. Mr. Drew said that they could enter into a private public partnership to construct new structured parking. Mr. Taylor said that the demand created from new development exceeds the new parking from structures.

Mr. Piorunski asked what districts like Harbor East in Baltimore do to address this problem. He said that there is a development corporation that all the property owners pay into to have amenities such as parking. He asked how they can share the burden of the parking. Mr. Taylor said that they share it by selling permits. Mr. Piorunski said that the parking demand in downtown is very different than the parking demand in a development in the north of the city. Mr. Taylor said that they are trying to determine the load of the parking demand. Mr. Piorunski said that they are looking for concrete numbers on the demand. Mr. Taylor said that this is not a close call mathematically.

Mr. Piorunski said that the central city district commission was created to deal with parking issues. He said that parking is a zero-sum game. He said that they can learn from other places that have similar issues.

Mr. Chiddenton opened the floor to public comment.

Molly Hilligoss spoke. She told a story about her daughter ordering food deliveries to illustrate that new technology will change parking demand. She said that new generations do not use vehicles as much. New delivery technology and apps like Spot Hero will cause parking demand to continuously change. She recommended considering the future when putting these requirements in place.

Robert Taylor spoke. He said that the example from the previous speaker was referring to someone who visits a community. He said that people who live in a community are going to drive. He said that he worked in One Plaza East and paid a fee for permits. He said that the general public is subsidizing downtown parking, which should stop.

David Layfield spoke. He showed a picture of the proposed SBY Market Center development. He said that they have the site permit ready for 50 units of affordable housing. They applied for their final review from DID 106 days prior and heard no mention of inadequate parking. 66 days ago they were notified that their application was being withdrawn from DID and taken over by the Mayor. He said that the prior planning commission and historic commission had blessed the project. He said that SBY Market center was the inspiration for the text amendment and that the amendment is a sniper shot to kill the project. He said that the mayor is trying to kill the project. He said that the parking garage is always empty and that there is no parking shortage in the downtown. He said that this constitutes a legal taking.

Jordan Gilmore, a Salisbury resident and policy director for the Maryland DHCD, spoke on behf the state of Maryland. He said the state is a partner in many of the downtown housing projects. He said that this arbitrary amendment would jeopardize these projects. Imposing on-site requirements would render many existing properties impossible to redevelop. Changing the rules for projects that have already been approved is not an acceptable business practice. The Housing Certainty Act was developed to put an end to this practice. He said Salisbury needs to add almost 1200 new housing units by 2030 to satisfy projected demand. These projects would bring the city ¼ to that goal. He said that a formal parking study needs to be conducted, and the timing of the amendment is not based on any data, which brings

the motivations for the amendment into question. Mrs. Bratten questioned the numbers that he brought up. He clarified that he was referring to SBY Market and the Salisbury Town Center, which would provide almost 25% of the needed housing.

Tom Aide, co-founder of Green Street Housing, spoke. He runs his business on Main St. in a building that he redeveloped. He planned to continue to redevelop the building as the city grew. He is anxious about the limitations that the city is imposing on the bundle of rights that he owns. He said that these changes would not allow him to redevelop his building into anything but office space. He said that he feels like his rights are being taken.

Carol Dunahoo, president of the Wicomico Environmental Trust, spoke. She said that the increased density and vibrancy in the central business district is missing from the Comprehensive Plan. She said that it is important to not let a premature decision on this matter to prevent the construction of housing. She thinks it should not be a hasty decision.

Mrs. Bratten said that she would like the letter submitted by the public to be made part of the record. Mr. Chiddenton said that he did not see the letters as they were submitted at the last minute. He reiterated that submissions that come in right before the meetings do not allow the commission enough time to review them.

WORK SESSION – Text amendment to require Special Exceptions for Data Centers and Battery Energy Storage Stations (BESS) (S. Liberto)

Ms. Liberto approached the table and read the staff report. City staff was recommending adopting code to regulate data center and storage centers. Mr. Piorunski had shared an article about the impact on data centers with city staff.

https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2026/04/american-oligarchy-hyperscale-data-centers-meta-openai-oracle-x-musk-altman-zuckerberg-bezos/

Mr. Piorunski asked if the city has signed an NDA regarding data centers. Mrs. Jackson said that they have not. He said that this is a common practice by data center developers. Mr. Chiddenton asked if there was a specific location that people had been inquiring about data centers. Mrs. Jackson said that the areas are industrial but that these have a lot of unintended consequences.

Ms. Rall said that she is concerned that these may be located close to low-income housing. Mr. Drew said that he sees data centers as different from battery and energy storage. He said that the power grid is unreliable and energy prices are rising. There is opposition to new transmission projects and renewable energy. He thinks that we are in a great spot to have BESS. He supports regulations to do it safely and a decommissioning plan for end of life, but he would like to see language that allows these as a by right use. He believes that BESS is low hanging fruit and does not want to get in the way of that.

Mr. Drew said that data centers do not cause additional public safety load, load on schools, or wastewater. He said that they should be looked at in terms of power and water demands. They could have a user raise the assessable tax base without causing a commensurate increase in demand for services. He is in favor of making things as favorable as possible to put them in communities in the right way.

Mr. Chiddenton asked if the direction the staff has taken is good. Mr. Drew responded that he does not want these to be special exceptions and would rather they be by-right uses.

Mr. Piorunski said that water and electricity are the two most important services that people pay for, and that these facilities do produce wastewater. Mr. Drew said that a third of the water usage in the city is from a single user. This user in turn subsidizes the city water by paying for the upkeep of the system.

Mr. Piorunski said that he likes the idea of looking at these in terms of scale. He said that many small-scale data centers exist, and those are different than the ones that you see on the news that are the size of office parks. Mr. Drew agreed that the scales are different, and referenced the Purdue server room which is an accessory to the building. He thinks that we can have a different class of use that is an accessory to another use.

Mr. Chiddenton opened the meeting to the public.

Molly Hilligoss spoke. She said that her son lives near Atlanta as a plumber. He has said that one of the communities near him was not aware that a data center was built near them, and they experienced water pressure issues as a result. She said that it is important to think about these issues and to be cautious.

Carol Dunahoo spoke. She stated that Wicomico Environmental Trust strongly supports renewable energy sources, which require BESS. However, she said that it is important to proceed carefully due to the safety concerns. She said that the data center issue is very complicated and it may be better to put a moratorium on them while they figure out how to proceed.

Mrs. Ryan said that they are concerned that the code is outdated and by not proceeding in a timely manner, projects could use the old code to receive an approval that would not be desirable. Mrs. Jackson said they are looking for a way to deal with the applications without outright banning them. She said that a special exception would allow them to look at these on a site-by-site basis.

Mr. Piorunski said that he wondered if there is a way to look at excluding accessory data centers. Mrs. Jackson said that they can look into it. Mrs. Ryan said that determining restrictions and criteria might take a long time, so it could make sense to create a special exception in the meantime while those are determined. Mr. Drew said that they could direct staff to go down both paths, looking into a special exception approach and a by-right approach eventually. Mrs. Jackson said that there are multiple jurisdictions looking into this now. Mr. Drew said he is comfortable with doing that.

Mr. Piorunski said that Harford County has blanket banned data centers, while Loudon County has allowed them to proliferate. Mrs. Rall said that the more they know, the more the public will know.

WORK SESSION – Text amendment to allow Accessory Dwelling Units as required by HB 1466 (S. Liberto and B. Jackson)

Ms. Liberto read the staff report. Staff was recommending adding language for ADU's to the code as mandated by a recent state bill. Mrs. Jackson said that public comment was received via email. She also said that they determined that they cannot just replace the definition in the code and will have to do it a different way, but the concept is the same.

Mr. Drew asked what the 75% of the size figure meant. Mrs. Jackson said it would be interpreted based on the size of the habitable space of the building. If the state is not clear, they will need to do more research. Mr. Piorunski said that they can take an attic space and make it habitable and that basements are sometimes included in calculations and sometimes are not.

Mr. Drew said that they are in a city where roughly 75% of units are renter-occupied, and he does not want to see that increase. He would like to see a requirement that the owner occupy the building. Mr. Chiddenton agreed. Mrs. Rall said that there are properties in her neighborhood that say that they are owner occupied but are not. Mr. Drew suggested that short-term rentals of ADU's be required to be for a long period of time- at least 30 days. Mrs. Jackson said that they need to do research on that because there are state regulations on how much they can restrict short term rentals.

Mr. Chiddenton said that he is concerned with short term rentals and that the owner of the property must occupy the unit. Mr. Piorunski mentioned the water and sewer connections of ADU's. He asked if they have a thought on requiring the ADU to have a separate connection or they tie into a line. Mr. Drew said that it would all be behind the same meter. Mrs. Jackson said that they would want to consult with the infrastructure team. They could require an additional meter but adding a new connection is a significant cost.

Judy Kuntz approached the table and spoke. She said that it will depend on how much EDU the accessory dwelling will require and how they are tying in. She said that it will typically have less usage than the primary dwelling, so the property would have a single water meter.

Mrs. Rall asked if there are restrictions on the number of people in an ADU. Mrs. Jackson said that is a rental or building code questions. Mrs. Rall said that it is concerning that there would be that many people living in one home. Mr. Piorunski asked about the 4-2 rule. Mrs. Ryan said that general occupancy rules apply as if it were a separate unit.

Mr. Chiddenton opened the floor to the public.

Sharon Dashiell spoke. She said that there is a great webinar that details what other counties in the state have done, and many of the things that they brought up were mentioned in it. She said that there is a contractor in Annapolis who has only been building ADU's and identified the hurdles to this issue in the webinar. She said that they don't need to reinvent the wheel since others have already done it. She asked if Mr. Piorunski will send her the article he was talking about.

Molly Hilligoss spoke. She is the CEO of Habitat for Humanity in Wicomico County. She suggested placing the rules they are considering into categories of inclusionary of exclusionary. She said that ADU's are a significant investment. She said that they have problems providing affordable housing and to think about that when considering their options.

Robert Taylor spoke. He said that ADU's are already permitted but local jurisdictions have to pass a statute that allows them. However, they can impose restrictions such as requiring owner occupied units and limiting short term rentals. He said that any new residential construction in Maryland has to be construction, and this could impact whether the water line would be sufficient to handle the sprinkler aspect. There is also the question of who pays the bill on usage. One option is a submeter. There are also issues with sewer connections.

Mr. Piorunski asked about setbacks for ADU's. He asked if ADU's will be required to have setbacks. The state law is unclear on that issue. Mrs. Rall asked what the next step on the amendment is. Mrs. Jackson said that they know they need to do more research and would eventually require a public hearing.

Mr. Piorunski asked about their policy on receiving feedback. Mrs. Ryan said that they can put the rules on the agenda to discuss when and how feedback and public comment is allowed. The commission discussed the problems with receiving feedback just days or hours before the meeting. Mr. Chiddenton said that this does not do anything for the public because they do not have the time to read it. He likes the idea of a 5-day rule.

Mr. Drew said that he would like to talk about a study on downtown parking at the next meeting and what steps would be necessary to issue an RFP to do that. Mrs. Jackson said that they would have to consult with finance, legal, and procurement because it would still be department. He also mentioned the developer that said that their plans are being delayed in the permitting process and he would like to hear a report at the next meeting about the status of that.

Mr. Piorunski mentioned the change of use for parking requirements and asked how that impacts parking. He said he would like to learn more about it.

Adjournment:
Chair Chiddenton entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Rall made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Piorunski. The motion was **APPROVED** (5-0).

Dave Chiddenton, Chair — 10-1-2026 Date

Betsy Jackson, Acting Secretary — 10/1/2026 Date