



PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

Wednesday, June 11, 2025, at 7:00 PM

Work Session, 6:00 PM, Council Chambers Conference Room, City Hall,
114 North Broad Street, Salem, Virginia 24153

Regular Session, 7:00 PM, City Hall, 114 North Broad Street, Salem, Virginia 24153

WORK SESSION

1. Call to Order

A work session meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Salem, Virginia, was held in the Council Chambers Conference Room, City Hall, 114 North Broad Street, at 6:00 p.m., on Wednesday, June 11, 2025, there being present the following members of said Commission, to wit: Denise P. King, Reid Garst, Jackson Beamer, Mark Henrickson, and Nathan Routt, constituting a legal quorum, with Chair King, presiding; together with Christopher Dorsey, City Manager, ex officio member of said Commission; William L. Simpson, Jr., Assistant Director of Community Development; Mary Ellen Wines, Planning & Zoning Administrator, Maxwell S. Dillon, Planner, and Jim H. Guynn, Jr., City Attorney; and the following business was transacted:

Chair Denise King reported that this date, place, and time had been set in order for the Commission to hold a work session. The work session meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m.

2. New Business

A. Discussion of items on the June agenda

- 1) 132 Electric Road

B. Discussion of items on the July agenda

- 1) Butt Hollow Road Rezoning/Special Exception Permit
- 2) Dalewood Avenue Rezoning/Special Exception Permit
- 3) Newman Drive Rezoning
- 4) Rowan Street Special Exception Permit

3. Adjournment

Chair King adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

REGULAR SESSION

1. Call to Order

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Salem, Virginia, was held in the Council Chambers Conference Room, City Hall, 114 North Broad Street, at 7:00 p.m., on Wednesday, June 11, 2025, there being present the following members of said Commission, to wit: Denise P. King, Reid Garst, Jackson Beamer, Mark Henrickson, and Nathan Routt, constituting a legal quorum, with Chair King, presiding; together with Christopher Dorsey, City Manager, ex officio member of said Commission; William L. Simpson, Jr., Assistant Director of Community Development; Mary Ellen Wines, Planning & Zoning Administrator, Maxwell S. Dillon, Planner, and Jim H. Guynn, Jr., City Attorney; and the following business was transacted:

Chair Denise King reported that this date, place, and time had been set in order for the Commission to hold a public meeting. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

A. **Pledge of Allegiance**

B. **Roll call**

Mr. Routt - Here
Mr. Henrickson - Here
Mr. Beamer - Here
Mr. Garst - Here
Chair King – Here

2. Consent Agenda

A. **Minutes**

Consider acceptance of the minutes from May 14, 2025, work session and regular meeting.

Chair King pointed out that there were two minor typographical errors found on Pages 3 and 5 of those minutes. The word property became proper. She asked if there were any questions or comments about the amended minutes. No questions were raised, and the minutes were accepted as presented, as amended.

Chair King announced that there will be a joint work session of the Planning Commission and City Council on June 25, 2025, at the Salem Civic Center at 5:30 pm. The work session will be regarding the Comprehensive Plan now being revised for the City of Salem. She stated that, for everyone that might wish to attend, it is not a public hearing, but it is a public meeting which means that the public may be in attendance.

3. New Business

A. **Special Exception Permit**

Hold a public hearing and consider the request of R & S Investments LLC, property owners, for the issuance of a special exception permit to allow a retail sales, smoke shop for the property located at 132 Electric Road (Tax Map #80-2-1).

Proper legal notice has been given and all adjoining property owners have been notified of said hearing.

Chair King asked if anyone was in attendance that would like to speak tonight on behalf of the applicant. She asked them to come forward and give their name, address and information regarding this request.

Antuon Nasser of 111 Wayward Hills Drive, Vinton, VA 24179 addressed the Commission. Mr. Nasser stated that they have smoke shops located in Vinton, Daleville, Lynchburg and Roanoke. Some of their loyal customers asked them to open a new store in Salem and that is what they are trying to do. He introduced his co-owner, Amanda Akers as someone who would like to speak.

Chair King stated that it would be fine and asked if she was part of the application tonight.

Amanda Akers stated she was not part of the application.

Chair King opened the public hearing at 7:04 p.m. She stated that anyone that wanted to speak on this topic may come forward and they need to state their name and address.

Amanda Akers of 1220 Walnut Shell Drive, Vinton VA 24179 addressed the Commission and stated she had a pamphlet of items she would like to discuss. She handed out the pamphlet to the members of the Planning Commission as follows:

I know Salem already has a number of smoke shops. That's actually why I've taken the time to design something different good for Salem something that fills a gap in the current market.

Premium focus: High-end glass, CBD, local exclusive products. Handmade local pipes, vintage signs, ash trays, vintage Tabacco signs and Humidor room for Cigars

Clean, upscale design: We will offer a boutique-style experience that's professional and inviting, not sketchy or cluttered. Local Products

Specialization: Local products, variety, knowable staff ,we want be part of Neighborhood

Education-oriented: Knowable Staff well trained, product guides, community Q&As.

- **Strict ID policies / age verification.**
- **Security:** Cameras, good lighting, safety practices.
- **No loitering:** Clear store policies.
- **Local employment:** You'll hire from within Salem.
- **Clean storefront & attractive signage.**

"I'm committed to operating in a way that reflects positively on the city—clean, safe, and fully compliant.

Imagine a modern, welcoming smoke shop that's closer to a wellness lounge than a head shop. Somewhere people feel safe asking questions, learning about their choices, and shopping responsibly.

Local Products Community Support

- **Honey from local farms** like. Ostrom Honey
- **Virginia-roasted coffee.** like Bean Bliss or Mill Mountain
- **Local artisans'** candles, art, crafts, even CBD products, Gift corner, custom made pipes

"This creates a win-win—we support other Salem businesses while offering unique items you can't get at a chain or gas station

Salem doesn't need just *another* smoke shop. It needs a better one—something clean, safe, community-minded, and truly unique. That's exactly what I'm building. I'm here for the long term, and I want this to be a point of pride for the neighborhood

Amanda co-owner Puff N' Pas

Request Special exception Permit for---- 132 Electric rd. Salem VA

Miss Akers stated that this was her first time as a business owner. As Mr. Nasser stated, they have other sister stores that she manages, and they are successful with those. They have had customers ask them to bring a location to Salem. They have customers that drive from Salem to their other locations and ask that they come to Salem. She stated that they are committed to operating responsibly that includes strict ID verification, compliance with all local laws and creating a safe, well-maintained storefront that reflects well on the City. Also, she stated that they are mindful of being respectful neighbors. They do not allow loitering around their storefront, and they do not plan to stay open late. Their goal is to maintain a quiet, clean and safe retail space that contributes positively to the Salem community. They pride themselves on being highly knowledgeable about their products. They are proud to hold an average 4.8-star rating on Google at their current

locations which reflected their commitment to quality and customer satisfaction. She stated they are more than just a smoke shop. They are proud supporters of local small businesses. They carry hand-blown glass pipes made by Virginia artists, as well as a selection of handmade gifts such as lotions, candles, knives and other locally crafted items. The plan would feature a walk-in Humidor stocked with handcrafted cigars offering customers a high-quality climate-controlled space to explore premium small batch products. While they recognized that there are other similar shops in the area, they believe that there was still space for a shop that serves customers in a more personalized, professional way. She stated they were excited to invest in the area and bring life to the space.

Chair King asked if she was the property owner.

Amanda Akers stated she was not the property owner.

Chair King asked if the owner of the property was here and if they would come up to answer a question. She asked them to state their name and address.

Steve Hartman of 130 Antietam Hill Road, Daleville VA 24083 addressed the Commission. He stated that he was a partner in the property at 132 Electric Road.

Chair King asked about the building that sits to the rear of the requested location of the smoke shop. She asked what the history and relationship of that property was to where the smoke shop would be.

Steve Hartman asked if she meant right behind the building.

Chair King indicated that it was directly behind the building.

Steve Hartman stated that the building was a house that they lease out and have had leased out for a while. He stated that probably 30 years ago, they bought Davis Pizza which was the name of the property. If they could imagine, that little house was a duplex with two separate homes and the main building was three units; an apartment in the back, Flowers by Louise and Davis Pizza that served pizza on newspaper. They have had the property for 30 years and have had multiple different tenants over this time. He stated he can speak on what he knows that the applicant wants to do unless the Commission has more questions.

Chair King asked if anyone had a question. None were stated.

Steve Hartman stated that he owns property in different places in the valley. One property was in Daleville across from Lord Botetourt High School and is known as the Botetourt Plaza. When one thinks of that property, they would not want a gun shop or a smoke shop, and they have had both in there. The applicant is a tenant at the very end of that building which is right across the street from the high school. They have had no problems and it has not been an issue whatsoever. The tenant asks for IDs and there are no high school students that even come over there because they know this is not the place to go. They are not going to get any product from this location. It is not a hangout place. It is

not a place where people come and go. They have 20 tenants and there is a lot of road exposure. The applicant mentioned to him that they would like to be a part of Salem and that is how they looked at this spot. He stated he thinks that they have a lot more to offer than just a typical tobacco shop. They are going to try to get things from local people and maybe do other things than just vape. He was glad to hear that, and he thinks they really fix a property up. He thinks it would look nice and not be an eye sore. He stated it would not be run down, and they would try to keep it up. The last tenant that was in this location did have some issues with the homeless in the back and they cleared all of that up. He knows that there are a lot of tobacco shops around. He just thinks the applicant is going to try to do something a little different than a typical one. The cigar shop that they put in is an enclosure that is heated and, for someone that smokes cigars, that is a big deal. It would be a sizable space that is heated. At Daleville, it is a real popular place because of Ashley Plantation. They stop and get their cigars before they go to the golf course. They have been good tenants. He sees them in Vinton. Mr. Hartman stated he has property in Vinton. They are not tenants of his there, but they do have a nice place in Vinton. He knows they have a location on Route 460. Lynchburg was mentioned, but he did not know about Lynchburg. Antuon is bringing Amanda in as a partner on this one. Mr. Hartman Stated that he is excited for her because he feels that she has been working for a good while and this is a big step for her to become a partner. He stated that he has had people where just the word vape shop and tobacco can turn them off. They think that no good thing happens there. He was probably that way 8 to 10 years ago. When someone came and wanted to do that, he would not let them come into the Botetourt Plaza. It took him probably a year because he did not want that. In his mind, even though they had a gun shop across from the high school, he just did not think that was what he wanted. Mr. Hartman stated he had gotten to know the applicant and they are good people. He feels like Amanda really wants a shot to have her own place and he thinks she would do Salem well. He thinks she has the personality. She is not going to let underage people come in. That is not going to happen. He has not seen it at any other place. She has not been written up for anything like that and they have good reviews. He hoped that the Commission would consider it. He is invested in Salem and thinks the applicant would be a good tenant. Just like everywhere else, there are tobacco shops. He thinks they are going to try to set themselves apart from that and offer a lot of other things. He told them to come get involved with Salem, come to the Salem market and find vendors that they could put their products in the store. There are always people, if they are into smoking, who may want old signs or something like that. People are looking for that type of thing. He thought that a portion of their store could become part of that. They have reaffirmed that. They talked this over quite extensively before he ever signed the contract to say, if this gets approved, they could come here. He did not take it lightly either. He would not want to put something up here that the City would come back to him and question what in the world did you do that for. He tries to have a good reputation, and they have been in the valley all their lives. His whole family has been in Roanoke for their whole lives. They own the local electronic store called Lee Hartman & Sons, so they have been here. He would not stand up here and promote them if he did not think they would be a real good fit.

Chair King asked if anyone else was present tonight to speak on this matter. Seeing none, she closed the public hearing at 7:16 p.m.

Mr. Beamer asked Chair King if she could get one of the speakers to come back up and answer questions.

Mr. Garst asked if Antuon Nasser could come back up.

Chair King asked Mr. Nasser to come back up to the podium.

Mr. Garst asked if he had a store currently in operation that closely models what they plan to do here or is this going to be very different than anything they had done before.

Mr. Nasser stated that all the stores they currently have were the same. They plan to do something different, like local artists and more local products in this store, because he has a co-owner. He was trying to give her an opportunity, a chance for a better life.

Mr. Garst asked if he was saying this one would be different.

Mr. Nasser confirmed that this one would be a little bit different.

Mr. Beamer asked if just he owned the other stores, and she is going to be part owner of this one.

Mr. Nasser answered yes. Because she manages some of the stores; with this one, she will be a co-owner.

Mr. Beamer asked what he meant by the term different and what did he envision.

Mr. Nasser asked if what he meant was the difference between the older stores and the new store.

Mr. Beamer confirmed that is what he meant.

Mr. Nasser stated the older stores were like any regular smoke shop but cleaner than anybody else he guaranteed with their reviews, the staff and the knowledge. Because she had been working for him for the past 3 to 4 years and he knew how she worked. He can trust her. She always comes up with new ideas. All the customers liked the new ideas so that is why it would be different, because it would be hers too.

Mr. Beamer asked if they would be open 7 days a week.

Mr. Nasser confirmed 7 days a week.

Mr. Beamer asked what hours.

Mr. Nasser stated 9 am to 9 pm.

Mr. Beamer asked if that was every day.

Mr. Nasser confirmed yes.

Chair King asked if anyone else had a question.

Mr. Light asked if the Commission issued a special exemption permit and that was what the vote was for, does that stay with the business or property. He asked if the applicant went out of business and then something else came in, does that mean a regular smoke shop could take its place.

Chair King stated that was her question too because she was concerned about the second building on the property. They were being asked to allow a special exception for the tax parcel.

Ms. Wines confirmed that it was a special exception for the property for a smoke shop so, if they were to leave, another smoke shop would be able to come in. The approval stays with the property. It also would cover the building in the rear. It would have to go through the building official for a change of use, but the use would be allowed in the building in the rear. The Commission can put conditions on the permit. If the Commission decided to approve it, a recommendation can be made to City Council that certain conditions be applied.

Mr. Rount asked if they could include just that one space.

Mr. Garst stated just the use of the brick building.

Mr. Rount stated he thought they could make it renewable. That way, if it did change over, it would only be for a short period of time.

Mr. Garst asked if they could make the exception permit renewable.

Ms. Wines confirmed that they could, but it might be hard to keep up with in the long term. They typically do not have those types of special exceptions.

Mr. Rount stated they would not have to worry about it if the people who were there are doing a good job. It is their successor that they are worried about. With the renewable part, they would be able to not renew it.

Chair King confirmed that it was a concern.

Ms. Wines asked if that was a condition that can be put on there.

Mr. Rount confirmed that if it expired. It must be reapplied for.

Chair King asked for confirmation that the house behind was currently being used for residential leasing.

Mr. Hartman confirmed and said the house behind it has a separate address of 1609 Springfield.

Chair King stated that it is part of the same parcel.

Mr. Henrickson confirmed it is part of the same parcel.

Mr. Hartman confirmed that they do get one tax bill. He did not know why it was not split because it has a separate entranceway. It had always been like that. The person that lives at that location has been there probably 8 or 10 years. He lives by himself. It is really a nice small 700 S.F. house but that is all he needs. He asked if this would carry on. If the applicant left, he would sign something. He only likes them. He would be precise about who he would let in the property.

Chair King stated that she understands but, if the special exception permit was issued, it would go with the property, not the property owner. It would be assigned to the property itself.

Chair King asked if there were any further questions or comments and asked if there was a motion.

Mr. Routt made a motion to deny. Mr. Henrickson seconded the motion.

Chair King stated that one of the things that the Commission considers when they are looking at zoning or special exception permits was the best and highest use of the property. Her concern was that there are 11 other smoke shops within the City of Salem and the City is a very small locality. She was not sure that a third smoke shop on Electric Road was the best and highest use of this property. There are 2 smoke shops located across the street.

Chair King acknowledged that there was a motion on the floor that had been seconded and asked if there was anything further.

Mr. Garst commented that they had been discussing that if the City had a good smoke shop that could potentially put lesser smoke shops out of business, it would be beneficial to let the market determine who was best and who was not. If they put the other two out of business across the street, then maybe that retail space could be used for something different in the mall.

Mr. Henrickson stated he did not disagree.

Chair King stated that it was a possibility.

Mr. Garst stated that it seemed like the applicant had an idea that extended beyond just a smoke shop if they are going to sell Mr. Ostrom's honey, coffee beans and arts and crafts. It was a bit more than a traditional smoke shop. If they were successful, they could win over the local business and put somebody else out of business. That effect was about the same as far as the number of stores was concerned. He stated that he would rather have a good smoke shop than a bad smoke shop.

Chair King stated there was a motion on the floor that had been seconded to deny this application. She asked for a roll call vote:

Mr. Routt - Aye
Mr. Henrickson - Aye
Mr. Beamer - Nay
Mr. Garst - Nay
Chair King - Aye

Chair King stated that the motion for denial was 3 to 2 and this matter would now go to City Council. She explained that the Planning Commission is a research and recommending body to the City Council. Attendees will need to appear at the City Council meeting when placed on their Agenda. They will be notified of the time and date once it has been scheduled.

4. Adjournment

Chair King asked if there was any additional business for the Planning Commission. There being no further business, Chair King adjourned the meeting at 7:25 p.m.