



**PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES**

Wednesday, December 10, 2025, at 6:30 PM

Work Session, 5:30 PM, Council Chambers Conference Room, City Hall,
114 North Broad Street, Salem, Virginia 24153

Regular Session, 6:30 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 5:30 p.m., on Wednesday, December 10, 2025, there being present the following members of said Commission, to wit: Denise P. King, Jackson Beamer, Mark Henrickson, and Nathan Routt, constituting a legal quorum, with Chair King, presiding; together with Christopher Dorsey, City Manager and Executive Secretary ex officio member of said Commission, Charles E. Van Allman Jr., Director of Community Development; Mary Ellen Wines, Planning & Zoning Administrator, Maxwell S. Dillon, Planner, and Haskell C. Brown, III, on behalf of Jim Guynn, City Attorney, Reid Garst was absent; 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 5:30 p.m.

A discussion was held on the following items:

2. New Business

A. Items for the December agenda

1. 1000 Electric Road Rezoning
2. Amendment to the City Code
3. Amendment to the PC bylaws regarding Designated Agents

B. Items from the January agenda

1. 101 Electric Road rezoning

3. Adjournment

Chair King adjourned at 6:13 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, City Hall, 114 North Broad Street, at 6:30 p.m., on Wednesday, December 10, 2025, there being present the following members of said Commission, to wit: Denise P. King,, Jackson Beamer, Mark Henrickson, and Nathan Routt, constituting a legal quorum, with Chair King, presiding; together with Christopher Dorsey, City Manager and Executive Secretary ex officio member of said Commission, Charles E. Van Allman Jr., Director of Community Development; Mary Ellen Wines, Planning & Zoning Administrator, Maxwell S. Dillon, Planner, and Haskell C. Brown, III, on behalf of Jim Guynn, City Attorney, Reid Garst was absent, and the following business was transacted:

Chair King called the December meeting of the City of Salem Planning Commission to order at 6:30 p.m. Reporting that this date, place, and time had been set in order for the Commission to hold a public meeting.

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Roll call

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

2. Consent Agenda

A. Minutes

Chair King asked if there were any questions or comments from the Commission. Hearing none, Chair King accepted the minutes as presented.

3. New Business

A. Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance

Hold a public hearing to consider the request of Khalili LLC, property owner, and Jay Patel or Assigns, contract purchaser, to rezone the property located at 1000 Electric Road (Tax Map # 221-2-1) from RB Residential Business District to HBD Highway Business District to allow the installation of fuel tanks and a canopy for operation of a gasoline station.

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

Chair King invited the applicant to come forward to present information regarding the request and asked that all speakers state their name and address for the record.

Jay Patel, 216 Minnie Bell Lane, Vinton, Virginia 24179, introduced himself and stated that he intended to open a Circle K convenience store at the subject property. He referenced his prior experience developing and operating a Circle K Travel Plaza at Exit 109 off Interstate 81 in Radford, noting his involvement in demolition, environmental cleanup, and redevelopment of that site. Mr. Patel stated that the Electric Road property is currently vacant and that Circle K has approved the location. He further explained that the interior of the store would be fully remodeled.

Chair King clarified that although the site previously operated as a gas station, it had since been rezoned and grandfathered; therefore, rezoning was required to reinstate the use. Mr. Patel acknowledged this clarification and asked whether the Planning Commission had any questions.

Chair King asked if there were any questions from the Commission. Hearing none, she opened the public hearing at 6:34 p.m. and invited public comment. No members of the public came forward, and the public hearing was closed at 6:34 p.m.

On motion made by Mr. Henrickson, seconded by Mr. Beamer and duly carried, the Commission recommended to approve the rezoning from RB Residential Business District to HBD Highway Business District.

Roll call vote:

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

Chair King announced that the motion carried. She stated that the Planning Commission serves as a recommending and research body to City Council and that the request would be forwarded with a recommendation for approval. The applicant would be notified once the item was placed on the City Council agenda.

Mr. Patel inquired about the City Council hearing date, noting that he may be out of the country and asked whether an agent could appear on his behalf. Commission members confirmed that representation by an agent would be acceptable. Mr. Beamer asked about the anticipated opening timeline, and Mr. Patel estimated approximately eight months to allow for remodeling. Mr. Patel also stated that the Circle K would create approximately 15–20 jobs due to 24-hour operations.

Chair King reiterated that the request would proceed to City Council and that the applicant would be notified accordingly.

B. Amendment to the City Code

Hold a public hearing to consider amending Chapter 66, Article I, in General, Section 66-11, Application of chapter to certain types of signs, Article IV, Permitted signs by use and district, Sections 66-105, Permitted signs and 66-107 Prohibited signs, and Article V, Definitions, Section 66-151 Definitions, of the CODE OF THE CITY OF SALEM, VIRGINIA pertaining to signs.

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

Mary Ellen Wines, 21 S. Bruffey Street, addressed the Commission and explained that the sign ordinance is a living document that requires updates to reflect changes in business practices. She noted the increased use of strip lighting, strand lighting, tube lighting, and bistro-style lighting throughout the city. Ms. Wines stated that downtown streetscape improvements include overhead lighting intended to preserve the unique character of the area, and therefore strip lighting should be prohibited in the downtown area. The proposed amendments would define strip lighting as white or clear lights only and permit their use exclusively in the HBD Highway Business District and BCD Business Commerce District. Multicolored string lights would be classified as holiday decorations and permitted only between November 15 and January 15. Ms. Wines further explained that strip lighting would not include residential easements as defined in the ordinance, ensuring that residential decorative lighting would not be in violation. All lighting would be required to remain static, with no blinking or movement. When used as signage, strip lighting would count toward allowable signage. In HBD and BCD districts, strip lighting placed in or around windows would be considered window signage and calculated accordingly, with one linear foot of strip lighting equaling one-half square foot of signage. Additionally, Ms. Wines stated that the amendments would define gas pump signs, noting that logos displayed on gas pumps had not previously been included in allowable sign area calculations. The proposed amendment would limit gas pump signage to a maximum of two square feet.

Chair King asked if there were any questions. Ms. Wines noted that two modifications had been made to the ordinance and were included in the agenda packet: (1) strip lighting would be allowed only between November 15 and January 15 for holiday decorations, while other holiday decorations would still be permitted at other times; and (2) strip lighting would not be considered a sign when used on residential structure types.

Chair King open the public hearing at 6:41 p.m.

Dr. Joe Foley, 302 Academy Street, requested clarification regarding the use of strip lighting for holidays such as Halloween.

Ms. Wines responded that strip lighting would not be permitted for those holidays.

Dr. Foley also asked about lighting on a Festivus pole.

Ms. Wines clarified that if the pole were located at a residence, the lighting would be permitted.

No additional public comments were offered. Chair King closed the public hearing at 6:42 p.m. and noted for the record that no written correspondence had been received, which Ms. Wines confirmed.

On motion made by Mr. Routt, seconded by Mr. Henrickson, and duly carried the Commission recommended to approve the amendment to Chapter 66 as presented with 2 modifications. 1) Section 66-11(H)(4) – Holiday and other temporary seasonal decorations (strip lighting allowed only from November 15 through January 15). 2) Section 66-155(A) – the definition of strip lighting to read “Lights in a strip used to outline any portion of a structure other than a structure that is used lawfully as a residential use type defined in section 106-602.3.”

Roll call vote:

Mr. Routt - Aye
Mr. Henrickson - Aye
Mr. Beamer - Aye
Mr. Garst – Absent
Chair King - Aye

Chair King stated that the amendment was approved and will go to City Council.

C. Amendment to the PC bylaws regarding Designated Agents

Consider the Amendment to the PC bylaws regarding Designated Agents. Introduce the proposal to amend Article 2.D. Agents shall serve at the request of the Commission and shall be the City Manager and ~~the Director of Community Development~~ his or her designee.

Chair King stated the 3rd item of the agenda is a potential amendment to the PC bylaws and the Commission has learned of some additional information. She entertained a motion to continue to the January 14th meeting.

On motion made by Mr. Henrickson, seconded by Mr. Routt, and duly carried, the Commission continued the amendment to the Planning Commission bylaws until the January 14, 2026, meeting.

Roll call vote:

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

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 6:44 p.m.