



Planning Commission
Wednesday, April 15, 2026, 6:30 PM

Work Session, 5:45 PM, Council Chambers Conference Room, City Hall, 114 North Broad Street, Salem, Virginia 24153

Regular Session, 6:30 PM, Council Chambers, City Hall, 114 North Broad Street, Salem, Virginia 24153

WORK SESSION

1. Call to Order
2. New Business
 - A. April Agenda
Zoning Text Amendment - Townhomes
 - B. May Agenda
213 Rutledge Circle - two family dwelling
3. Adjournment

REGULAR SESSION

1. Call to Order
 - A. **Pledge of Allegiance**
 - B. **Roll Call**
2. Consent Agenda
 - A. **Minutes**
Consider acceptance of the minutes from the March 11, 2026, work session and regular meeting.
3. Reports
 - A. **Site Plan and Subdivision Plat Approvals**

4. Unfinished Business

5. Public Hearing Items

A. **Amendment to the City Code - Chapter 106, Zoning**

Hold a public hearing and consider the request of ABoone Real Estate Inc. to amend Chapter 106 Zoning, Article III Use and Design Standards, Section 106-304.17(G)(4) Townhouse, of the CODE OF THE CITY OF SALEM, VIRGINIA pertaining to separation between townhouse groupings.

6. Other Business

7. Adjournment



**PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES**

Wednesday, March 11, 2026, 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, March 11, 2026, 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 Chris 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, Jim Guynn, City Attorney, and Tammy Dunn, Permit Technician; 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 5:32 p.m.

A discussion was held on the following items:

2. New Business

A. Items for the March agenda

1. 740 North Mill Road – two family dwelling

B. Items for the April agenda

1. 213 Rutledge Circle – two family dwelling

3. Adjournment

Chair King adjourned at 6:04 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, March 11, 2026, 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 Chris 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 Jim Guynn, City Attorney, and the following business was transacted:

Chair King called the March 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 - Here
Chair King – Here

2. Consent Agenda

A. Minutes

Consider acceptance of the minutes from the January 14, 2026, work session and regular meeting.

Chair King stated that under the consent agenda, are the minutes of January 14, 2026, Planning Commission work session and regular meeting. Chair King asked the Commission if anyone had any questions, additions, or comments. Hearing none, the minutes were accepted.

3. Reports

A. Site Plan and Subdivision Plat approvals

Max Dillon referenced a one-page report included in the agenda packet acknowledging the number of approved site plans over the past couple of months since the Commission didn't meet in February. The report shows no site plan approvals in January, two in February. There were two

Subdivision Plat approvals in January and three in February.

Chair King asked the Commission if anyone had any questions, additions, or comments. Hearing none the meeting continued to the next item.

B. 2025 Planning Commission Annual Report

Chair King explained that the 2025 Planning Commission Annual Report is a report that summarizes everything the Planning Commission did in the year 2025. If the Commission approves this report, it is then presented to City Council for their information. Chair King asked if anyone had any questions, additions, or comments. Hearing none Chair King asked for a motion. Mr. Beamer made a motion to approve the report and submit said report to City Council. Mr. Garst 2nd the motion.

Roll Call Vote

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

4. Unfinished Business – none

5. Public Hearing Item

Consider the request of WILLIAMHART LLC, property owner, for a special exception permit to allow a two-family dwelling on the property located at 740 North Mill Road (Tax Map # 48-2-7)

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

Chair King asked if there was anyone on the staff wanting to say something about this matter.

Mr. Henrickson recused himself from this vote due to consulting with the property owner about the property being discussed.

Chair King invited the representative of the applicant to come forward and state their name, address, and how they are relevant to this matter.

Barney Horrell from Brushy Mountain Engineering introduced himself as the representative of the property owner. Mr. Horrell stated that he had provided a packet with a concept plan showing drawings of a duplex on this residential single-family lot, understanding that duplexes in residential single-family zones require a special exception permit. Mr. Horrell continued stating that the surrounding area has quite a few rentals, helping to provide some housing for Roanoke College students. He noted this lot is oddly shaped like a pan handle, and the property owner purchased a little bit of additional ground from the property owner of 744 North Mill Road to help fit this type of structure. The Majority of the lot is in a flood plain, but the location of the house is up on the old railroad bed making it elevated sufficiently out of the flood plain. He stated this house will not be very visible from the road, and this property backs up to the

Wheeler property which is going to be developed. He mentioned this property is not located near the creek that runs through the Wheeler property. Mr. Horrell stated he would be happy to answer any questions.

Chair King explained that when there are site plans submitted, they go through other departments within the city so that everyone is aware of what is being proposed. A question has been brought to the Commission's attention about the access and the turning of a fire truck or EMT truck and their ability to turn into the driveway based on the plans that were provided.

Mr. Horrell agreed that getting a fire truck into the site and turned around would be very challenging, even as a single-family residence.

Chair King stated that the concern from the fire department was with the width of the driveway not being any bigger than it was.

Mr. Horrell commented that the plans show a 12-foot paved drive, that is the width of an average lane size on a highway.

Ms. Wines clarifying that the fire department's concerns were more with the width of the entrance at the street and the ability to turn into the property.

Mr. Horrell, understanding the clarification, stated that they would be happy to widen the radii out. He noted his plans usually use the standard driveway dimensions for drawings but making it bigger wouldn't be a problem.

Chair King reiterated it was the width of the access point to North Mill Road.

Mr. Horrell stated that there was a little access easement granted by the applicant to the adjoining rental property because that driveway comes through the front of his parcel. The concept plan shows this and maybe the driveways can be blended and take advantage of that.

Chair King asking Mr. Horrell what was going to be done to the front entrance of the property where the light pole is now, it seems to be all brush and asked if this driveway was going to be to the east side or to the west side or will it come straight out.

Mr. Horrell answered that the property owner did hire an excavator to do some grading in the back of the property already. When this project was first presented the idea was to share the driveway with the property at 740 North Mill Road, but the owner of that property expressed he wanted his own driveway. It will be a grading challenge since the part of the driveway is in the floodplain not the floodway.

Mr. Dorsey wanted to know how close this property was to the old railroad bridge located in that area.

Mr. Horrell stated that the property is immediately to the west of that bridge.

Mr. Garst, looking at the concept plan, stated that it looked like it was about 30 feet based on scale.

Mr. Horrell continued that he did have to set the house off the property line 25 feet.

Chair King expressed her concern about turning off North Mill Road but was pleased to see the site lines were good coming out of this property.

Mr. Horrell explained that he only had 40 feet or less of frontage to work with.

Chair King asked if anyone else had any questions or comments for the property representative. Hearing none, she opened the public hearing at 6:41 PM.

Chair King invited anyone who would like to speak or comment on this matter to come forward and give their name and address.

Chair King asked Ms. Wines if there were any calls, emails, or correspondence from anyone about this matter.

Ms. Wines answered no ma'am.

Chair King, seeing no one, closed the public hearing at 6:41 PM and asked for a motion.

Mr. Routt made a motion to recommend approval. Mr. Beamer 2nd the motion.

Roll Call

Mr. Routt aye
Mr. Henrickson abstained
Mr. Beamer aye
Mr. Garst aye
Chair King aye

6. Other Business – None

7. Adjournment

Chair King stated there was no additional business for the Planning Commission and the meeting was adjourned at 6:42p.m.

SALEM VA



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Site Plan Approvals

March 2026	
Name/Location	Type
416 Electric - Two New Metal Buildings	Major

Subdivision Approvals

March 2026	
Name/Location	Type
Steelton Mill Subdivision	Subdivision Plat
432 Chestnut Street	Lot Line Vacation



Item #: 5.A.

AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF SALEM, VIRGINIA HELD AT CITY HALL

MEETING DATE: April 15, 2026

AGENDA ITEM: **Amendment to the City Code - Chapter 106, Zoning**
Hold a public hearing and consider the request of ABoone Real Estate Inc. to amend Chapter 106 Zoning, Article III Use and Design Standards, Section 106-304.17(G)(4) Townhouse, of the CODE OF THE CITY OF SALEM, VIRGINIA pertaining to separation between townhouse groupings.

SUBMITTED BY: Maxwell Dillon, Planner

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION:

In the City of Salem, townhouse developments are permitted by right in the RMF Residential Multi Family and RB Residential Business District zoning designations, and by Special Exception Permit in the RSF Residential Single Family, DBD Downtown Business District, TBD Transitional Business District, and CBD Community Business District. Regardless of the zoning district, each townhouse development is required to meet the Use and Design Standards specified in Section 106-304.17 of Salem's Zoning Ordinance, which prescribes additional regulations related to items including, but not limited to minimum lot size/frontage, maximum density, setback/buffer yards, and spacing between unit groupings.

The applicant is requesting a text amendment related specifically to Chapter 106-304.17(G)(4), which currently requires a minimum 40-foot separation be provided between groupings of townhouse units, unless both facing walls contain no windows, doors, or balconies in which case the separation can be reduced to 20 feet. A similar separation standard is a requirement for multi-family structure spacing in the RMF Residential Multi-Family and RB Residential Business zoning districts, likely stemming from the intent of satisfying previous building codes and establishing ample separation between non-single family residential structures. While sometimes thought of as multi-family developments, the *townhouse* use is defined in Salem's Zoning Ordinance as a "grouping of three or more attached **single family dwellings** in a row...". As such, the a reduction from the currently required 40-foot separation to 20-feet is reasonable, with future townhouse developments still adhering to applicable building and fire codes. Furthermore, regional localities Roanoke County and Botetourt

County both require a 20-foot separation between townhouse groupings, and Roanoke City does not require any separation.

Ultimately, the remainder of Section 106-304.17. (Townhouse Use and Design Standards), and specifically Section 106-304.17(B)(2) which designates the maximum density of a townhouse development (10 units per acre) will remain in effect to govern relevant site design and development. Salem's built-out environment renders efficient infill development paramount to the accommodation of housing needs in the future, and this proposed code adjustment allowing for flexibility in unit group spacing supports that objective without sacrificing standards that protect surrounding land uses.

FISCAL IMPACT:

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Recommend approval of the proposed code adjustment.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Text Amendment - Townhouse application
2. Applicant Letter of Proposal for Text Amendment
3. Zoning Text Amendment Sec. 106_304.17. Townhouse.

Application Data for Application Number: Z26-30060

Application Type Zoning

Application Sub-Type Text Amendment

Applicant

Location

Applicant Address

Property Owner

CITY OF SALEM

Owner Address

PO BOX 869

Tax Parcel

SALEM, VA,24153

Application Information

Section	Question	Answer
Details and Scope of Work	Please provide a detailed description of the work associated with this application.	Text amendment to the Townhouse Use and Design Standards for reduction in group spacing distance.
Existing Structure Info	Year Built	
	Property Description	
	Number of Stories	
	Number of Rooms	
	Number of Bedrooms	
	Number of Bathrooms	
	Type of Roof	
	Type of Exterior	
	Type of Basement	
	Finished Square footage of Primary Building	
Parcel Information	Lot Size Acres	
	Lot Size SQFT	
	Zoning Classification	
	Legal Description	
	PID	
Special Exception Details	Please advise Current Zoning type	
	Please advise current use	
	Please advise future use	
	Please advise designation from the future land use map	
	Is the building or parcel in a district currently designated as historic	
	If yes, describe the proposed measures for meeting the standards of the Department of Historic Resources	

SALEM VA



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Special Exception Details	This Special Exception/Use Not Provided For is being requested in order to?	Text amendment to the Townhouse Use and Design Standards for reduction in group spacing distance.
	Describe in detail how you plan to develop the property for the proposed use and any associated uses	
	Describe why the proposed use or exception is desirable and appropriate for the area	See attached letter.
	What measures will be taken to assure that the proposed use or exception will not have a negative impact on the surrounding vicinity?	
	Is the subject property located within the Floodplain District?	
	If yes, describe the proposed measures for meeting the standards of the Floodplain Ordinance	
	Have you provided a conceptual plan of the proposed development, including general lot configurations and road locations?	
	Are the proposed lot sizes compatible with existing parcel sizes in the area?	



March 23, 2026

Mr. Rob Light
Assistant City Manager
114 N. Broad Street
Salem, VA 24153

Dear Mr. Light,

Please accept this letter as our formal request for a text amendment to the Use and Design Standards for Townhouses under Sec. 106-304.17 of the code of ordinances for the City of Salem. The specific request relates to item (G) Grouping of Townhouses: 4. The purpose of this requested text amendment is to revise the language to permit the separation between groupings of townhouses to be reduced to 20 feet from the current 40-foot requirement.

The current language within the zoning code reads:

“A minimum 40-foot separation shall be provided between groupings of townhouse units. This minimum separation may be reduced to 20 feet if both facing walls contain no windows, doors or balconies.”

We request the following proposed text amendment to revise this section of the code to read:

“A minimum 20-foot separation shall be provided between groupings of townhouse units.”

This proposed change to the City of Salem code is justified based on current building and fire codes and development standards. Please note the below for consideration of this request:

- Sec. 106-304.17 (D) 1. (b) (Minimum Townhouse Yard Requirements) states that “the minimum side yard for end units shall be ten feet.” This existing code language would create spacing between townhouse groupings of twenty (20) feet based on side yard requirements.
- A 20-foot separation between townhouse groupings is the most common spacing under today’s best practices for development and is considered a good balance between developing a higher density, quality neighborhood townhouse layout design and providing green and open space for residents.
- A 20-foot gap between townhouse groupings meets current requirements for fire safety and protection to prevent the spread of fire as outlined in the 2021 Virginia Residential Code and 2021 Virginia Construction Code.

- The 20-foot gap between townhouse groupings allows for the necessary space for emergency vehicle access as well as other maintenance vehicles and equipment.

Your consideration and approval of this request for a text amendment to the zoning code is of benefit to the City of Salem as well as its residents. The City has limited availability of developable land for housing or other purposes, and maximizing the use of the developable portions of the subject property will provide much-needed housing stock for current and future residents. The separation requirement as it currently exists also significantly constrains properties that are more topographically challenged, which is generally a characteristic of the remaining available land, and limits the housing units that can be built within the City. As Sec. 106-304.17 (A) states regarding the intent of the townhouse design standards:

“These standards are intended to allow flexibility in unit arrangements, unit size and yard space, thereby allowing the creation of efficient and economical housing arrangements.”

The proposed amendment allows for more efficient and economical use of the existing property and the approved development while encouraging the development and construction of a high-quality neighborhood. Additionally, the proposed amendment results in increased tax revenue to the City by increasing density in an already approved new neighborhood, and that additional revenue can be used for the benefit of all Salem residents.

Salem, as with most jurisdictions throughout our region, faces a housing shortage. This shortage of diverse homes is a deterrent to economic growth. Communities cannot grow if people are not able to find a place to live. Businesses do not expand or relocate without diverse forms of housing to meet the needs of their workforce. As a result, additional new housing is critical for communities to be competitive in business attraction and retention, and increased density (limited to 171 total townhouses per the rezoning) through the proposed text amendment will help address this challenge.

The proposed amendment to Sec. 106-304.17 (G) 4. of the City of Salem Zoning Code of Ordinances serves to better align the code with current best practices in new townhouse community development while also meeting current fire safety and separation standards.

We respectfully request the approval of the Planning Commission and City Council of the proposed amendment to the zoning code of the City of Salem and thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Alexander Boone
President

Sec. 106-304.17. Townhouse.

- (A) *Intent*: The following minimum standards are established in recognition that common-wall single-family dwellings on individual lots of record are a viable housing alternative to conventional detached single-family dwellings. These standards are intended to allow flexibility in unit arrangements, unit size and yard space, thereby allowing the creation of efficient and economical housing arrangements.
- (B) *Townhouse Development Standards*: The following minimum standards refer to the overall design of the site, and not to individual townhouse lots.
1. Applicants for townhouse developments shall submit a site plan in accordance with section 106-400 of this chapter. The site plan shall include a master plan that defines the entire townhouse development. The party submitting the site plan shall not commence development until the plan has been approved by the city. Approval of a final subdivision plat, pursuant to the provisions of the Salem Subdivision Ordinance is required prior to the sale of any townhouse lot.
 2. The minimum development size for any townhouse development shall be 15,000 square feet. The maximum density of any townhouse development shall be ten dwelling units per acre.
 3. The minimum frontage for a townhouse development shall be 60 feet on a public street.
 4. Along public rights-of-way, the setback for the townhouse groupings shall be as specified in article II. Setback areas shall be free of all physical improvements, including parking areas, except for the following:
 - Pedestrian walkways and sidewalks.
 - Privacy fences in rear yards.
 - Accessory buildings in rear yards.
 - Retaining walls.
 5. When buffer yards are required between zoning districts of different intensities, plantings shall be installed as specified in the 25-foot, or greater, buffer yard requirement found in section 106-402.3. No individual townhouse lot lines shall extend into any required landscape buffer.
 6. A minimum 25-foot setback shall be established between townhouse groupings and adjacent properties that are zoned AG or RSF. Setbacks between townhouse groupings and adjacent properties of other zoning classifications shall meet the requirements of the underlying zoning district for the property. Where required, this area shall be professionally landscaped with a combination of trees and shrubs, and shall remain free of all physical improvements, including parking areas, except for:
 - a. Pedestrian walkways and sidewalks.
 - b. Privacy fences in rear yards.
 - c. Accessory buildings in rear yards.
 - d. Retaining walls.
 7. No townhouse unit shall have a private driveway connecting to a public street.
 8. All townhouse developments shall be served by public water and sewer.
 9. A homeowners' association shall be created for each townhouse development. The homeowners' association shall be responsible for the perpetual maintenance of all commonly owned areas and facilities including, but not limited to, open space, required buffer yards,

common areas, private streets and parking areas, and stormwater management facilities within the townhouse development.

(C) *Minimum Townhouse Lot Requirements:*

1. Individual townhouse lots may front on either public or private streets, parking areas, or other commonly-owned areas within the development.
2. There shall be no minimum lot size for individual townhouse lots. Each townhouse lot shall be large enough to accommodate the footprint of the unit, any required yards, and any amenities intended for the exclusive use of that unit, such as private parking areas or patios. No required townhouse yard may contain any parking area not intended for the exclusive use of that unit. Individual townhouse lots may extend into the 25-foot landscaped setback at the perimeter of the development, however they may not extend into any required buffer yard.
3. The minimum width for any townhouse unit shall be 16 feet.

(D) *Minimum Townhouse Yard Requirements:*

1. Townhouse Unit:

Front Yard:

- (a) The minimum front yard for any townhouse unit fronting on a public street shall be as specified in article II, District Regulations.
- (b) The minimum front yard for any townhouse unit not fronting on a public street shall be ten feet.

Rear Yard: The minimum rear yard shall be ten feet.

Side Yard for End Units: The minimum side yard for end units shall be ten feet.

(E) *Maximum Height of Structures:*

1. The maximum height of any townhouse unit shall be three stories or 45 feet.

(F) *Maximum Building Size:*

1. Accessory Structures: No accessory building shall exceed 100 square feet in size.

(G) *Grouping of Townhouses:*

1. Townhouses shall be attached in groups of three to 12.
2. The facades of townhouses shall be varied by staggered front yards and variations in design and materials. No more than four abutting townhouses shall have the same front yard depth and the same architectural treatment of facades and roof lines. The front yard stagger, when required, shall be a minimum of two feet.
3. All townhouses shall be arranged such that only the front or side of any unit shall face a public street. If site characteristics require that the backs of townhouses face a public street, then vegetative screening shall be required per the provisions of this chapter. Such vegetative screening shall be located within a common area, and not on any townhouse lot.
4. A minimum ~~40~~20-foot separation shall be provided between groupings of townhouse units. **This minimum separation may be reduced to 20 feet if both facing walls contain no windows, doors or balconies.**