



**PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

**Wednesday, April 15, 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

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**WORK SESSION**

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**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, April 15, 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 Rob Light, Assistant City Manager and Deputy Executive Secretary, ex officio member of said Commission. Charles Van Allman Jr., Director of Community Development; Maxwell S. Dillon, Planner, Jim Guynn, City Attorney; and the following business was transacted:

Chair 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 5:47 p.m.

A discussion was held on the following items:

**2. New Business**

A. Items for the April agenda

1. Zoning Text Amendment - Townhomes

B. Items for the May agenda

1. 213 Rutledge Circle – two family dwelling

**3. Adjournment**

Chair King adjourned at 6:29 p.m.

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## REGULAR SESSION

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### 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, April 15, 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 Rob Light, Assistant City Manager and Deputy Executive Secretary, ex officio member of said Commission, Charles E. Van Allman Jr., Director of Community Development; Maxwell S. Dillon, Planner, and Jim Guynn, City Attorney, and the following business was transacted:

Chair King called the April meeting of the City of Salem Planning Commission to order at 6:33p.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 March 11, 2026, 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 and subdivisions over the past month. The report shows one site plan approval located at 416 Electric Road and two subdivision approvals. One being the Steelton Mill

Subdivision and the other located at 432 Chestnut Street.

Chair King asked the Commission if anyone had any questions, additions, or comments. Hearing none the site plan and subdivision plat report was accepted.

4. Unfinished Business – none

5. Public Hearing Item

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.

Proper legal notice has been given, and the property owner has been notified of said hearing.

Chair King asked if the applicant's representative was present and able to provide information.

Court Rosen, 3934 Electric Road, Roanoke, addressed the Commission regarding the current language within the referenced section of the code which requires a minimum 40-foot separation be provided between townhome groupings, though the minimum separation may be reduced to 20 foot if both facing walls contain no windows, doors, or balconies. The proposal is to revise the standard to a minimum 20-foot separation between groupings of town house units. Mr. Rosen noted that this issue arose during work on the Newman Project. He emphasized that the proposed amendment would not affect the approved density of the Newman development. Instead, maintaining the 40-foot requirement would force the layout to expand outward, reducing planned green and open space. He stated that the 20-foot standard is consistent with current building codes and is already used in nearby jurisdictions, including Roanoke County, Montgomery County, and Botetourt County. He added that the existing 40-foot requirement likely reflects an older building code predating modern fire-resistance standards. Adopting this amendment, it allows better use of the land and to keep it compact and preservation of green space which is important for communities. He mentioned the 20-foot proposed separation between groupings is also consistent with today's development trends and the way communities are designed. It is not a consideration for Newman Drive, but development costs have skyrocketed and when houses are pushed apart, it increases infrastructure which is a big increase in costs up front. It is also a big increase in cost of long-term maintenance for municipalities, which is the reason communities are really tending to go to the 20-foot separation between townhouse groupings. He noted that Chris Burns can answer any engineering questions you may have.

Mr. Garst asked whether the number of townhomes in the Newman Project would remain unchanged, noting that the number is controlled by proffer. Mr. Rosen confirmed that the unit count is fixed by the concept plan. Chair King reiterated for the record that the amendment would not increase the number of townhomes permitted on the Newman property.

Mr. Rosen added that the density of the Newman project will not be affected one way or the other. The 40-foot separation pushes things out and it requires a lot more mass grading, it is just not what would be good for the community.

Chair King stated that at least one phone call had been received from a resident in the Newman Drive area under the impression that this hearing was a request to increase the number of town home units, and they were told that was not true. She asked if anyone else had any questions and if so please come forward.

Mr. Henrickson asked Mr. Burns to address some concerns with that end unit having a minimum of 10 feet of property line setback; meaning that a property line would run between the units.

Mr. Chris Burns, Westwood Professional Services, 1208 Corporate Circle, Roanoke, confirmed that a property line would run between the units and stated that building code requires only a 5-foot separation.

Mr. Henrickson expressed concern about the lack of an easement between units and with a building that big and that long, he thinks there should be some sort of easement in between.

Mr. Burns stated that part of the research we did was asking what emergency services need to get through there if there was an emergency or a fire and 20 feet was reasonable.

Chair King stated that was something that had been confirmed by the Fire Captain and the Fire Marshal also. She stated that Mr. Henrickson, referring to an easement concerns her. She noted there is a difference between having an access easement and having the ability for emergency services to be able to get to the property and maybe that is something to discuss in the site plan regarding getting rescue or whatever is needed back there. Not an open access easement for just anybody to go through the property.

Mr. Burns stated that with the way town homes are built and the building code, you have firewalls between each unit, so they are treated the same as single family structures as far as building code and the separation from property lines and firewalls on the end units.

Mr. Light asked Mr. Dillon whether the amendment would affect density allowances for future townhome projects.

Mr. Dillon explained that there is another stipulation in the city's Use and Design standards that restricts the density of any town home project to 10 dwelling units per acre, which would prevent developers from increasing density simply by reducing separation distances.

Chair King asked if there was anyone that would like to come forward and speak on this matter, and to please state your name and address for the record. The public hearing was opened at 6:42 PM.

Kathryn Chrisfield, 948 North Mill Road, asked whether the 20 acres designated for development in the Newman Project could later be used to request additional units if the separation requirement were reduced.

Chair King explained the number of units have already been proffered which means they cannot arbitrarily change the number of units.

Mr. Garst added that the proffer is legally binding on the property regardless of ownership.

Chair King explained that the number of units is controlled by proffer and cannot be changed without restarting the full approval process.

Mr. Rosen stated that open space will be conveyed to a home association. There will be 171 homeowners and there can be something written into the declaration of conveyances, conditions, and restrictions that the land remains open space or some mechanism legally to do that.

Mr. Garst stated that the HOA could address Mr. Henrickson's concerns about structures such as a wall or fences in between those units.

Mr. Rosen agreed, stating all that is included, he is certain there will be language which will permit only certain fences of certain sizes and certain areas behind the townhomes. That normally would get addressed in conveyances, conditions, and restrictions.

Mr. Garst stated that this should allow for more compact footprint allowing for more green space. He asked if the 40-foot separation would affect the cost.

Mr. Rosen explained that about 15 units being impacted out of 171 units is fairly negligible, it is dealt with during the mass grading phase. It will add costs and they will absorb that costs to finish 171 proffered units. They simply feel it is better for the neighborhood and the new neighborhood to have more green space available.

Chair King asked if anyone else would like to speak on this matter, please come forward.

Elizabeth Roberts, 566 Parkdale Drive, asked how many acres are going to be taken up if there will be 20 feet instead of 40 feet between the units.

Mr. Rosen answered that the exact amount of acreage would have to be checked. He mentioned that the original concept plan that was presented before the Planning Commission showed the town home units 20 feet apart. There are only slight changes to the roads to make them work and be safer. There is no actual change in the layout because the original concept plan already showed 20-foot between the units.

Chair King stated that along with the staff doing a lot of research work the Commission has done a lot of research work also. She could not find a single jurisdiction that had 40-foot width anymore. She was surprised to find that in some cases jurisdictions do not have any regulation of width between town home buildings.

Chair King asked if there was anyone else who would like to speak, seeing no one, she closed the public hearing at 6:48PM.

Mr. Garst made a motion to recommend approval as written. Mr. Beamer 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion.

Roll Call	Mr. Routt	aye
	Mr. Henrickson	nay
	Mr. Beamer	aye
	Mr. Garst	aye
	Chair King	aye

Chair King stated for the record that Planning Commission members would like to encourage City Council members to see about the revising of the entire town house code.

**6. Other Business – None**

**7. Adjournment**

Chair King stated there was no additional business for the Planning Commission and the meeting was adjourned at 6:48p.m.