

**BRISTOL ZONING COMMISSION
MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING OF THURSDAY APRIL 10, 2025**

By: Chairman White

Time: 5:00 P.M.

Place: City Hall
Via Zoom

MEMBERS	NAME	PRESENT	ABSENT
REGULAR MEMBERS:	David White (Chairman)	X	
	Thomas Marra (Vice Chairman)	X	
	Richard Harlow	X	
	Richard Goodwin (Secretary)	X	
	John LaFreniere	X	
ALTERNATE MEMBERS:	Michael DeRoehn	X	
	Sara Mangiafico	X	
	Peter Caruso	X	
STAFF:	Robert M. Flanagan, AICP, City Planner	X	

1. Call to Order

Per the order of Chairman White, the meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M.

Chairman White reminded the Commission the next Regular Meeting of the Zoning Commission is Monday, April 14, 2025.

2. New Business

a. Review of zoning update schedule

Staff explained there would be a special meeting on Thursday, May 29, 2025, for purposes of opening the public hearing for the Zoning Regulation Rewrite.

Mr. Gomes explained the Commission would close their discussion this evening on the residential districts this evening. The consultant noted the Commission should discuss some residential district recommendations this evening. Mr. Gomes indicated the next steps were to discuss the site designs, sedimentation controls, greening and buffering.

Mr. Gomes stated that the administrative aspects of the Regulations would then be discussed with permit requirements by the Commission. After these discussions, Mr. Gomes noted the site designs and signage Regulations would then be discussed.

Mr. Gomes summarized all the items that would be discussed at the May 29, 2025, meeting.

b. Review of an amendment to the Adaptive Reuse of Existing Non-Residential Principal Buildings Regulation to add: Personal Service Establishment to the list of allowed uses.

Mr. Gomes wanted to discuss a few new recommended amendments that were discussed last month. Mr. Gomes said the Staff had recommended amendments for the adaptive reuse of existing non-residential principal buildings. The consultant noted there was a new use for battery energy storage systems. The consultant suggested adding personal service establishments as a permitted use to the adaptive reuse for Special Permits or Site Plans just for that use itself.

Staff pointed out the permitted use as suggested by Mr. Gomes would be used for an existing building. Commission inquiries: Mr. Gomes explained if the adaptive reuse Regulation is adopted for the entire City, a mixed use would be allowed with retail and residential uses. Staff would provide a list of the abandoned properties in the industrial zone for the Commission.

- c. Review of an amendment to allow Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) as an accessory use in various zones.

The City Planner said the new Regulation amendment for energy storage systems would be for homeowners and larger Commercial and Industrial applications. He noted that Mr. Gomes had discovered a document from the American Planning Association recommendations for the size of the facilities. The City Planner reviewed the different sizes of the energy storage systems.

Commission DeRoehn described the difficulties of putting out fire of the energy storage systems.

Mr. Gomes outlined the three levels of energy storage systems and the specified zones. The consultant indicated up to 80 kilowatts would be allowed by right and not require a zoning permit in residential zones. The consultant noted residential permits would be with the Building Dept. Mr. Gomes specified 80 to 600 kilowatts required a Zoning Permit and a Site Plan with the Zoning Commission. The consultant verified the kilowatts over the 600 level would require a Site Plan with the Zoning Commission.

Mr. Gomes reviewed the limits, requirements and stipulations for the energy storage systems. The consultant suggested allowing energy storage systems in the industrial zone for now. Mr. Gomes suggested if successful then allowing the use in commercial zones. The consultant noted the accessory use table Section 5.2. had to be updated. Mr. Gomes detailed Section 5.4.7. would be added to the Regulations for energy storage systems.

Commission inquiries: The consultant would update the fence height for Section d.2. Staff would review the inquiry into if the energy storage system was in an Aquifer Protection Area and it melts down.

Staff inquiries: Mr. Gomes specified that 60 to 80 kilowatts would be allowed in the commercial and mixed-use zones and all the zones except for the residential zones. The consultant indicated above 600 kilowatts would require a Special Permit and Site Plan in the industrial zone and industrial park zones.

Staff requested the Commission to review the energy storage system Regulations before the public hearing.

- d. Review recommended Parking amendments

Mr. Gomes detailed the suggestions to the parking amendments that would simplify the process for applications. The consultant mentioned most of the uses had the applicants providing the specification for the parking requirements. Mr. Gomes reviewed the details of the suggested parking recommendations #1 to #10 with more guidance on how the Regulations work.

Commission inquiries: The consultant compared the parking differences of micro-breweries, restaurants and fast-food restaurants.

- e. Review recommended Commercial, Industrial and Mixed-Use Districts amendments

Mr. Gomes went over some of the recommended new uses in the I zone, IP zone and the BN zone. The consultant said the Commission was looking to lower the permit requirements for Special Permits and Site Plans. Mr. Gomes pointed out that large parking garages would now require a Site Plan with the Special Permit. Regarding establishments and building sizes, the consultant suggested to increase these to 5,000 sq. ft.

Mr. Gomes said the total size of the buildings was eliminated. Mr. Gomes added there was a new IP-5 zone with a 5-acre lot minimum. The consultant suggested a property that was in the R-15/BT zone be amended to be in the BD zone boundary.

Mr. Gomes reviewed recommendation 33: RM-5 Mixed Residential Zone. The consultant suggested the existing business transition overlay zone be converted to a base zoning district. Mr. Gomes said the Zoning Commission agreed to change the RM overlay zone. The consultant indicated some uses in the RM-5 base zoning would be eliminated because it required a lot of land and there was not a lot of land in the area.

f. Review of recommended Environmental amendments

Mr. Gomes reported on some of the updated references to the environmental amendments that applied to the APA Regulations, protection of trees and the Riparian Corridor Protection Regulations.

Commission inquires: The consultant said the clear cutting of trees would be prevented with the new Regulations. Mr. Gomes thought if there were problems with clear cutting trees, then an Ordinance would be strengthened by this associated activity with strict fines. The consultant compiled a points system for incentives for environmental improvements. Mr. Gomes reviewed the new Riparian Corridor Protection Regulations that prevented any construction within 25 ft. of the Pequabuck River.

The Commission suggested offsite alternative properties in Bristol to plant trees if the applicant had insufficient area on an applicant's site.

g. Review of recommended Residential zone amendments

Mr. Gomes reviewed the recommendation 34 for accessory dwelling units and the suggested amendments. Staff noted Section 5.4.3.C. and D. were part of the old Regulations and were put back in the Regulations because of some two-family house concerns.

The Commission agreed these amendments were a partial solution to the high costs of housing. The members agreed that the accessory dwelling units should be attached to the house. The Commission agreed the detached accessory dwelling units should be deleted from the Regulations. The members agreed that Section 5.4.3.C. and D. should be added to the Regulations.

Mr. Gomes cited some of the revised Regulations such as the BT overlay zone would be converted to an RT-5 zone. The consultant said the Commission agreed previously to consider the Open Space Development zone as a floating overlay zone. Mr. Gomes indicated the Universal Residential Development/Mixed Use Standard would be convert to the RT-5 zone. The consultant reviewed the process of the public hearing that would apply from the BT overlay zone to the RT-5 zone. Mr. Gomes explained his authorization at the public hearing that was discussed with the Corporation Counsel Office. The consultant made clear the RM zone would be voted on separately because of all its nuances.

Staff suggested for the URD zone should specify 9 units per acre with a 15 ft. front yard setback because of the previous difficulties with the Earl St. plan.

h. Review of recommended Cannabis Cultivation regulations

Mr. Gomes explained the cannabis cultivation Regulations were discussed at last month's meeting.

Staff said that cultivators were above 10,000 sq. ft. and micro cultivators were between 2,000 sq. ft. and 10,000 sq. ft. that would be allowed inside a building. The City Planner said the micro-cultivators could expand by about 5,000 sq. ft.

The consultant compared the requirements of both the cultivators. Mr. Gomes said the biggest concern was the odor. The consultant reviewed the Commission's questions from the last meeting regarding best practices, distances/sensitive distances and what different towns were doing.

Mr. Gomes' view was that the numbers in the recommendations were the right numbers. The consultant indicated that many of the I zone and IP zone properties were close to residential properties.

i. Review of Current Map (digital conversion)

Staff explained the GIS software that the City was using was no longer supported and a new version of GIS is now available. The City Planner noted that Mr. Gomes has updated the Zoning Map to the new software version of GIS for the City.

j. Review of Proposed Zoning Map (digital conversion)

Mr. Gomes reviewed the areas on the Zoning Map that were updated. The consultant reviewed the SDD zone. The consultant, Staff and the Commission would review the SDD zone and the BG zone near the high school during the rewrite process.

Commission inquiries: Staff would contact the property owner's attorney for the property located in the RT-5 zone on West St. Staff noted Attorney Peter Olson would overview all the amendments before the public hearing.

Mr. Gomes noted there were numerous items to bring to the public hearing on May 29, 2025. The consultant said the Commission should discuss any items before the public hearing.

k. Review and discussion of survey results

Mr. Gomes said there were 366 responses in January 2025 and since February 2025 there was a small number of responses. The Commission agreed to make the survey official and close the survey.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

Mr. Gomes listed the next steps were to review the site design, sign regulations, lighting and exterior items. Mr. Gomes reminded the Commission the next special meeting was on Thursday May 8, 2025, at 5:00 P.M. to discuss the site design, sign regulations, lighting and exterior items.

4. Adjournment

Chairman White designated regular Commissioners Marra, Harlow and Goodwin and LaFreniere to vote on the adjournment.

MOTION: Move to adjourn at 7:30 P.M.

By: Harlow

Seconded: Goodwin.

This meeting was recorded.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy King
Recording Secretary

David White, Chairman

Richard Goodwin, Secretary