PUBLIC HEARING MEETING
PLANNING COMMISSION
APRIL 1, 2026
7:00 P.M.

PRESENT

Chair:	Dianna Carneal
Vice Chair:	Maria Pitts
Planning Commission Members:	Myra Dickinson
	Timothy Bradshaw
Assistant Town Manager	
Zoning Administrator:	James Knighton
Secretary:	Patsy K. Scates

ABSENT

Planning Commission Member:	David Hammond

VISITORS

Straton Beamer	Warren Evans
Caroline Amos	Cherly Evans
Bill Woodhouse	

A Public Hearing of the Planning Commission was held on April 1, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. in the Tappahannock Municipal Building. The hearing was advertised in the Rappahannock Times for two consecutive weeks, March 18, 2026, and March 25, 2026, as required by Title 15.2-2204 of the 1950 Code of Virginia, as amended.

The purpose of the public hearing is to consider the following:

An application from June Parker Oil Co. Inc. is requesting to rezone a portion of the lot known as tax parcel 32B (37) A and all of the lot known as 32B (37) B1. The proposed request would rezone the eastern portion of 32B (37) A, the extent of the request to rezone would extend 109' along the northern property line along the alley, the south from the end of the alley to the north western property corner of lot B1 totaling approximately 0.3 acres, located at the 700 and 800 block of Essex St. in the Town of Tappahannock. The applicant is requesting to rezone the property from R-3 Town Residential to CG-2 General Commercial to fix an error on the official zoning map adopted in 2023.

CALLED TO ORDER

Chair Carneal called the meeting to order.

Chair Carneal stated the purpose of the public hearing.

Chair Carneal recognized Assistant Town Manager Knighton.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton reported the rezoning request involves two parcels in the 700 block of Essex Street owned by June Parker Oil, identified as Tax Map Parcels 32B-37-A and 32B-37-B1. Together, the parcels total approximately 0.49 acres and are currently zoned R-3 Town Residential. The property's existing use includes a vacant portion on Lot A, while the remaining area functions as a gravel

lot currently used by Parker Oil. The request is to rezone the property to CG-2 General Commercial, not to introduce a new use, but to correct what the staff believes is a zoning error on the official 2023 zoning map.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton explained the current and proposed zoning maps show the discrepancy and emphasized that the property has long been associated with commercial activity. He stated a 1968 land use map, while not a zoning map, indicates commercial use on part of the property at that time. He stated although the 1975 zoning map still showed the property as residential, later records demonstrate that by 1993 the parcels were zoned CG-2 commercial. He noted that the parcels remained commercially zoned from 1993 until the 2023 zoning map adoption, suggesting that the current residential designation was likely an unintended mapping error rather than a deliberate policy change.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton advised that additional research did not uncover a standalone rezoning request for the property in the historical record but stated that such zoning adjustments can occur as part of broader map adoptions, especially when a property has an established commercial use. The comprehensive plan places the property within the Town Scale Residential future land use category, but staff also referenced broader central business district goals in the plan, which support balanced land use patterns, preservation of community character, efficient service delivery, and compatible coexistence of surrounding uses. He was pointed out that because no development or use change is proposed, he did not request comments from Virginia Department of Transportation and did not complete a fiscal impact analysis.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton stated from an environmental standpoint that the property lies within the Resource Management Area, but not within a Resource Protection Area or a FEMA flood zone. He also reviewed Commissioner of Revenue land records, which showed one parcel listed with commercial zoning in 2017 and the other listed as residential, although both were being taxed based on commercial use. Assistant Town Manager Knighton clarified that the Commissioner of Revenue assesses land based on actual use rather than zoning classification but said the tax records still reinforce the longstanding commercial nature of the site.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton described how the commercial zoning boundary would be defined based on existing plats and deed book records. The intended zoning line would begin at the termination of an alley on the north side of Lot A, extend approximately 109 feet, and then run south to connect with a rod on Lot B1. He stated this boundary appears consistent with the property's historical commercial zoning configuration. He stated based on the research and documentation presented, staff concluded that the request is simply to correct an error and recommended approval of the rezoning from R-3 to CG-2.

The group discussion focused on clarifying the proposed zoning boundary at the end of the alley and how the CG-2 zoning area would be defined.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton explained that the zoning line would extend south from the termination of the alley to an existing rod located on Lot B-1. He indicated that this boundary is intended to match how the property had previously been zoned, helping to reestablish a consistent zoning line for the area.

During the conversation, a request was made to display the map or drawing on the screen so everyone could better understand the boundary being described. Although the presenter did not have the document immediately available electronically, printed copies were distributed so those in attendance could follow along with the explanation of the two parcels and the proposed line.

The group raised questions about the exact location of the alley and whether anything physically visible on the site identifies it, particularly near the rear of nearby fenced properties.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton responded and explained that the true location of the alley and the rod is established by a recorded plat and legal property descriptions, not by visible site features such as fences, sheds, or other structures. The group emphasized that physical improvements on the ground should not be used to determine property lines and that a surveyor would be needed to accurately locate the boundary.

The group expressed additional concerns about whether current items in the area, such as a container, dumpster, and trucks, may be located within the alley or on private property. The discussion highlighted that because there is no obvious visible evidence of the alley on the ground, it can be difficult to tell without reference to the plat or a formal survey. Overall, the exchange centered on ensuring the zoning boundary is properly understood and legally defined before moving forward.

The discussion focused on clarifying a rezoning request for a portion of a property proposed to change to CG-2 commercial zoning while the remaining section would stay residential.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton explained that only the red-shaded area on the map, consisting of part of Lot A and all of Lot B-1, would be rezoned, while the rest would remain R-3.

The Planning Commission members raised concerns about how the dividing line between the commercial and residential portions would be accurately established, since it was not clearly surveyed on the map. Assistant Town Manager Knighton reported that the line could be determined using existing survey markers, monuments, rods, and legal metes and bounds descriptions, even if a new survey had not yet been completed.

The Planning Commission Members questioned how nearby residents would be protected if the commercial rezoning moved forward.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton explained that the property has historically been used for commercial purposes for decades and is considered a legal nonconforming use, meaning the business could continue operating even without rezoning because the commercial use had not been abandoned. He emphasized that the rezoning request is essentially intended to correct what appears to be a longstanding town mapping error rather than authorize a new commercial use. Because of that, he expressed reluctance to require additional buffers, fencing, or restrictions that would reduce the property owner`s usable commercial area, especially since the issue stemmed from a town mistake rather than a new development proposal.

The group raised concerns about how split zoning would be handled in the future, and he explained that while split-zoned parcels are uncommon in Tappahannock, they are not unusual overall, and future use near the dividing line may require a plat to clearly show whether improvements are located on the residential or commercial side.

The discussion concluded with acknowledgment that the applicant, June Parker, formally submitted the rezoning request, but Assistant Town Manager Knighton repeatedly stressed that the request was considered as a correction of a town error, not because the owner had improperly used the property, and that the commercial use could legally continue regardless.

Chair Carneal asked if anyone was present on behalf of the applicant, June Parker Oil Company.

There was no one present on behalf of the applicant.

Chair Carneal recognized Straton Beamer.

Straton Beame asked for clarification about how the portion of the property fronting Essex Street would be legally protected from future commercial development and remain residential.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton explained that the protection comes from the official zoning map rather than a separate deed or plat line, noting that the parcel would be split-zoned and regulated by metes and bounds, with residential uses allowed only in the residentially zoned portion and commercial uses limited to the CG-2 portion.

Straton Beamer expressed concern that the rezoning language could be interpreted as applying from Essex Street all the way back to the alley.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton clarified that the rezoning request only applies to the portion along the alley and not the section facing Essex Street. He noted that the public hearing advertisement had been revised to make that distinction clearer.

Chair Carneal recognized Caroline Amos.

Caroline Amos stated her support for rezoning the identified parcels—part of parcel 32B-37-A and all of parcel 32B-37-B1—to CG-2 but emphasized that the rezoning should only move forward if the boundaries are clearly and formally defined. She argued that the split-zoned portion of the larger parcel must be precisely measured and documented with specific dimensions, including feet and inches on a recorded plat, rather than relying solely on meters and bounds or rod-to-rod descriptions.

Caroline Amos main concern was that the exact amount of land designated as CG-2 versus R-3 be clearly shown on all sides of the parcel to avoid any future confusion.

Chair Carneal recognized Cheryl Evans.

Cherly Evans urged the commission members to carefully examine what she described as a confusing and incomplete zoning history involving two separate parcels connected to the June Parker Oil property. She argued that there appear to be missing public records for both subdivision and rezoning actions, particularly for parcel B1, the former Hinton house lot, and for the portion of parcel A that has allegedly functioned as commercial property.

Cherly Evans said that while an old survey references CG-2 zoning for one parcel, there is no formal zoning case file, subdivision case file, or related permits on record to support how those changes were legally established. She also raised concerns that additional permits for site improvements, such as gravel parking, a shed, electrical service, and HVAC equipment, were not evident in the public file, which she said contributes to uncertainty and distrust among neighboring property owners.

Cherly Evans emphasized that neighbors are not trying to shut down the existing business, acknowledging that the property has operated commercially for decades, but they want clear protections to prevent commercial zoning from gradually expanding farther toward Essex Street and deeper into the surrounding

residential neighborhood. She strongly recommended that the commission require a clearly surveyed and recorded delineation of the commercial and residential portions of the property, including exact meters and bounds or measured dimensions, so there is no ambiguity in the future. She also urged enforcement and review of zoning-related issues such as setbacks, parking, drainage, stormwater, impervious surfaces, and environmental concerns tied to commercial activity next to homes.

Cherly Evans remarks focused on the use of the public alley behind the property, which she said is being used for commercial purposes in ways that are inappropriate and harmful to neighbors. She alleged that the alley has been used for parking fuel trucks, placing dumpsters, storing trash, tires, and shipping containers, and contributing to drainage problems affecting nearby residential properties.

Cherly Evans stated neighbors have sought answers and enforcement for years without resolution, and she referenced a recent conversation with a Virginia Fire Marshal representative who told her the business owner claimed to have permission from the town to use the alley for business operations. She concluded by saying that the lack of documentation, unanswered questions, and informal arrangements have eroded trust, and that the commission should require clear boundaries and address the alley issue in order to restore confidence for the surrounding neighborhood.

Cherly Evans raises a concern that there is a discrepancy between the description in the staff report and the wording used in the public notice advertisement, specifically noting that the advertisement referenced only "a portion" of the property while the staff report did not, emphasizing the importance of consistency in the official case record.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton clarified that there is an existing subdivision plat approved in 1997, but no rezoning file could be located, likely due to missing or incomplete historical paper records. He explained that despite the lack of a rezoning file, multiple surveys and deed records establish clear meets and bounds for the property, including a defined 109-foot boundary supported by physical markers, which can be used to accurately delineate property lines.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton further note that historical land use maps and zoning maps from 1968 and 1993 indicate the property had commercial use and zoning, supporting the current rezoning request as an effort to restore that designation. Other issues raised, such as use of the alley or potential zoning violations, are described as separate matters not directly relevant to the rezoning decision.

During discussion, questions arise about whether there is a precise survey distinguishing the residential and commercial portions of the property.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton responded that while there may not be a single survey created specifically for that division, multiple existing surveys and physical markers provide sufficient reference points to establish the boundary by connecting known locations. He explained that interpreting exact zoning boundaries is the responsibility of the zoning administrator, and any disputes over those interpretations can be appealed to the Board of Zoning Appeals.

There was some discussion on property boundary information and how it applies to a planning commission's review.

The commission members acknowledge residents' concerns about the property and surrounding issues but emphasizes that the commission must base its decision strictly on the evidence presented and the specific request at hand. The commission recognized that there may have been an error and that additional

matters could need future attention, the commissioner stresses that those issues fall outside the scope of the current decision, which must rely solely on the facts available.

ADJOURNED

There being no further business, Chair Carneal asked for a motion to adjourn the public hearing meeting.

On motion of Maria Pitts, seconded by Myra Dickinson, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the public hearing at 7:50 p.m.

Votes were cast as follows:

Myra Dickinson:	Aye	Timothy Bradshaw:	Aye
Maria Pitts:	Aye		
Dianna Carneal:	Aye		

Dianna Carneal

Dianna Carneal, Chair

Patsy K. Scates

Patsy K. Scates, Secretary