

Friendsville Zoning Ordinance Public Hearing Summary

Thursday, June 4, 2026

The Town of Friendsville held a public hearing on the draft Zoning Ordinance Update on Thursday, June 4, 2026. The hearing provided residents and stakeholders an opportunity to ask questions, provide comments, and discuss various components of the proposed ordinance.

Overall, much of the discussion focused on clarifying the intent of the ordinance and understanding proposed changes rather than requesting specific amendments to the draft language. Several attendees expressed appreciation for the opportunity to review the ordinance and asked questions regarding how certain regulations would function in practice.

Major Discussion Topics

Redlined Version of Changes

- Several attendees asked whether a redlined version comparing the current ordinance to the proposed ordinance was available.
- It was clarified that no redlined document exists, as the draft ordinance represents a comprehensive rewrite and modernization of the Town's zoning regulations rather than amendments to the existing ordinance.

Parking Requirements

- Significant discussion occurred regarding parking requirements.
- Staff explained that parking requirements were substantially reduced throughout the ordinance, particularly within the Town Center (TC) District, where off-street parking is generally not required in order to support walkability, adaptive reuse of existing buildings, and downtown revitalization efforts.

Dimensional Requirements and Density

- Attendees discussed reductions in dimensional requirements and lot sizes.
- Particular attention was given to proposed minimum lot sizes for single-family dwellings in residential districts, including discussion regarding lot sizes of 7,500 square feet and potentially 5,000 square feet in the Suburban Residential (SR) District.
- General concerns and questions regarding residential density and future development patterns were raised throughout the hearing.

Building and Fire Codes

- Questions were raised regarding building code and fire code requirements.
- It was clarified that these regulations are administered separately from zoning and are governed by their own state and local codes and regulations.

Online Public Comments

Several online comments submitted prior to the hearing addressed topics that fall outside the scope of zoning regulations, including:

- Residential density concerns;
- Blight waivers and programs to address vacant properties; and
- Potential five-year tax freezes or tax incentives for redevelopment.

Staff noted that while these topics are important community issues, they are generally addressed through separate municipal programs, policies, or legislation rather than through zoning regulations.

Essential Utility Equipment

Discussion also occurred regarding essential utility equipment and appropriate setbacks from residential districts. The current draft ordinance addresses these uses through supplemental regulations and requires certain facilities to obtain Special Exception approval. These provisions are intended to provide additional review and ensure compatibility with surrounding residential areas.

Short-Term Rentals

Short-term rentals were also discussed during the hearing. It was noted that supplemental regulations governing short-term rentals are anticipated to be developed following ordinance adoption to provide clear operational standards and address community concerns while maintaining flexibility for future implementation.

Next Steps

Public comments received during and after the hearing will continue to be reviewed by staff and the Planning Commission as the zoning update process moves forward. Additional refinements to the ordinance may be considered prior to adoption based on public input and further discussion.