



The following minutes are a summary of items on the agenda. This meeting may be viewed in its entirety by accessing the video of the same date online via the Town's website at www.frontroyalva.com for a limited time.

The Planning Commission meeting of the Town of Front Royal, Virginia was held on April 16, 2025, at 7:00 PM at the Warren County Government Center.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Marshner called the April 16, 2025 meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 7:00 pm.

ROLL CALL

Present: Connie Marshner, Chairman
Allen Neel, Vice Chairman
Megan Marrazzo, Commissioner
Andrew Brooks, Commissioner
Teresa Fedoryka, Commissioner

Staff Present: Lauren Kopishke, Planning Director / Zoning Administrator
John Ware, Deputy Zoning Administrator
George Sonnett, Town Attorney
Connie L. Potter, Executive Assistant, Clerk of the Planning Commission

ADDITION/DELETION OF ITEMS FROM THE AGENDA

There were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- March 16, 2025 – Regular Meeting

Vice Chairman Neel moved, seconded by Commissioner Brooks to approve the meeting minutes from March 16, 2025 regular meeting.

VOTE: Yes – Brooks, Marshner, Neel, Fedoryka
No – N/A
Abstain – Marrazzo
Absent – N/A

ROLL CALL

**CITIZEN COMMENTS**

There were no speakers present.

CONSENT AGENDA

- **2500104** – A request for a Special Use Permit Application submitted by Julie Vaught-Happy Creek Antiques for a Farmers Market (raised garden beds and a community garden) at 515-B N. Commerce Avenue, identified by Tax Map 20A4, Section 10, Lot 8. The property is zoned C-1, Community Business District. (*Consent to advertise for public hearing at the May 21, 2025 regular Planning Commission meeting.*)
- **2500108** – A Special Use Permit Application submitted by Home Base Holdings LLC to allow a short-term rental to be located at 66 W. Strasburg Road, identified by Tax Map 2012, Section 3, Lot 31B. The property is zoned C-1, Community Business District. (*Consent to advertise for public hearing at the May 21, 2025 regular Planning Commission meeting.*)

Commissioner Brooks moved, seconded by Commission Marrazzo to approve the consent agenda to publicly advertise for a public hearing in May as presented.

Vote: Yes – Marrazzo, Brooks, Marshner, Neel, Fedoryka

No – N/A

Abstain – N/A

Absent – N/A

VOICE VOTE

PUBLIC HEARING

Chairman Marshner reviewed the procedures for speaking at the public hearing.

- **2500051** – An Ordinance Amendment to amend Front Royal Town Code Chapter 175-137 pertaining to Fees, Charges and Expenses and Chapter 148-1100 Fees.

Mr. Ware explained this was an ordinance amendment to 175-137 pertaining to Fees, Charges and Expenses and Chapter 148-1100 Fees. The ordinance amendment has been discussed at several Planning Commission work sessions and the needs and reasons behind the proposed changes.

There were no comments from Planning Commission members.

Chairman Marshner opened the public hearing.



There were no speakers.

Chairman Marshner closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Marrazzo moved, seconded by Commissioner Brooks that for the purposes of good zoning practice, the Planning Commission forward a recommendation of approval to the Front Royal Town council for Ordinance Amendment #2500051 to amend Front Royal Town Code Chapter 175-137 pertaining to Fees, Charges and Expenses and Chapter 148-1100 Fees.

Ms. Kopishke suggested an amendment to the motion that the line item fee of \$650 “Zoning Ordinance Amendment” be stricken from the fee schedule.

Commissioner Marrazzo moved, seconded by Vice Chairman Neel to amend her motion that the Planning Commission forward a recommendation of approval sans the line pertaining to the Zoning Ordinance Amendment fee of \$650 except for that a recommendation of approval otherwise to the Front Royal Town Council for Ordinance Amendment #3500051 to amend Front Royal Town Code Chapter 175-137 pertaining to Fees, Charges and Expenses and Chapter 148-1100 Fees.

Vote: Yes – Marrazzo, Marshner, Fedoryka, Brooks, Neel

No – N/A

Abstain – N/A

Absent – N/A

ROLL CALL

- **2500062** – A Zoning Text Amendment to Town Code Chapter 175-12.1 to allow lodging houses by Special Use Permit in the R-1 zoning district.

Mr. Ware reviewed the proposed text amendment request to allow lodging houses by Special Use Permit in the R-1 zoning district on property $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre or larger. Based on the applicant’s statement of justification there is a need in the community for alternative housing types that meets the needs of individuals that are not expressly covered by Town Code. Generally speaking the lodging house would be in this category until further action is defined by different housing types are addressed. The Planning Commission was asked to determine if it was appropriate to have a lodging house in the R-1 zoning district on those parcels of land $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre or larger.

The applicant was not present to speak.

Chairman Marshner opened the public hearing.

There were no speakers present. Chairman Marshner closed the public hearing.



For the purpose of good zoning practice and lack of public necessity Vice Chairman Neel moved, seconded by Commissioner Marrazzo that the planning Commission forward a recommendation of disapproval to the Town Council for zoning text amendment #2500062 to not allow lodging houses by Special Use Permit in the R-1 zoning district.

Commissioner Marrazzo said that lodging houses are commonly understood as Airbnb's (not necessarily related to that brand). With her understanding of the Town Code she believes that currently this disagrees heavily with the intent of the district. Specifically these "areas which are delineated, to promote and encourage a suitable environment for family life where there are children, to provide areas for suitable expansion of the Town as facilities are provided, etc." When you have a home that is next door or slightly down the street that has people you do not know and are changing out on a regular basis it is not a neighborly situation. It does not necessarily promote a family life where there are children in this type of a setting. Commissioner Marrazzo does not think this fits in the R-1 zoning district. In the statement of intent it also states specifically that "mobile homes or rooming houses are prohibited." To now say they are allowed seems contradictory. She does not believe this should move forward with a recommendation of approval.

Chairman Marshner asked Vice Chairman Neel if he would consider removing the statement "lack of public necessity" from his motion because there is a need for transitional housing/short-term housing and the ability for shared housing and she does not like to see the wording "lack of public necessity" be on public record.

Vice Chairman Neel explained the wording was part of the justification for forwarding a recommendation of denial. We do need this type of housing, and the Planning Commission is currently working toward this in other discussions. This application is too general in nature and covers a broad swath of types of houses. He felt they cannot approve "just pieces" of this in such a broad swath.

Commissioner Brooks disagreed with Vice Chairman Neel. He stated there clearly is a need and this would be by Special Use Permit. It would not be by-right whereas anyone with property in the R-1 zoning district could now make it a boarding house.

Vote: Yes – Fedoryka, Marshner, Neel, Marrazzo

No – Brooks

Abstain – N/A

Absent – N/A

ROLL CALL

- **2500072** – A request for a Special Use Permit submitted by the Warren County Community Health Coalition for a lodging house at 506 N. Royal Avenue, identified by Tax Map 20A5, Section 7, Block 18, Lots 3-4. The property is zoned C-1, Community Business District and is located within the Entrance Corridor.



Mr. Ware reviewed the guidelines for Special Use Permits noting conditions can be placed on a Special Use Permit, but those conditions must be justified.

The request is for a lodging house at 506 N. Royal Avenue. The property is zoned C-1, Community Business District and also within the entrance corridor. Mr. Ware read the definition of Lodging House from Town Code Chapter 175-3 – Definitions. He also read from Chapter 148-870 – Parking and Loading Area. The required off-street parking is one (1) space per room and an additional two (2) parking spaces for employees. Currently there is not sufficient parking on site to accommodate the future use. The applicant does show a proposed gravel parking lot on the survey plat with six (6) proposed parking spaces. Staff does recommend approval with the appropriate conditions placed on this Special Use Permit.

The applicant Christa Shifflett said she was the Executive Director of the Warren Coalition. Ms. Shifflett explained that the Warren Coalition currently has two (2) level 3 recovery residences operating in Front Royal. One located at 501 S. Royal Avenue known as “The Landing” and the other at 200 N. Royal Avenue known as “The Nest”. The women’s house is located at The Nest which has been open since September 2024. There are four (4) females currently staying at this location and the most that have stayed there are seven (7) for a very short time. There are not enough women in the house to cover the rent and therefore would like to move the women’s house to 506 N. Royal Avenue that will house six (6) women. They would then open 200 S. Royal Avenue as a second men’s house which can sleep nine (9). There is a waiting list for men waiting to move into one of the recovery residences. Ms. Shifflett explained the rules of the recovery residences and the staff that is onsite, as well as the process for individuals to move into the residences and continue to stay there until an appropriate time to leave.

Chairman Marshner opened the public hearing.

Jason Tucker, 501 N. Royal Avenue, Front Royal, VA. Mr. Tucker said he had been a part of this community for twelve (12) years and has lived at “The Landing” for about one year. Living at the recovery residence and having support has helped him to remain clean for almost two (2) years. Having this as a safe space has a positive ripple effect on the whole community.

Christopher Ritenour, 501 S. Royal Avenue, Front Royal, VA. Mr. Ritenour shared he had struggled with addiction for twenty-five (25) years. He has now been clean for a year and has a full time job. Mr. Ritenour asked Commission members to consider helping the community and rebuilding families by recommending approval of this application request.

Andrea O’Bryan, 200 N. Royal Avenue, Front Royal, VA. Ms. O’Bryan shared her accomplishments since being at the recovery residence since December 2024.

Tiara Bailey, 200 N. Royal Avenue, Front Royal, VA. Ms. Bailey explained that if this wasn’t available to her she would have gone back to active addiction. She said there are many people who want to be sober, and she wants them to know there is a place for them to come and be safe.



Hearthier Rollins, 200 N. Royal Avenue, Front Royal, VA. Ms. Rollins said she is a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist and shared the positive impact this program has had on her life.

James Funkhouser, 501 S. Royal Avenue, Front Royal, VA. Mr. Funkhouser shared he is a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist and the House Manager at The Landing. He said the people at the recovery residence are his family. The recovery residence's offer men and women a home and a chance to build a family.

There were no additional speakers.

Chairman Marshner said the Planning Commission totally agrees with what an asset the recovery residences are to the community but their job as Planning Commissioners is to make a determination based on land use issues and zoning principles.

Chairman Marshner closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Brooks moved, seconded by Vice Chairman Neel that the Planning Commission forward a recommendation of approval to Town Council for Special Use Permit #2500072 for a lodging house at 506 N. Royal Avenue with the following condition:

- 1. The applicant shall install six permanent parking spaces and associated parking lot built to Town Standards on the property prior to the commencement of the use.***

Commissioner Marrazzo expressed her appreciation and admiration for the work that goes into these residences. When it comes to the effect on the immediate surrounding area and the welfare of that area she understands that many living at the house are on probation and can have police/parole officers visit at any time. She has some concern about there not being any regular follow-up and it is a blanket open situation as long as the condition of parking is met. When it comes to making sure that the neighborhood remains protected and that people are safe she questioned if they could entertain a follow-up clause. Perhaps the Warren Coalition could invite staff to confirm that property regulations are being maintained or perhaps invite the Town police every 6 months or every year to make sure things are running cleanly and smoothly and things that are necessary for the safety of the community.

Chairman Marshner said those things are not related to land use.

Commissioner Marrazzo said it is directly related to the welfare of the community which is part of the consideration for a Special Use Permit. Within that she believes it could be understood that with a proper condition they could advise or encourage the Town Council to consider the conditions.

Chairman Marshner noted that the Warren Coalition has been around for many years. If there had been any problem during earlier years she believed there would be people testifying to that at the public hearing.



Commissioner Marrazzo said there are times when there are going to be dramatic situations where people do not come to the Planning Commission. She is looking at this as a precautionary measure to add this to a community that hasn't had this before and the welfare of that citizenry will be protected.

Chairman Marshner asked if Commissioner Marrazzo was asking for the motion to be amended.

Commissioner Marrazzo said perhaps but that she proposed this as a discussion element.

Chairman Marshner asked the Town Attorney if Commissioner Marrazzo's conditions would be appropriate for a Planning Commission amended motion.

Mr. Sonnett deferred the question to the Planning Director.

Ms. Kopishke explained that the Planning Commission is looking at the use as a lodging house. If the use is not being used as intended there is a process, and staff would begin enforcement procedures where the Special Use Permit could be revoked. There are protections in place.

Commissioner Marrazzo said she believed if there was a complaint staff would not have access to the interior of the property without being invited.

Ms. Kopishke said that scenario would be for a property maintenance complaint. If the use was anything other than a lodging house the Special Use Permit would be revoked.

Commissioner Marrazzo expressed that if overall proper regulations were not followed it would have an impact on the community.

Vice Chairman Neel explained there are a lot of enforcement mechanisms built in to the program. They have court monitoring, regular drug testing, police involvement, lockdown procedures, and merit based promotion based through freedoms. He stated he was less concerned about Commissioner Marrazzo's concerns.

Commissioner Fedoryka believed that if they can operate as a rehab there are certain standards that have to be kept so they do not lose their ability to operate as a rehab.

Ms. Shifflett responded that those that work in the house are licensed with the state. She explained they are not a rehab facility but a recovery house. Organizations can obtain certification with a recovery housing agency, but they are not. However they follow what the agency requires. They did obtain guidance from the Virginia Association of Recovery Residence on what needs to be in place.

In addition, there is someone who lives onsite in all of the houses. They also have eyes on the people who live in the houses every day. If there are any concerns that someone is altered they are



going to test that individual and there are consequences that follow. Staff take that very seriously as well as the prevention side very seriously. First and foremost the Coalition is a prevention agency. Ms. Shifflet stated they will not allow this to be a place where we know active drug use is going on.

Commissioner Marrazzo expressed that her recommendations were in no way a commentary on the moral character of the goals or intentions of the Coalition or the moral character of the people in the homes.

Vice Chairman Neel thanked the Coalition for answering the questionnaire that was previously sent to them that addressed some of the comments expressed at this meeting. He thanked them for the work they are doing.

Vote: Yes – Marshner, Neel, Brooks, Fedoryka

No – Marrazzo

Abstain – N/A

Absent – N/A

ROLL CALL

- **2500100** – A request for a Special Use Permit submitted by Divinum Auxilium Academy for a private school located at 16 N. Royal Avenue, identified by Tax Map 20A5, Section 11, Lot 15. The property is zoned C-2, Downtown Business District and is located within the Entrance Corridor.

Mr. Ware referred back to the items to be considered for Special Use Permits. Applications are to be based on zoning principles and land use applications.

This request is for a private school to be located at 16 N. Royal Avenue. The property is zoned C-2, Downtown Business District and located in the entrance corridor as well as within the historic district. With a change of use Town Code 175-104 requires all new uses or developments in change of use shall comply with the off-street parking requirements of Chapter 148. The change of use to a public or private school requires one (1) parking space per employee plus parking spaces for a school auditorium as noted in the auditorium section. The auditorium section requires one (1) parking space per four (4) fixed seats in the main assembly area or one (1) parking space per one hundred (100) net square feet. There is limited parking in the rear of the building, but it is not currently sufficient to accommodate the future use. A private school is allowed in this zoning district by Special Use Permit.

In Chapter 148-870-A.4 Town Code does allow that “off-street parking areas shall be oriented to the buildings they are designed to serve and shall be within three hundred (300) feet walking distance. Before off-site facilities are approved, a written agreement thereto assuring their retention for such purposes shall be properly drawn and executed by the parties concerned, and approved as to form by the Town Attorney, and for compliance with the requirements of this Chapter by the Director”.



Diane Schmiedicke, 311 Luray Avenue, Front Royal, VA. Ms. Schmiedicke stated she was the founder of the Divinum Auxilium family of schools. Their first academy is located at 6294 Browntown Road where they serve pre-k through 6th grade. In 2018 they opened St. Edith Stein School for Girls at 124 Luray Avenue that serves girls grades 7th through 12th. They now have St. Joseph the Just School for Boys that serves boys grade 7th through 11th and is being housed in their parish building. They are seeking a permanent home for the St. Joseph the Just School for Boys at 16 N. Royal Avenue. For the past thirteen years they have been committed to children and families in the community. They care very much about where their children spend the majority of their days. The old Town Hall located at 16 N. Royal Avenue built in the 1930s has been vacant for some time. Ms. Schmiedicke stated they would like to restore the building and maintain its integrity as a historic site. In their Statement of Justification that wanted to make very clear that the health, safety, and welfare of the community is of the utmost importance to them. They want to assure the Town that they remain entirely open with aligning their plans to address the questions and concerns of the Town with consideration of this project. They have provided an addendum to the Statement of Justification addressing the traffic flow concerns that were brought up at the previous Planning Commission work session.

Vice Chairman Neel asked how the student pick up and drop off would be handled. He noted that the addendum provided three (3) possible scenarios.

Ms. Schmiedicke reviewed the possible scenarios, and she noted that a map was included with the three (3) scenarios.

Below are the three (3) scenarios provided by Dian Schmiedicke in the Addendum to the Statement of Justification that was provided to staff and the Planning Commission:

Scenario #1 (Preferred): Families would enter one-way onto Maddox Ln. from W. Main St. and enter the leased parking area of St. John the Baptist Church. Students can safely be dropped in the parking lot and walk to the school entry at the back of 16 N. Royal Ave. (facing Union St.) through the municipal parking lot between Maddox Funeral Home and First Baptist Church and crossing Union St. using the designated crosswalk. We will agree to staff the crosswalk during drop-off and pick-up times to ensure students can walk safely into the school when they are dropped off and back to the parking lot for pick-up. Cars will continue through the parking lot in a circular fashion and back out onto W. Main St. using the one-way driveway that exits in that parking lot. Current Drop-off Window: M-Th 8:10-8:20 a.m. Pick-up Time: 3:10 p.m., Pick-up Fri. 1:10 p.m. {Marked #1}

Scenario #2: As the large majority of our families have students across all three schools, boys attending school at 16 N. Royal Ave. could be dropped off and picked up at the neighboring girls' school located at 124 Luray Ave. The boys could then walk to school along Luray Ave. and crossing over W. Main St. to school and back again in the reverse. The current drop-off and pick-up times would need to be adjusted slightly to accommodate the slightly longer walking distance: M-TH 8:05-8:15 a.m. and 3:05 p.m. and 1:05 p.m. on Fri. respectively.



Scenario #3: Families would enter one-way Union St. according to a staggered schedule of no more than 3 cars at a time. Cars would pull into the back parking area of 16 N. Royal Ave. in a U or arced fashion and drop students off to receiving staff. During these brief drop-off and pick-up windows only, the 2 handicapped and 3 regular parking spaces would not be available. Afterward, they would be available again for parking. If at any time families approaching this parking/drop-off/pick-up area discover a backlog that would cause traffic stoppage on Union St. they would be instructed to circle the block until space has been freed to completely pull in off of Union St. In this scenario the staggered schedule would need to begin earlier and continue later in order to accommodate the slower traffic flow of 3 cars per scheduled allotment. We believe 3 cars every 5 minutes would ensure minimal backup and allow for the efficient reception and dismissal of our small student body. {Marked #3}

Chairman Marshner opened the public hearing.

Andrew Hill, 1237 Kendrick Ford Road, Front Royal, VA. Mr. Hill stated he is also a business owner in Town at 25 S. Royal Avenue, Front Royal, VA. He explained that seven (7) of his children attend these schools and he is strongly in favor of approving the application request. In addition, seeing the old Town Hall building being put to good use once again would do the Town a lot of good.

There were no additional speakers. Chairman Marshner closed the public hearing.

Vice Chairman Neel moved, seconded by Commissioner Marrazzo that the Planning Commission forward a recommendation of approval to the Town Council for Special Use Permit #2500100 for a private school located at 16 N. Royal Avenue conditioned on the following:

- 1. The provision of off-street parking areas, which shall be oriented to the building they are serving and within three hundred (300) feet walking distance, with a written agreement thereto assuring their retention for such purposes shall be properly drawn and executed by the parties concerned and approved as to form by the Town Attorney prior to the commencement of the use and a valid written off-site parking agreement shall remain in effect for the duration of the Special Use Permit.***
- 2. A staggered pick up and drop off time be used for students.***

Commissioner Marrazzo referred to Vice Chairman Neel's motion stating "...the parking area shall be oriented to the building they are serving" and asked if he could expand on what he means by that.

Vice Chairman Neel explained it has to do with the relevant position of the parking to the agreement so we're staying within the number of feet required.

Commissioner Marrazzo asked for Vice Chairman Neel's reasoning for the staggered drop off vs. the other two scenarios.



Vice Chairman Neel answered it was for the sake of safety.

Commissioner Marrazzo commented that with the staggered scenario vs. the applicant's preferred scenario with all of twenty-five (25) students she thought that would have a pretty light effect on anything. She did not know if the second condition was needed given the circumstances this application presents.

Commissioner Brooks asked what the concern was if there was no staggered drop off. Was there a concern for the potential obstruction of traffic on the street.

Vice Chairman Neel expressed it was the obstruction of traffic and safety of the children. He amended his previous motion.

Vice Chairman Neel moved, seconded by Commissioner Fedoryka to amend his motion to forward a recommendation of approval to the Town Council for Special Use Permit #2500100 for a private school located at 16 N. Royal Avenue conditioned upon the following:

- 1. The provision of off-street parking areas, which shall be oriented to the buildings they are serving and within three hundred (300) feet walking distance, with a written agreement thereto assuring their retention for such purposes shall be properly drawn and executed by the parties concerned and approved as to form by the Town Attorney prior to the commencement of the use and a valid written off-site parking agreement shall remain in effect for the duration of the Special Use Permit.***

Vote: Yes – Marrazzo, Marshner, Fedoryka, Neel, Brooks

No – N/A

Abstain – N/A

Absent – N/A

ROLL CALL

COMMISSION MEMBER REPORTS

Commissioner Marrazzo said she had completed the Planning Commission Program in Richmond and is now certified.

Vice Chairman Neel reminded Commission members of the upcoming meetings with the Warren County Bridge of Hope and the Harvest Missions Outreach Center.

Commissioner Fedoryka shared that her sister-in-law Catie Fedoryka would be speaking at the next work session. Ms. Fedoryka has worked extensively with special need adults and children. She has worked in special housing environments and may have an interesting perspective from a recipient's point of view.



PLANNING DIRECTOR REPORT

Ms. Kopishke reviewed the March monthly report.

Staff and the Planning Commission are working on the special housing needs. Review of the administrative portions of the draft Zoning Ordinance have been completed. Staff will continue to review those changes and compile them into the document. The next portion of the Zoning Ordinance will be discussing the uses and the zones. Ms. Kopishke said she would like to have community input on uses and the appropriateness of the existing zones.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Marshner moved, seconded by Vice Chairman Neel to adjourn the meeting.

VOTE: Yes – Neel, Marshner, Marrazzo, Fedoryka, Brooks

No – N/A

Abstain – N/A

Absent – N/A

VOICE VOTE

The meeting was adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Approved by Planning Commission

Date: 5/21/2025