

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](http://www.frontroyalva.com).

The Planning Commission special meeting of the Town of Front Royal, Virginia was held on April 5, 2023 at 7:04 PM.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Vice Chairman Wells called the special meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 7:04 pm.

### **ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Daniel Wells, Vice Chairman  
Connie Marshner, Commissioner  
Glenn Wood, Commissioner  
Michael Williams, Commissioner

**Absent:** Darryl Merchant, Chairman

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

### **PUBLIC HEARING**

- **2300137** - An amendment to Chapter 175 of the Town of Front Royal Zoning Ordinance to amend the definition of "cemetery" to Chapter 175-3; add "cemeteries" as an accessory use to churches in the Residential District (R-3), and to add supplemental regulations for "Cemeteries" to Chapter 175-30.2.

Ms. Kopishke explained that the definition of cemetery is being amended so that it would say: "Any land or structure used or intended to be used for the interment of human remains. The sprinkling or interment of ashes on church grounds or their placement in a columbarium on church property shall not constitute the creation of a cemetery. Cemeteries are subject to Virginia Code 15.2-1111 and 57.26 and may be for public or private use."

In addition, the definition of a Churchyard will be added to say: "An area of land owned by and surrounding a place of worship, other than a cemetery, and is often used as a burial ground for human remains."

Staff is requesting that cemetery use be included under miscellaneous uses as an accessory to a church or a place of worship as a Special Use Permit. This is under state code 57.26. Staff would also like to add the following performance standards which would create Chapter 175-30.2 CHURCHYARDS (R-3) in the Town Code:

Churchyards shall be permitted in an R-3 Residential Zoning District as an accessory use to a church upon approval of a zoning permit by the Zoning Administrator.

- A. Churchyard uses shall be set back 150 feet from lot lines.
- B. Churchyard uses shall be marked with a fence or stone.
- C. The location of the churchyard shall be recorded on a plat and registered with the Planning and Zoning Department.

The following will also need to be added to the proposed ordinance amendment: The location of the churchyard would need to be at least 300 yards from a water source (under State Code 57.26) and it would need to be 250 yards from residential property lines (under State Code 57.26).

Vice Chairman Wells opened the public hearing.

Vice Chairman Wells explained how a public hearing should run and asked speakers to try and keep their comments to 3 minutes.

Eloisa Rogers, 14 Little Sorrel Drive, Middletown, VA. Mrs. Rogers spoke about her late husband and his love and compassion for the community as well as his contribution and accomplishments in the community. They thought it would be an honor to lay Pastor Rogers to rest on the church property where he gave some much to the community. She spoke in favor of the ordinance amendment.

Joseph D'Arezzo, 92 Jenny Court, Strasburg, VA. Mr. D'Arezzo said he was legal counsel for the church. He thanked the Commission and staff for their hard work on this ordinance amendment. He believes this is an opportunity for the Planning Commission to carve out a very narrowly tailored space for churches or other places of worship to have something appropriate and keeping with their intended use. The Special Use Permit will go a long way protecting the surrounding properties and owners. He spoke in favor of the ordinance amendment.

Dorian Anderson, 226 Twin Oaks Drive, Bentonville, VA. Mr. Anderson shared his appreciation for Pastor Rogers and spoke in favor of the ordinance amendment.

Sarah Kessler, 206 Pendleton Lane, Strasburg, VA. Ms. Kessler shared that she works at the church and school and thanked staff for helping the church through this process. She believes that laying Pastor Rogers to rest at the church will mean a lot to herself and staff.

There were no additional speakers. Vice Chairman Wells closed the public hearing.

After a brief discussion the following motion was made.

*Commissioner Williams moved, seconded by Commissioner Marshner that the Planning Commission forward a recommendation of approval to the Front Royal Town Council to Chapter 175 of the Town of Front Royal Zoning Ordinance to amend the definition of cemetery to Chapter 175-3, add cemeteries as an accessory use to churches in the Residential District R-3 and to add supplemental regulations for cemeteries to Chapter 175-30.2.*

VOTE: Yes – Wells, Marshner, Wood, Williams  
No – N/A  
Abstain – N/A  
Absent – Merchant

ROLL CALL

**ADJOURNMENT**

*Commissioner Wood moved, seconded by Commissioner Williams to adjourn the meeting.*

VOTE: Yes – Wood, Marshner, Wells, Williams  
No – N/A  
Abstain – N/A  
Absent – Merchant

VOICE VOTE

The meeting adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

Approved by Planning Commission  
Date: 4/19/2023