

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL was held on Wednesday, October 22, 2025, to discuss the Zoning Legislation.

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 7:30 p.m. The meeting was held at the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, 25 Crescent Road, and virtually via Zoom.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Amy E. Knesel, Danielle P. McKinney, Jenni A. Pompei, Silke I. Pope, Rodney M. Roberts, Kristen L.K. Weaver, and Emmett V. Jordan.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Josué Salmerón, City Manager; Terri Hruby, Director of Planning and Community Development; Jaime Fearer, Assistant Director of Planning; Ryan Sigworth, Community Planner; and Shaniya Lashley-Mullen, Deputy City Clerk.

OTHERS PRESENT WERE: Ben Friedman, Chair of the Advisory Planning Board; Bill Orleans; Michael Hartman; and others.

The City Council recently convened a work session to discuss proposed revisions to Chapter 20 of the City Code. These revisions are intended to repeal and reenact the Zoning section to align it with the new Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance, enacted in 2022. Ms. Hruby, the Director of Planning and Community Development, delivered a PowerPoint presentation detailing the zoning authority and the recommended changes. A key aspect of the revisions is an expansion of the City's authority over variances, departures, and non-conforming uses. Additionally, Ms. Fearer and Mr. Sigworth emphasized specific powers that the City could acquire, including the certification of non-conforming uses, the approval of minor changes to significant exceptions, and the granting of alternative compliance with respect to the landscape manual. The Council is currently reviewing the draft legislation, which is also under review by Mr. DeLoach, the City Solicitor. It is anticipated that a revised version will be presented following the incorporation of feedback from this session.

Ms. Hruby, Ms. Fearer, and Mr. Sigworth discussed proposed changes to the zoning code, focusing on three new provisions: increasing the threshold for Advisory Planning Board approval, allowing alternative compliance with the landscape manual for commercial properties, and establishing a special exception plan for high-security fences and walls. They clarified that these changes would not apply to federal properties and noted that the proposed legislation would provide the City with modest increases in authority over development decisions. Ms. Hruby emphasized that the primary purpose of the bill is to update the City's Zoning Code to align with the new Prince George's County ordinance enacted in April 2022.

The meeting focused on the delegation of powers under the new zoning ordinance, highlighting the City's need to comply with Prince George's County Code standards. Mayor Jordan pointed out that certain application types will now be decided and approved by the Advisory Planning Board or the Planning Director, while the City Council will serve as the appellate authority. Ms. Hruby suggested transferring all zoning functions to the Advisory Planning Board to enhance efficiency and continuity, as

they are more familiar with the new zoning ordinance and its processes. The meeting also discussed introducing new methods, such as neighborhood meetings, pre-application meetings, and homeowner association (HOA) and resident registration, which will be facilitated through a website.

Ms. Hruby discussed the process for granting approval authority on applications, highlighting their success in managing variances and departures without the need for appeals. She emphasized their commitment to assisting applicants through the complex process, especially for minor requests. Ms. Hruby outlined the following steps: working with the city attorney to finalize drafts, scheduling public hearings, and transmitting the ordinance to the Clerk of the County Council. Additionally, she plans to prepare process manuals, create applications and fee schedules, and train the Advisory Planning Board on new terminology and procedures.

Mr. Sigworth discussed the need for an ordinance that would be transmitted to the County Council, emphasizing the importance of being prepared once it is passed. He addressed questions about the expansion of authority and the ability to adopt it without fully implementing all aspects simultaneously. Mr. Sigworth also clarified the decision-making authority for minor revisions to notable exceptions and discussed potential staffing and budget impacts. He noted that the authority to make minor revisions currently applies to only three properties in the city.

There was a discussion about delegating responsibilities and authority related to zoning ordinances, highlighting the need for more streamlined processes and potential amendments to align with changes at the county level. Ms. Hruby addressed the impact of these delegated powers on existing protections within overlay zones, such as those in Greenbelt. She clarified that variances for specific requests, such as landscaping or accessory dwellings, will still need to adhere to county criteria. Additionally, she explained that installing Level 2 EV chargers on streets falls under a right-of-construction and right-of-way permit process, which is separate from variances or departures.

The Council discussed revisions to the zoning and permitting process, granting the Planning Director new authority and expanding the Advisory Planning Board's responsibilities. They reviewed a proposed ordinance designed to streamline these processes; however, some concerns were raised about conflicting language and the potential for delays. The team decided to complete the recodification of the city code separately from the zoning legislation, aiming to finalize it by February. They also considered the need for printed copies of the updated code.

The meeting ended at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shaniya Lashley-Mullen
Deputy City Clerk