

The Town of Washington

"THE FIRST WASHINGTON OF ALL"

June 16, 2025

7:00 p.m.

Approved Minutes

- CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Joe Whited opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. Council members Jean Goodine, Patrick O'Connell, Brad Schneider, and Gail Swift were present with Mr. Catlin absent. Town Attorney Tracy Gallehr attended remotely and Barbara Batson was present
- APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA: Mr. Whited motioned the agenda be approved, Ms. Goodine seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. Beard "yes"

Ms. Goodine voted "yes"

Mr. O'Connell voted "yes"

Mr. Schneider voted "yes"

Ms. Swift voted "yes"

Mayor Whited voted "yes"

And the motion passed 6-0 with Mr. Catlin absent

Mayor Whited invited Ms. Caroline Anstey to open the Planning Commission (PC) meeting.

Ms. Anstey opened the PC meeting and confirmed a quorum was present.

Mr. O'Connell recused himself from the discussion and left the building.

- Planning Commission Public Hearing, rezoning spa: Ms. Anstey opened the public hearing at 7:06 p.m.
 - a) Request of The Inn at LW, LLC, dba: The Inn at Little Washington is requesting that 0.4408 acres change the zoning district category for the property 371 and 389 Main Street, Washington, VA 22747; Tax Map ID Number 20A-1-15 and 20A-1-16 from the current Rural Residential (RR) to Village Mixed Use (VMU). The request is being considered in accordance with the Town of Washington Zoning Ordinance; Article 9, Amendments; Section 1, Paragraph 1.1, (c). The property is located in the Rural Residential (RR) and Historic Zoning District Categories.
- Ms. Anstey asked the Inn at Little Washington to explain the main points of the application. They described how the existing gravel lot will be removed and the spa will be constructed in that area.
- Ms. Platt commented that the original plan for the spa contained a parking lot that is currently being suggested for the property behind Patty O's Café. She asked why couldn't the parking lot still be located at the spa. Ms. Anstey replied that she didn't know why the location had moved.

Ms. Anstey closed public hearing at 7:09 p.m.

Ms. Anstey opened the topic up for committee discussion.

Mr. Pennington asked why the rezoning was needed. Ms. Anstey responded that the rezoning was needed to be consistent with the adjoining lot. She also mentioned that there will need to be engineering for the stormwater management system.

Ms. Bruce motioned approve rezoning Tax Map ID Number 20A-1-15 and 20A-1-16 from the current Rural Residential (RR) to Village Mixed Use (VMU), Mr. Pennington seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Ms. Bruce voted “yes”

Mr. Pennington voted “yes”

Chairperson Anstey voted “yes”

- Planning Commission Public Hearing, rezoning parking lot behind Patty O’s:
 - a) Request of The Inn at LW, LLC, dba: The Inn at Little Washington is requesting that 2.0152 acres for the property 309 Main Street, Washington, VA 22747; Tax Map ID Number 20A-1-34 and part of 20A-1-37A from the current Village Residential (VR) to Village Mixed Use (VMU). The request is being considered in accordance with the Town of Washington Zoning Ordinance; Article 9, Amendments; Section 1, Paragraph 1.1, (c). The property is located in the Village Residential (VR) and Historic Zoning District Categories.

Ms. Anstey opened the public hearing at 7:12 p.m. Ms. Anstey invited The Inn to make its presentation.

The Inn’s representation said that the existing parking lot is zoned as Village Mixed Use (VMU). The Inn is seeking to rezone the lot behind the existing parking lot to VMU in order to construct additional parking spaces for 90 vehicles.

Ms. Wendy Murdoch shared the following letter with the PC

“Good evening, and thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Wendy Murdoch, and I’ve lived in the Town of Washington for over 20 years.

I’m here tonight not just as a neighbor directly affected by the current rezoning application, but as someone who cares deeply about the future of this community. I’d like to offer a few thoughts from that perspective—grounded in both personal experience and a long-term view.

Over the past two decades, I’ve witnessed a significant transformation in the Town. One of the biggest catalysts was the construction of the wastewater treatment plant, which went online around 2009 or 2010. Before that, several septic systems in the village—including those on Piedmont Avenue—were failing. The treatment plant solved a real problem, and it opened the door for improvements. But it also enabled a scale of development that simply wasn’t possible before.

For example, the fields behind what is behind the Carter House, my house and beside the brick house were previously used as septic areas for the Inn. Those fields, which are now being considered for rezoning, were essentially undevelopable under the old system. With the treatment plant in place, the limitations were removed—and that has brought new challenges.

Let me be clear: growth in itself isn't the problem. It's how we manage that growth—how we make decisions not just based on what's possible, but on what's right for the community in the long term.

I understand that this rezoning request is part of a broader vision for the Inn's expansion. But what's missing, in my view, is a clearly articulated long-range plan. Instead, decisions seem to be made one parcel at a time, with residents and the Town left to respond reactively. That makes it very hard for neighbors to feel confident or for the Town to protect the village's unique character.

There's also a concern about enforcement and accountability. For example, in 2021 a gravel parking lot was constructed on a parcel currently zoned Village Residential. That work happened without the (IMHO) proper approvals, yet it has remained in place. Since then, I've experienced late-night disturbances, bright lights, and increased traffic—all of which are not in keeping with VR zoning.

When I raised concerns, I was surprised to receive an offer to purchase my home as a way to "resolve the situation." While perhaps well-intentioned, it didn't address the underlying issue: that zoning ordinances exist for a reason—and when they're ignored, it erodes trust.

And trust is a key issue here. The Town needs to be able to trust that any entity—whether it's a private homeowner or a long-standing business—will follow the rules set forth. And neighbors need to trust that the Town is looking out for their well-being, not just in this moment, but for the future of the village.

Currently, the Village Mixed Use (VMU) zoning category lacks specifics when it comes to important issues like setbacks, buffers, lighting, noise, odors, and waste management. If these parcels are rezoned now, those issues will not be regulated—and the neighbors will have no recourse.

I'm not here to oppose progress. I'm here to advocate for thoughtful planning. If the Town believes that VMU is the right designation for these parcels, then I respectfully ask that you first take the time to strengthen the VMU ordinance. Let's ensure it includes the protections that preserve the integrity of this village and the well-being of all residents.

This isn't just about one person or one business. It's about how we shape the legacy of this town. The town's change and growth should not be the vision of one person. It should be done as a community with input and discussion on how we change and grow. What kind of Washington do we want to leave to the next generation?

Let's make that decision carefully, and make sure our ordinances reflect the kind of community we moved here for—and together.

Thank you for listening."

Ms. Joan Platt asked for this request to be tabled. She shared that she had just received a plan for the space two hours ago. On the plan there is a trash compactor next to her home. She said she is not against progress but it is a residential area and she would like to be able to enjoy her peace.

Ms. Anstey closed the public hearing at 7:27 p.m.

Ms. Anstey reminded everyone, we are not here to discuss the site plan. She continued that the town has expressed the need for off road parking. It's important that we take both sides options into account. She said the asphalt parking lot would be less dusty. I've thought if it's possible to move the trash compactor, move it to 211 or wastewater treatment plant. Doesn't make sense to have it along a property line. The fence should be extended along the bamboo next to Ms. Platt's home. Those three things would give us more comfort to have a parking lot back there. They also said that they will add more trees and further plantings for the comfort of the neighbors.

Ms. Bruce motioned approve to rezone Tax Map ID Number 20A-1-34 and part of 20A-1-37A from the current Village Residential (VR) to Village Mixed Use (VMU). Mr. Pennington seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Ms. Bruce voted "yes"

Mr. Pennington voted "yes"

Chairperson Anstey voted "yes"

Ms. Anstey closed public hearing at 7:39 p.m.

Ms. Anstey opened the topic up for committee discussion.

Ms. Bruce motioned to close the meeting at 7:39 p.m. Mr. Pennington seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Ms. Bruce voted "yes"

Mr. Pennington voted "yes"

Chairperson Anstey voted "yes"

Mayor Whited thanked the PC for their service.

- a) Request of The Inn at LW, LLC, dba: The Inn at Little Washington is requesting that 0.4408 acres change the zoning district category for the property 371 and 389 Main Street, Washington, VA 22747; Tax Map ID Number 20A-1-15 and 20A-1-16 from the current Rural Residential (RR) to Village Mixed Use (VMU). The request is being considered in accordance with the Town of Washington Zoning Ordinance; Article 9, Amendments; Section 1, Paragraph 1.1, (c). The property is located in the Rural Residential (RR) and Historic Zoning District Categories.

Mayor Whited opened the public hearing at 7:40 p.m. and with no comments closed the public hearing at 7:41 p.m.

Ms. Swift motioned to approve rezoning Tax Map ID Number 20A-1-15 and 20A-1-16 from the current Rural Residential (RR) to Village Mixed Use (VMU), Ms. Goodine seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. Beard “yes”	Ms. Goodine voted “yes”
Mr. O’Connell was not present	Mr. Schneider voted “yes”
Ms. Swift voted “yes”	Mayor Whited voted “yes”
And the motion passed 5-0 with Mr. Catlin and Mr. O’Connell absent	

- b) Request of The Inn at LW, LLC, dba: The Inn at Little Washington is requesting that 2.0152 acres for the property 309 Main Street, Washington, VA 22747; Tax Map ID Number 20A-1-34 and part of 20A-1-37A from the current Village Residential (VR) to Village Mixed Use (VMU). The request is being considered in accordance with the Town of Washington Zoning Ordinance; Article 9, Amendments; Section 1, Paragraph 1.1, (c). The property is located in the Village Residential (VR) and Historic Zoning District Categories.

Mayor Whited opened the public hearing at 7:43 p.m.

Ms. Murdoch said listening to the conversation from the site plan to rezoning the conversation should be tabled to best understand what the plan is.

Mayor Whited closed the public hearing at 7:46 p.m. and asked for TC comments.

Mr. Schneider said that we are talking about a property that is in Village Residential and an historical zoning district. We have a limited number of properties within the historical property district. He didn’t see anything in the paperwork that documents this property is within the historical district. The Inn has promised in the past to do things and has not lived up to those promises. The zoning administrator needs to bring the zoning ordinance up to date. Mr. Schneider would rather see the request tabled until the zoning ordinance can be addressed, especially for things like setbacks. The applicant can say they’ll do something and the contractor can do something different. There are no teeth in the ordinances if something isn’t done as promised.

Ms. Swift agreed it should be tabled until loose ends can be tied up. Ms. Goodine also agreed with tabling it but not long enough for the ordinance to be updated.

Mayor Whited said that what happens next is not an administrative issue, it is a legislative review. He said the ordinances are intentional vague for a reason. We can decide there is a list of things we don’t want to see but I’m leery to get too specific. We have put money in the budget to review the ordinances. Historically the town hasn’t taken action in the past but we are currently taking action now; for example, the packing shed and Rush River Commons.

Mayor Whited said he is accepting into the record a letter from Ms. Murdoch, Ms. Platt, and Ms. McKee. He agrees to continue the meeting to next Monday to give time for the property owners to come to a decision with The Inn. Ms. Swift agrees that is a good plan.

Mayor Whited motioned continue the meeting to June 23. Ms. Swift seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. Beard "yes"	Ms. Goodine voted "yes"
Mr. O'Connell was not present	Mr. Schneider voted "yes"
Ms. Swift voted "yes"	Mayor Whited voted "yes"
And the motion passed 5-0 with Mr. Catlin and Mr. O'Connell absent	

ADJOURNMENT: At 8:02 p.m. Mayor Whited made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Ms. Swift seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Ms. Goodine voted "yes"	Mr. O'Connell voted "yes"
Mr. Schneider voted "yes"	Ms. Swift voted "yes"
Mr. Whited voted "yes"	

THE NEXT REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL IS
July 14, 2025.

Barbara Batson, Town Manager/Clerk