
Zoning Committee of the Planning Commission (ZOCO)

Meeting Summary

February 17, 2026, 7:00pm

Bozman Government Center

2100 Clarendon Boulevard

Conference Room 311

Arlington, VA 22201

Hybrid Meeting ([Click here for meeting recording](#))

Planning Commissioners in attendance (in-person):

- Paola Amodeo
- James Lantelme
- Tony Striner (Chair, ZOCO)
- Adriana Torres

Planning Commissioners absent:

- Denyse “Nia” Bagley
- Eric Berkey
- Kateri Garcia
- Karen Guevara
- Cicely Whitfield Johnson
- Devanshi P. Patel
- Tenley Peterson
- Peter Robertson
- Sara Steinberger

Staff in attendance:

- Deborah Albert, AICP, Deputy Zoning Administrator, CPHD – Zoning
 - Jill Hunger, AICP, Assistant Director, CPHD
 - Nick Rogers, AICP, CZA, Principal Planner, CPHD – Planning
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Strategic Amendments to Sign Regulations

ZOCO Chair Tony Striner opened the meeting at 7:03pm and invited public comment. No comment was provided on the agenda item.

Ms. Jill Hunger then provided an overview of the proposed zoning ordinance amendments. She explained that these amendments were a second phase of a broader effort to review Arlington County's sign regulations and identify strategic updates consistent with the Commercial Market Resiliency Initiative (CMRI), stakeholder feedback, and staff analysis.

Ms. Hunger explained that the proposed amendments included:

- Greater flexibility for signs in RA zoning districts through expanded allowances for wall, canopy, blade, and certain freestanding signs;
- Expanded duration for temporary banners on publicly owned properties and in public districts;
- A framework for allowing off-premises advertising, automatic changeable-copy signs, and other sign types in specified locations;
- Additional flexibility for automatic changeable-copy signs that change copy no more than once per day;
- Removal of the allowance for certain temporary signs placed by private parties within public rights-of-way; and
- Technical and editorial amendments intended to improve consistency, organization, and readability.

Signs in RA Districts

Ms. Hunger summarized how the proposed amendments were intended to better accommodate signage for contemporary mixed-use and multifamily development patterns within RA districts. The proposed amendment would expand the types of signs permitted, while retaining provisions compatible with existing garden-style and other established residential developments. Ms. Hunger noted that the amendments would also clarify treatment of commercial messages associated with building identification.

Temporary Banners on Public Property

Ms. Hunger outlined proposed amendments to permit temporary banners for the duration of an event on public properties and in public districts. These amendments would improve upon existing ACZO requirements that limit display periods to a maximum of 16 days. She explained that the change would provide greater visibility for longer-running exhibitions, performances, and community events occurring at schools, parks, museums, and similar facilities.

Off-Premises Advertising and Sign Systems

Ms. Hunger discussed a proposed framework that would permit off-premises advertising and automatic changeable-copy signs in specified circumstances. She noted that Arlington currently prohibits off-premises advertising, and that the proposed amendments would signify a policy change from previous approaches to regulating off-premises signs.

The framework would allow the County Board, under defined circumstances and findings, to authorize sign systems within public rights-of-way and certain public properties, including interactive kiosks, wayfinding signage, and other pedestrian-oriented sign types. Ms. Hunger indicated that potential future applications could include business improvement district initiatives, sponsorship opportunities associated with public facilities, and informational displays providing public safety, transportation, and community information. She emphasized that the proposed amendment would establish a regulatory framework only, and would not represent automatic endorsement of implementation, procurement, or contractual arrangements.

Athletic Fields and School Facilities

Ms. Hunger presented proposed amendments to allow commercial messaging and automatic changeable copy for no more than two signs associated with athletic fields located on public school or park properties. She clarified the intent of this amendment was to provide sponsorship opportunities while maintaining standards for limiting visibility from public rights-of-way.

Automatic Changeable-Copy Signs

Ms. Hunger discussed proposed increases to the maximum size of certain automatic changeable-copy signs that change copy no more than once daily. The amendment would recognize advances in sign fabrication technology and provide property owners with additional flexibility while maintaining existing performance standards.

Sidewalk Signs

Ms. Hunger summarized public feedback and applicable County policies regarding sidewalk design, accessibility, and streetscape standards. Although the topic was included in stakeholder outreach, she explained that staff believed additional sidewalk sign allowances would not be compatible with existing transportation, accessibility, and public-space objectives. The proposed amendments did not recommend substantive changes to current sidewalk sign regulations.

Temporary Signs in Public Rights-of-Way

Ms. Hunger presented analysis supporting the proposed removal of allowances for temporary signs placed by private parties in public rights-of-way, commonly referred to as "median signs." Staff reviewed existing sign categories, enforcement data, public engagement findings, Vision Zero considerations, and peer-jurisdiction practices.

Ms. Hunger described how enforcement activity related to median signs increases significantly during election periods. Public feedback generally reflected concerns regarding visual clutter, litter, maintenance, and driver distraction. Vision Zero analysis highlighted driver distraction as a contributing factor in a substantial share of severe crashes. Moreover, nearby jurisdictions, including Alexandria, Falls Church, and Fairfax County, generally prohibit similar signs in public rights-of-way.

Staff reviewed several alternatives before concluding that eliminating the allowance was the preferred approach because it would simplify regulations and enforcement, reduce signage in public rights-of-way, and advance roadway safety objectives.

Technical Amendments

Staff outlined several technical revisions intended to improve consistency, organization, readability, and cross-references throughout Article 13 of the Zoning Ordinance. Staff also described ongoing outreach efforts with stakeholder organizations, including the Arlington Chamber of Commerce, business improvement districts, NAIOP Northern Virginia, the Office of Voter Registration and Elections, and various County advisory bodies.

Commissioner Striner then facilitated ZOCO's discussion on the following topics:

- Commissioners requested clarification regarding language associated with removal of sidewalk signs when businesses are closed and encouraged staff to make the regulations easier to understand.
- Commissioners also discussed potential confusion regarding the use of the term "median signs." Ms. Hunger acknowledged that the proposed amendments apply more broadly to signs located within public rights-of-way and agreed that explanatory language could be improved to more clearly distinguish medians from other areas of the public right-of-way. Commissioners also sought clarification regarding signs posted on utility poles, streetlights, and other public infrastructure. Ms. Hunger explained the distinctions between County-owned facilities and utility-owned facilities and discussed current enforcement practices.

- Commissioners discussed the removal of temporary signs from public rights-of-way, including political campaign signs, community notices, and lost-pet notices. Commissioners generally expressed support for the recommendation, and mentioned the research which showed the limited effectiveness of campaign signs on influencing voter behavior. They also focused on concerns regarding visual clutter and roadway safety, the role of digital communications and alternative methods of outreach, the need to balance public information access with broader transportation-safety objectives, and the continued availability of private-property signage and election-day signage at polling locations.

Ms. Hunger noted the challenges with balancing roadway safety and visual-distraction concerns and equitable access to information for residents with limited digital literacy. She emphasized Arlington's ongoing efforts related to digital equity and public engagement.

- Commissioners requested clarification regarding how the proposed banner regulations would apply to events occurring intermittently over multiple weeks. Ms. Hunger indicated that the intent of the proposal was to allow banners for the duration of an event and agreed to review the language to ensure that the standards clearly address multi-week and weekend-only events.
- Commissioners examined the proposed limit of two signs at athletic fields with changeable copy and commercial messaging. Ms. Hunger clarified that the recommendation was intended to correspond generally with placement at opposite ends of a field while limiting the number of signs containing commercial messaging or digital elements. Commissioners suggested similar opportunities could be considered for athletic facilities operated by private schools and other institutional uses.
- Commissioners questioned how the proposed amendments would work for Capital Bikeshare docking stations and similar facilities. Ms. Hunger explained that the proposed framework could create opportunities for sponsorships and advertising within designated locations while maintaining the existing locational requirements, pedestrian-oriented design standards, and other performance standards. Commissioners saw these amendments as a potential tool for supporting maintenance and operational funding for public facilities.
- Commissioners sought more understanding as to how the proposed amendments would interact with approved site plan conditions in RA districts and elsewhere. Ms. Albert explained that some older site plans contain sign-related conditions that would continue to apply unless amended by the County Board. She further explained that newer site plans generally rely on the ACZO's administrative review processes and are less likely to contain restrictive sign conditions.
- Commissioners asked about accessibility considerations for future public-information kiosks and sign systems. Ms. Hunger discussed the relationship between zoning regulations, accessibility requirements, and other applicable standards. She noted that accessibility features, including audio functionality for users with limited vision, may be incorporated into future sign systems where appropriate.

Commissioners generally expressed support for the proposed amendments and found the recommendations to be reasonable and well-balanced. Ms. Hunger indicated that comments received from commissioners, stakeholders, and members of the public would be incorporated into refinements to the proposal before the Planning Commission public hearing. She reminded

the Commissioners that public hearings for the proposed amendments were scheduled for the Planning Commission's March 2, 2026 regular agenda, with subsequent County Board consideration anticipated on March 14, 2026.

The ZOCO meeting was adjourned at 8:00pm.