

# PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

Town of Canaan (Falls Village)  
Special Meeting-Village Business Residential Zone Informational Session  
Thursday, June 25, 2026  
Lee H. Kellogg School  
47 Main ST, Falls Village, CT 06031

## Attendance

### Members – In Person:

ZEO Janell Mullen; Chairman Greg Marlowe; Vice Chair Stephen Koshland; Doug Cohn; Matthew Macchi; Tim Metzger; Eileen Kinsella; Kathy Clark

**Members – Via Zoom:** none

**Members Absent:** Kimberly Mahoney

### Alternate Members – In Person:

**Alternate Members -Via Zoom:** none

**Alternate Members Absent:** Mark Rosen

**Seating of Alternates:** none

**Also Present:** First Selectman David Barger; Selectmen Christopher Kinsella and Judy Jacobs; members of the public

## 1. Call to order

Chair **Greg Marlowe** called the meeting to order at **6:05 PM**. No alternates were present or seated.

## 2. Explanation of the proposed Village Business Residential Zone (VBRZ)

Chair Marlowe provided background:

- The Commission has discussed the concept of a Village Business Residential Zone for several years, dating back to **before COVID**.
- The idea originated from **low-impact businesses** expressing interest in locating in the village center, but the town lacked a zoning mechanism to accommodate them.

- The Commission lost potential **tax revenue** and opportunities because certain uses were not permitted under existing zoning.
- The proposal is **not** intended to bring large commercial development.
- The concept aligns with the **2023 Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD)**, which emphasized:
  - walkability
  - revitalizing the village center
  - supporting small-scale business
  - enabling mixed residential/business uses
- The Commission emphasized this is **not a predetermined action** but a **listening and learning session**.

Zoning Enforcement Officer **Janelle Mullen** added:

- The POCD (2013 and 2023 updates) both referenced the need for a more flexible village-center zone.
- The town has experienced situations where small businesses were turned away due to zoning limitations.
- Examples of successful small-scale village businesses include **John Robshaw’s textile and Marche’**.
- The current zoning map contains **spot zoning** and inconsistencies between Village Residential, Light Industrial, and Residential Agriculture zones.
- The proposed zone would unify the village center into a single **Village Business Residential** district.

### **3. Discussion of the Process for Adoption – Text Amendment & Map Amendment**

ZEO Mullen explained the statutory process:

- Any zoning text or map amendment requires a **formal public hearing**.
- The Commission must:
  - publicly notice the hearing
  - notify abutters when required
  - follow state statutes for timing and publication
- No decisions can be made without this formal process.

### **4. Public Comment / Questions**

Questions from the public included:

**Would this require a town-wide vote?**

- Chair Marlowe stated zoning amendments fall under the **purview of the Planning & Zoning Commission**, not Town Meeting.
- However, the Commission is far from drafting any amendment; this session is **preliminary**.

## **Why is a new zone needed if special permits already allow many uses?**

Key points from Commission:

- Current Village Residential zoning allows home businesses only under **home-business rules**, which require retaining residential use.
- Some properties in the village center may wish to operate **business-only** uses, which current zoning does not allow without a **zone change**.
- The new zone would:
  - allow certain low-impact uses **by zoning permit** (administrative)
  - require **special permits** only for higher-impact uses
  - reduce costs and delays for applicants

A resident noted:

- Their property has historically been **Residential Agriculture**, but online maps now show it as **Village Residential**.
- They expressed concern about:
  - loss of agricultural rights
  - tax implications
  - inconsistent maps appearing online

Commission response:

- The town recently adopted a new **GIS mapping vendor**, and some parcels require correction.
- The Commission acknowledged the need for accurate maps before any zoning change is considered.
- Commission will coordinate with the **Assessor** to clarify tax implications and ensure zoning layers are correct.

## **Parking requirements**

A resident asked how parking requirements would apply to new businesses.

- Commission explained that parking requirements vary by use and are addressed during zoning permit or special permit review.
- Past examples (e.g., the “Robshaw” retail shop) required a **special permit** because the property retained residential use while adding retail.

## **Home business vs. business-only use**

Clarifications provided:

- Under current zoning, a business in a residence must retain the **residential component**.
- Under the proposed zone, a property could potentially host a **business without a residence**, depending on the use category.
- Higher-impact uses would still require a **special permit**.

## **Village center vision**

Commissioners emphasized:

- The goal is a **walkable, mixed-use village center**, consistent with long-standing community discussions (e.g., sidewalk grants, POCD goals).
- The intent is not to force changes on existing homeowners but to **enable** appropriate uses.

## **5. Adjournment**

With no further comments, the informational session concluded **at 7:23 pm**

**Attachments:** Draft Village Business Zone Expansion Proposal  
Correspondence from Resident Barbara Lobdell

Respectfully Submitted, Recording Secretary, Patti Fife

**Town of Canaan (Falls Village) Planning & Zoning Commission**  
Village Business Zone Expansion - Memo  
**Updated for Informational – June 25, 2026**

The Town of Canaan (Falls Village) Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) is proposing a new zoning district, **Village Residential Business Zone (VRBZ)**. The intent of this district is to support a balanced mix of residential uses and neighborhood-scale businesses within the Village Center.

The objective of this new zone is to:

- **Reflect existing development patterns.**
- **Support village-scale housing and businesses.**
- **Encouraging adaptive reuse and reinvestment in existing properties.**

**WHY PROPOSE THIS CHANGE?**

A primary object of the Town Plan of Conservation and Development (2024-2034) is to encourage and attract business activity within the Village Center. In support of this goal, the P&Z has determined that the establishment of a new zoning district that is compact, cohesive, and pedestrian-oriented is appropriate.

The proposed VRBZ is intended to strengthen and revitalize the Village Center by fostering a vibrant, mixed-use environment that integrates historic residential structures with small-scale, neighborhood-serving businesses. This zoning approach emphasizes preservation-based economic development, with a focus on revitalization and adaptive reuse, thereby reinforcing the Village Center as an active and sustainable community center.

Housing opportunities are intended to be concentrated within the Village Center where infrastructure, services, businesses, and community facilities already exist. Multifamily and cluster housing developments would require Special Permit approval by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

**The proposed zoning change does not require any property owner to alter the use of their property. Existing residential and business uses may continue as they do today. Properties will remain subject to all applicable health, safety, environmental, building, fire, wetlands, and state permitting requirements.**

## WHAT USES WILL BE ALLOWED IN THIS ZONE?

The Village Residential Business Zone will allow for the following uses:

### BY RIGHT

Open Space

Agricultural Uses/Farming

### BY ZONING PERMIT

Single-family dwelling

Two-family dwelling (Duplex)

Retail stores

Office/Financial Institutions

Personal Service Establishments

Educational, philanthropic, or non-profit related use

Restaurants & Cafes, including outdoor dining

Traditional Lodging, such as hotels & inns

### BY SPECIAL PERMIT:

Governmental, municipal buildings or Town-related use

Club (the use of firearms or internal combustion engines will not be permitted)

Research & Development

Automobile Sales and Service Facilities

Contractor's Yards/Lumber Yards

Mixed-use

Small-scale manufacturing, processing, packaging, or assembly of goods including Food & Beverage

Manufacturer or Product Manufacturer

Multi-family dwellings (3 or more units)

Cluster Housing

## WHAT ARE THE DIMENSIONAL REQUIREMENTS OF THIS NEW ZONE?

Minimum Lot Size 5,000 square feet

Minimum Frontage 50 feet

Front Setback 0

Side Yard Setback 5 feet

Rear Yard Setback 10 feet

Maximum Building Height 35 feet

Maximum Building Coverage n/a

Maximum Impervious Coverage n/a

These dimensional standards are intended to reflect the traditional development pattern found within Falls Village, where buildings are generally located closer to roads and neighboring structures than in rural residential areas.

**DEFINITIONS TO ADD:**

Allowable uses that haven't yet been defined will now be defined within Section 8 of the Zoning Regulations.

Contractor's Yard/Lumber Yard – a site where a building trade or contractor stores material and equipment or where a contractor performs shop or assembly work. This use may include a retail component.

Mixed-Use – A development containing both residential and nonresidential uses within the same building or on the same lot.

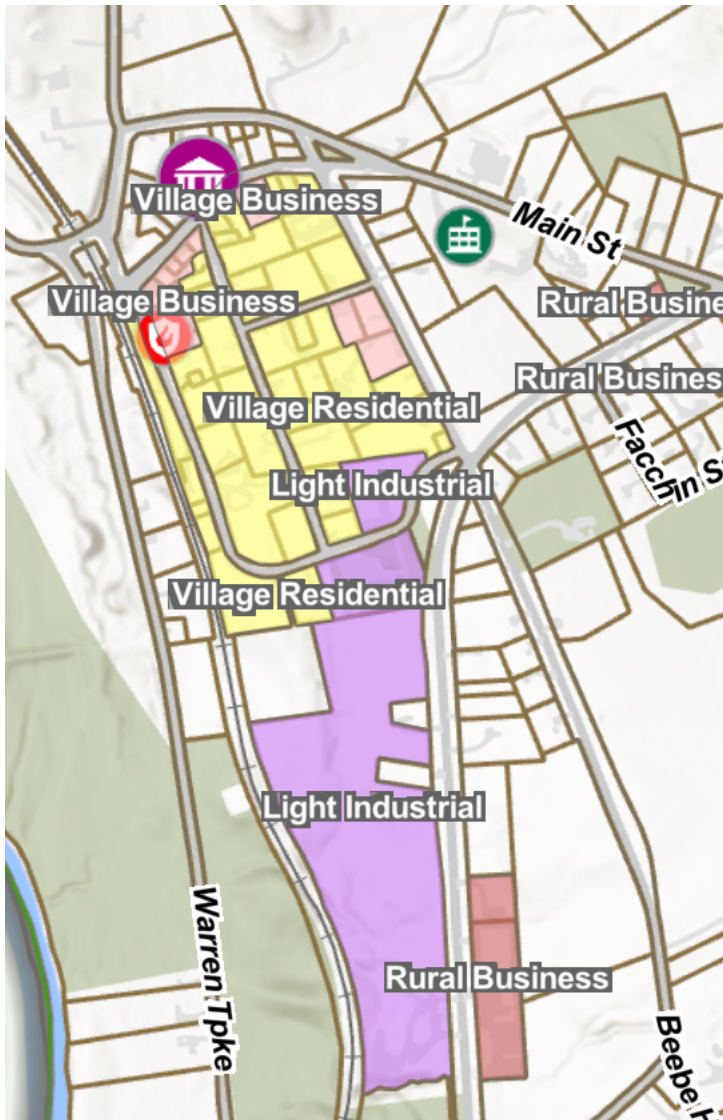
Small-scale Manufacturing – the production of goods on a small scale (within a building of less than 20,000 square feet), typically using limited resources and with a focus on local markets. This type of manufacturing involves the use of manual labor and simple machinery or tools. Small scale manufacturers may produce a wide range of products, including food, textiles, handicrafts, and other consumer goods.

Multi-family Dwelling – A residential building containing three or more dwelling units.

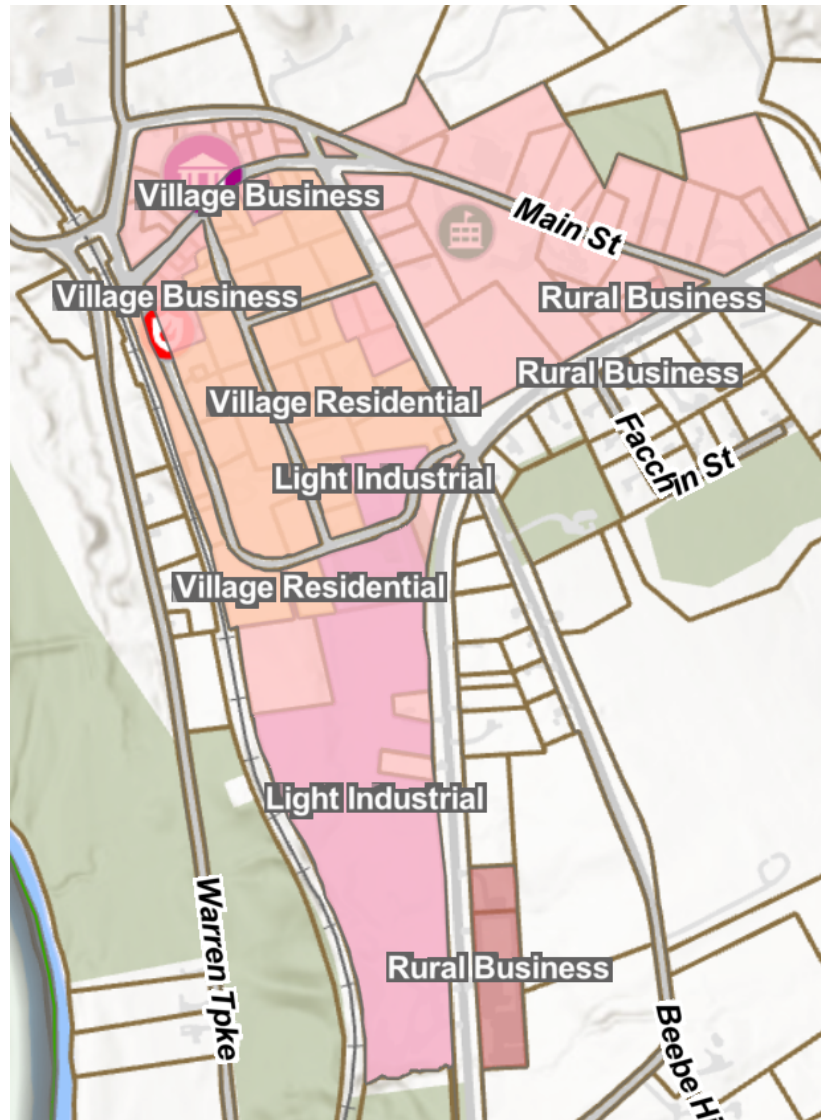
Cluster Housing – A residential development consisting of multiple dwelling units arranged in a coordinated manner on a single parcel with shared open space, common facilities, or amenities.

**WHERE WILL THIS DISTRICT BE LOCATED?**

**CURRENT ZONING MAP**



**PROPOSED ZONING MAP**



## WHAT OTHER ZONING REGULATIONS WILL BE AFFECTED BY THIS CHANGE?

All properties that were formerly in the Light Industrial Zone will now be rezoned as properties within the Village Business Residential Zone. All allowable uses within the Light Industrial Zone will become allowable uses in the VRBZ. Allowable uses that haven't yet been defined will now be defined within Section 8 of the Zoning Regulations, as mentioned above.

The existing Light Industrial Zone has not developed in a manner consistent with traditional industrial activity. Over time, the area has evolved into a mix of residential, commercial, civic, and small business uses. **The proposed VRBZ is intended to better reflect existing development patterns while providing flexibility for future investment and adaptive reuse.**

## WHAT WILL THIS ACCOMPLISH?

The proposed VRBZ is intended to:

- Encourage investment in existing buildings.
- Support locally owned businesses and services.
- Promote adaptive reuse of historic structures.
- Expand housing opportunities within the Village Center.
- Create a walkable mixed-use environment.
- Align zoning regulations with the goals of the 2024-2034 Plan of Conservation and Development.

The proposed Village Residential Business Zone is intended to better align zoning regulations with the existing character and development pattern of the Village Center while providing opportunities for housing, small businesses, adaptive reuse, and future investment. The Planning and Zoning Commission welcomes public input and encourages residents to participate in the public hearing process.

Date: June 16, 2026

RE: Town of Canaan/Falls Village, CT

Planning & Zoning - Proposed Village Residential Business Zone (VRBZ) change

I was completely blindsided by the April Planning & Zoning letter notifying me of the Proposed Village Residential Business Zone (VRBZ) change. I am opposed to the Proposed Village Residential Business Zone (VRBZ) change for the following reasons:

1. I purchased my property in 2024 because it is in a quiet residential neighborhood. My property is zoned "Residential/Agricultural". I did not anticipate this major change of zoning to a "Residential Business Zone". Had I know that this property could/would be rezoned to "Business", I would not have purchased it.
2. Since moving to Falls Village, I have integrated into the community through volunteering in town events, serving on the Board of the local Historical Society, as a Trustee in the Falls Village Congregational Church, and donating the use of my field for the town Car Show and the upcoming 250<sup>th</sup> Celebration. I am concerned that this new Business Zone classification will not allow continued use of my field for town events or allow my field to be used for existing permitted Agricultural purposes.
3. My property is incorrectly designated as "Village Residential" on the on-line map of Current Zoning, but is correctly noted as "Residential/Agricultural" in the map that was mailed in April. Either my property should not be included in the Proposed Zoning change or the on-line map should be correctly noted.
4. The zoning description of my property as Residential/Agriculture would completely disappear from land records if this proposal is approved, to be replaced with "Residential Business".
5. The existing Zoning Regulations, Rev. May 18, 2026, already accommodate Business uses without turning 50+ residential properties into a "Business Zone".
6. I do not want businesses as neighbors. This Proposed Village Residential Business Zone will, I believe, de-value my property. Who wants to buy a property with such an open-ended zoning categorization? Will there be a fast food outlet, another antique shop, or a used car lot potentially built next-door in this formerly quiet residential neighborhood?
7. This proposed Business Zone change will completely alter the "town's proud country heritage and rural character" (quoted from the Zoning Regulations Preamble). The change may not happen immediately, but the vast majority of the residents are over 65 years old and their properties will change hands in the next few years, hopefully not to a "business" developer.
8. Taxes: since purchasing the property, my property taxes have gone up almost \$1000/year and this new proposed "Business Zone" will likely cause an even larger tax increase. The P&Z announcement says nothing about increased taxes, but in my experience Business Zoned properties have higher tax rates than Residential or Agriculture Zoned properties.

Again, I am opposed to the Proposed Village Residential Business Zone (VRBZ) change.

Barbara Lobdell  
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