



Government of the District of Columbia ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3/4G

Chevy Chase, Barnaby Woods, Hawthorne

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COMMISSIONERS

3/4G-01 - Lisa R. Gore, Chair 3/4G-02 - Bruce Sherman, Vice Chair 3/4G-03 - Carol Grunewald
3/4G-04 - Laura Phinizy 3/4G-05 - Karrenthya Simmons, Treasurer
3/4G-06 - Peter Gosselin 3/4G-07 - Elizabeth Nagy, Secretary

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3/4G Special Meeting Minutes November 3, 2025, 12:30 PM – Virtual via Zoom

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

- Commissioner Lisa Gore (ANC 3/4G-01, Chair)
- Commissioner Bruce Sherman (ANC 3/4G-02, Vice Chair)
- Commissioner Carol Grunewald (ANC 3/4G-03)
- Commissioner Laura Phinizy (ANC 3/4G-04)
- Commissioner Karrenthya Simmons (ANC 3/4G-05, Treasurer)
- Commissioner Peter Gosselin (ANC 3/4G-06)
- Commissioner Elizabeth Nagy (ANC 3/4G-07, Secretary)

Number of participants online: Approximately 53 participants, including Commissioners

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Gore called the meeting to order at 12:36 PM.

I. OPENING BUSINESS

A. MEETING PROCEDURES

Chair Gore outlined virtual meeting procedures and noted that the meeting format would differ from typical meetings to accommodate Joel Lawson from the Office of Planning, who was available until 2:00 PM. She requested that commissioners and community members limit comments to one to two minutes to ensure adequate time for community questions.

B. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The Commission considered the single-item agenda regarding omnibus zoning and other proposed legislation.

Commissioner Gore moved to adopt the agenda. The motion was seconded and adopted unanimously (7-0-0).

II. MAIN TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

A. PRESENTATION - OMNIBUS ZONING TEXT AMENDMENTS (CASE 2512)

Joel Lawson, Office of Planning, presented information on proposed omnibus zoning text amendments. The discussion focused on provisions most relevant to ANC 3/4G, particularly those affecting R1A, R1B, R2, R3, RA, and RF zones.

1. OVERVIEW AND GENERAL PROVISIONS

Lawson explained that most proposals are citywide and intended to add clarity, provide certainty for homeowners, and simplify existing regulations. He emphasized that the amendments do not significantly affect height, density, or use in most cases.

Commissioners identified three key proposals affecting the majority of ANC 3/4G:

- Omnibus Proposal #15: Relief from front yard setbacks for new construction
- Omnibus Proposal #16: Increase accessory building size in R and RF zones
- Omnibus Proposal #17: Add accessory building side and rear setbacks in R zones

Additional relevant provisions discussed:

- Ground floor deck regulations
- Accessory apartments and buildings
- Connecticut Avenue neighborhood mixed-use zone changes
- Recreation facility light poles (Provision #3)
- Garage door height and setback corrections (Provision #11)
- Parking requirement changes
- Alley lot provisions

2. ACCESSORY BUILDING SIZE (PROVISION #16)

Lawson explained that current regulations limit accessory buildings to 450 square feet of footprint in low-density zones, with a height limit of 22 feet. The proposal would increase the permitted footprint to:

- 600 square feet in R1 and R2 zones (from 450)
- 550 square feet in R3 and RF zones (from 450)

The intent is to allow adequate space for accessory dwelling units within accessory buildings, addressing concerns raised in numerous Board of Zoning Adjustment cases. Lawson noted that the District's current accessory building size limits are smaller than those in surrounding jurisdictions.

Commissioners and community members raised concerns about:

- Impact on open space and neighborhood character
- The potential for oversized structures eliminating yards
- Developer-driven applications rather than genuine homeowner needs
- Light, air, and privacy impacts on adjacent properties

Lawson clarified that lot occupancy requirements would not change, rear yard requirements would remain, and open space requirements would be preserved.

3. ACCESSORY BUILDING SETBACKS (PROVISION #17)

Originally, OP proposed setback requirements for both R and RF zones. Following feedback from other ANCs with significant RF zoning, the proposal was modified.

Current proposal:

- RF zones: No setback requirement (removed from proposal)
- R zones: 3-foot setback required from side and rear property lines when those lines abut another property
- No setback required when side or rear property lines face streets or alleys
- Existing 7.5-foot setback from alley centerline remains unchanged

4. FRONT YARD SETBACKS (PROVISION #15)

The proposal would change the relief process from variance to special exception for properties seeking relief from front setback requirements.

Current regulation: New construction must be set back from the front lot line within the range of existing front setbacks of residential buildings on the same block face.

The proposed change would make it easier to obtain relief through special exception rather than the more stringent variance process. The substantive setback requirement itself would not change.

Commissioners Grunewald and Gosselin expressed concerns that easier relief could lead to "front setback creep" over time. They noted that each building granted relief effectively resets the acceptable distance, potentially changing the entire streetscape character of blocks over time.

Commissioner Sherman noted that the regulation itself maintains protection by requiring new construction to remain within the range of existing setbacks on the block.

5. RECREATION FACILITY LIGHT POLES (PROVISION #3)

The proposal addresses light poles for District recreation facilities and public schools, allowing poles up to 90 feet in height as a matter of right with a one-to-one setback from property lines.

Commissioner Phinizy raised significant concerns regarding Lafayette Park and Lafayette Elementary School, noting:

- Community meetings in 2014, 2018, and 2019 included commitments for no sports lighting
- The school was not allowed a third story due to historic preservation concerns
- The proposed 90-foot poles appear inconsistent with prior commitments and historic district guidelines
- Department of Parks and Recreation guidelines referenced in the proposal have not been made publicly available for review

Lawson acknowledged he did not have the DPR guidelines readily available but committed to providing them. He noted that zoning does not trump historic preservation requirements, and projects would still require Historic Preservation Office review depending on what is designated (building vs. property).

6. GARAGE DOOR HEIGHT AND SETBACK (PROVISION #11)

Under the 1958 zoning regulations, minimum garage door height and setback requirements applied to large parking structures. When translated to ZR16, these were inadvertently applied to residential garages on private property.

The proposal would maintain the regulation for large parking structures but exempt residential garages, returning to the original intent of the 1958 regulations.

7. PARKING REQUIREMENTS

The proposal would allow buildings constructed under 1958 regulations to conform to current parking requirements, which in most zones are less stringent than the 1958 requirements.

Current practice requires buildings to maintain 1958-era parking levels for the life of the building. The change would primarily affect structured parking in multi-unit zones (RA2, RA4), potentially allowing conversion of excess parking spaces to other uses such as green space.

Commissioners questioned whether this could enable conversion of parking to housing. Lawson indicated this would be practically unlikely but that the intent was to allow conformance with current parking regulations.

8. GROUND FLOOR DECKS

Lawson explained that ground-floor decks off the house were not regulated under old regulations but are regulated under current ones. The proposal would ease restrictions on ground-floor decks, with greater benefit for properties with smaller lots that are more constrained by lot occupancy requirements.

9. ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY CONCERNS RAISED

Advisory Neighborhood Commission Notification Process:

Commissioner Gore raised concerns about changes to ANC notification. Lawson explained that the major change would be that projects currently requiring BZA approval (which triggers ANC notification) would become by-right under building permits (which do not trigger ANC notification).

Examples include:

- Accessory buildings between 450-600 square feet (currently require BZA, would be by-right)
- Various other provisions throughout the omnibus amendments

Lawson emphasized that the by-right threshold would still exist, and projects exceeding those thresholds would continue to require BZA approval and ANC notification. He noted that many ANCs have expressed support for reducing non-contentious cases that occupy agenda time.

Infrastructure and School Capacity:

Commissioners Phinizy and Nagy raised concerns about infrastructure impacts, particularly school capacity. Lawson indicated that DCPS is notified of major projects but

does not typically comment because their planning process looks at broader trends rather than individual small projects. He noted that the RA1 zone discussion (allowing up to four units by right) is a separate text amendment from the omnibus.

Process and Timeline Concerns:

Multiple commissioners and community members expressed frustration with:

- Limited time to review complex zoning proposals
- Lack of adequate community outreach and education
- Hearings beginning before ANCs had adequate time to consult constituents
- The first outreach occurring in June 2025, with the proposal published June 30, followed by August recess
- Difficulty understanding which specific properties and zones would be affected
- Absence of comprehensive impact analysis

Lawson noted that OP's first outreach to ANCs was in June 2025, with follow-up in October. He emphasized that the meeting was held at the ANC's request, not OP's requirement.

Developer vs. Homeowner Benefits:

Several community members, including Mary Rouse, questioned whether the changes primarily benefit developers rather than genuine homeowners, noting that ADU construction is expensive and development patterns in the neighborhood suggest developer-driven projects.

Comprehensive Plan Consistency:

Community members questioned why these changes could not wait for the upcoming comprehensive plan update process beginning this year. Lawson responded that OP believes the proposals are consistent with and further the current comprehensive plan's policy direction, and that the relatively targeted nature of the provisions did not warrant delay.

Split-Zoned Lot Provision (Provision #1):

Community members asked about the split-zoned lot provision and its potential application to the Chevy Chase Civic Core site. Lawson clarified that this provision does not rezone property but provides clearer direction for development on split-zoned properties. He noted that the Civic Core is no longer split-zoned following recent map amendments.

Density and Neighborhood Character:

Commissioner Nagy and several community members expressed concerns about a broader pattern of increasing density in DC and the cumulative effect of incremental zoning changes. They noted concerns about the erosion of adjacent homeowner rights to light, air, and privacy as more development becomes by-right rather than subject to BZA review.

B. COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION AND NEXT STEPS

Following Lawson's departure at 2:00 PM, commissioners discussed how to proceed with providing input before the comment period closes November 13, 2025.

Commissioner Grunewald expressed frustration with the rushed timeline, noting:

- The proposal was published June 30, 2025
- The ANC was in August recess

- Initial OP outreach was difficult to identify in communications
- First meaningful opportunity for detailed discussion with OP was this meeting
- Hearings had already begun before adequate ANC consultation

Commissioners discussed potential approaches:

- Commissioner Grunewald offered to draft testimony focusing on the three provisions most affecting her SMD (provisions 15, 16, and 17)
- Commissioner Sherman indicated interest in surveying constituents on key provisions
- Commissioners discussed whether to pursue ANC-wide or SMD-specific surveys
- The Commission agreed to work toward a resolution for the November 10, 2025, regular meeting

Commissioner Nagy noted that the Commission need not agree on all points and could present areas of disagreement in testimony while still making views known.

Chair Gore emphasized the importance of:

- Getting Commission input into the record before the November 13 deadline
- Focusing the November 10 meeting agenda primarily on this matter
- Using the oversight hearing process to address concerns about OP's consultation timeline and process with ANCs

The Commission agreed that this issue should be a priority for program oversight hearings for the Office of Planning and Zoning Commission.

Ron Kahn noted for the record his view that Joel Lawson's framing of the changes as "common sense overdue improvements" reflected a warped lens that failed to adequately account for community and neighbor interests versus developer interests.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 2:24 PM.

Approved on December 8, 2025

Attested by:


box SIGN 187YZ365-172ZXYX9
Lisa R. Gore, Chair


box SIGN 4ZRVL67X-172ZXYX9
Elizabeth A. Nagy, Secretary

Dec 15, 2025
Date

Dec 15, 2025
Date