

**Albemarle County Planning Commission
Final Minutes Regular Meeting
March 10, 2026**

The Albemarle County Planning Commission held a public meeting on Tuesday, March 10, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

Members attending were: Luis Carrazana, Chair; Corey Clayborne; Lonnie Murray; Mary Katherine King.

Members absent: Karen Firehock, Vice-Chair; Nathan Moore.

Other officials present were Michael Barnes, Director of Planning; Rebecca Ragsdale, Planning Manager; Kevin McDermott, Deputy Director of Planning; Jenny Tevendale, Deputy County Attorney; and Carolyn Shaffer, Clerk of the Planning Commissions.

Call to Order and Establish Quorum

Carolyn Shaffer called the roll.

Mr. Carrazana established a quorum.

Public Comment on matters pending before the Commission but not listed for a Public Hearing on this agenda

There were none.

Consent Agenda

Mr. Clayborne motioned that the Planning Commission approve the consent agenda as presented. Mr. Murray seconded the motion, which carried unanimously (4-0). (Ms. Firehock and Mr. Moore were absent)

Public Hearing

ZMA-2025-00012 Parham Circle Self Storage

Rebecca Ragsdale, Planning Manager said that she would be providing the staff report on ZMA-2025-00012. She said that the request was for a rezoning in a planned development district, focused on an amendment to a shopping center to allow for a self-storage facility. She said that when this was rezoned in 1996, certain uses were prohibited at the time, and those uses would continue to be prohibited, so this request was solely focused on the self-service storage facility, as it was now commonly referred to. She said that they had previously referred to it as light warehousing. She said that there were also special exceptions associated with this request.

Ms. Ragsdale said that the Commission was not required to act on the special exceptions, but she would discuss them. She said that the site was located on Parham Circle, behind the bank on Mill Creek. She said that the site was marked in blue on the map, near the upper center, and was part of the Mill Creek Shopping Center Planned Development Shopping Center (PDSC), approved in 1996. She said that the subject site was approximately 1.73 acres in size, and that it was situated near County-owned properties zoned R-15 and R-1, which included a fire station and Albemarle County Service Authority (ACSA) facilities in the area.

Ms. Ragsdale said that the 2015 Comprehensive Plan designated this area as a Community Mixed-Use area, where self-storage was one of the commercial uses consistent with that district.

She said that the master plan did not include any prohibitions for the type of use, so staff concluded it was consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. She said that also included was the application plan. She said that upon zooming in, the parcel was located at the back of Parham Circle and behind the bank. She said that it was proposed as a multi-story self-storage building.

Ms. Ragsdale said that the concept plan and application request a reduction to the 50-foot commercial setback, while maintaining the 20-foot buffer, which applied to parking areas and required screening to adjacent residential-zoned properties. She said that the request was limited to only allow self-storage as the permitted use, and included proffers in support of that.

Mr. Murray asked for more details about the Albemarle County Service Authority (ACSA) facility and what it was used for.

Ms. Ragsdale said that she believed it was a maintenance facility and a cell tower on the property.

Mr. Barnes said that initially, there was a water tank, and recently they had added some other uses. He said that he believed Ms. Ragsdale was correct that they were maintenance facilities that supported ACSA's operations.

Mr. Clayborne said that he was trying to get a sense of the topography as one drove up Mill Creek Drive. He said that it was an uphill climb to drive past the high school and approach the traffic light on Avon Extended. He asked if the proposed building would be towering over the road, since it was four stories tall.

Ms. Ragsdale said that yes, the applicant had submitted a photo simulation, which was included in the staff presentation. She said that they provided a rendering of the building height and sight line from the entrance corridor. She said that because it was within the entrance corridor overlay district, the application would be reviewed by the Architectural Review Board (ARB). She said that the applicant was proposing four stories and requested a waiver to the setback requirements.

Mr. Clayborne asked if Ms. Ragsdale could provide the attachment with the photo. He said that he must have missed that in the documents.

Ms. Ragsdale said that it was included with the materials for the setback waiver request.

Mr. Carrazana asked if the applicant had a presentation.

Laurie Schweller, Attorney with Williams Mullen, representing the applicant, and she was joined tonight by representatives from Live Oak Capital Partners and Timmons Group. She said that they were here to request the Planning Commission's recommendation of approval of an amendment to the zoning for this parcel. She said that the reason for the request was solely for a proffer text amendment. She said that to the southeast of the subject site there was extra acreage associated with the fire station, which was forested. She said that to the south, they could see the Albemarle County Service Authority (ACSA) property, which included a cell tower. She said that Mill Creek Drive ran to the north and west, and they could see the Mill Creek subdivision and the Mill Creek Shopping Center, which was zoned as a Planned District Shopping Center.

Ms. Schweller said that this site was the last parcel remaining, and it had been on the market for over a year. She said that it had very few steep slopes, and the managed slopes would not be disturbed. She said that the R-1 property to the south was ACSA, and the R-15 property to the southeast belonged to the County. She said that their request was to amend the 1996 proffers for the shopping center, which was originally planned in 1995 for the Mill Creek Shopping Center. She said that the area outlined in red was the subject site, and they were requesting to strike one of the prohibited uses from the list.

Ms. Schweller said that at the time of rezoning in 1996, this list of 15 uses was accepted, and none of these uses may be developed on this parcel. She said that they were requesting to strike "light warehousing" from the list, as self-storage facilities had evolved significantly since the 1990s. She said that the application plan showed a four-story building with a maximum of 48 feet, pedestrian facilities connecting to the existing sidewalk along Parham, and an existing bank and car wash associated with the gas station and shop. She said that the parking was located on the subject property, and loading was within the building, with an office within the building. She said that the property could be accessed by Parham Circle. Parham Circle was a private road used by the four parcels that comprised the car wash, gas station, bank, and the subject property. She said that there had been an agreement in place for many years regarding cost sharing and maintenance.

Ms. Schweller said that in terms of the view, the site appeared to be a grassy area with very little slope. She said that they did have elevations available if the Commission would like to see more detail. She said that the property was located in the Southern and Western Neighborhoods Land Use Map and was designated Community Mixed-Use. She said that community centers were intended to serve nearby residential neighborhoods, which was exactly what this proposal would do. She said that most of the customers for self-storage facilities like this come within three miles of the facility. She said that therefore, it would be convenient for nearby neighborhoods, particularly those with families, to use this facility. She said that this project aligns with the Comprehensive Plan. She said that the Plan's objectives include having a higher density of use, a higher intensity of use, and taller buildings.

Ms. Schweller said that additionally, the plan encouraged using infill lots with higher density development. She said that this project would provide a more diversified tax base, lessening the burden on residential property taxpayers. She said that she had provided a summary of the project's conformity to the Comprehensive Plan. She said the land use expectation for this area is a mixture of residential and retail uses that serve the community. She said that this was a self-storage facility designed to serve the community. She said that the footprint was under the 60,000 maximum, with a 24,000 square-foot building and a maximum four-story height. She said that the height called for by the Comprehensive Plan was one to four stories. She said that there would be no steep slopes disturbed, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities will be included.

Ms. Schweller said that Parham Circle is an interconnected street subject to an access easement agreement. She said that they were requesting a stepback waiver from the Board. She said that stepbacks typically avoid the canyon effect when properties were close together and pedestrians passing through those properties. She said that in this case, the site, the closest building, the bank was 88 feet away, and the gas station and car wash were over 110 feet away. She said that they would not have a lot of pedestrians passing through those areas to create a canyon effect. She said that the real interest in having that step back would be for visual purposes, and this could be handled with architectural elements.

Ms. Schweller said that they were also requesting a special exception for the setback requirement for commercial properties that border residential properties. She said that currently, the setback was 50 feet, and they were seeking a reduction to 20 feet. She said that this was due to the properties to the south, which were zoned residential but were actually used for public or institutional purposes. She said that by allowing the site to utilize the full acreage, they could avoid the steep slopes and ensure proper stormwater management. She said that she had also provided photos depicting the ACSA and Albemarle County Fire Station facilities that abutted the property.

Ms. King asked if there were any proposed improvements to Parham Circle as part of the concept plan.

Ms. Schweller said that the road would remain unchanged. She said that it currently had a sidewalk, a gutter, but a new crosswalk would be added. She said that their conceptual location was situated across from where there was already a ramp on the bank side, so the new crosswalk would connect to the existing sidewalk. She said that parking would have drive-in parking and parallel parking.

Ms. King asked if there would be a curb cut to allow the parking spaces to fit. She asked if the applicant foresaw any issues with the traffic that would be taking Parham Circle to turn left into the gas station.

Ms. Schweller said that this use had very little traffic associated with it, so it was not anticipated to change the level of traffic flow.

Ms. King asked if the road would be narrowed.

Ms. Schweller said no.

Ms. King asked if the road would get markings.

Ms. Schweller said that the concept plan did not show any.

Mr. Clayborne said that regarding the height of the building, he was wondering if there were any other structures within eyesight that was remotely close to this scale.

Ms. Schweller said that to her knowledge, she was not aware of any other four-story structures in this area. She said that there was the water tower and the cell tower behind it, but there were no other buildings in this area.

Mr. Murray said that they would be handling stormwater at the site plan phase, but he would like to know if they anticipated being able to treat all stormwater on site, or if they foresaw purchasing stormwater credits.

Ms. Schweller said that they had a conceptual stormwater management facility located behind the building.

Kevin Flynn, Engineer with Timmons Group, said that the facility in the back was originally designed as a dry pond, intended for quantity only. He said that for water quality, they had two options: they could convert it to a wet pond, utilizing the same footprint, which should be able to treat most or all of the water on-site. He said that they could use off-site nutrient credit purchases to supplement that treatment. He said that this would be handled in more detail at the site plan level.

Mr. Murray said that one of the benefits of some of these facilities was the stormwater facility could also be designed to treat stormwater quality and become a visually appealing addition to the site. He said that if they were considering incorporating a feature that enhanced quality, he believed highlighting this aspect would be beneficial.

Mr. Flynn said that was something they could consider in the site plan process.

Mr. Carrazana said that he understood this was a concept plan and not a site plan, but he was questioning the parking being located so close to the curb and the parking spaces underneath the building.

Mr. Flynn said that they had standard parking spaces, on-street parking, and loading spaces within the building itself. He said that their envisioned layout was that if individuals were coming

to drop off furniture or load up items they had left behind, they would primarily be using the loading spaces within the building for the moving truck. He said that if they had an additional vehicle, either for personal use or for staff members who worked at the facility, they would park on the street or in the pull-in spaces.

Mr. Carrazana said that they would have to back out into the curb.

Mr. Flynn said that alternatively, they could back into the spaces and then pull forward out.

Mr. Carrazana said that he thought the plan could benefit from some additional study in terms of a safety standpoint and to ensure there were adequate lines of sight between the parking and the street traffic.

Mr. Flynn said that the traffic going through the curve would likely be coming at a slow speed so they did not think there would be any issue for cars exiting the self-storage facility.

Ms. King asked if it was a nine-foot parking bay in front of the building.

Mr. Flynn said that they had five on-street parallel parking spots and four pull-in spots located near the curb.

Ms. King asked where larger semi-size moving trucks would park.

Mr. Flynn said that the parallel parking would probably be the best place. He said that they could also look into something that could back into the loading bay itself.

Ms. King said that she thought it was important they ensure large moving trucks could have space to get off Parham Circle and have space to park.

Mr. Carrazana asked about the setback 20-foot request. He asked if it would apply to two or three sides of the property.

Ms. Schweller said that for properties adjacent to residential areas, 50 feet was required, so they were requesting a special exception only for the two sides abutting residential properties, which were on the left and on the bottom in the provided map. She said that the other side would be 20 feet regardless.

Ms. King asked if this property had been marketed since the last rezoning process.

Ms. Schweller said that she did not have much information on the history of the property; she was most familiar with the land use submittals. She said that there was a previous submittal for a self-storage facility back in 2020 that was ultimately withdrawn, and that was the most recent marketing she was aware of.

Mr. Carrazana asked if any members of the public wished to speak on this item. He read the rules for public comment.

Robert Finley, 1268 Timber Branch Court, said that he served as President of the Board of Directors of the Mill Creek Homeowners Association (HOA). He said that following the presentation of the applicants at the 5th and Avon Community Advisory Committee (CAC), they had invited the applicant to appear at their HOA Board meeting in December. He said that they had a thorough discussion at that time, covering topics such as the structure's appearance, operating hours, lighting, signage, and traffic. He said that one aspect that stood out to them was the presence of by-right options in the original proffer for the shopping center development, which could lead to increased traffic.

Mr. Finley said that given the high volume of comments the HOA received about traffic, this was a significant consideration for them, particularly since Avon Street Extended was a busy thoroughfare. He said that after approximately two hours of discussion and presentation, the Mill Creek HOA was not opposed to this amendment. He said that they did have some preferences, however. He said that they believed that adhering to the step-back requirement or incorporating an architectural element that ameliorated the structure's mass and size would be beneficial. He said that the picture from 5th and Avon illustrated that the structure did not obscure the ridgetop of Carter Mountain, which was an important consideration for them. He said that nevertheless, they felt that the step-back requirement would address the structure's appearance and mass in a way that could be helpful.

Mr. Finley said that while this may be a matter for the Board of Supervisors, it was still an important consideration. He said that they also discussed the preferred appearance of the structure, specifically that the side-facing Mill Creek Drive be brick, consistent with the general architectural appearance of many structures in Albemarle County and the shopping center itself. He said that they knew that the ARB would review signage, and they expected the applicant to work with the neighborhood and the HOA to address both the appearance and visual impact of the structure. He said that he would be glad to provide any further information from the HOA Board to the Commission if needed.

Teri McGrath, 43 Creekside Circle in Charlottesville, where Mill Creek runs along Avon Extended Street, said that she was concerned about the general encroachment of development on the wildlife habitat in the surrounding area. She asked if the applicant could sell some of their acreage to the ACSA to preserve, or preserve it themselves as a tax write-off. She said that on another note, she was wondering about the feasibility of a four-story self-storage unit in this location. She said that the applicant had said this building would be on a slab, but if they had to construct a basement, they would need to go underground and probably break into the bedrock in this area. She said that doing so could have negative environmental impacts, such as release of potentially harmful gases. She said that she thought a smaller building would pose less of an issue in that regard, and this was the reason this type of use was not listed in the permitted list in the first place. She said that additionally, if this was not a climate-controlled storage facility, there were limited things that could be stored in the building. She said that on a related note, the 5th Street self-storage was not full because they did not have full humidity control for the storage units. She said that perhaps the applicant could buy that building and make it climate-controlled so that both could have a more successful business. She said that additionally, ACSA had damaged nearby homes as they blew up bedrock in this area, so there had already been detrimental effects of construction here.

Beth Grader, 39 Creekside Circle, said that her property backed up onto Avon Street. She said that during the blasting that occurred at ACSA's changes to the area over the past year had significantly impacted her home. She said that the doors no longer aligned properly, and there were cracks in various areas. She said that she was concerned about the value of her home, so she did not want blasting to continue. She said that if someone was discussing parking underneath a building, it may require blasting through the bedrock. She said that she was not certain about this. She said that although she had missed the first 10 minutes of the meeting, she did not want her house to be damaged. She said that the value of her home was extremely important to her.

Ms. Grader said that if the structure of her home was compromised, the value would decrease. She said that she did not want that to happen. She said that if a project needed to be built in that area, she would like to know that there would be no further blasting. She said that the movement of her home was a significant concern. She said that they had contacted the County, and they stated that the changes were within the supposed limits. She said that however, those limits had altered the structure of her home. She said that she did not want this to happen again. She said

that she would like to establish limits on the structural changes to the bedrock to prevent further damage to her home.

Mr. Carrazana closed the public hearing and the matter rested with the Commission.

Mr. Murray said that from what he had seen, it was an acceptable use for the property with low traffic impacts and support of the community nearby. He said that he supported the application.

Mr. Clayborne said that the use was appropriate; however, he did have concerns about the size and scale. He said that the ARB would weigh in on that aspect, but it seemed out of scale to him. He said that from the Commission's standpoint, he was supportive of the proposed..

Ms. King said that she agreed with the proposed use and special exceptions. She said that there were not any other commercial areas in the plan located nearby. She said that she believed the residents in that area would greatly appreciate a different use. She said that although the market was not providing that, and it was not the Commission's primary concern, she understood that a storage facility was being called for by the market, which was a reasonable consideration. She said that ideally, she would have liked to see a restaurant or community amenity. She said that nevertheless, she was in favor of the application.

Mr. Murray said that he thought Ms. King had brought up an interesting point. He said that he wished these types of facilities could be built with some additional adaptability, potentially converted into another use later on if the market changed.

Mr. Carrazana said that he was also supportive of the application. He said that he assumed the developer would take all the considerations necessary if they had to blast into bedrock. He said that he had faith that they would follow the requirements for those actions.

Ms. King motioned that the Planning Commission recommend approval of ZMA-2025-00012 Parham Circle Self Storage. Mr. Clayborne seconded the motion, which carried unanimously (4-0). (Ms. Firehock and Mr. Moore were absent)

Adjournment

At 8:45 p.m., the Commission adjourned to March 24, 2026, Albemarle County Planning Commission meeting, 6:00 p.m.



Michael Barnes, Director of Planning

(Recorded by Carolyn S. Shaffer, Clerk to Planning Commission & Planning Boards; transcribed by Golden Transcription Services)

Approved by Planning Commission
Date: 04/14/2026
Initials: CSS