

Town Council Public Hearing

Meeting Minutes

September 21, 2026, 6:30 PM

1102 Unionville Church Road, Unionville, NC, US

The Town Council of the Town of Unionville held a public hearing on Monday, September 21, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. in Town Hall, 1102 Unionville Church Road, Monroe, NC. Mayor Baucom, Mayor Pro Tem Andrew Benton, Jeff Broadaway, Lana Kirkpatrick, Gene Price, Jaren Simpson, and all staff were present.

OPENING PROCEEDINGS

Welcome and Call to Order

The Town Council Public Hearing was called to order by Mayor Baucom. Town Attorney Ken Helms outlined the procedural format for the hearing: the applicant would present first, followed by speakers in favor of the rezoning application, then speakers in opposition, each subject to a three-minute time limit. The applicant's representatives would be afforded an opportunity for rebuttal following public comment.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Rezoning Request ZC-26-02 — 623 Sikes Mill Road (Parcel 08207010): Rezone from RA-40 to CD-Light Industrial for Mini-Warehouses

Staff Presentation

Clerk/Tax Collector/Land Use Administrator Melody Braswell presented the application. She explained that Rezoning Application ZC-26-02 requests a rezoning of a 2.07-acre portion of the parcel at 623 Sikes Mill Road from RA-40 to Conditional District Light Industrial for the development of a Class 1 mini-warehouse facility. The subject parcel is adjacent to an existing light industrial parcel supporting a welding and metal fabrication business, with all other surrounding parcels zoned RA-40. The adjacent light industrial use predates the Town of Unionville's administration of its own zoning ordinances.

Administrator Braswell confirmed that required public notices were published in the Enquirer Journal on September 9th and 16th, property signage was posted on August 28th, and adjoining property owner letters were distributed on August 28th.

With respect to consistency with the Town's land use plan, Braswell noted that while the parcel is not within a designated future commercial growth area, the comprehensive plan supports considering new light industrial uses along major thoroughfares at sites compatible with surrounding uses. Sikes Mill Road is classified as a major thoroughfare under the existing plan, and staff identified no specific goals or policies rendering the request inconsistent with the adopted comprehensive plan or future land use map.

Braswell summarized the proposed conditions attached to the application, including: no outside storage; storage limited to dead storage only; hours of operation restricted to 6:00 AM to 9:00 PM, seven days per week; total indoor storage area capped at 8,000 square feet across three buildings; a 6-foot privacy fence around all buildings; 24/7 security monitoring with night vision cameras; solar lighting directed straight down over garage doors; no electrical outlets in storage units; and architectural standards requiring that metal building facades not be visible from public rights-of-way. The property is located within the protected area of the Lake Twitty watershed, with impervious surface limited accordingly. A subdivision of the parcel would be required prior to development.

Braswell reported that the Planning Board reviewed the application on August 3rd and recommended approval by a 5-to-1 vote, with a written letter of recommendation submitted as required by the land use ordinance. In making this recommendation, the Board adopted the following Statement of Consistency and Reasonableness:

Planning Board hereby recommends approval of a Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning of parcel 08207010 with a physical street address of 623 Sikes Mill Road as requested by the

applicant from RA-40 to CZD-LI based on the request's compliance with the Town of Unionville Comprehensive Plan adopted June 2022, specifically:

- *The area in question is contiguous with an existing Light Industrial-zoned property;*
- *The adopted Comprehensive Land Use and Master Plan establish the following goals supporting the request:*
 - o *Goal: To consider new light industrial uses along major thoroughfares within the Town at sites where they will be compatible with surrounding uses.*
- *No goal or policy explicitly prohibiting expansion of existing light industrial zoning where the Town determines the request furthers the goals/objectives of the adopted Comprehensive Plan.*

The Board has determined the rezoning request is reasonable and in the public interest as the request represents a logical extension of existing land use and zoning designations present in the area allowing for the logical extension of existing higher intensity nonresidential development in the area. Further, as this is a Conditional Zoning district requesting proposing a specific land use, the Board has determined the request is reasonable and in the public interest as the proposed land use will not represent the establishment of a use of property that could negatively impact adjacent property owners.

Applicant Presentation

Michael Sandy, a certified planner with 33 years of experience, presented on behalf of the applicant. He described the request as a conditional zoning for one specific use tied to one specific site plan, emphasizing that the rezoning would cover only the 2.07-acre tract rather than the entire parcel. He noted the property's history, including a long-standing nonconforming plumbing business predating both the Town and county zoning. Sandy stated that the property owner intends to reside in the existing house on the property, eliminating the need for a separate caretaker's residence. He invited the Council to propose any additional conditions it saw fit and noted that a community meeting held on August 31st drew six attendees from within the required 500-foot notice radius, with no subsequent concerns communicated by email.

Civil Engineer Kevin Herring presented the rezoning site plan. He confirmed that land disturbance would be less than one acre, exempting the project from a DEQ erosion control permit, though all DEQ erosion control standards would be followed in design and construction. He stated that while the watershed allows up to 70 percent impervious surface, the proposed site would be only 36.55 percent impervious. Herring noted that existing vegetation would be preserved to the greatest extent possible and augmented where needed, and that the 6-foot fence would be slatted to provide opacity. He confirmed that a 20-foot utility easement for the Union County water line runs along the rear of the property, that the applicant owns the underlying land, and that the proposed buildings would back up to, but not encroach upon, that easement.

In response to a question from Councilman Jaren Simpson regarding the water line, Herring clarified that Union County holds a 20-foot easement for a water line running at approximately 9 feet of depth, and that construction would not disturb that easement. He added that the warehouses themselves would have no impact on the waterline.

Attorney John Scarborough of Scarborough & Scarborough (Concord) addressed the Council regarding an email submitted by a member of the public raising concerns about potential crime. Scarborough cautioned the Council that speculative crime concerns, unsupported by documented evidence, are not a proper basis for a rezoning decision, citing the North Carolina Court of Appeals decision in Gregory v. County of Harnett, in which a rezoning denial was found arbitrary where it rested solely on undocumented crime complaints from citizens. He urged the Council to ground its decision in fundamental zoning concepts, including the characteristics of the land, the comprehensive plan, and the proposed conditions. Scarborough confirmed there was no pending litigation involving the property.

Mortgage loan officer Michelle Huggins spoke to the question of property values. She testified that, in her 25 years of experience as a DE-certified underwriter, mini warehouses are not classified as unique properties under Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac guidelines and therefore do not negatively affect appraisals, as comparable sales within five miles can be identified given the existing concentration of such facilities in the Monroe area. She noted that the adjacent Vann's welding shop had previously presented appraisal challenges for nearby properties, whereas the mini warehouses would not.

Speakers in Favor

Dennis Pressley, 620 Sikes Mill Road, expressed support, stating he believed the mini warehouses would be an asset to the community by providing a local storage option and that the on-site owner and his brother would actively monitor the property.

Emory Altman spoke to the character of the applicant and his family, attesting to their reliability and meticulous property maintenance over a 25-year acquaintance.

Douglas Kiker, a Sikes Mill Road resident, stated he was aware of at least six neighbors within a half-mile radius who had been required to travel outside the area for storage, and expressed support for the facility as a benefit to the community and a source of tax revenue for the Town.

Michael Sandy read into the record a letter of support from Gary Chaney, 809 Sikes Mill Road, dated September 20th. Sandy also addressed crime statistics, stating that a review of Union County 911 communications data for three comparable mini-warehouse facilities in the county revealed no significant crime patterns, a position corroborated by a former sheriff's deputy. He further noted that the State Fire Marshal had indicated that a code-compliant mini-warehouse facility presents a minimal fire hazard.

Speakers in Opposition

Kathy Oropesa, 1417 Carlson Drive, stated she was not opposed to mini storage in principle but expressed concerns about the feasibility of the proposed site given its narrow, constrained configuration alongside the Union County water line easement. She questioned whether adequate access would be available for Union County equipment in the event of a waterline failure, and whether emergency apparatus could maneuver effectively within the developed site. She also expressed concern that the density of structures on the parcel was inconsistent with the open, residential character of Unionville.

Beth Walker, 500 Sikes Mill Road, challenged the applicant's assertion that the low turnout at the community meeting indicated a lack of neighborhood concern, noting that the large attendance at the public hearing reflected the community's opposition. She presented a letter from the Union County Sheriff's Department documenting incidents at existing storage facilities in the county, including search warrants executed for breaking and entering, a stolen flatbed trailer, vehicle larceny, catalytic converter theft, and an unreturned rental truck. She urged the Council to prioritize community safety and to maintain the RA-40 zoning, warning that approving the rezoning would open the door to similar future requests.

Addie Philemon, 611 Sikes Mill Road, whose property adjoins the subject parcel, expressed concern that the facility would bring increased traffic, commercial activity, lighting, and noise that would alter the residential character of the neighborhood her family had chosen for its peace and privacy over 20 years. She also raised concern that approving one rezoning would establish a precedent inviting further commercial encroachment into Unionville's residential areas.

Kevin Philemon, 611 Sikes Mill Road, noted the existing availability of approximately five storage facilities within five miles of the property, all within Monroe's city limits, as well as additional facilities under construction. He argued that rezoning residential property to commercial or light industrial use causes a demonstrable 5 to 10 percent devaluation of neighboring residential properties and narrows the buyer pool. He raised concerns about the potential for future expansion of the rezoned footprint and presented law enforcement incident data showing that the number of calls to three major Monroe-area mini-warehouse facilities had nearly doubled from prior years, reaching approximately 275 incidents. As a firefighter, he noted that building-code compliance at the time of construction does not control what is subsequently stored in the units.

Matt Hinson, 3127 Concord Highway, addressed fire and safety concerns in detail. He noted that stored items commonly include lithium batteries, unknown chemicals, flammable liquids, and compressed gases, and questioned whether a sprinkler system would be installed and whether the site's stormwater plan could manage contaminated water runoff in the event of a fire. He expressed doubt that the site layout could accommodate fire apparatus of the length used in Unionville (40-plus feet) and questioned whether an environmental impact study had been conducted. Hinson also raised concerns about unlicensed commercial activity and illegal uses known to occur at mini-warehouse facilities, and argued that such facilities are suited to urban, high-density environments rather than communities like Unionville. He stated that any operational commitments made by the current property owner would not necessarily bind future owners, and urged the Council to vote no.

Mitch Austin, 4105 Old Camden Road, opposed the application, citing the availability of existing storage options in the Monroe and Wingate areas and his concern about increased criminal activity. He also commented on the applicant's public conduct during the process, suggesting it cast doubt on the likelihood of adherence to the conditions imposed by the planning board.

Rick Headrick, 710 Sikes Mill Road, stated he had no objection to the proposal.

Jeff Shaffer spoke in opposition, noting that the Town had previously denied similar storage facility applications and arguing that this established precedent should be upheld. He expressed appreciation for the community members who had consistently engaged in civic advocacy for the Town of Unionville.

Todd Loving, owner of property at 612 Sikes Mill Road directly across from the subject parcel, expressed opposition on behalf of himself and his brother. He raised concerns about stormwater drainage, noting that runoff from the subject property already flows onto his land, and expressed concern that grading and site improvements would exacerbate this. He also noted the potential for contaminated fire suppression runoff to reach his property and asked the Council to give full consideration to the interests of neighboring property owners.

Applicant Rebuttal

Michael Sandy addressed the points raised during public comment. On the water line easement, he stated that Union County purchased a 20-foot easement because that was the access they determined they needed, and that responsibility for accessing and maintaining the line rests with the county, not the adjacent property owner. He noted that fire access could be achieved via the open easement corridor or around the building, and that fire marshal review during the building permit process would address all access requirements. He clarified that vehicle storage is expressly prohibited under the proposed conditions, making the catalytic converter and vehicle theft concerns cited from the Sheriff's letter inapplicable. On the question of conditions running with the land, Sandy confirmed that because this is a conditional zoning, all conditions are binding on the property regardless of future ownership, a point he noted the Town Attorney affirmed. He acknowledged that crime can occur anywhere and argued that the security measures proposed—cameras, fencing, and on-site oversight—significantly exceed what is typically required in other jurisdictions. On traffic, he noted that the property is located on a major thoroughfare and that the adjacent welding shop has generated commercial traffic on Sikes Mill Road for decades, predating most neighboring residents.

Council Questions Following Rebuttal

Councilman Jeff Broadaway asked Sandy to clarify whether a fence would be installed along the rear of the property adjacent to the water line easement. Sandy confirmed that the current site plan places the back wall of the long building at or very near the 20-foot easement line, with no separate fence in that location, but offered to add a fencing condition along that boundary if the Council deemed it necessary from a security standpoint. Sandy confirmed the building would be approximately one to two feet from the easement boundary.

Mayor Pro-Tem Andrew Benton and other Council members asked about the distance between the buildings on the site plan. Sandy indicated the spacing between the long rear building and the buildings in front of it was approximately 29.5 feet and noted that fire code turn radii had been incorporated into the site plan design.

Following the conclusion of questions, the Mayor announced a brief five-minute recess before the commencement of the regular meeting, at which time the Council would take up the rezoning application for deliberation and action.

ADJOURNMENT

The public hearing recessed at the conclusion of testimony and Council questions, with the regular Town Council meeting to immediately follow.

Respectfully submitted,

Melody Braswell
Clerk/Tax Collector/Land Use Administrator

Approved as to form:

R. Kenneth Helms, Jr., Town Attorney

Note: These minutes were drafted with the assistance of Clerk Minutes by HeyGov. All content was reviewed and approved by the Clerk/Tax Collector/Land Use Administrator prior to submission.