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GREENE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT — WORK SESSION

Meeting Date	**November 18, 2026**
Subject	Proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendments — Cannabis Establishments
Meeting Type	Planning Commission Work Session
Requested Action	Discussion and direction to staff; no formal recommendation requested

Purpose

To review proposed amendments to the Greene County Zoning Ordinance addressing the location and land-use standards for cannabis establishments and to obtain Planning Commission direction before a potential public hearing.

Background

On October 13, 2026, the Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 2026-014 directing the Planning Commission, in coordination with County staff, to review the Zoning Ordinance and recommend amendments regarding retail cannabis establishments. The resolution identifies definitions, permitted zoning districts, separation distances of no more than 1,000 linear feet, and reasonable retail hours as subjects for review. It also directs the Commission to consider whether overly restrictive zoning or special use permit requirements could effectively prohibit retail cannabis sales.

The attached draft ordinance extends beyond retail sales to address cultivation, processing, testing, transportation, delivery, microbusinesses, and pharmaceutical processors. The Commission should consider whether the full scope is appropriate under the Board's direction.

Local Authority to Regulate Cannabis Establishments

Under Virginia's new adult-use cannabis laws, local governments have limited authority to regulate cannabis establishments, as the Commonwealth has reserved primary regulatory and licensing authority to the Virginia Cannabis

Control Authority. While localities cannot prohibit retail cannabis sales, impose moratoriums, limit the number of licenses, or regulate cannabis products, packaging, or advertising, they may establish reasonable zoning regulations governing where retail cannabis establishments may operate. Specifically, localities may designate zoning districts where retail sales are permitted, establish separation requirements of up to 1,000 feet from certain sensitive uses, including schools, childcare facilities, hospitals, and parks, and regulate retail hours of sale. Local zoning regulations must be carefully structured to avoid creating an effective prohibition on otherwise lawful cannabis businesses.

Additionally, while special use permit requirements may be considered, overly restrictive approval processes could be challenged as a de facto ban.

Accordingly, the proposed amendments are intended to establish reasonable land-use standards that promote compatibility with surrounding properties and protect public health, safety, and welfare while remaining consistent with the limitations imposed by state law.

Summary of Proposed Amendments

Permitted zoning districts. Cannabis dispensing facilities and retail marijuana stores would be by-right uses in B-1, B-2, and B-3, and listed within the Planned Unit Development shopping-center use provisions. Cultivation facilities, microbusinesses, delivery operators, testing facilities, processing facilities, transporters, and pharmaceutical processors would be by-right uses in M-1 and M-2.

Separation requirements. The draft requires 1,000 feet between dispensing facilities, retail stores, and microbusinesses; 1,000 feet between those uses and hospitals, schools, higher education institutions, child day programs, and publicly designated parks; and 1,000 feet between specified industrial cannabis uses and sensitive uses. The draft measures separation in a straight line from the occupied tenant space or structure to the boundary of the protected property.

Additional development standards. Retail stores, dispensing facilities, and microbusinesses would require frontage on a public street with a stated minimum width of 30 feet. The draft also restricts window, electronic, animated, and temporary signs and certain exterior decorative lighting.

Definitions. Article 22 would add definitions for cannabis-related establishments, activities, products, and related terminology, many referencing Virginia law.

Items for Planning Commission Discussion

1. Confirm the appropriate zoning districts and whether all listed uses should be permitted by right.

2. Consider whether each proposed 1,000-foot buffer is appropriate and whether mapping of affected properties should be prepared before a public hearing.

3. Clarify how the separation requirement applies between establishments, including the measurement endpoint and treatment of multi-tenant buildings.

5. Review the street-frontage, signage, and lighting standards for consistency with existing County ordinance provisions and applicable state authority.

6. Confirm treatment of microbusinesses that may include retail activities but are proposed as by-right industrial uses.

Staff Recommendation / Next Steps

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission discuss the proposed amendments, identify preferred zoning districts and separation standards, and provide direction on retail hours and other operating provisions. Following the work session, staff can revise the draft, coordinate legal review, and return the ordinance for consideration of a public hearing. No formal action is requested at this work session.