

Text Amendment

- . Proposed text amendment to section 5.1.D of the Watertown Zoning Regulations to classification and enforcement of commercial vehicles parked in residential zones.

From: Day Palmer <day@gowansknight.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 4, 2025 2:46 PM
To: Cameron Natusch <Natusch@watertownct.org>
Subject: PROPOSED TEXT AMENDMENT FOR COMMERCIAL PARKING

Cameron,

First problem is that the Proposed Text Amendment link found in both the "packet" section and in the "more" section of the agenda is missing the page with section #3 and #4. These are the most controversial items!!!! I had printed it off when you had the survey up on the front page of the Town Website. Now anyone who looked thru the agenda paperwork for this meeting would not have known about the missing page. They would think that not much had changed when in reality A LOT has been changed in what is being proposed.

Second problem that I saw was the confusion of Tabled vs Continued. The Public Hearing for this started in September and the "Motions" say that the Public Hearing was tabled. To me "tabled" means that nothing was done or discussed, so after I saw three months of it being "tabled", I looked closer. I found that all the agendas said that it was a continued Public Hearing. Now I realize that I have to open up every video link and find where it came up to listen to what went on. I would like to see P&Z to go back to actual minutes and not just motions. It took me about 2 ½ hours to follow thru the three (3) months of this hearing. This is certainly not a good way to have transparency in government because most people are not going to bother if it takes that much time. Also the word "tabled" in the motions should be changed to "continued"

Now the Proposed parking issues.

1. If you ask people to put up a fence so they can hide their stuff then you are making it considerably harder on yourselves to enforce parking issues. You can not go on peoples property with out their permission so you are not going to be able to enforce and maybe that is the plan. Out of sight, out of mind is not going to help at all in this situation. Now a fence or trees along a property line to protect the neighbor from having to see the mess is probably a good thing but a blocking from the street view is not. In fact, we should state that they can not park behind a fence or wall.
2. #3a – Vehicles from Class 6 or higher should NOT be allowed to park in a residential area at all – unless they are at a job site and then they must move every night.
3. #3b – If anyone wants to park three (3) vehicles from Class 3 to 5 then they are running a business out of their house. This will mean that the workers come to the house to pick up the work truck and leave their personal vehicle probably parked in the road for the day. Under no circumstance should this be allowed. Class 1 and 2 – maybe by special permit because it is possible that two (2) people work for some kind of service company and need to take their work vehicle home with them.
4. #3c - The permit process should be extremely clear and should Have to come before the P&Z commission. The agent determination that goes on now with zoning permits is not and has not worked well at all. The Zoning Board of Appeals used to meet very frequently and now it is rare for them to have a meeting. I am sure its not because there is less building going on but because the LAND USE office decides too much on their own and does not use the Appeal Board when it should.

Please protect this town!!! I know that a lot of contractors want to run businesses out of their houses but I do not believe for one minute that is what the majority of this town would like to see in our residential neighborhoods.

To: Town of Watertown Planning and Zoning Commission

From: Mark Massoud, Administrator for Land Use and Building Services /Zoning Enforcement Officer & Cameron Natusch, Assistant Zoning Enforcement Officer

Date: December 18, 2025

Re: Section 5.1.D Commercial Vehicle Text Amendment Comparison

Comparison Summary

	Old Regulations	New Regulations
Considered Commercial Vehicle	Broad view on commercial vehicles, including what is not allowed in residential zones	Based off FHWA class chart and weight
Number of Commercial Vehicles Allowed	One, except for those listed under "Commercial Vehicle Which Shall NOT Be Parked In A Residential Zone" One commercial vehicle which "Shall not be parked" is allowed by special permit approval More than one commercial vehicles of the other subcategories by special permit	Two up to 10,000 pounds GVWR One between 10,000 and 19,500 pounds by zoning permit Three class 1 through 5 or 1 class 6 or higher by special permit approval
Screening	Only when through special permit	All vehicles class three or higher or by special permit
Agricultural Vehicles	Allowed for use on a farm	Allowed for a permitted agriculture, farming, forestry, or nursery gardening use

Edits

Small edits were made to the proposed regulations, mostly for grammar. Highlighted edits were added, and words with a slash through them indicate removal. The commercial vehicles of class six or higher were limited to one.

Possible Changes Up to Commission

- Changes requested by resident Day Palmer attached.
- Allowance of certain types of earth moving vehicles in residential zones.
- Whether commercial vehicles must meet accessory building setbacks for zoning permit when already being screened.
- Any other changes up to the commission's discretion.

EXISTING Watertown Commercial Vehicle Regulations:

“D. Accessory Parking Of A Commercial Vehicle

1. **Commercial Vehicle - Overnight parking / storage of one (1) commercial vehicle may be allowed as an accessory use on a residential lot in any residential district provided that the table below shall indicate that the specific vehicle type is allowed in a Residential Zone.**

<p>May Be Parked In A Residential Zone Unless Considered a Commercial Vehicle</p>	<p>a. Generally <u>NOT</u> A Commercial Vehicle (see factors below)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passenger car, convertible, station wagon • Sport utility vehicle (SUV), minivan, pickup • Farm vehicles used on a farm for activities associated with that farm
<p>If Considered A Commercial Vehicle, One Such Vehicle May Be Parked In A Residential Zone</p>	<p>b. May Be Considered A Commercial Vehicle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full size pickup • Van, utility van • Mini-bus • Open or enclosed trailers used for commercial purposes
<p>A Commercial Vehicle Which Shall <u>NOT</u> Be Parked In A Residential Zone</p>	<p>c. Generally Considered A Commercial Vehicle --</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step van, box truck, walk-in truck • Landscaping truck, dump truck, bucket truck • Tractor cab and/or trailer, oil truck, pumper truck, school bus • Earth moving equipment and similar types of construction equipment.

2. Factors which may be used to decide whether a vehicle or a trailer is a commercial vehicle include, but are not limited to:

- a. Commercial registration.
- b. Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) greater than 10,000 pounds or vehicle class (Class 2 or above).
- c. The presence of logos or markings identifying a trade, business, service or commodity.
- d. Modifications such as equipment racks.

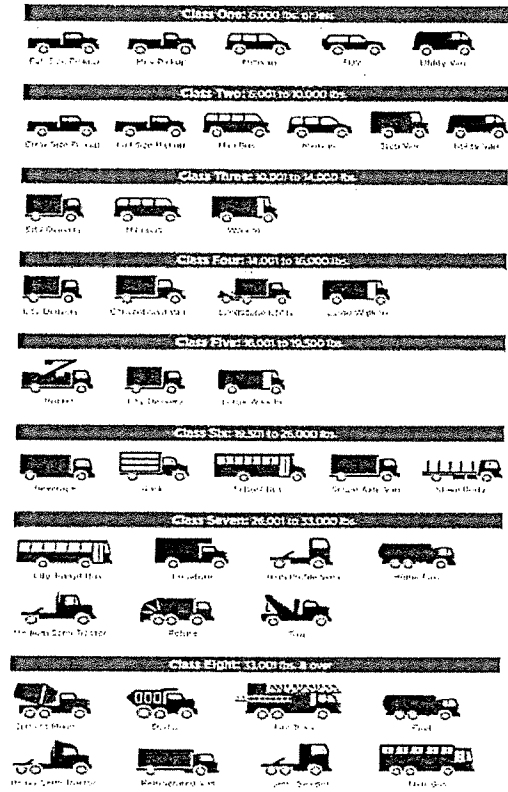
3. Exceptions may be made for temporary parking of public utility emergency vehicles or on-call service vehicles used as part of a resident’s employment when such vehicles are parked on the driveway.

4. Provided that such vehicles are screened to the satisfaction of the Commission, the Commission may, by Special Permit, allow the parking / storage of:

- a. More than one (1) commercial vehicle of the type categorized into Subsection 5.1.D.1.5 above, or
- b. A commercial vehicle of the type categorized into Subsection 5.1.D.1.c above.”

PROPOSED Watertown Commercial Vehicle regulations:

Commercial Vehicle- Parking / storage of two (2) commercial vehicles may be allowed as an accessory use on a residential lot in any residential district provided that it is either class one (1) or class two (2) based on the Federal Highway Administration diagram found below.



1. Factors which may be used to decide whether a vehicle or a trailer is a commercial vehicle include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Commercial registration.
 - b. Vehicles above class two (2).
 - c. The presence of logos or markings identifying a trade, business, service or commodity.
 - d. Modifications such as equipment racks.
2. One commercial vehicle from class three (3) to five (5) ~~or two commercial vehicles class one (1) to two (2)~~, may be parked on a lot by zoning permit approval from the Zoning Enforcement Officer provided there is proper screening from town roadways and the parked vehicle meets accessory structure setbacks.
3. By Special Permit approval, the Planning & Zoning Commission may permit the following:

- a. The parking of one commercial vehicle(s) that meet the definition of Class six or higher according to FHWA.
- b. The parking of three (3) or more commercial vehicles that meet the definition of Class 1 through Class 5 according to FHWA.
- c. In evaluating a Special Permit application under this section, the Commission shall consider the Special Permit Requirements in Section 8.4 of these Regulations and the following specific factors: the size, intended use, and hours of operation of the vehicle in question; other vehicles on the property; and physical characteristics of the neighborhood.

4. Minimum Standards

All commercial vehicles within any residential zone, regardless of vehicle class unless otherwise stated, shall meet the following standards:

- a. No vehicle shall be parked so as to obstruct the view of traffic from adjacent driveways or streets.
- b. No vehicle containing hazardous materials or waste may be parked on a residential lot.
- c. Commercial construction vehicles, including but not limited to, backhoes, skid steers, bucket loaders, track vehicles, shall not be allowed unless expressly exempted in Section 5.1.D.10. below.
- d. No tanker trucks or similar type vehicles used for hauling liquids including but not limited to oil trucks, septic cleanout trucks, etc. shall be allowed.
- e. Parking of commercial vehicles in the front yard of a residence is prohibited. All commercial vehicles shall be parked:
 - a. On the driveway of the occupied residential lot;
 - b. In a parking area leased to the residential occupant; or
- f. The commercial vehicle shall be owned or operated by the permanent resident of the property on which it is to be parked.
- g. No maintenance or repair of a commercial vehicle shall be allowed on the adjacent street.
- h. All commercial vehicles of class three (3) or higher shall be screened to prevent from town roadways and neighboring properties.

i. No trucks, including but not limited to garbage trucks, which haul cargo that emits objectionable odors shall be permitted.

~~j. No trailer shall be attached to any parked commercial vehicle for longer than one day.~~

6. All applications for Special Permits shall include a detailed description of the vehicle including vehicle class according to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Any permits granted shall be for the specific vehicle class described in the application. Any changes from the vehicle class as approved shall require a new approval by the Commission.

7. Commercial vehicles subject to Special Permits shall be screened along the closest residential property line by appropriate evergreen trees, shrubs, fence, or a combination thereof. Exceptions and modifications may be considered by the Commission taking into consideration topography and proximity of adjacent residential structures.

8. Nothing herein shall be construed to permit a home-based business that is not otherwise permitted under the Regulations. Any home-based business that is conducted in conjunction with the parking of a commercial vehicle must meet the applicable requirements and be registered with the Zoning Enforcement Officer.

9. Nothing herein shall be construed so as to prohibit commercial vehicles parked temporarily while engaged in providing products or services to the owner of the property.

10. Nothing herein shall be construed to prohibit commercial vehicles that are used as part of the following:

a. a permitted agriculture, farming, forestry, or nursery gardening use;

b. a permitted earth excavation, removal, or deposit activity authorized under Section 13.1 of these Regulations;

c. The temporary, occasional parking of a commercial vehicle on residential property by a contractor and/or town or public utility employee required for "on-call" services.

d. a use of facility operated by the Town of Watertown, a Fire Department, State of Connecticut, or Federal Government;

e. a maintenance facility in support of a multiple dwelling project on the lot, or in support of a Special Permit use, if authorized under such Special Permit.

11. Pursuant to Section C.G.S. 8-6, the Zoning Board of Appeals is prohibited from varying any provision of this section.