

PLANNING DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM

TO: Coventry Planning Commission

FROM: Doug McLean, Director of Planning and Development

DATE: May 21, 2026

SUBJECT: Proposed Kennel Use, Ordinance 2026-17

Town staff have proposed an amendment to the Town of Coventry Zoning Ordinance, identified as Ordinances 2026-17, which will allow and regulate the use of kennels. This land use was previously allowed in Town through a Special Use Permit, but this allowance was removed in January of 2024 due to changes in state law on the permitting criteria for Special Use Permits to make such permits more permissive. It has always been the intent of Town staff to allow this land use again without utilizing the Special Use Permit approach.

Context

Although the ultimate authority to amend a municipal Zoning Ordinance resides with that municipality's Town Council, R.I. Gen. Laws § 45-24-51 ("Adoption – Review by planning board or commission.") establishes that the Planning Commission's role in the process begins upon referral of proposed amendments, and describes that role as follows: "...The planning board or commission shall, in turn, notify and seek the advice of the city or town planning department, if any, and report to the city or town council within forty-five (45) days after receipt of the proposal, giving its findings and recommendations as prescribed in § 45-24-52."

The Town Council conducted a first reading of these Ordinances on May 12, 2026, and a Public Hearing (and possible vote on adoption) is anticipated for June 9, 2026. Therefore, the next step in the Town's review process is for the Ordinance to be reviewed by the Planning Commission at its meeting on May 27, 2026 for an advisory recommendation.

Proposed Kennel Ordinance

Ordinance 2026-17 will amend Table 6-1, Schedule of District Use Regulations, to allow "Kennels, or the boarding of animals (including retail sales)" in the RR-5, RR-3, RR-2, R-20, GB, BP, and I-1 zones. Kennels will not be allowed in the mixed-use VMC and VRC zones, as the small minimum lot sizes do not provide for adequate space or separation from commercial uses, or the I-2 zone, which is not conducive to such commercial operations.

This proposed ordinance will also delete the present definition for kennels in Article II (Definitions), and establish a new definition in Article IX (Supplementary Regulations) that allows kennels and outdoor enclosures to host up to 20 dogs over six months. The proposed new kennel provisions were drafted in close coordination with the Animal Control Officer (ACO) and Zoning Clerk who have institutional knowledge of this land use.

The proposed minimum lot sizes in Article IX for each district directly align with the minimum lot sizes established within the Dimensional Regulations, except for the RR-2 and R-20 zones. These residential zones, while more conducive to kennels than the mixed-use zones, have smaller minimum lot sizes that could present challenges for adequate separation between similar residential uses. Thus, the proposed ordinance will establish minimum lot sizes of 3 acres for the RR-2 zone and 2 acres for the R-20 zone.

This ordinance will define “residential property” as a parcel of land with one or more residential dwelling units, which effectively requires the separation distance to be measured from the property line of the nearest residential use while preventing vacant residentially-zoned parcels from being construed as residential uses.

The separation distances proposed in Article IX were developed in close coordination with the Animal Control Officer and Zoning Clerk. To start, 300-foot separation distance between kennels and residential properties in residential zoning districts is appropriate given the space required for kennel use, especially outdoor training and exercise, and potential noise impacts. In addition, the 100-foot separation distance between kennels and residential properties in commercial or industrial districts will protect abutters in mixed-use or nonconforming residences.

Moreover, a broad 50-foot separation distance between kennels in any zone and other non-residential uses will provide blanket protection for a range of uses that have not been listed or for lots with development potential. 100-foot separation distances will be required between kennels in any zone and schools, daycare, library, park/playgrounds, sports fields, youth centers, athletic and recreational facilities, and places of religious worship, consistent with recently adopted zoning code for intensive commercial operations.

The proposed ordinance will mandate that kennels be subject to the standards and procedures of Minor or Major Land Development Applications, with floor area to include outdoor enclosures. This will enable Planning staff, and potentially the Planning Commission, to help regulate and mitigate potential impacts to the community.

Kennels will only be allowed in the rear yard and shall not be placed in the front or side yards, and must adhere to minimum front setback requirements. The proposed ordinance enables the Administrative Officer and/or Planning Commission to require a 6' stockade fence along the perimeter of the kennel outdoor enclosure. This fence will mitigate potential noise impacts to abutters from barking dogs and ensure the security of the dogs when outside.

Finally, the hours of operation for the outdoor use of kennel structures will be restricted to 7:00 am to 7:00 pm, to prevent potential nuisances to abutters during the evening and early morning hours. The kennel itself may operate 24/7 and dogs may stay overnight. The code will allow for individual dogs to go outside for brief periods of time (to relieve themselves, for example).

Findings of Fact

Staff has conducted an orderly, thorough, and expeditious review of this proposed ordinance for conformance with required standards set forth in RIGL Section 45-24-52, as well as in the Town of Coventry's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code, and finds as follows:

RIGL § 45-24-52 (“Adoption – Review by planning board or commission.”) states that, “Among its findings and recommendation to the city or town council with respect to a proposal for adoption,

amendment, or repeal of a zoning ordinance or zoning map, the planning board or commission shall:"

"(1) Include a statement on the general consistency of the proposal with the comprehensive plan of the city or town, including the goals and policies statement, the implementation program, and all other applicable elements of the comprehensive plan; and

1. The Comprehensive Plan adopted in 1999 does not provide any specific guidance on kennels or the boarding of animals. However, personal services such as kennels or the boarding of animals are generally considered an acceptable use within both residential and non-residential districts.

"(2) Include a demonstration of recognition and consideration of each of the applicable purposes of zoning, as presented in § 45-24-30."

2. The proposed ordinance is consistent with the applicable purposes of zoning as presented in Rhode Island General Laws (RIGL) § 45-24-30 and the Town of Coventry Code of Ordinances § 255-110, specifically:
 - a. The proposed ordinance "promote[s] the health, safety, morals and general welfare of the public" by establishing separation distances between kennels and other sensitive uses. The zoning ordinance also addresses fencing requirements, storage and disposal of animal waste, and hours of operation.
 - b. The proposed ordinance also "provide[s] for a range of uses and intensities of uses appropriate to the character of the Town and reflecting current and expected future needs." Kennels is an intensive personal service that can be accommodated in both residential and non-residential zones.

Recommendation

Staff finds proposed Ordinance 2025-17 to be consistent with the standards for the required findings of fact set forth in RIGL Section 45-24-52 and Coventry Zoning Section § 255-110 with regard to the Town of Coventry's Comprehensive Plan and Purposes of Zoning Code. Staff therefore recommends that the Planning Commission adopt the documented findings of fact and forward a **positive recommendation** to the Town Council.

1 THE TOWN OF COVENTRY

2
3
4 **ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN COUNCIL**

5
6 IN AMENDMENT OF THE TOWN OF COVENTRY CODE OF ORDINANCES,
7 2008 PART II – GENERAL LEGISLATION,
8 CHAPTER 255, ARTICLE VI Zoning District Use and Dimensional Regulations, and
9 ARTICLE IX – Supplementary Regulations

10
11 **Ordinance No. 2026-17**

12
13 *The Town Council of the Town of Coventry hereby ordains as follows:*

14
15 **Section 1.** The Town of Coventry Code of Ordinance, Part II General Legislation is hereby
16 amended by amending the following Chapter and Sections of Article II:

17
18 **Article II, Chapter 255 – Definitions**

19
20 **§255-9110 Standard interpretations.**

21
22 ~~Kennel—An establishment licensed to operate a facility housing dogs, cats, or other household~~
23 ~~pets and where grooming, breeding, boarding, training, or selling of animals is conducted as a~~
24 ~~business.~~

25
26
27 **Section 2.** The Town of Coventry Code of Ordinance, Part II General Legislation is hereby
28 amended by amending the following Chapter and Sections of Article IX:

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30 **Article IX, Chapter 255 — Zoning (Supplementary Regulations)**

31 [Insert entire amendment below as a new section to Zoning Ordinance at §255-9110]

32
33 **§255-9110 Kennels.**

34
35 A. Definitions.

36
37 Kennel – Any structure and/or outdoor enclosure in which the housing, breeding, boarding, or
38 selling of up to twenty (20) dogs over six months of age is conducted as a business.

39
40 B. Minimum Lot Size.

41
42 1. The minimum lot area for kennel structures and/or outdoor enclosures shall conform to the
43 following standards according to the applicable zone, as follows:

44
45 a. RR-5 zone: five (5) acres

- 46 b. RR-3 zone: three (3) acres
- 47 c. RR-2 zone: three (3) acres
- 48 d. R-20 zone: two (2) acres
- 49 e. GB zone: 15,000 square feet
- 50 f. I-1 zone: 60,000 square feet

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52

53 C. Proximity to Other Land Uses. The separation distances noted below shall be measured from
54 the nearest portion of the property dedicated to the kennel, including the outdoor enclosure, to
55 the following nearby uses.

56
57 1. For the purposes of this section, "residential property" shall be defined as a parcel of land that
58 contains one (1) or more residential dwelling units.

59
60 2. Kennel structures and/or outdoor enclosures that are sited in residential zoning districts shall
61 not be located within three hundred (300) feet from any other residential property.

62
63 3. Kennel structures and/or outdoor enclosures that are sited in commercial or industrial districts
64 shall not be located within one hundred (100) feet from any other residential property.

65
66 4. Kennel structures and/or outdoor enclosures in any zone shall not be located within fifty (50)
67 feet for any other non-residential property.

68
69 5. Kennel structures and/or outdoor enclosures in any zone shall not be located within one
70 hundred (100) feet from the land uses listed below:

71

- 72 a. School property;
- 73 b. Commercial day care;
- 74 c. Library;
- 75 d. Municipal Park/playground;
- 76 e. Outdoor sports field;
- 77 f. Youth center;
- 78 g. Public athletic and recreational facilities; or
- 79 h. Places of religious worship.

80

81 E. Restrictions.

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83 1. Kennel structures and/or outdoor enclosures shall be subject to the standards and procedures
84 of Minor or Major Land Development Applications consistent with the Town of Coventry
85 Subdivision and Land Development Regulations. For the purposes of such Applications, the
86 outdoor enclosure area shall be calculated as part of the floor area.

87

88 2. Kennel structures and/or outdoor enclosures shall adhere to the minimum front setback
89 requirements established in Section 255-610 for the applicable zoning district.

90

91 3. Kennel outdoor enclosures shall be placed in the rear yard. Kennel outdoor enclosures shall
92 not be placed in front yard or side yard areas.

93
94 4. A stockade fence of at least six (6) feet in height may be required along the perimeter of the
95 kennel outdoor enclosure at the discretion of the Administrative Officer and/or the Planning
96 Commission.

97
98 5. Kennel structures and/or outdoor enclosures shall have on-site waste facilities designed to
99 accommodate all animal waste. The storage and disposal of animal waste shall comply with
100 federal, state, and local laws.

101
102 6. The hours of operation for the outdoor use of kennel structures and/outdoor enclosures shall be
103 between 7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. This provision shall not be construed to prohibit individual dogs
104 from being able to go outside for brief periods of time outside of the hours of operation.

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106
107 **Section 2.** The Town of Coventry Code of Ordinance, Part II General Legislation is hereby
108 amended by amending the following Chapter and Sections of Article VI:

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110 **Article VI, Chapter 255 — Zoning (Zoning District Use and Dimensional Regulations)**

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112 **§ 255-600 Zoning District Use and Dimensional Regulations.**

113
114 A. The following Schedule of District Use Regulations, attached to this Chapter as Table 6-1, is
115 designed to regulate the uses in the various zoning districts in the Town. Specific uses are listed
116 for each zoning district.

117
118 B. For uses not specifically listed in Table 6-1, the property owner may submit a written request
119 to the Zoning Official for an evaluation and determination of whether the proposed use is of
120 similar type, character, and intensity as a listed use.

121
122 C. The following uses are permitted only in the zoning district marked with a " P." Uses
123 permitted in the zoning district as a special use permit under the provisions of Article IV of this
124 chapter are marked with an " S." Where the letter "N" appears, the uses are prohibited. Note that
125 Article XII, regarding parking, Article XVI (Development Plan Review), Article XIV (Land
126 Development Projects), and Article XVII (Landscaping), will likely apply to some residential
127 and agricultural uses, as well as most commercial and industrial uses.

128
129 **[Amended 1-13-2026 by Ord. No. 2025-23]**

130 [This space intentionally left blank for legislative purposes only]

131 [Table 6-1 is a separate document containing amendments]

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133
134 **Section 3.** This ordinance shall take effect upon its passage and final adoption.

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Town of Coventry Schedule of District Use Regulations

The following uses are permitted only in the zoning district marked with a “P.” Uses permitted in the zoning district as a special use permit under the provisions of Article IV of this chapter are marked with an “S.” Where an “N” appears, the uses are prohibited. Note that Article XII (regarding parking), Article XVI (Development Plan Review), Article XIV (Land Development Projects), and Article XVII (Landscaping) will likely apply to some residential and agricultural uses, as well as most commercial and industrial uses.

2. Personal services.

	Use	RR5	RR3	RR2	R20	VRC	VMC	GB	BP	I1	I2	Comments
01	Laundry or dry cleaners (pick-up) and self-service laundromat	N	N	N	N	P	P	P	P	N	N	In BP Zone, these uses allowed only in multioccupant structures
02	Photo studio, taxidermist and similar specialty shops	N	N	N	N	P	P	P	P	N	N	See comments under 01
03	Beautician and barber shops, shoe repair, tattoo shop and similar specialty shops	N	N	N	N	P	P	P	P	N	N	See comments under 01
04	Mortuary or funeral home	N	N	N	N	N	N	P	N	N	N	See comments under 01
05	Caterer	N	N	N	N	P	P	P	N	N	N	See comments under 01
07	Kennels, or the boarding of animals (including retail sales)	P	P	P	P	N	N	P	P	P	N	Annual kennel license required from Town Council
08	Pet grooming	N	N	N	N	P	P	P	P	P	P	

137 Approved as to Form:

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139

140 _____
Town Solicitor Date

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142

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144 Introduced by/Pursuant to: Council  _____

145

146 Referred to/for: First Reading of the Ordinance on _____, 2026

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148 Planning Commission for recommendation on _____, 2026

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150 Public Hearing before the Town Council on _____, 2026

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152

153 Passed or Denied on a vote of _____

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156 _____
John-Paul A. Verducci – Town Council President

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159 Approved:

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162 _____
Daniel O. Parrillo – Town Manager

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165 Certification Actions by Town Clerk:

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