

ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENT (TA-23-01)
Regulations for Permanent Campgrounds and Temporary Camping
Adopted by the Board of Supervisors on September 25, 2024

Description:

Proposed text amendment to add a new permanent use, “primitive campground,” to Zoning Ordinance Section 5.2D (Recreation/Education/Assembly Uses); to add a new temporary use, “temporary camping,” to Section 5.4 (Uses, Definitions, and Use Regulations – Temporary Uses); and to delete “campground” and “summer camp” uses from Section 5.2D. The purpose is to limit permanent campgrounds operated as a business or by a non-profit or not-for-profit organization to primitive camping only -- overnight stays by patrons using their own tents and subject to use regulations – in order to mitigate impact on surrounding properties and the environment. The text amendment also establishes regulations for the maximum duration of camping activities, the long-term lease of a lot for camping, and temporary event camping. Primitive campgrounds would be allowed with a special use permit in the AOC and FOC Districts subject to use regulations. Temporary camping would be allowed by-right in the AOC, FOC, and ITL Districts subject to use regulations.

Ordinance Amendment Text (changes shown in bold italics with strikethroughs where necessary):

<i>PRIMITIVE CAMPGROUND</i>	
Permitted Use	None
Accessory Use	None
Special Use	AOC, FOC

Definition:

The use of land as the permanent location for primitive camping by a business, by a non-profit organization, or by a not-for-profit organization. Primitive camping is a recreational activity consisting of overnight stays by patrons using their own tents.

Use Regulations:

- 1. Primitive camping limited to tents brought by customers and guests. Accommodations at a primitive campground are limited to tents owned by and brought to the site by customers and guests. Recreational vehicles such as travel trailers, fifth-wheel campers, motor homes, tent trailers, pop-up campers, and pickup campers are prohibited. Accommodations in any temporary or permanent structure provided by the owner of the primitive campground are also prohibited.***

- 2. Onsite manager required. The owner or a designated manager shall reside onsite and be present at all times that customers, guests, and visitors are on the property.***

3. Occupancy limitations. *A primitive campground shall be limited to a maximum of ten (10) campsites and fifty (50) customers, guests, and visitors on the property at any one time. Only one primitive campground is allowed per lot.*

4. Minimum lot size. *The minimum lot size for a primitive campground is 40 acres.*

5. Minimum setback requirements.

- *For structures, campsites, and parking areas:*
 - *From property lines -- 300 feet*
 - *From dwellings on adjacent lots in existence at the time of approval – 500 feet*
 - *From perennial streams and the Shenandoah River – 100 feet*
- *Walking trails from property lines -- 100 feet*

Setbacks may be reduced with an alternate siting plan approved in conjunction with the special use permit

6. Buffer requirements. *A minimum 50 foot buffer containing mature trees shall exist and be maintained along all property lines. All buffer areas shall remain undisturbed and there shall be no removal of vegetation except for dead or diseased trees and plants and invasive species. In the absence of a compliant buffer, a planted buffer and/or greater setback distance may be substituted with an alternate siting plan approved in conjunction with the special use permit.*

7. Campsites, parking areas, and walking trails.

A. *Campsites, parking areas, and walking trails shall be unimproved except for use of gravel, mulch, or similar material for soil stabilization purposes.*

B. *All campsites shall be clearly delineated in a fixed location, identified by a number or other designation, and shown in the sketch plan required by use regulation 13.*

C. *Campsites may be served with a water source and electricity. Accessories such as picnic tables and chairs may be provided.*

8. Location of campsites, parking areas, and accessory structures and uses. *All campsites, parking areas, and accessory structures and uses shall be located within 300 feet of the owner's or resident manager's dwelling unless an alternate siting plan is approved in conjunction with the special use permit.*

9. Limitations on retail activities. *Camp stores and onsite food sales shall be prohibited in conjunction with a primitive campground except for the limited sale of firewood, first aid supplies, and bottled water to customers unless other zoning approvals are obtained. Renting of camping and recreational equipment is also prohibited.*

10. Camping duration. *No customer or guest may camp in a primitive campground for more than 7 consecutive days or for more than 14 days in a 30 day period. All tents, vehicles, and other belongings shall be removed from the primitive campground by the customer or guest at the end of the occupancy period.*
11. Direct access to public road required. *A primitive campground shall have direct access to a public road and shall use such direct access as the means of public ingress and egress. Use of a shared driveway or private access easement shall not constitute direct access to a public road and shall not be used for public ingress and egress.*
12. Parking requirements. *Parking for a minimum of 2 spaces per 5 customers and/or guests shall be provided in conjunction with each campsite, in a separate delineated parking area, or a combination of both. Parking areas are not required to be hard-surfaced.*
13. Campground plan required. *In lieu of a site development plan per Section 6.2.2, a campground plan prepared by a professional engineer or licensed surveyor shall be provided in conjunction with the special use permit application containing the following elements:*
 - *A boundary survey of the subject property including access easements, waterways, and any flood plain areas and floodways.*
 - *A sketch plan showing the location and dimensions of required setback and buffer areas, access easements, existing and proposed structures including the owner's or resident manager's dwelling, campsites, restroom facilities, water supplies, parking areas, walking trails, and utility easements.*
 - *An emergency action plan which includes the following items:*
 - *Processes and procedures to monitor all campsites effectively during occupancy periods*
 - *Methods for the owner or operator and customers to contact law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services*
 - *Fire prevention and onsite suppression methods*
 - *Flood response (if located adjacent to a stream or river) including evacuation plans for flash flooding events*
 - *Access for first responders including fire, emergency medical services, and law enforcement personnel*
 - *Any other information deemed relevant by the zoning administrator*
14. Alternate siting plan. *An alternate siting plan may be approved in conjunction with the special use permit which allows for reduced property line setback and buffer requirements based on existing site conditions. In addition to the applicable special use permit review factors, requests to reduce setback and/or buffer requirements shall be evaluated considering the following factors:*

- *Whether existing mature trees and/or topography in the proposed area would provide more effective screening than in a compliant location.*
 - *Whether the proposed area provides less of an impact on adjacent properties and residences than in a compliant location.*
 - *For requests to reduce the maximum setback distance from the owner's or resident manager's dwelling, whether the proposed location otherwise fully complies with property line setback and buffer requirements.*
15. *Limitations on outdoor burning. In addition to compliance with all State and County regulations regarding outdoor burning, all open-air fires shall be confined to a fire ring constructed of stone, metal, masonry, or similar fire-resistant materials and not to exceed three (3) feet in width. Fire rings shall be covered with a metal screen or other compliant device in accordance with State law when the 4PM Burning Law is in effect. Unconfined bonfires shall be prohibited. A water source and/or other materials for fire extinguishment and suppression shall be provided within 100 feet of all open-air fires.*
 16. *Solid waste disposal. Each campsite shall be provided with an enclosed trash receptacle and all solid waste shall be stored in an enclosed dumpster or similar container until properly disposed of off-site.*
 17. *Amplified sound. No amplified sound shall be audible at or beyond the property lines of the subject property.*
 18. *Motorized and electric vehicles and equipment. With the exception of customer and guest passenger vehicles, use of motorized or electric vehicles such as all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), dirt bikes, drones, and golf carts or motorized equipment such as chainsaws and generators by customers and guests is prohibited. Such vehicles and equipment may be used by the owner or operator of the primitive campground for facility maintenance.*
 19. *Boat ramps and accesses. Construction or modification of any new or existing ramps, docks, stairs, or similar accesses into perennial streams and the Shenandoah River shall comply with the site and construction regulations found in Zoning Ordinance Section 4.2.3D (Permitted Uses and Structures in a Stream Buffer).*
 20. *Compliance with Virginia Department of Health (VDH) requirements. A campground approval from the Virginia Department of Health shall be obtained, if required, and maintained in good standing throughout the life of the primitive campground.*

TEMPORARY CAMPING	
Permitted Use	<i>AOC, FOC, ITL (fairgrounds only)</i>
Accessory Use	<i>None</i>
Special Use	<i>None</i>

Definition:

A recreational activity conducted on a lot of record involving overnight accommodations on a temporary or periodic basis. If temporary camping is operated in exchange for a fee or other compensation, the use shall only be conducted in accordance with the long-term lease of a lot described in use regulation 5 below.

Use Regulations:

- 1. The duration of all camping activities conducted on a lot of record shall not exceed a total of 30 days in any 60-day period and shall not be conducted for more than 14 consecutive days.*
- 2. Temporary camping shall be limited to recreational vehicles and temporary structures such as tents or yurts or similar forms of temporary shelter not permitted for permanent residential use. Temporary or permanent onsite connections for recreational vehicles to water, sewage disposal, electric power, or other utilities are prohibited.*
- 3. Temporary camping shall not be publicized as being open to the public or as being the permanent campground for a non-profit or similar organization.*
- 4. A temporary campground approval from the Virginia Department of Health shall be obtained, if required, and maintained in good standing throughout the duration of the camping activity.*
- 5. The long-term lease of a lot for temporary camping by the property owner to a lessee and their guests for a charge is permissible subject to the following requirements:*
 - A. The minimum duration of a long-term lease shall be 30 days and shall be evidenced by a written agreement between the property owner and each lessee.*
 - B. No more than two campsites shall be allowed per lot of record and each campsite shall be limited to no more than one recreational vehicle including but not limited to travel trailers, fifth-wheel campers, motor homes, and pickup campers. A campsite is an area designated in a lease for camping by the specified lessee.*
- 6. Temporary camping may be permitted in conjunction with a temporary event held in accordance with an approved agritourism activity zoning permit, a special event permit issued per County Code Chapter 57, an ancillary activity to a temporary event held at a*

fairgrounds, or as specifically approved by other zoning action. Such camping shall be subject to the following requirements:

- A. Temporary event camping shall require approval of a zoning permit unless approved in conjunction with an agritourism activity zoning permit.*
- B. A temporary campground approval from the Virginia Department of Health shall be obtained, if required, and maintained in good standing throughout the duration of the event.*
- C. Camping activities shall be limited to the duration of the temporary event or as set forth in the approved agritourism activity zoning permit or special event permit.*
- D. A camping plan shall be provided with the zoning permit application which delineates the area reserved for campsites, all facilities required in conjunction with the VDH temporary campground permit, and any other pertinent information required by the zoning administrator.*

Required Review Processes:

A Zoning Permit per Section 6.2.1 is required for camping in conjunction with a temporary event as described above.

CAMPGROUND	
Permitted Use	None
Accessory Use	None
Special Use	AOC, FOC

Definition:

Any area, place, or lot, by whatever name called, on which three or more campsites are occupied or intended for occupancy, or facilities are established or maintained, wholly or in part, for the accommodation of camping units for periods of overnight or longer, whether the use of the campsites and facilities is granted gratuitously, or by rental fee, lease, or conditional sale, or by covenants, restrictions, and easements, including any travel trailer camp, recreation camp, family campground, camping resort, or camping community. "Campground" does not mean a summer camp, migrant labor camp, or park for mobile homes as defined in Code of Virginia, or a construction camp, storage area for unoccupied camping units, or property upon which the individual owner may choose to camp and not be prohibited or encumbered by covenants, restrictions, and conditions from providing his sanitary facilities within his property lines.

Use Regulations:

1. ~~Additional terms.~~ For the purposes of this section, the term "camping unit" shall mean a tent, tent trailer, travel trailer, camping trailer, pickup camper, motor home, and any other vehicular type structure for use as temporary living quarters or shelter during periods of

recreation, vacation, leisure time, or travel. The term “campsite” shall mean any delineated area within a campground used or intended for occupation by the camping unit.

2. ~~Duration of accommodations.~~ A campground shall be for the temporary accommodation of a camping unit for not more than 15 days in any 30-day period.

Required Review Processes:

1. ~~Special Use Permit Review is required per [Section 6.3.1](#).~~
2. ~~Site Development Plan Review is required per [Section 6.2.2](#).~~

SUMMER CAMP	
Permitted Use	None
Accessory Use	None
Special Use	AOC, FOC

Definition:

Any building, tent, or, vehicle, or group of buildings, tents or vehicles, if operated as one place or establishment, or any other place or establishment, public or private, together with the land and waters adjacent thereto, which is operated or used in the Commonwealth from the Saturday immediately preceding Memorial Day through Labor Day for the entertainment, education, recreation, religion instruction or activities, physical education, or health of persons under eighteen years of age who are not related to the operator of such place or establishment by blood or marriage within the third degree of consanguinity or affinity, if twelve or more such person at any one time are accommodated, gratuitously or for compensation, overnight and during any portion of more than two consecutive days.

Use Regulations:

1. ~~The minimum lot size for a summer camp is three acres.~~
2. ~~Applicants for such uses shall demonstrate that all applicable regulations of the Department of Health and Commonwealth of Virginia (specifically including [Title 35.1, Code of Virginia](#)), have been met.~~

Required Review Processes:

1. ~~Special Use Permit Review is required per [Section 6.3.1](#).~~
2. ~~Site Development Plan Review is required per [Section 6.2.2](#).~~