



MEMORANDUM

CITY OF WATERTOWN, NEW YORK
PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
245 WASHINGTON STREET, ROOM 305, WATERTOWN, NY 13601
PHONE: 315-785-7741 – FAX: 315-782-9014

TO: Planning Commission Members

FROM: Michael A. Lumbis, Planning and Community Development Director

SUBJECT: Amending Chapter 310 – Zoning, of the City Code; Article V – Sign Regulations and Article VI – Parking

DATE: July 2, 2026

At the request of the City Council, Staff is initiating an application to amend Article VI – Parking of the City of Watertown Zoning Ordinance, regarding electric vehicle (EV) charging stations.

Article VI – Parking, Section 310-37, Parking Standards, Paragraph E, requires two EV charging ports to be installed for every 30 newly constructed parking spaces. The City Council is proposing to eliminate this requirement from the Zoning Ordinance and has asked that an application be prepared and presented to the Planning Commission. A Zoning Ordinance Amendment requires a process similar to a zone change with the first step being the consideration of the request by the Planning Commission and a recommendation by the Commission to the City Council.

The requirement to include EV charging ports as part of new parking lot construction was included in the new Zoning Ordinance when the City undertook a complete rewrite of the document in 2023. The primary reason for including the requirement was due to New York State mandating that by 2035, all new light duty passenger vehicles sold in the state must be electric.

The City Council would like to remove the local requirement for EV charging stations, citing the cost of installation and the fact that the State is beginning to relax the electric vehicle requirement. Council members have also noted that the private sector will drive the demand for these facilities and businesses will react accordingly, which would remove the need for the City to mandate the construction of them. The draft ordinance would eliminate Section 310-37, Parking Standards, Paragraph E in its entirety from the Zoning Ordinance.

In addition to this request, Staff is also proposing an amendment to rectify a possible error in Article V – Sign Regulations, regarding the maximum sign surface area allowed per occupant in the Parks and Open Space Zoning District.

While researching sign regulations for a proposed project, Staff discovered that the allowed maximum sign surface area allowed per occupant in the Parks and Open Space Zoning District is only 20 square feet. Under the previous Zoning Ordinance, the same district allowed 200 square feet. While not certain, Staff's educated guess is this was a typographical error that occurred when drafting the new ordinance.

The proposed amendment would change Section 310-28, Sign Requirements, Paragraph A, Allowed Sign Surface Area, Subparagraph (1) to change the Maximum Sign Surface Area Per Occupant table to allow 200 square feet in the Parks and Open Space District.

A copy of a draft Ordinance containing all proposed changes is attached to this Staff Report. Also attached is a completed Part 1 of the Short Environmental Assessment Form.

The proposed Zoning Amendment requires referral to the Jefferson County Planning Board pursuant to Section 239-m of New York State General Municipal Law. Staff will refer this amendment to the County for consideration at its Tuesday, July 28, 2026, meeting.

The amendment also requires a public hearing. This City Council is expected to schedule a public hearing on the proposed amendment on August 3, 2026.

ORDINANCE

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Amending City Municipal Code § 310, Zoning

Council Member GARRABRANT, Shane A.

Council Member KIMBALL, Robert O.

Council Member OSBORNE Jr, Douglas E.

Council Member SHOEN, Benjamin P.

Mayor PIERCE, Sarah V.C.

Total

YEA	NAY

Introduced by _____

BE IT ORDAINED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby amends the City Municipal Code § 310, Zoning as follows, with **bold** text added and stuck through text eliminated:

§ 310-28. Sign Requirements

1. Each occupant shall be allowed two square feet of total sign surface area for each linear foot of occupant building frontage. In no case shall total signage exceed the maximum sign surface area listed in the following table:

District	Maximum Sign Surface Area Per Sign Occupant (square feet)
Residential	4
NMU	60
UMU	50
Downtown	40
Commercial	200
Planned Campus	200
Industrial	200
Parks and Open Space	20 200
Waterfront Overlay	50

and,

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that Chapter § 310-37 (E) is deleted in its entirety, with **bold** text added and stuck through text eliminated:

~~E. For new construction, two EV charging ports shall be installed for every 30 parking spaces constructed.~~

And,

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that this amendment shall take effect as soon as it is published once in the official newspaper of the City of Watertown, or printed as the City Manager directs.

Seconded by

Short Environmental Assessment Form

Part 1 - Project Information

Instructions for Completing

Part 1 – Project Information. The applicant or project sponsor is responsible for the completion of Part 1. Responses become part of the application for approval or funding, are subject to public review, and may be subject to further verification. Complete Part 1 based on information currently available. If additional research or investigation would be needed to fully respond to any item, please answer as thoroughly as possible based on current information.

Complete all items in Part 1. You may also provide any additional information you believe will be needed by or useful to the lead agency; attach additional pages as necessary to supplement any item.

Part 1 – Project and Sponsor Information			
Name of Action or Project:			
Project Location (describe, and attach a location map):			
Brief Description of Proposed Action:			
Name of Applicant or Sponsor:		Telephone:	
		E-Mail:	
Address:			
City/PO:		State:	Zip Code:
1. Does the proposed action only involve the legislative adoption of a plan, local law, ordinance, administrative rule, or regulation? If Yes, attach a narrative description of the intent of the proposed action and the environmental resources that may be affected in the municipality and proceed to Part 2. If No, continue to question 2.			NO <input type="checkbox"/>
			YES <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Does the proposed action require a permit, approval or funding from any other government Agency? If Yes, list agency(s) name and permit or approval:			NO <input type="checkbox"/>
			YES <input type="checkbox"/>
3. a. Total acreage of the site of the proposed action? _____ acres			
b. Total acreage to be physically disturbed? _____ acres			
c. Total acreage (project site and any contiguous properties) owned or controlled by the applicant or project sponsor? _____ acres			
4. Check all land uses that occur on, are adjoining or near the proposed action:			
<input type="checkbox"/> Urban <input type="checkbox"/> Rural (non-agriculture) <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Residential (suburban)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Forest <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> Aquatic <input type="checkbox"/> Other(Specify):			
<input type="checkbox"/> Parkland			

5. Is the proposed action,	NO	YES	N/A
a. A permitted use under the zoning regulations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Consistent with the adopted comprehensive plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Is the proposed action consistent with the predominant character of the existing built or natural landscape?	NO	YES	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. Is the site of the proposed action located in, or does it adjoin, a state listed Critical Environmental Area? If Yes, identify:	NO	YES	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. a. Will the proposed action result in a substantial increase in traffic above present levels? b. Are public transportation services available at or near the site of the proposed action? c. Are any pedestrian accommodations or bicycle routes available on or near the site of the proposed action?	NO	YES	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9. Does the proposed action meet or exceed the state energy code requirements? If the proposed action will exceed requirements, describe design features and technologies: _____	NO	YES	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10. Will the proposed action connect to an existing public/private water supply? If No, describe method for providing potable water: _____	NO	YES	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
11. Will the proposed action connect to existing wastewater utilities? If No, describe method for providing wastewater treatment: _____	NO	YES	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
12. a. Does the project site contain, or is it substantially contiguous to, a building, archaeological site, or district which is listed on the National or State Register of Historic Places, or that has been determined by the Commissioner of the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to be eligible for listing on the State Register of Historic Places? b. Is the project site, or any portion of it, located in or adjacent to an area designated as sensitive for archaeological sites on the NY State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) archaeological site inventory?	NO	YES	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
13. a. Does any portion of the site of the proposed action, or lands adjoining the proposed action, contain wetlands or other waterbodies regulated by a federal, state or local agency? b. Would the proposed action physically alter, or encroach into, any existing wetland or waterbody? If Yes, identify the wetland or waterbody and extent of alterations in square feet or acres: _____ _____	NO	YES	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

14. Identify the typical habitat types that occur on, or are likely to be found on the project site. Check all that apply: <input type="checkbox"/> Shoreline <input type="checkbox"/> Forest <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural/grasslands <input type="checkbox"/> Early mid-successional <input type="checkbox"/> Wetland <input type="checkbox"/> Urban <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban		
15. Does the site of the proposed action contain any species of animal, or associated habitats, listed by the State or Federal government as threatened or endangered?	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	YES <input type="checkbox"/>
16. Is the project site located in the 100-year or 500-year flood plain?	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	YES <input type="checkbox"/>
17. Will the proposed action create storm water discharge, either from point or non-point sources? If Yes, a. Will storm water discharges flow to adjacent properties? b. Will storm water discharges be directed to established conveyance systems (runoff and storm drains)? If Yes, briefly describe: _____	NO <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	YES <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
18. Does the proposed action include construction or other activities that would result in the impoundment of water or other liquids (e.g., retention pond, waste lagoon, dam)? If Yes, explain the purpose and size of the impoundment: _____	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	YES <input type="checkbox"/>
19. Has the site of the proposed action or an adjoining property been the location of an active or closed solid waste management facility? If Yes, describe: _____	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	YES <input type="checkbox"/>
20. Has the site of the proposed action or an adjoining property been the subject of remediation (ongoing or completed) for hazardous waste? If Yes, describe: _____	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	YES <input type="checkbox"/>
21. Is the project located within, or within ½ mile of, a disadvantaged community? If No, could impacts from the project affect a disadvantaged community? If Yes to either question in 21, answer the following question. a. Identify the potential pollution impacts of the project, either direct or indirect, that may occur within the disadvantaged community (e.g., wastewater discharges, air emissions, noise, odors, solid or hazardous waste generation or management):	NO <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	YES <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
I CERTIFY THAT THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE IS TRUE AND ACCURATE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE Applicant/sponsor/name: _____ Date: _____ Signature: _____ Title: _____		