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Planning Director

**Mike Hughes, P.E., CFM**  
County Engineer

## MEMORANDUM

**To: Planning Commission Members**

**From: Doug Demosi, Planning Director**

**Date: October 20, 2015**

**Subject: Staff Report – Mini Warehouse Regulation Amendments**

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The Planning Commission instructed Staff to investigate the possibility of amending the standards for mini warehouse developments in the unincorporated areas of Rutherford County at their September 28, 2015 meeting. The following analysis outlines the history of the regulations, requirements in other communities in the Middle Tennessee Area, presents amendment options and Staff recommendations.

### History

The Zoning Resolution in effect prior to 2013 did not contain any specific regulations for mini warehouse developments, with the exception of the definition, which stated that no sales, service or repair activities other than rental of dead storage units were permitted. Historically, these developments were categorized as Type II Conditional Use Permits that required approval from the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA).

Standards were added to the Zoning Ordinance adopted in 2012 (Effective January 1, 2013) for mini warehouse developments. They are allowed with Special Exception approval from the BZA in the OP, CN, CS, CG, VNC, RC and EAC zones and by-right in the LI and HI zones. Section 1103 contains use-specific standards for mini warehouse developments, regardless of whether allowed by Special Exception or by-right, which include:

- a. There shall be provided along the entire site boundaries fencing, screening, and landscaping in accordance with Section 1104. When the outdoor storage of boats, campers and trailers is to be accommodated on the site, the fencing and screening heights shall be increased to completely screen from public view the boats, campers and trailers.



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- b. The use of buildings in which the exterior facade is of one hundred (100) percent metal construction shall be prohibited with the buildings which face a street having a minimum of fifty (50) percent brick or stone;
- c. No individual storage unit may be used for sleeping or housekeeping, any business operation or for music and band operations.
- d. All buildings shall be separated by a minimum of twenty (20) feet;
- e. The setback for such activities shall be a minimum of sixty-five (65) feet;
- f. An apartment on site may be permitted for security purposes;
- g. The maximum size of an individual storage unit shall be five hundred (500) square feet;
- h. The facilities shall be designed to discourage the use by and generation of heavy or semi-truck vehicles.

The Planning and Engineering Department has received four applications for mini warehouse developments since these new regulations were implemented. During that time, Staff has received several concerns about Item e, the 65-foot setback requirement. One of the primary concerns raised was that with such a large setback, as opposed to 15 or 20 feet, can make site design a challenge. The Planning Commission has also approved mini warehouse developments prior to 2013 where the backs of the buildings serve as part of the buffer between properties. Staff believes that this is not practical with buildings that are setback a minimum of 65 feet from the property line.

## Comparison of Regulations

Staff contacted several Planning offices in the Middle Tennessee area regarding their setback requirements for mini warehouse developments. Those findings can be seen in the following table:

| <u>Locality</u>          | <u>Required Setback</u>   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <b>RUTHERFORD COUNTY</b> | <b>65 feet</b>  |
| Brentwood                | Controlled by the zoning district. No additional setbacks   |
| Franklin                 | Controlled by the zoning district, but not permitted within 500 feet of an arterial right-of-way as shown on the Franklin Major Thoroughfare Plan unless screened in accordance with the Zoning Ordinance |
| Lebanon                  | 65 feet   |



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|-------------------|---|
| Murfreesboro      | Controlled by the zoning district. No additional setbacks   |
| Smyrna            | Controlled by the zoning district. No additional setbacks   |
| Williamson County | 150 feet between all residential property lines and all buildings and/or storage areas related to the self-service storage use – Can be waived if fencing and screening is utilized in accordance with the Zoning Ordinance |
| Wilson County     | Controlled by the zoning district. No additional setbacks   |

A majority of the localities surveyed required no additional setbacks other than what is required in the zoning district. Franklin and Williamson County both have greater minimum setbacks than those required in the zoning district, but have the ability to reduce them if the use is buffered properly. Lebanon has a setback that cannot be reduced with buffering.

## Amendment Options

After reviewing how other localities regulate setbacks for mini warehouse developments, Staff has identified the following options:

- Option 1: Remove the 65-foot setback requirement. Removing the requirement would be consistent with the majority of the communities surveyed;
- Option 2: Amend the 65-foot requirement. Either reduce the requirement or adopt language that would allow a developer to reduce the distance if screening requirements are met.
- Option 3: Leave the 65-foot requirement as is.

## Staff Recommendation

After researching and analyzing the results, Staff feels that Option 2 would be the best course of action. If constructed properly, the backs of the buildings can be used as part of the buffering for the property. That being said, Staff feels that some scrutiny in the design is appropriate in this situation. Staff recommends the following changes to Section 1103 C.3:

*The setback for such activities (i.e. buildings and outdoor storage) shall be a minimum of sixty-five (65) feet, provided that if there are no doors on the outside wall of the buildings, the setbacks of the district can apply. The buildings may be used as part of the required buffer if approved by the Board of Zoning Appeal or Planning Commission, as applicable, consistent with Section 1104 of this Ordinance. Blank walls of masonry, concrete block or similar material will not be allowed.*



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In order to make this amendment, a public hearing will need to be held at both the Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners, consistent with the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.

Staff will be available before or during the meeting to answer any questions.

