

Town of Glen Echo
Town Council Meeting & Public Hearing
August 24, 2026 at 7:30pm
Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams (recorded)

Attendance:

Mayor Dia Costello
Councilmembers Dan Spealman, Kellan Steele, Matt Stiglitz and Julia Wilson
Town Manager, Susan Theis
Town Attorney, Ron Bolt

Residents:

Heather Bloxham, Madeleine Carter, Wright Doss, Pete Epanchin, Alexis Feringa, Alec Graham, Aaron Hirsch, Patrick Hooper, Hilary Kapner, Robin Kogelnik, Gloria Levin, Andy Malmgren, Olivia from Delegate Korman's office, Emily Parsons for *The Echo*, Colleen Perlman and Bonnie Whyte

Proposed Amendments to the Building Ordinance (Article 3) relating to Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) and Accessory Structures Generally

The Council's principal business was consideration of amendments to the Town's ordinance governing accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and other accessory structures. The discussion was prompted by recent Maryland legislation requiring local jurisdictions to establish compliant ADU regulations by October 1, 2026. The ordinance amendments are intended to ensure compliance with Maryland law while preserving appropriate local controls over accessory structure size, height, placement, and neighborhood impact.

Proposed and Discussed Ordinance Amendments Related to Accessory Structures

The proposed revisions and subsequent discussion addressed the following:

- Elimination of ADU-specific requirements relating to setbacks and parking;
- Addition of new or amended definitions concerning "building structure", "building line", "height", "rear yard" and "through lot";
- Establishment of rear and side setbacks for accessory structures from property lines, including adjustments based on height or length of the structure greater than 15 feet and 24 feet, respectively;
- Applying a 20-foot height limit to all accessory structures;
- Limiting size and scale of ADUs to 75% of the principal dwelling; and,
- Limiting placement of ADUs to rear yards.

As initially drafted (before the County's proposed changes became known), the proposed ordinance revisions would have removed ADU-related limitations, and set new requirements related to all accessory structures (to include ADUs). However, the proposed requirements included setback provisions that were, in some respects, more restrictive than those currently being considered by the County—principally, a proposed minimum 7-foot rear setback for

certain structures taller than 15 feet, rather than the county's proposal of a 5-foot setback. The revisions also set a 75% size limitation for accessory structures, noting that this reflects an important threshold under state law.

County Standards vs. Town Standards

The bulk of feedback from residents who provided comments or attended the meeting—and resulting Council discussion—focused on the setback differences between the proposed Town and County amendments. It was noted that property owners must comply with both Town and County requirements where applicable, with the more restrictive applicable requirements between the two jurisdictions effectively controlling the outcome.

Some Council members and residents favored simply following Montgomery County's standards, citing:

- The need for increased housing in the region;
- The desire to avoid unnecessary local restrictions;
- The small size of many Glen Echo lots; and
- The benefits of the County's existing regulatory framework and enforcement mechanisms.

Other Council members supported retaining some Town-specific protections, particularly given concerns relating to:

- Impact of increased development on stormwater and drainage, light and air, and privacy;
- Building scale and its effect on neighborhood character; and the ability of the Town to address local conditions and enforcement concerns, given that the County has previously fallen short in this regard.

Actions Taken

- Following public input and discussion, the Council proposed further amendments to the draft ordinance changes to reflect accessory structure rear and side setback requirements (both minimums and adjustments for oversized structures) that aligned with those currently proposed by Montgomery County.
- Motion to amend: CM Spealman
- Second: CM Wilson
- Opposed: CM Stiglitz
- Vote: 3 in favor and 1 opposed; Amendment passed 3-1.

The final ordinance amendment proposal (as amended) was subsequently approved unanimously and sent for the Mayor's signature.

- Motion to approve the ordinance changes as amended: CM Spealman
- Second: CM Stiglitz
- Vote: All

6001 Yale Avenue — Proposed Residential Addition

Mayor Dia Costello introduced a separate matter concerning a proposed addition at 6001 Yale Avenue.

The homeowner wishes to construct an addition at the rear of the residence. The County, however, considers the Yale Avenue-facing portion of the property to be the front of the house for zoning purposes. This creates a setback issue that could potentially require the addition to be placed toward the front of the property.

The homeowner requested that the Town provide a letter to the County expressing the Town's view that the side entrance functions as the home's primary/front entrance, because the Yale Avenue-facing door is rarely used.

Council members expressed uncertainty about the request and questioned whether the Town should take a position on an issue being considered by the County. Members also noted that other residents may similarly use side or alternative entrances.

Several Council members indicated that they needed to see the actual architectural plans and property configuration before considering any support for the homeowner's request.

The Mayor ultimately deferred the matter. The homeowner and her architect are expected to return at a future meeting to explain the proposal in greater detail. Council members also discussed obtaining the homeowner's permission to visit the rear of the property so they can better understand the proposed addition.

No letter of support or other action was approved.

Town Operations and Upcoming Expenditures

Town Manager Theis provided an update on several upcoming maintenance and safety projects. The Mayor emphasized that these items were presented for informational purposes and did not require Council votes.

Fire-Safety Services

The Town plans to expand its relationship with Cintas to provide consolidated fire-safety services.

The work will include inspection and maintenance related to:

- Fire extinguishers; emergency lighting; fire sprinklers; backflow systems; CO & smoke detectors; and coordination with the Post Office, which occupies part of the same building.

TM Theis explained that multiple companies were contacted and that additional bids/pricing were obtained. The selected option was considered more manageable and reasonably priced compared with alternatives.

Sidewalk Repairs

The Town also plans to undertake sidewalk repairs using two types of work and two contractors:

1. Grinding/shaving uneven sidewalk sections; and
2. Replacing sections and curbs that cannot be repaired.

TM Theis reported that multiple contractors were contacted. Some did not respond, while another company provided pricing that was substantially higher than the selected contractor. The selected contractor was described as the lowest-priced responsive option, with relevant municipal recommendations or prior experience.

Procurement Discussion

Councilmember Spealman asked about the Town's procurement and bid-selection process and requested that the process be reflected in the record.

TM Theis explained that she contacted numerous companies and evaluated the responses and pricing received. The Mayor expressed confidence in the Town Manager's due diligence in seeking competitive pricing.

Upcoming Town Events

The Mayor announced the upcoming Summer Picnic, scheduled for Saturday, August 29, 2026 from 5-7pm. A pie contest will be included as part of the event.

Next Meeting

The next Town Council meeting was announced for Monday, September 14, 2026 at 7:30pm

Adjournment

The Mayor thanked Council members, staff, and residents for their patience and participation, noting the strong level of public involvement in the meeting.

The Council then adjourned the meeting at 9:32pm.

Minutes prepared by Town Manager, Susan Theis and Councilmember Matt Stiglitz

Approved by:

Mayor Dia Costello

Signature: 

Date: 10/19/2026