

COUNTY COUNCIL
OF
DORCHESTER COUNTY, MARYLAND

BILL NO. 2026-9

AN ACT OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL OF DORCHESTER COUNTY, MARYLAND TO AMEND CHAPTER 155 (ZONING), § 155-33 (RURAL RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT RR) AND APPLICABLE DISTRICT DENSITY AND BULK REGULATIONS OF THE DORCHESTER COUNTY CODE FOR THE PURPOSE OF UPDATING THE PURPOSE AND INTENT OF THE RURAL RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT AND REVISING MINIMUM LOT SIZE STANDARDS BASED ON THE AVAILABILITY OF PUBLIC COMMUNITY WATER AND SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE; PROVIDING THAT THE TITLE OF THIS BILL SHALL BE DEEMED A FAIR SUMMARY, AND GENERALLY RELATING TO ZONING IN DORCHESTER COUNTY, MARYLAND.

WHEREAS, pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Local Gov't § 10-317(a)(4), the County Council of Dorchester County, Maryland (the "County Council") is authorized and empowered to enact local laws to protect and promote public safety, health, morals, comfort, and welfare in Dorchester County, Maryland (the "County"); and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Local Gov't § 10-324(a)(1), the County Council is authorized and empowered to enact local laws relating to zoning and planning and to promote public safety, health, morals, and welfare; and

WHEREAS, following a public hearing held on May 6, 2026, the Dorchester County Planning Commission (the "Planning Commission") recommended that the County Council approve a text amendment amending Chapter 155 (Zoning) of the Dorchester County Code (the "County Code") for the purpose of updating Rural Residential (RR) District density regulations to align with infrastructure availability, subject to certain conditions; and

WHEREAS, on August 4, 2026, the County Council held a public hearing regarding the foregoing text amendment recommended by the Planning Commission, notice of which was published on July 18, 2026, and July 25, 2026, in The Star Democrat, a newspaper of general circulation in the County, in accordance with Md. Code Ann., Land Use § 4-203(b) and § 155-6(B) of the County Code; and

WHEREAS, having considered the recommendations of the Planning Commission and the Department of Planning & Zoning Staff, as well as the comments made during the August 4, 2026, public hearing, the County Council is desirous of amending Chapter 155 of the County Code for the purpose of adjusting minimum lot sizes based on water and sewer infrastructure to encourage efficient growth management; and

WHEREAS, the County Council finds that the enactments set forth herein are necessary to promote and protect the public health, safety, and welfare.

SECTION ONE: With respect to the substantive provisions of this Bill, additions to existing law are shown in bold, underlined font and deletions from existing law are shown in strikethrough.

SECTION TWO: Acting under Md. Code Ann., Local Gov't §§ 10-317(a)(4) and 10-324(a)(1) and Chapter 155 of the County Code, be it ENACTED and ORDAINED by the County Council of Dorchester County, Maryland that Chapter 155 (Zoning), § 155-33(A)(5) (Rural Residential District RR) and related lot standard provisions of the County Code be and it is hereby amended to read as follows:

§ 155-33(A)(5) Rural Residential District (RR).

Rural Residential District (RR). The Rural Residential District is established to encourage and concentrate low- to medium-density residential development in limited areas of the county, near existing towns or in ~~development corridors~~ **designated development corridors** where public services can be efficiently provided, thereby helping to preserve Resource Conservation and Agricultural Conservation Districts. ~~Rural Residential Districts are not to be served by public community water or sewer systems.~~ **Development shall be based on the availability of infrastructure, with higher densities permitted where public community water and sewer systems are available and lower densities required where development relies on on-site well and septic systems, in order to direct growth to appropriate areas, promote efficient use of infrastructure, and maintain the rural character of the county while protecting agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive areas.**

SECTION THREE: Acting under Md. Code Ann., Local Gov't §§ 10-317(a)(4) and 10-324(a)(1) and Chapter 155 of the County Code, be it ENACTED and ORDAINED by the County Council of Dorchester County, Maryland that Chapter 155 (Zoning), 155 Attachment 2 (Density, Lot Size and Bulk Regulations Table) is hereby amended by deleting the current minimum lot size standards for the Rural Residential (RR) district and inserting new standards based on infrastructure availability, to read as follows:

DORCHESTER COUNTY CODE
CHAPTER 155 ATTACHMENT 2
(DENSITY, LOT SIZE AND BULK REGULATIONS TABLE)

[Excerpts of Table Row: Rural Residential (RR)]

District: Rural Residential (RR)

Minimum Lot Size (sq. ft.):

~~Non-cluster: 40,000~~

~~Cluster: 20,000~~

Lots served by public community water and sewer systems: 10,000

Lots not served by public community water and/or sewer systems: 20,000

SECTION FOUR: And be it further enacted and ordained that if any section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase, or portion of this Bill is for any reason held invalid or unconstitutional by any court of competent jurisdiction, such portion shall be deemed a separate, distinct, and independent provision and such holding shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Bill, it being the intent of the County Council that this Bill shall stand, notwithstanding the invalidity of any section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase, or portion hereof.

SECTION FIVE: And be it further enacted and ordained that all bills, ordinances, or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Bill are hereby repealed to the extent of such inconsistency.

SECTION SIX: And be it further enacted and ordained that General Code Publishers is directed to codify the above amendments to the Dorchester County Code accordingly.

SECTION SEVEN: And be it further enacted and ordained pursuant to § 308 of the Charter of Dorchester County, Maryland that promptly after enactment of this Act, the County Manager shall cause a fair summary of this Act to be published at least once in a newspaper of general circulation in Dorchester County, Maryland.

SECTION EIGHT: And be it further enacted and ordained that this Bill shall be known as Bill No. 2026-9 of Dorchester County, Maryland and shall take effect sixty (60) days after its final passage.

PASSED this _____ day of _____, 2026.

ATTEST:

COUNTY COUNCIL OF DORCHESTER
COUNTY, MARYLAND

BY: _____
Jerry Jones
County Manager

BY: _____
George L. Pfeffer, Jr.
President

Pfeffer –

Detmer –

Kramer –

Nichols –

Travers –