

CITY OF HARRISONBURG



January 13, 2026 City Council Meeting

Title

Zoning Ordinance Amendment, Meat and Poultry Processing and Storage Facilities in the M-1 District — Planning Commission and Adam Fletcher, Community Development

Summary

Zoning Ordinance Sections	Amend Sections 10-3-24, 10-3-96, and 10-3-97
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add new definitions for Meat Processing and Storage Facility and Poultry Processing and Storage Facility.• Add Poultry Processing and Storage Facility as a by right use in M-1.• Add Meat Processing and Storage Facility as a special use permit in M-1.
Applicant	Honest Meats LLC
Planning Commission	December 10, 2025 (Public Hearing)
City Council	January 13, 2026 (First Reading/Public Hearing) Anticipated January 27, 2026 (Second Reading)

Recommendation

Option 1. Staff and Planning Commission (6-0) recommend approval of the Zoning Ordinance amendments.

Fiscal Impact

N/A

Context & Analysis

On September 10, 2025, staff met with Honest Meats LLC (applicant) representatives to discuss future expansion to the T&E Meats facility located at 256 Charles Street. A portion of this facility operates a slaughterhouse for domesticated livestock and is a nonconforming use.

Article E. - Nonconforming Structures and Uses of the Zoning Ordinance prohibits the enlargement or expansion of nonconforming uses. After reviewing the details of the proposed expansion with the applicant, staff concluded that the new proposal would not violate Article E. However, the applicant expressed interest in finding a way to permit the slaughterhouse use in the M-1 General Industrial District to remove their nonconforming status and provide a route for future improvements that are not restricted by Article E.

Staff worked with the applicant to create a new definition for “Meat processing and storage facility,” as shown below:

Meat processing and storage facility: A building used for the slaughter and processing of game or domestic animals. May include temporary storage of animals outside the principal building and onsite storage facilities for distribution of processed meats. Does not include processing and storage of poultry and other fowl.

This definition separates facilities that slaughter and process domestic animals and game from poultry processing. Further discussion on the importance of that distinction is discussed later in this report. The definition will allow temporary storage of animals outside while waiting to be processed. The proposal would add a new subsection (18) within Section 10-3-97. - Uses permitted by special use permit in the M-1 General Industrial District to permit, meat processing and storage facilities only by special use permit (SUP).

Staff believes that Planning Commission and City Council should consider meat processing and storage facility operations on a case-by-case basis so that the location and potential undesirable impacts can be evaluated and considered. During the special use permit (SUP) process, staff, Planning Commission, and City Council could consider and attach conditions to address matters of concern such as, but not limited to:

- Location relative to adjacent and nearby uses, zoning districts, and (future) Land Use Guide designations,
- Facility size (i.e. footprint, building scale),
- Temporary outdoor storage of animals,
- Hours of operation, and
- Noise.

While crafting the definition for meat processing and storage facilities, it became apparent the proposed amendment needed to address poultry processing and storage. Harrisonburg’s first ZO in 1939 separated poultry processing from other types of meat processing and slaughterhouses. While slaughterhouses were expressly prohibited as a use, poultry processing and storage was allowed. In the 1939 ZO, Section 7, B-2 Business, Manufacturing and Industrial District Uses stated:

In any B-2 District, no lot, building or structure shall be used and no building or structure shall be erected which is intended or designed to be used, in whole or in part, for any of the following specified purposes:

- (1) Abattoir or slaughter house, except for poultry and incidental to a retail store; stockyard; starch; glucose or dextrine manufacture; horn processing, except from cleaned shells; the curing, tanning, dressing or storing of raw or green salted hides or skins.

The ZO has changed significantly since then and poultry processing is not explicitly mentioned anymore. It had been a long-standing interpretation of the ZO that poultry processing is allowed by right under Section 10-3-96(1) which states:

Industrial operations for the manufacturing, processing, storage or treatment of products which are not customarily found in retail centers. It is intended that the industrial use shall not endanger surrounding uses or create severe pollution problems.

To clarify that a poultry processing and storage facility is not a subcategory of a meat processing and storage facility, the proposal includes a new definition for “Poultry Processing and Storage Facility” as shown below:

Poultry processing and storage facility: A building used for the slaughter and processing of poultry or fowl. May include temporary storage of poultry outside the principal building and onsite storage facilities for distribution of processed poultry.

The proposal includes the addition of subsection (22) within Section 10-3-96. - Uses permitted by right in the M-1 General Industrial District to allow poultry processing and storage facilities by right in the M-1 district. This would codify the existing interpretation and remove the possibility of making existing poultry processing facilities nonconforming by requiring a SUP.

Conclusion

The proposed amendments will provide slaughterhouse operations with a path to operate within the City as conforming use and clarify existing interpretations regarding poultry processing operations. Staff recommends approval of the amendment as proposed.

Options

1. Approve the Zoning Ordinance amendments.
2. Approve the Zoning Ordinance amendments with modifications.
3. Deny the Zoning Ordinance amendments.

Attachments

- Extract from Planning Commission
- Application and supporting documents
- Current Ordinance Reflecting Recommended Amendments