



Development Services

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Cochise County Planning and Zoning Commission
FROM: Matthew Taylor, AICP, Planning Manager
FOR: Christine McLachlan, AICP, Director
SUBJECT: Docket R-26-02 (Special Use Criteria/Development Standards for Certain Uses)
DATE: October 14, 2026 (tabled from June 10 and August 12, 2026)

I. BACKGROUND

Staff requests text amendments to Articles 2.15 (Rural Zoning Districts), 2.33 (General Business Zoning District), 2.36 (Light Industry Zoning District), 2.39 (Heavy Industry Zoning District), and 2.51 (Site Development Standards) of the Cochise County Zoning Regulations to amend Special Use Authorization criteria and site development standards for communications facilities and certain agricultural and animal-related uses.

II. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

The amendments being proposed are limited to Rural (RU), General Business (GB), Light Industry (LI), and Heavy Industry (HI) zoning districts and affect the following uses:

- Agricultural Processing
- Commercial Riding Stables
- Communication Towers
- Custom Butchering/Meat Curing/Processing
- Feedlots/Stockyards/Livestock Auction Barns
- Slaughterhouses/Meat Packing Plants

The purpose of this amendment is to appropriately transfer development standard relief from the Planning and Zoning Commission to the Board of Adjustment (BOA), add flexibility to minimum setbacks for agricultural and animal processing facilities and incorporate new standards to limit conflicts with adjacent uses, and update existing communication facility standards relative to permitting and acknowledgment of federal and state law.

Proposed amendments do not change permitted uses currently identified in the Zoning Regulations; however, this amendment will shift the requirement for Special Use Authorization approval by the Planning and Zoning Commission to Variance approval by the BOA. Current regulations identify several instances where a special use is required based on a development standard such as height, setbacks, or site area and not in relation to the use itself. For example, wireless communication facilities are a permitted use in Rural zoning districts provided the tallest associated structure, typically a monopole or lattice structure with mounted cellular equipment, does not exceed 30' which is the maximum height allowed in Rural districts. The regulations currently require a special use for wireless communication facilities when the height exceeds 30'. In effect, the Commission's decisions rests on approving a special use for height, which is a development standard of the zoning district, and not for the actual use, which is permitted. Per Article 2.60 of the Zoning Regulations, when a variation from a defined development

standard is requested, the appropriate body to consider such a request is the BOA, which has specific authority to grant Variances:

“A deferral, modification, or waiver of the terms of these zoning regulations granted by the appropriate Board of Adjustment pursuant to Section 2.60 of these Zoning Regulations.”

Staff previously proposed text amendment to facilitate the same modification relative to accessory dwellings. In 2025, Docket R-25-03 (Ordinance 25-18, approved by the Board of Supervisors on September 2, 2025) sought to update the County’s accessory dwelling standards. Driven by changes to State law and mandating Counties to expand the number of allowed accessory dwellings per parcel, planning staff included a change where a proposed increase in the allowed size of an accessory dwelling would no longer require a special use but, appropriately require Variance approval by the BOA. Accessory dwellings are an allowed use in residential zoning districts, and an accessory dwelling that exceeds the maximum allowed size does not constitute a new or separate use requiring special use approval. Again, the BOA is explicitly authorized to grant relief from development standards contained in the zoning regulations and, similar to the special use process, Variance request require public notification by the County (mailed notices, property posting, legal advertisement, and publishing on the County’s website).

Specific proposed amendments by use include:

- Agricultural Processing
 - Removes special use requirement to reduce building setback
 - Requires building for agricultural processing
 - Reduces minimum required setback from 300’ to 100’
 - Requires Variance to reduce minimum building setback
- Commercial Riding Stables
 - Keeps minimum 10 acre site area requirement
 - Defers to existing setbacks in Section 2.51.130 for livestock-related corrals, stables and similar structures
 - Requires Variance to reduce minimum site area
- Communication Towers
 - Removes special use requirement to exceed zoning district height
 - Requires Variance for increased tower height; building permit and/or special use if pre-1999 towers are modified, expanded, replaced, or altered; includes language federal/state regulations (Telecommunications Act of 1996, etc.)
- Custom Butchering/Meat Curing/Processing
 - Removes special use requirement to reduce building setback
 - Requires enclosed building
 - Reduces property line setback from 300’ to 150’; keeps 300’ setback (existing residential structures)
 - Defers to existing setbacks in Section 2.51.130 for outdoor animal holding pens
 - Requires Variance to reduce building setback
- Feedlots/Stockyards/Livestock Auction Barns
 - Removes special use requirement to reduce building setback
 - Reduces auction barn setback from 300’ to 150’; increases minimum site area from 20 to 40 acres
 - Creates 1000’ setback requirement for outdoor holding pens, manure collection
- Slaughterhouses/Meat Packing Plants
 - Removes special use requirement to reduce building setback

- Requires enclosed building
- Reduces property line setback from 300' to 150'; keeps 300' setback (existing residential structures)
- Defers to existing setbacks in Section 2.51.130 for outdoor animal holding pens
- Requires Variance to reduce building setback

III. RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends amending Articles 2.15 (Rural Zoning Districts), 2.33 (General Business Zoning District), 2.36 (Light Industry Zoning District), 2.39 (Heavy Industry Zoning District), and 2.51 (Site Development Standards) of the Cochise County Zoning Regulations to amend Special Use Authorization criteria and site development standards for communications facilities and certain agricultural and animal-related uses.

ATTACHMENTS: Exhibit A