



City and Borough of Sitka

100 Lincoln Street • Sitka, Alaska 99835

Coast Guard City, USA

Planning and Community Development Department

AGENDA ITEM

Case No: ZA 20-02
Proposal: Add a definition for “bulk retail” and change “bulk retail” to a conditional use in Industrial zones
Applicant: Jeremy and Savanah Plank
Location: N/A
Legal: N/A
Zone: Industrial

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This request is for a zoning text change to amend the Sitka General Code (SGC) to add a definition of “Bulk retail” - a use that is identified in the zoning code’s use tables but not defined, and to make “Bulk retail” a conditional use in Industrial zones.

KEY POINTS AND CONCERNS

- Bulk retail is already an identified use in the zoning code, this amendment provides clarity to enable better administration of this use.
- A few retail uses are currently allowed in the Industrial zone – bulk retail is a logical extension of these uses in the Industrial zone.
- Making bulk retail a conditional use in the Industrial zone will allow staff and the Commission to analyze on a case-by-case basis the appropriateness of categorizing a proposal as bulk retail and consider whether it will be conducive to the industrial area in question.
- Other professional and political organizations have worked to create a definition of bulk retail that can be adopted for local use.
- The applicants are working with staff to operate a business under the name “Sitka Bulk Retail” in an industrial zone.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of this zoning text change.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Draft Ordinance

Attachment B: APA Glossary of Zoning, Development, and Planning Terms Excerpt

Attachment C: Applicant Materials

BACKGROUND

The intent of the Industrial zone as stated in SGC 22.16.110 is *“for industrial or heavier commercial uses including warehousing, wholesale, and distribution operations, manufacturing, natural resource extraction, contractors’ yards, and other such uses that require larger property or larger water and sewer services.”*

Retail services are very limited, primarily allowing wholesale, business-to-business type sales. Allowed retail uses currently include (per SGC Table 22.16.015-6):

- Building, hardware and garden materials
- Bulk forest products sales
- Retail forest products sales
- Agricultural product sales
- Gasoline service stations
- Monuments, tombstones, and gravestones
- Fuel dealers

Conditional uses in the Industrial zone include eating and drinking places, and marijuana retail facilities.

“Bulk retail” is a use that is identified in the use tables of the zoning code under 22.16.015-6 Retail and Business Uses. Bulk retail is allowed in the C-1 and C-2 zones, and a conditional use in the GI and LI zones. It is a prohibited use in the Industrial zone. However, the zoning code lacks a definition of what constitutes bulk retail.

The American Planning Association (APA) in its Glossary of Zoning, Development, and Planning Terms defines bulk retail as: *“A retail establishment engaged in selling goods or merchandise to the general public as well as to other retailers, contractors, or businesses, and rendering services incidental to the sale of such goods. Bulk retail involves a high volume of sales of related and/or unrelated products in a warehouse setting and may include membership warehouse clubs (i.e. “big box” retail). Bulk retail is differentiated from general retail by any of the following characteristics: items for sale include large, categorized products (e.g., lumber, appliances, household furnishings, electrical and heating fixtures and supplies, wholesale and retail nursery stock, etc.) and may also include a variety of carry out goods (e.g., groceries, household, and personal care products).”*

Staff recommends that along with changing the zones of allowed/conditional use of this activity, we adopt the above definition into Sitka’s zoning code to allow for/enable better administration of the use.

ANALYSIS

Definition: As previously stated, the zoning code recognizes bulk retail as a use, but does not provide a definition of said use. Adopting a definition of this use would make it easier for both staff and the Commission to administer. Even the definition provided by the APA requires a degree of judgement, so having a baseline of standards from which to judge is an important code update.

Use: When considering the other allowed retail uses in the Industrial zone, there are a few common themes. First, retail sales are limited to items conducive/related to other industrial uses – construction, garden, agricultural, gasoline, and stonework. Second, most of these items generate only moderate, rather than high, vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The current allowed retail uses are not “convenience” in nature that would draw in high traffic, and thereby do not conflict with large vehicle and heavy machinery traffic needed for other industrial uses. Third, the allowed retail uses are not what staff would characterize as “aesthetically sensitive”. Patrons of apparel, jewelry, hobby, craft supply, art, books, florists, and other specialty retail stores, may expect a particular aesthetic of the stores and surrounding areas. These expectations could create conflict between shop owners and other industrial users if in close proximity to one another. The current allowed retail uses in the industrial zone are not of this “aesthetically sensitive” nature.

Bulk retail fits within these themes of currently allowed retail uses in Industrial zones. The items themselves are large, categorized products (their relatedness to industrial use is proposal-specific). Bulk retail would likely generate only moderate traffic, as bulk retail operations do not sell convenience goods. Most consumers would visit this type of establishment on a once-weekly or bi-weekly basis due to the large quantities of packaging/goods sold. Lastly, bulk retail takes place in a “warehouse” type setting conducive to many Industrial properties/developments.

Making bulk retail a conditional use, rather than allowed use, in Industrial zones allows staff and the Commission to consider these factors and determine on case-by-case basis if the proposal 1) fits within the definition of bulk retail and 2) is conducive with the industrial area in question.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION/CONCLUSION

Staff recommends the zoning text change to amend Title 22 of the Sitka General Code to add a definition of “Bulk retail” and to make bulk retail a conditional use in the Industrial zone.

RECOMMENDED MOTION

“I move to recommend approval of the zoning text change to amend Title 22 of the Sitka General Code to add a definition for bulk retail, and to make bulk retail a conditional use in Industrial zones.”