

TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD

TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

January 27, 2026, 6:35 p.m.,

Legislative Chambers

Re: Ordinance Permitting Recreational Vehicles as
an Accessory Use in Existing Single-Family
Residence Districts - Application of Michael
Cervone seeking to Section 177-2 and Section
177-6C of the West Hartford Zoning Ordinances.

Reporter: Lisa L. Warner, CSR #061

1 A p p e a r a n c e s :

2 Council Members :

3 MAYOR SHARI CANTOR

4 DEPUTY MAYOR DEBRA POLUN

5 JOHN LYONS, Minority Leader

6 DR. GAYLE HARRIS

7 LISA LAZARUS

8 TIFFANI MCGINNIS

9 BARRY WALTERS

10 DR. JASON WANG

11 BEN WENOGRAD

12

13 Town Manager :

14 RICK LEDWITH

15

16 Corporation Counsel :

17 DALLAS DODGE, ESQ.

18

19 Town Clerk/Council Clerk :

20 LEON DAVIDOFF

21

22 Town Planner :

23 TODD DUMAIS

24

25 Also present: Michael Cervone

1 (The public hearing commenced at 6:35
2 p.m.)

3 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Good evening,
4 everyone. I am calling the 6:30 public hearing to
5 order. This is an Ordinance Permitting
6 Recreational Vehicles as an Accessory Use in
7 Existing Single-Family Residence Districts -
8 Application of Michael Cervone -- and if I'm not
9 pronouncing that right, please let me know --
10 seeking to Section 177-2 and Section 177-6(C) of
11 the West Hartford Zoning Ordinances.

12 Roll call, Mr. Davidoff.

13 MR. DAVIDOFF: Good evening, Madam
14 Mayor. Mayor Cantor.

15 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Here.

16 MR. DAVIDOFF: Councilor Harris?

17 COUNCILOR HARRIS: Here.

18 MR. DAVIDOFF: Councilor Lazarus.

19 COUNCILOR LAZARUS: Present.

20 MR. DAVIDOFF: Councilor Lyons.

21 COUNCILOR LYONS: Here.

22 MR. DAVIDOFF: Councilor McGinnis.

23 COUNCILOR MCGINNIS: Here.

24 MR. DAVIDOFF: Councilor Polun.

25 COUNCILOR POLUN: Here.

1 MR. DAVIDOFF: Councilor Walters.

2 COUNCILOR WALTERS: Here.

3 MR. DAVIDOFF: Councilor Wang.

4 COUNCILOR WANG: Here.

5 MR. DAVIDOFF: Councilor Wenograd.

6 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: Here.

7 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you, Mr.

8 Davidoff.

9 We have a presentation by the resident,
10 Mr. Cervone, the applicant.

11 MR. CERVONE: All right. Those
12 supplemental materials should be on their way
13 around. I believe you have the proposal itself in
14 front of you; if not, Todd is running down to get
15 it. I thought that material was going to be
16 available already.

17 Can I get started?

18 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Yes, please.

19 MR. CERVONE: Very good. Good evening,
20 Mayor Cantor, Members of the Town Council, staff
21 and fellow residents. Thank you for the
22 opportunity to speak this evening. And thank you
23 to the town staff present here for collaborating
24 with me on this process to present the proposal.

25 Michael Cervone, 40 Wiltshire Lane for

1 the record. I am here in support of the
2 application submitted on behalf of the owners of
3 40 Wiltshire Lane to amend the West Hartford
4 zoning code. This is a targeted proposal intended
5 to bring clarity where there is currently
6 ambiguity defining recreational vehicles by
7 establishing clear, reasonable standards for its
8 limited outdoor storage as an accessory use in
9 single-family residential districts.

10 Today the town zoning code is silent on
11 recreational vehicles among other registration
12 types for vehicles recognized by the State of
13 Connecticut. That silence creates confusion for
14 residents who own these assets and for enforcement
15 staff tasked with applying the code. The result
16 is inconsistent enforcement, unnecessary disputes,
17 and a lack of predictability for homeowners who
18 are trying to comply in good faith. This proposal
19 does not introduce new land use, provide structure
20 and standards for a use that already exists
21 throughout our community.

22 On a national level, anywhere from 15
23 to 23 percent of households own recreational
24 vehicles, boats, utility trailers, and West
25 Hartford is no exception.

1 Zoning ordinances work best when they
2 reflect how people actually live. Today West
3 Hartford families own these assets in significant
4 numbers, yet our zoning code has not been updated
5 to reflect that reality. At the same time, our
6 town actively assesses and collects property taxes
7 on these vehicles recognizing them as legitimate
8 personal property.

9 In March 2025, at the State of the Town
10 Address, the Mayor acknowledged the revenue
11 contribution brought by growing Grand Lists which
12 almost a year ago showed at \$7.2 billion net value
13 up 8.5 million from the prior period. This
14 proposal closes the gap by aligning taxation,
15 regulation and modern family life.

16 Surrounding municipalities across
17 Connecticut recognize this reality and have
18 adopted clear enforceable standards that balance
19 neighborhood character with reasonable property
20 use. West Hartford is an outlier, and this
21 proposal seeks to address that gap. The town does
22 have an obligation to define how property is
23 compliantly stored across all property classes it
24 recognizes.

25 Before I walk through the proposal

1 language, I want to emphasize that our intent is
2 not to loosen the standards set by existing
3 precedent. We do seek to clarify them in a way
4 that aligns with the Town's Plan of Conservation
5 and Development and treats residents consistently
6 and fairly. The result we believe would have a
7 material reduction in enforcement burden on town
8 staff.

9 The first proposed change is to Article
10 I, Section 177-2, to formally define recreational
11 vehicle. The purpose of the definition is to
12 recognize the distinct difference between the
13 definition of motor vehicle already defined in the
14 ordinance. This definition ensures inclusivity
15 and clarity to reflect the most common forms of
16 recreational vehicles in use today and the
17 terminology recognized by the State of
18 Connecticut.

19 As drafted, a recreational vehicle
20 would be defined as any vehicle, motor vehicle or
21 trailer with or without mode of power designed or
22 used for leisure, travel or temporary
23 accommodation. This includes but is not limited
24 to motorhomes, campers, travel trailers and other
25 towable units, noncommercial utility trailers,

1 boat trailers with boats and all-terrain vehicles
2 designed for off-road use. Establishing this
3 definition ensures that residents and enforcement
4 officers are working from the same understanding.

5 The second proposed change is to
6 Section 177-6(C), the Schedule of Permitted Uses,
7 to explicitly list recreational vehicles as
8 defined in Section 177-2 as a permitted accessory
9 use in residential zoning districts R-10, 13, 20,
10 40 and 80. Importantly, this permitted use comes
11 with clear and reasonable conditions designed to
12 protect neighbors and preserve community
13 character. Under the proposal, the recreational
14 vehicle may be parked or stored by its owner, and
15 if stored outside of a garage, it shall be parked
16 to the rear of the front of the main building on
17 the lot. The intent here is to prevent
18 recreational vehicles from remaining in driveways
19 or in prominent frontage locations facing the
20 street.

21 The proposal also requires that any
22 recreational vehicle stored outdoors be located at
23 least 10 feet from the side or rear lot lines and
24 not permitted in the front yard. This ensures
25 appropriate separation from neighboring properties

1 and avoids visual or spatial impacts on adjacent
2 lots.

3 Additionally, the proposal makes clear
4 that no recreational vehicle stored on a property
5 may be used for sleeping, living, cooking or
6 carrying on a business. It must be kept in good
7 repair and in clean and sanitary conditions at all
8 times. This provision ensures that recreational
9 vehicles are not used as dwellings and prevents
10 issues related to inoperability, junked or
11 abandoned vehicles.

12 The ordinance further requires that
13 recreational vehicles be buffered and adequately
14 screened from street view and neighboring
15 properties where necessary consistent with
16 existing screening and landscaping requirements
17 already found elsewhere in the code. This allows
18 flexibility while maintaining neighborhood
19 aesthetics.

20 Finally, the proposal allows temporary
21 storage in a driveway for up to 24 hours for the
22 purpose of loading, unloading and cleaning. This
23 recognizes the practical reality that these
24 vehicles come and go and that limited driveway
25 access is necessary to use them responsibly and

1 compliantly. Taken together, these provisions
2 establish clear expectations, reduce subjectivity
3 and provide enforcement standards that benefit
4 residents, neighbors and town staff.

5 As documented in the supplemental
6 materials provided, recreational vehicles, utility
7 trailers and boats already exist throughout West
8 Hartford in significant numbers. Similarly,
9 surrounding municipalities have adopted nearly
10 identical frameworks without experiencing
11 enforcement or administrative strain. This
12 proposal brings West Hartford in line with those
13 best practices while preserving the character of
14 our neighborhoods, and importantly, it restores
15 the protections of our rights as property owners
16 where an existing local ordinance and the
17 interpretations of it have gone too far for too
18 long.

19 I must also acknowledge the town has
20 been presented with a letter from the Town
21 Planning and Zoning Commission with respect to
22 this proposal. While TPZ provided little to no
23 substantiation, it makes it very difficult for
24 anyone to understand what if any robust analysis
25 was completed to reach that conclusion which is

1 how much inherent biases were at play. At the
2 same time, Capitol Region Council of Governments
3 has reviewed the proposal and finds no conflict
4 with regional plan or policies of neighboring
5 towns. Instead, I strongly urge the Town Council
6 to consider this proposal on its merits alone, no
7 biases. We have a problem in need of a fix. When
8 we needed it was yesterday.

9 This proposal is intentionally narrow
10 and carefully designed to minimize impact on the
11 neighbors and neighborhood character. It does not
12 change residential density, alter housing use or
13 introduce new development of any kind. It simply
14 clarifies an accessory use on existing
15 single-family properties. By establishing clear
16 objective standards, including setbacks, screening
17 and limitations on use, the ordinance provides
18 predictability not only for residents trying to
19 comply in good faith but also for town staff who
20 benefit from guidance that is easier to explain
21 and enforce consistently.

22 Adopting this common sense update would
23 reinforce our commitment to responsive, inclusive
24 local government, it would reduce enforcement
25 burdens, advance comprehensive land use planning,

1 and ensure our regulations align with practical
2 realities of modern family life. We recognize
3 that refinements may be appropriate, and we
4 welcome collaboration with staff, legal counsel or
5 the Town Council itself to strengthen the
6 language, but we strongly believe this proposal
7 presents a balanced thoughtful position that at a
8 minimum -- is at a minimum equal to, if not an
9 improvement, to versions before it by surrounding
10 municipalities.

11 I respectfully urge the Council to
12 advance this application for further review and
13 consideration. And thank you for your time and
14 attention. I'll answer any questions that you
15 have.

16 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you, Mr.
17 Cervone. We usually go to public comment first,
18 so we're going to go to see if there's anybody
19 signed up to speak. And in the meantime, I'm
20 going to ask our Town Clerk if he had received any
21 feedback on that.

22 MR. DAVIDOFF: Madam Mayor, we have not
23 received any public comment.

24 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Okay. Is there
25 anybody signed up?

1 MR. DODGE: (Handing.)

2 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Okay. So Michael
3 has signed up and then Jennifer has signed.
4 Jennifer Cervone, I don't know if you would like
5 to comment also. Okay.

6 Is there anybody in the audience that
7 would like to speak to this public hearing?

8 (No response.)

9 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Okay. Then we'll go
10 to questions from the Council. Are there
11 questions from any of my councilors?

12 Mr. Wang.

13 COUNCILOR WANG: Yes. Thank you.
14 Through you, Madam Mayor. Thank you for the
15 presentation. This is a question for anybody who
16 might know. What was the justification for TPZ to
17 not recommend this? I tried to look through their
18 minutes. I couldn't find much. Is anybody aware?

19 PRESIDENT CANTOR: I don't know, but
20 Mr. Ledwith.

21 MR. LEDWITH: Through you, Madam Mayor,
22 to Councilor Wang's question. We do have our town
23 planner in the audience. I'd ask Todd to join us
24 at the podium. I know it was found the amendment
25 to not be in compliance with our Plan of

1 Conservation and Development, our POCD, but
2 certainly Todd can address anything that's
3 specific that came up during that meeting. Thank
4 you.

5 MR. DUMAIS: Thank you, Mr. Ledwith.
6 Todd Dumais, town planner for the record.
7 Councilor Wang, the Planning Commission felt that
8 the Plan of Conservation and Development was not
9 supported in the proposed ordinance before the
10 Council.

11 It also had some concerns with the
12 language of the ordinance as drafted. Although
13 they acknowledge that it's not their lane of
14 review, they did point out their concern that as
15 drafted it was a bit ambiguous and could create an
16 enforcement burden for the town.

17 COUNCILOR WANG: Thank you. Do you
18 know specifically what part was ambiguous?

19 MR. DUMAIS: Well, there's a number of
20 standards. So the standard for -- I'm going off
21 the top of my head, Councilor Wang -- the
22 buffering and screening from neighboring
23 properties, they weren't sure how that could be
24 effectively addressed through meaningful
25 screening.

1 There were also some inconsistencies,
2 in their opinion, with the way the language was
3 used for placement of the RV stored behind the
4 front of a building or a front yard, they thought
5 there was a little bit of ambiguity there.

6 They also had some concerns that the
7 definition provided for recreational vehicle was
8 perhaps too permissive, and, in particular, they
9 were concerned with the element of noncommercial
10 utility trailers. Does that mean -- they thought
11 there could be some room for commercial utility
12 trailers to fit somewhere within this definition
13 if it weren't a utility trailer.

14 Those were kind of off the top of my
15 head kind of the high technical issues that they
16 had.

17 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you,
18 Mr. Dumais.

19 Anything further, Mr. Wang?

20 COUNCILOR WANG: No.

21 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Okay. Thank you.

22 All right. Are there other questions?
23 I'm sorry, Ms. Harris, Councilor Harris.

24 COUNCILOR HARRIS: Through you, Madam
25 Mayor. So I'm just clarifying what you said in

1 your presentation. I just want to be clear on
2 this. We're taxing these vehicles on the town
3 side, meaning people are paying taxes for these
4 vehicles, but they're not allowed to have them on
5 their property? I just want to be clear that I
6 understood that.

7 MR. LEDWITH: Through you, Madam Mayor.
8 To Councilor Harris's question, that is correct,
9 yes.

10 COUNCILOR HARRIS: Okay. Do we do that
11 in any other situation where we tax something, a
12 piece of property and then not allow it to be used
13 at the person's residence?

14 MR. LEDWITH: Through you, Madam Mayor.
15 I do not believe that to be the case. I'd have to
16 talk with our assessor. Nothing comes to mind off
17 the top of my head. Thank you.

18 COUNCILOR HARRIS: Okay. Thank you.

19 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Mr. Dumais is coming
20 up.

21 MR. DUMAIS: Again, Todd Dumais, Town
22 Planner. There are instances where the assessment
23 division will go out and assess a property. And,
24 in particular, there are a number of cases where
25 they will count the number of dwelling units in a

1 home, and they will assess it for the number they
2 find. So you could have a number of multifamily
3 properties that might be assessed at three or
4 four, but the zoning only permits, and there's
5 only legally applied for and ZO'd for two or fewer
6 than it's being assessed. So there's quite a few
7 instances where an assessment is different than
8 what's permitted through zoning or other building
9 permitting processes.

10 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you, Mr.
11 Dumais.

12 Ms. Harris.

13 COUNCILOR HARRIS: Thank you. Through
14 you, Madam Mayor.

15 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Mr. Dumais, you
16 might be needed back.

17 (Laughter.)

18 COUNCILOR HARRIS: From your comments,
19 Mr. Dumais, prior, are you suggesting that the
20 issue through TPZ was that the way this ordinance
21 was written is the problem or are we suggesting
22 that in general, meaning if the ordinance was
23 rewritten in a certain way, would it be something
24 that could gain a positive feedback or are you
25 essentially saying that that wouldn't be possible?

1 Because the way I understood your comments was
2 that there were problems with the way it was
3 written, not necessarily the concept in general.

4 MR. DUMAIS: So I think as it was
5 presently crafted and debated by the Planning
6 Commission, they had trouble seeing its
7 consistency with the POCD. But they did make a
8 point of suggesting these inconsistencies and
9 concern with the language and that perhaps a
10 different version might have had a different
11 outcome, but they kind of stayed in their lane as
12 the ordinance was presented to them.

13 I will say for Mr. Cervone's benefit,
14 they don't have the benefit of having a
15 presentation for the applicant as part of that
16 referral process. It falls upon staff to explain
17 the ordinance as drafted and written submitted on
18 referral to them.

19 COUNCILOR HARRIS: Okay. Thank you.

20 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you, Ms.
21 Harris.

22 Mr. Wang.

23 COUNCILOR WANG: Thank you. Through
24 you, Madam Mayor.

25 To Attorney Dodge, I haven't had time

1 to look through what other towns are doing. Do
2 you have an opinion or some kind of guidance as
3 far as are we outside of the norm with this
4 proposed ordinance or are we outside the norm by
5 not permitting these and, as Councilor Harris
6 said, and taxing them at the same time?

7 MR. DODGE: Thank you, Councilor Wang.
8 I think the planner did a good job of explaining
9 the tax issue and some of the circumstances that
10 we deal with when there's property in town that
11 might not be conforming but should be taxable.

12 In terms of the question about
13 consistency with other municipalities, I think
14 that's less a legal question than a planning
15 question, so I'll once again take that over to the
16 town planner.

17 MR. DUMAIS: Sure. Councilor Wang, I
18 think Mr. Cervone did a good job of kind of a
19 blanket across really adjacent communities. You
20 know, if we look statewide, there's certainly a
21 large number of communities that do permit the
22 keeping of recreational vehicles in forms and
23 fashions similar to the ordinance that was
24 presented or the ones that he provided evidence
25 to. It gets a little trickier when you have a

1 more heavily suburbanized community with smaller
2 lot sizes. There you start to see a divergence or
3 at least if not an outright prohibition not
4 allowed in every area in a municipality because of
5 smaller lot sizes. So I think it's really a
6 function of residential density in many
7 communities.

8 COUNCILOR WANG: Okay. Thank you so
9 much.

10 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you, Mr. Wang.
11 Are there any other comments or
12 questions?

13 (No response.)

14 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Okay. I don't see
15 any right now. I don't know, Mr. Cervone, if
16 you -- well, just let me read into the record a
17 letter dated January 16, 2026 from the Town Plan
18 and Zoning Commission not recommending approval; a
19 letter dated January 6, 2026 from the Capitol
20 Region Council of Governments finding no apparent
21 conflict with regional plans and policies or the
22 concerns of neighboring towns.

23 Mr. Cervone, I don't know if you wanted
24 to have some closing comments. We do have another
25 public hearing right on the heels, and then we

1 will close the public hearing. Thank you.

2 MR. CERVONE: The notes from TPZ, we
3 recognize them. The way we crafted the language
4 was intentional to have some of that flexibility,
5 particularly around the buffering and screening.
6 Rather than putting that in this ordinance itself,
7 there are plenty of ordinances that define that.
8 So in order to be not in conflict with anything,
9 any other updates with the broader zoning
10 ordinance, we didn't want to bring them together
11 in the same definition.

12 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you, Mr.
13 Cervone. And with that, one more round.

14 (No response.)

15 PRESIDENT CANTOR: We'll close the
16 public hearing. Thank you very much.

17 (Whereupon, the above proceedings
18 concluded at 6:56 p.m.)
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25

CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the foregoing 21 pages are a complete and accurate computer-aided transcription of my original stenotype notes taken of the WEST HARTFORD TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING IN RE: Ordinance Permitting Recreational Vehicles as an Accessory Use in Existing Single-Family Residence Districts - Application of Michael Cervone seeking to Section 177-2 and Section 177-6C of the West Hartford Zoning Ordinances, which was held before THE WEST HARTFORD TOWN COUNCIL, 50 South Main Street, Legislative Chambers, Room 314, on January 27, 2026.



Lisa L. Warner, CSR 061

Notary Public

My commission expires:

May 31, 2028

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