

Minutes Randolph County Commissioners

April 10, 2001 - Joint Meeting with Randolph County Planning Board

The Randolph County Board of Commissioners met in a special joint session with the Randolph County Planning Board at 6:30 p.m. in the Commissioners Meeting Room, Randolph County Office Building, 725 McDowell Road, Asheboro, N.C. The purpose of the meeting was to review the draft Growth Management Plan and related zoning amendments. Commissioners Kemp, Frye, Holmes, Davis and Mason were present.

Hal Johnson called the meeting to order and told the Boards that due to statistics obtained by the County's very sophisticated GIS system indicating Randolph County's rapid and sustained sprawl development, he had been asked by the Board of Commissioners to prepare a draft growth management plan with related specific zoning ordinance amendments. This plan would allow Randolph County to more adequately manage growth and to continue to provide cost effective services and a high quality of life to its citizens. The plan was to be accomplished in four phases. Phase I, the drafting of the growth management plan and zoning amendments, was completed in September, 2000. Phase II involved a formal process of consulting with and seeking advice from a wide segment of the Randolph County community including neighborhood citizen organizations, chambers of commerce, home builders and boards of realtor associations, agricultural and agri-business communities, Cooperative Extension sponsored community land use workshops, and the Soil and Water Conservation Board. Some of the comments and suggestions obtained at these meetings have been incorporated into the draft growth management plan and zoning amendments. Mr. Johnson stated that this special joint meeting is Phase III of the growth management plan. Phase IV involves formal public hearings to obtain more citizen input and comments prior to a final decision by the Board of Commissioners.

Mr. Johnson stated that the current zoning ordinance is not flexible and lacks land use options for property owners and developers. The proposed growth management plan is a 31-page document (plus an additional 20 pages of detailed maps and charts) that is specifically designed to accommodate new sustainable growth while attempting to preserve Randolph County's heritage and natural resources. Mr. Johnson then summarized the proposed zoning amendments as follows:

Residential Overlay Districts--provides a wider variety of options when developing major residential subdivisions in Randolph County.

- *Conventional Residential Overlay District*--same requirements and minimum lot sizes that are currently in place.
- *Rural Residential Overlay District*--4 acre minimum lot size developments designed to preserve the low density rural character of a community allowing natural open space and well water recharge areas on individual lots.
- *Conservation Overlay District*--cluster subdivision option provides the benefit of preserving rural character through required designated open spaces while providing density bonus opportunities to the developer. (Requires a developer to designate 50% of the property to open space but allows smaller lot sizes within the total developments.)

Development Impact Analysis--intended to encourage long-term planning among property

owners, developers and county government. The applicant would submit a Development Impact Statement (prior to submitting a subdivision proposal at public hearing) with basic information concerning housing characteristics, water resources, traffic analysis, and public education impact. This Impact Statement will allow better determination of the feasibility of a rezoning proposal based on its impact to the community and the capacity of county government to provide adequate public services.

Neighborhood Information Meeting--a County-sponsored meeting involving the developer, county staff, and adjacent property owners. Although required as an additional procedure during the rezoning process, this informal meeting is designed to provide a time where adjoining property owners might meet with the developer and county planning staff to review preliminary residential subdivision proposals prior to formal presentation at public hearings to the planning board and county commission.

Specialized Industrial/Commercial Overlay Districts--provides greater flexibility than that of current zoning districts without changing the zoning status of the underlying district by applying standards and conditions in addition to those already in place to insure compatibility of the commercial operation with the rural community.

- *Industrial Overlay District*--designed for secondary growth areas intended to accommodate manufacturing, wholesaling, warehousing, research and development, and related activities.
- *Rural Business Overlay District*--designed for rural areas where small rural type businesses (neighborhood retail and service establishments) provide reduced travel and promotes better livability in the rural communities.
- *Commercial Environmental Overlay District*--No changes to the zoo zoning (Environmental One Zoning) are proposed.

Scenic Corridor Overlay District--establishes the mechanics in the Ordinance of designating a Scenic Corridor.

Forest Harvested--Clear-cut properties planned for major residential subdivision development shall maintain a 40-foot no-cut buffer along the boundaries (all property lines) of the property. (Applies after property has been clear-cut and property owner decides to do a major subdivision.)

Private Roads--Roads not built to D.O.T. standards with maximum length 1320 feet and service not more than 6 lots with a minimum size of 5 acres.

Mr. Johnson used overheads to show how Randolph County is defined as related to growth and said that currently there are 403,000 acres zoned as residential agricultural. He then reviewed a proposed resolution (to be adopted following public hearings) establishing the Randolph County Growth Management Plan, and highlighted its main points:

- recognize that all individual growth management decisions are part of a larger interconnecting framework of building sustainable and quality growth within Randolph County;
- discourage high density development in areas where significant urban infrastructure is not anticipated;
- encourage rural lot designs in those areas where urban infrastructure is not

anticipated that will enhance groundwater recharge ability while preserving open space;

- recognize that growth management policies should afford flexibility to County boards and agencies that will enable them to adapt to the practical requirements often necessary for rural development; and
- performance zoning criteria, such as open space or heritage asset preservation, should establish a presumption in favor of development project approval during the rezoning process.

Mr. Johnson then reviewed the Growth Management Plan notebook and stressed that growth is essential to Randolph County and should not be viewed in a “bad light.” He commented that during some of the community meetings there was some confusion about “Voluntary Farmland Preservation.” He stated that this is strictly voluntary and provides a method for the county commissioners to protect farmlands and their owners. Also there was confusion about the Heritage Assets Inventory. He cleared this up by saying that the County does not plan to purchase land for this purpose.

Mr. Johnson answered questions from the 2 boards regarding open space subdivisions, private roads, clear-cut areas, and extra-territorial areas.

Mr. Frye asked about the number of public hearings that would be necessary before adopting the plan. Mr. Johnson stated that since he has already garnered so much input from the community in preparation of the plan, only 1 or 2 public hearings would be necessary.

All board members agreed that the neighborhood information meetings are an excellent idea and should cut down on the confusion and length of planning board and commissioner public hearings. They all also commended Mr. Johnson and staff for their hard work and excellent results in preparing the growth management plan.

Maxton McDowell stated that the Planning Board, at their last meeting, had discussed a possible moratorium of major subdivision zoning while the new growth management plan is under review.

It was the consensus of the 2 Boards that the Board of Commissioners, at their May 7, 2001 meeting, would consider such a moratorium.

Phil Kemp asked the Planning Board members if they felt comfortable setting a public hearing on the growth management plan as it stands. After the Planning Board held an informal vote of 4-3, it was decided that the Planning Board would set a working session with the Planning Department staff to make a few adjustments to the proposed zoning amendments before setting a public hearing.

Business being concluded, the meeting adjourned.

Phil Kemp, Chairman

Darrell Frye

Harold Holmes

Robert Davis

Robert Mason

Cheryl A. Ivey, Deputy Clerk