

Board Chair:
Rodney Cheek

Planning Director:
Matthew Hoagland



Commissioners' Meeting Room
124 W Elm Street
Graham, NC 27253
April 11, 2024 at 7:00 PM

ALAMANCE COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

AGENDA

Virtual-

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1QADkhkyUpac9rMs42imjA>

Members Present

Rodney Cheek
Vaughn Willoughby
Ernest Bare
Amie Perkins
Anthony Pierce
Lee Isley
Henry Vines

Members Absent

Stephen Dodson
Bill Poe
John Paisley

Staff Present

Matthew Hoagland, *Planning Director*
Ian Shannon, *Planner II*
Janet Moreno, *Planning Technician*
Rik Stevens, *County Attorney*
Michelle Horn, *Assistant County Attorney*

I. CALL TO ORDER

Called to order at 7:01 pm.

II. ROLL CALL

Staff handled roll call through in-person roster.

III. APPROVAL OF PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

1. March 14, 2024 Regular Meeting

Henry Vines brought up that he might have been the one to make the motion for the RV park clearway.

Motion to accept with correction: Lee Isley
Second: Anthony Pierce
Vote: Unanimous

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS*

Rodney Cheek acknowledged last month's meeting and said that once public comment is over it is over and he would ask people to leave if they kept interrupting after comment.

Jeff Throneburg: Jeff introduced himself as the president for the homebuilder's association. He talked about the history of this discussion, how 5 acre lots were originally proposed in 2022. In July 2023 there was a public input session with a lot of public comment. Last month the recommendations were made in a goal to protect farms, reduce water usage, and provide

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buffers. He mentioned Wilson Mize stating there was little concerns with cross contamination and Rob Snow saying they have seen few failures. He told the board that they need to make a decision to protect the citizens and reflect the feedback. He said that he was not sure how much sway the homebuilders have on local politicians, but they are willing to do what they need to do to reach a reasonable change.

Jerry Cooper: Jerry told the board that this is an overreaction. He talked about some proposals in other states that did not work and asked why would they work here? He told the board that they definitely need to go back and figure this out more. He said he wanted the board to be careful and not do something that will trigger some reaction down the line for the county.

Henry Chandler: Henry told the board that he has watched them wrestle with this topic for over a year now. He said there was something troubling last month with how none of the speakers talked about what is good for the county only what is best for them. He said this issue concerns a lot of people. On march 2023 there was a proposal for a 65,000 sqft minimum. He said he heard a lot of convincing arguments that 30,000 is not good for septic and well long term and he began to visualize what a 30,000 lots look like. Henry passed out photos from a 14 lot development near him, most lots around 1 acre. He said the houses are close to the road, on hwy 62. He asked the board if this is what they wanted the county to look like. With affordability concerns Henry said that he saw in news about families needing more than the average household income to afford a home. He said that leaving lot sizes as is probably will not solve this. He told the board he is in favor of a larger lot, that it would be best for homeowner safety and water and good for the county. He also said there could possibly be an increase in road frontage requirements. He wanted the board to move forward with a recommendation instead of just discussing it over and over.

V. BOARD/COMMISSIONER RESPONSES

Rodney amends the agenda to cover articles 3 and 4 then move on to the lot size discussion.

Motion to amend: Ernest Bare
Second: Amie Perkins
Vote: Unanimous

VI. OLD BUSINESS

1. Consideration of Clarifying UDO Article 3 Amendments

The only new change from last month is the proper 1 inch = 400 feet notation that Stephen had pointed out.

2. Lot Size Subcommittee Report/Recommendation

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Discussion happens after discussion on Articles 3 and 4.

Matthew said that he was happy to answer any further questions the board may have. Lee asks where the board is with all of this and how they make a decision to move forward. Rodney said that he would want a consensus from the board to let staff write up an official amendment to then be recommended. Vaughn stated that he had a lot of different ideas on all of this but thought that the board needs to just decide on a number or not do anything at all. Henry said that he would like to set the minimum size to 2 acres and set a minimum road frontage as well. He said that he understood that this would add to the cost of land but there were already portions of the county at 2 acres and then an acre and a half under that in the watersheds. He said that 2 acres would allow for each lot to carry their own impervious surfaces and keep the water clean.

Lee said that he appreciated the conversation and was thinking about these proposals in a big picture sense. He said he could see some benefit to raising the minimum lot size for preservation and rural character but it would also increase costs for consumers and development. He said that looking at a 1 acre minimum might be more reasonable, it is not much bigger than the current minimum and would add some benefit without much extra cost. Amie told the board about just getting ready to sign the lease for her daughter's 2 bedroom apartment for \$2,100 a month. She asked the board if lot size went down if they thought developers would lower their prices. She told the board that the cost of building went up during covid and is still up. She said that she thought the lot size needed to be larger because everything around the county is larger. Anthony added that he had spoken with some businesses looking at moving to the county and they thought it was important to live here as well. He said it should be possible to be both pro homeowner and business. Anthony also added that what the board decides needs to make sense for those developers in the county as well. He said that going up to 2 acres would be too far and would have a lot of issues with affordability. He suggested 1 acre as a middle ground and said that the board would be able to reevaluate later. He also said that he would like to look at each of the other recommendations as well.

Henry said that only raising the lot size a quarter of an acre would not have that much impact and that the board needed to make a larger change. He also said that increasing the lot size would not add that much to the cost. Rodney clarified some of what he said last month about the 3 revenue streams with the county's taxes. He brought those up as taxes that the county can rely on year to year. He also mentioned that \$60,000 was used as the price of 1 acre. He said that it was \$72,000 for 2.1 acres so there was not that much of a cost difference. Amie asked about the possibility of getting some more data on approved lots. Ian was able to provide some numbers he had been keeping track of, stating that 12 of the 130 lots approved since September were between 30,000 sqft and 1 acre.

Anthony mentioned that Mr. Mize had said the main problems with wells happen with the larger community wells as opposed to individual wells. He also asked if lots were already being developed at larger sizes for the most part then why would a change be needed. Henry

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suggested that going to 2 acres would mean that everything was the same. Vaughn said that going to an acre would be in line with what is already happening in the county but 2 acres still sounded like too much. He also mentioned that actively looking at cluster development would be a good option. There were some brief questions on the other proposals and Matthew told the board that those were all still options, they would just need to be refined and specified. Rodney suggested that planning staff should work on some consistency statements for each of these proposals. There was some discussion on the buffer from subdivisions and the ratio for cluster subdivisions. It was determined that the 2 acre lot size and a 35% ratio would be used for the draft ordinance and could be discussed more later.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Consideration of Clarifying UDO Article 4 Amendments

Matthew gave an overview of all the proposed edits to the board. There was some discussion on the rock quarry and how the county handles violations and code enforcement. Rik mentioned that the HIDO was created largely in response to the quarry and that the quarry had received permits through the state so there was not much the county could really do. Anthony mentioned that the ability to revoke permits might be a good option. Matthew and Rik both added some more clarity on the current process and how in most cases the county tries to reach out to the owner. If nothing is resolved then fines can be imposed and there is some potential for criminalization and stopping operation of some uses. Matthew told the board to look over the proposed changes and have some more feedback ready for next meeting.

Discussion now goes to the recommendations.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS/DISCUSSION

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Ernest Bare
Second: Henry Vines
Vote: Unanimous

Adjourned at 8:45pm