

## FRANKLIN COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

June 13, 2017

The Franklin County Planning Board held its regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, June 13, 2017 in the Franklin County Administration Building, Commissioners Meeting Room, 113 Market Street, Louisburg, North Carolina.

**Present:** William Holden, Mary Solomon, Robert Mann, Mark McArn, Steven Buescher, and Martha Mobley

**Staff:** Jason Rogers, and Katie Rhyne

Chairman Mark McArn called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M., and welcomed everyone in attendance. Robert Mann gave the invocation.

A motion to approve the agenda and minutes from May 9, 2017 was made by Martha Mobley and was seconded by Mary Solomon. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Agenda Items:**

1. 17\_UDO\_01 After discussions with Franklin County Economic Development, Planning Staff proposed an amendment to the Unified Development Ordinance, requiring a Special Use Permit for solar farms within the Light Industrial (LI) and Heavy Industrial (HI) zoning districts.

Jason Rogers explained that Special Use Permits require a public hearing. The hearing process determines whether a solar farm would be the best use of parcels within these districts. The amendment is intended to protect the limited number of industrial zoned parcels within the County. These parcels are located along major thoroughfares, specifically US 1 HWY and NC 56 HWY. In addition, the County has made significant investments in water and sewer infrastructure in the affected areas to encourage industrial development.

Jason Rogers stated that a buffer with evergreen trees being six foot (6ft) high at the time of planting was a recommended condition for solar farms. This amendment would make this a requirement for any future solar farms.

Martha Mobley asked if the buffer was required all around the properties that applied for the solar farm use.

Jason Rogers explained that buffers were a requirement in article 14 of the Franklin County Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). He stated that existing vegetation may be used but new vegetation must be placed where there was none.

Mark McArn stated that industrial properties must be protected, and he expressed how important he felt this amendment was. He questioned why Solar Farms were permitted in these zoning districts.

Jason Rogers explained that the initial amendment was issued when many solar farms began to apply for permits. He explained that the special use permitting process would require a meeting as well as a hearing. It is the longest process that could be applied to a use.

Martha Mobley asked if there had been an increase in solar farm applications.

Jason Rogers explained that there had been an increase in the past, but the county was not seeing as many applications as it had in the past few years.

Mark McArn explained that the process has shifted for corporations regarding solar farms. State incentives for solar farms had expired and that only federal funds were left. Many corporations had already found that they were meeting their quotas for sustainable energy. He said that power companies were now trying to find ways to provide the solar energy themselves instead of buying power from a company specializing in solar power.

Robert Mann asked if there were guidelines for the board members to utilize when someone applied for a special use permit.

Jason Rogers explained that the applicant had to meet all Unified Development Ordinance requirements in order to submit for a special use permit. There was a checklist provided to each board member and planning staff discusses each case.

Stephen Buescher asked if this amendment would make solar farms uniformly require a special use permit in all allowed zoning districts.

Jason Rogers answered that the amendment would be uniformly requiring solar farms as a special use for each allowed zoning district, and for the required buffers for solar farms to be six foot (6ft) at the time of planting.

Mark McArn stated that he would like the board to look through the checklist when a special use was applied for. He said that he would request comments from the board in the future. Mr. McArn asked if a solar farm had been denied at some point.

Jason Rogers answered that there had been a case where the Board of Commissioners denied a special use permit for a solar farm. He explained that the requested permit was for a property located off Cedar Creek Rd. The reasoning for the denial was due to the investment that the county had made for water and sewer infrastructure, the Board of Commissioners felt it was not the best use for the property.

Steven Buescher stated that he was not comfortable restricting the use. He explained that if someone invested in a commercial property, he felt that they should be allowed to use the property for a commercial purpose.

Jason Rogers explained that this was a common argument against zoning. zoning was to protect property owners and citizens within the county. He added that this amendment would

not prohibit the use but require the application to go before a board for review to determine if it were the best use for the property,

Stephen Buescher asked if other sustainable forms of energy production such as wind energy facilities were addressed in the Unified Development Ordinance.

Jason Rogers stated that the Unified Development Ordinance did not include these uses, and told the board that staff could research these uses.

With there being no further discussion from the board, Chairman Mark McArn entertained a motion.

William Holden made a motion to recommend approval of the amendment. Robert Mann seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mark McArn asked the board if they had any questions or concerns toward staff about the proposal.

2. Jason Rogers explained that planning staff wanted to share with the board images of some of the subdivision projects that the board had approved over the last few years to share the progress the developments had made..

He shared images of the Falls Creek Subdivision. The subdivision has 57 lots and was approved in April 12, 2016. The lots had been recorded on April 11, 2017.

Martha Mobley asked who the developer of the subdivision was.

Jason Rogers answered that Winslow Custom Homes had been the initial developer for the project. Sagebuilt Homes is the current developer.

Jason Rogers showed images of Addyson subdivision which had been initially approved on April 12, 2016 for 75 lots. 25 lots of the 75 were recorded on May 10, 2017 as the first phase. He explained that some of these lots were selling for nearly \$90,000 and were being served by county water.

Jason Rogers shared images of the progress for the Bailey Farms subdivision. The subdivision was approved for 71 lots in June 14, 2016. 21 of those 71 lots were recorded in September 19, 2016. The subdivision is being served by a community water system and the developer is Wynn Construction.

Jason Rogers shared images of Carlson Ridge. The lots were approved by the planning board on October 15, 2015. It was meant to be another phase of the Princeton Manor subdivision but was met with contention at the Planning Board meeting and as a condition of approval had to be renamed. The subdivision consists of 25 lots and was recorded on November 15, 2016.

Jason Rogers shared images of the Cedar Crossing subdivision. He explained that this subdivision had initially applied in 2006 and 50 of the 240 approved lots were expected to be recorded as the first phase by the end of the month. The subdivision is going to be served by county water and sewer.

Jason Rogers shared images of the South Hall subdivision which had been approved on September 13, 2016. He stated that the lots were set to be recorded the following day (Wednesday June 14, 2017)

Jason Rogers shared images of the South Louisburg Solar facility located off NC 39 Hwy that was approved on April 20, 2017. He explained that the facility was approved before the staff began the recommendation of the buffer being six feet (6ft) at the time of planting, so while a buffer was visible, the shrubbery was smaller.

Mary Solomon asked about the progress of the solar energy facilities that were approved for Hickory Rock Road, and T.K. Allen Road.

Jason Rogers explained that the solar farm that was approved for Hickory Rock Rd had expired.

Martha Mobley asked about the progress made for the solar farm that was approved for Mays Crossroads.

Jason Rogers answered that the solar farms to be located at T.K. Allen Road and Mays Crossroads were still active permits and that Carolina Solar is still making progress towards construction.

With there being no further business before the Planning Board, Chairman Mark McArn adjourned the meeting at 7:32 P.M.

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Mark McArn – Chairman  
Franklin County Planning Board

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Katie Rhyne – Clerk  
Franklin County Planning Board