

Board Chair:

Rodney Cheek

Planning Director:

Matthew Hoagland



Commissioners' Meeting Room

124 W Elm Street

Graham, NC 27253

July 10, 2025 at 7:00 PM

ALAMANCE COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

Livestream: <https://tinyurl.com/22kb3exe>

I. CALL TO ORDER

Called to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Members Present:

- Chairman Rodney Cheek
- Vice Chair Lee Isley
- Henry Vines Jr
- Henry Chandler
- Stephen Dobson
- Amie Perkins

Members Absent:

- Mac Jordan
- Tom King
- Ernest Bare

Staff Present:

- Matthew Hoagland: Planning Director
- Keyshawn Haith: Planner 1
- Rob Snow: Environmental Health Program Specialist
- Ryan Langley: Environmental Health Program Specialist

III. APPROVAL OF PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

June 12, 2025, Regular Meeting

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS*

V. BOARD/COMMISSIONER RESPONSES

VI. OLD BUSINESS

1. Final Consideration of Staff Recommendation
 - Rural Preservation Ordinance
 - Land Use District Map
 - Subdivision Ordinance Amendments
 - Supplemental Definitions

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Mr. Hoagland introduced the old business section by noting that the current agenda represented the culmination of months of work related to updates and revisions to the Rural Preservation Ordinance, Land Use District Map, Subdivision Ordinance, and supplemental definitions. He explained that the version presented reflected a staff recommendation shaped through ongoing consultation with the Planning Board but was not an official action. The purpose of the recommendation was to offer flexibility to the Board of Commissioners, who could either adopt the recommendation as-is, request modifications, or reject it altogether. An official recommendation would require a public hearing and formal vote by the Commissioners, while a staff recommendation could be presented informally for feedback.

Beginning with the Rural Preservation Ordinance, Mr. Hoagland highlighted a few organizational and content changes. The section outlining the official map (Section 5.4) was relocated earlier in the document to improve flow. Sections 5.1 through 5.3 remained unchanged from the April draft. Section 5.5 was updated to include the family subdivision option previously discussed in the Agricultural District and to correct a typographical error: the minimum lot size for cluster subdivisions in the AG district should be 15,000 square feet, not 8,000. In the Mill Village Districts section (5.6), a new subsection was added to provide specific setback standards for properties adjacent to sidewalks identified in the Burlington-Graham Metropolitan Planning Organization's 2050 Transportation Plan. Mr. Hoagland noted that this plan now includes Saxapahaw, making the area eligible for sidewalk funding through NCDOT. He explained that these setback requirements would apply only to parcels abutting future sidewalk corridors, to encourage uniformity in future development patterns. Section 5.7 was also expanded to provide more detail on the permitting and approval processes for special uses, accessory uses such as home occupations, and uses permitted with additional regulations, including airports, temporary fairgrounds, and family care homes.

Mr. Hoagland then reviewed the Land Use District Map. He stated there were no changes to the map since the last review. Significant adjustments had been made previously, including scaling back rural community districts in orange areas and modifying some transitional districts. No further questions or changes were brought up regarding the map.

The Board then turned to the Subdivision Ordinance. Mr. Hoagland explained that Section 6.9.2.3 had been relocated from the environmental regulations section to a more appropriate place under application procedures, with no change to the content. During this discussion, Amie Perkins raised a question about whether the term "file" was correct in reference to how the Register of Deeds handles plats. She suggested that "record" might be the appropriate

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ALAMANCE COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

term. Mr. Hoagland responded that the language likely came from state law but acknowledged her point and agreed to review it further.

In Section 6.9.5, which addresses variances and appeals, the third sentence of part A was removed because it directed the Board of Adjustment to consider subjective factors—such as compatibility with the surrounding area or economic impact—which are outside the scope of quasi-judicial review. Part B of this section was simplified to reference state law regarding appeal procedures. Sections 6.9.6 through 6.9.8 remained unchanged.

Section 6.9.9 was updated to clarify that stream buffers will be treated as marginal land for purposes of calculating lot size. In Section 6.9.10, language was added to clarify that width standards for dead-end public roads apply to the travel surface. The standards for Class 1 private roads were revised to reference state law, specifically regarding disclosure requirements for property transfers. Mr. Hoagland explained that while the ordinance previously stated the county would ensure the disclosure statement was passed from one property owner to the next, this was not practical to enforce, and the provision was already covered under state regulations.

The most notable changes appeared in Section 6.9.11, where the family subdivision option was reintroduced. This provision allows a property owner to create up to four lots for direct family members, each with a minimum lot size of one acre. Mr. Hoagland noted that this approach is used in other counties and helps address concerns about inconsistent lot size standards for major and minor subdivisions. During discussion, Mr. Isley identified a typographical error where the term “marginal lane” appeared instead of “marginal land,” which Mr. Hoagland agreed to correct. Additionally, footnotes related to cul-de-sac frontage standards were moved to a clearer location in the document.

Other clarifications were made in Section 6.9.12, including a note that construction plans are required only for Class 2 and major subdivisions. This reflects existing practice but had not been explicitly stated in the ordinance. Language regarding environmental health was revised to require agencies be given an opportunity to comment, rather than mandating formal approval—again, to align with state statutes.

In closing the old business portion, Mr. Hoagland briefly addressed minor updates to the supplemental definitions, noting that only a couple of definitions had changed since the last version. He reiterated that should the Commissioners wish to proceed with formal adoption,

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ALAMANCE COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

the proposal would be returned to the Planning Board for an official recommendation and consistency statement per NCGS 160D.

Following the staff presentation, Mr. Isley requested that the Board express its views in a favorable or unfavorable format rather than a general consensus. Chairman Cheek invited comments from each member, leading to a broader discussion.

Mr. Isley shared that while he appreciated the considerable effort put into the proposed revisions by both staff and fellow board members, he could not support the recommendation. He referenced a prior consultant-led planning effort, which he described as deeply flawed, and contrasted it with the current proposal, which he acknowledged was better—but still not sufficient. In his view, the proposed plan failed to meet the county's current and future needs. Specifically, he believed the minimum lot sizes in both the Agricultural and Rural Residential Districts were too large, citing concerns about unnecessary pressure on landowners and property maintenance burdens on future homeowners. He argued that requiring two- to five-acre lots, as proposed in some areas, would discourage appropriate growth and could have negative environmental or visual impacts. He also stated that the rural zoning district on the map was too limited, and that the plan as presented did not support the county's need for flexible, scalable growth. While reiterating his respect for the time and thought put into the project, Mr. Isley ultimately stated that he was on the "unfavorable" side of the recommendation.

The Board then discussed the procedural requirements and timelines for moving forward. Mr. Hoagland explained that, while the Commissioners are not obligated to act on the recommendation immediately, any official ordinance amendment must follow the legal process, including a Planning Board recommendation, public notice, and formal public hearing. Mr. Cheek and Mr. Isley expressed concern about ensuring public input is maintained in the process. Mr. Hoagland confirmed that no ordinance changes could be adopted without the formal public hearing, and this was supported by the board's legal obligation under state law.

After extended discussion, Mr. Cheek asked for a consensus vote on the staff's recommendation. The Board reached a 5 to 1 favorable consensus. No official vote was taken, but this informal tally will be included in the minutes.

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ALAMANCE COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

VII. NEW BUSINESS

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS/DISCUSSION

While there were no official announcements made during the meeting, Planning Director Matthew Hoagland shared that pedestrian maps for Saxapahaw and a few other unincorporated areas have been successfully incorporated into the Burlington-Graham Metropolitan Planning Organization's (BGMPO) 2050 Master Transportation Plan. He noted this was a significant accomplishment staff had been working on behind the scenes, as inclusion in the plan is a prerequisite for future NCDOT funding eligibility.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting Adjourned at 7:50 PM