

Chair
Ray Cobb



Commissioners' Meeting Room
124 W Elm Street
Graham, NC 27253
September 14, 2023 at 7:00 PM

ALAMANCE COUNTY PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

Virtual-

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

Members Present

Ray Cobb, *Chair*
Rodney Cheek
Vaughn Willoughby
Ernest Bare
Eric McPherson
Stephen Dodson
Bill Poe
Sandy Ellington-Graves
Amie Perkins
Stephen Dodson
John Paisley (Virtual)

Members Absent

Blake Cobb
Anthony Pierce
Arthur Hall
Julian Doby

Staff Present

Ian Shannon, *Planner I*
Rik Stevens, *County Attorney*
Michelle Horn, *Assistant County Attorney*
Brian Baker, *Assistant County Manager*
Rob Snow,
Environmental Health Program Specialist

I. CALL TO ORDER

Called to order at 7:03 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

Staff handled roll call through in-person and virtual roster.

III. APPROVAL OF PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

1. July 20, 2023

Motion to accept: Bill Poe
Second: Vaughn Willoughby
Vote: Unanimous

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS*

Peter: Molcombe: Peter expressed that the county's school system was low-performing and getting worse. He brought up that there was being more spent on buildings for the purpose of keeping up with the growth rate but public school enrollment had actually been decreasing over the past five years. He told the board that there was more enrollment in charter, private, and homeschools. Peter said he wanted to challenge the idea that new schools had to be expensive for the county and take long periods of time for construction. He handed board members a copy of his written comments as well as some of the data on school enrollment and construction costs.

V. BOARD/COMMISSIONER RESPONSES

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. Member Re-Appointment Applications:
 - a. Amie Perkins: Haw River Township
 - b. Rodney Cheek: Newlin Township
 - c. Sandy Ellington-Graves: Newlin Township
 - d. Blake Cobb: Pleasant Grove Township

Motion to recommend reappointment for all four members listed: Bill Poe

Second: Eric McPherson

Vote: Unanimous

2. New Member Applications:
 - a. David Hadley: Albright Township
 - b. Catherine Dickens: Haw River Township
 - c. Lee Isley: Patterson Township
 - d. Max Morgan: Melville Township
 - e. Henry Chandler: Faucette Township

David Hadley: Not present for comment.

Catherine Dickens: Catherine introduced herself to the board stating that she was a mother of five, soon to be a grandmother of eleven. She also stated that she is the vice president of the Haw River precinct. She told the board that she thought Alamance was a wonderful place to be and it would be her honor and pleasure to serve on the board.

Lee Isley: Lee introduced himself and thanked the board for their consideration. He stated that he understood the importance of the role from serving on the board in the past. He stated that he has been a lifelong resident of the county and currently lives in Snow Camp. He told the board that he has seen a lot of changes to the county over the years, and that the county is in a unique position to adapt to these changes.

Max Morgan: Max introduced himself and stated that he has also been a lifelong resident of the county and has worked the past 12 years at P. Morgan Enterprises managing mobile home parks. He stated that he also has a real estate firm in Mebane. He told the board that he wants to help guide and have positive impact on the county, to protect property values, and work with the community's input by using his knowledge of land development.

Henry Chandler: Henry introduced himself as a lifelong resident of the county who had retired in 2021. He told the board that his family had been in Alamance County since before the Civil War. He told the board that he wants to try and get more involved and help the county any way he can and be a part of the community. He stated that he is currently serving on the voluntary ag district board and will continue to do so.

Rodney Cheek mentioned that last fall the planning made a recommendation for David Hadley but the Commissioners did not appoint him. He made a motion to recommend appointing David Hadley to serve on the remainder of Julian Doby's term.

Second: Bill Poe
Vote: Unanimous

Motion to recommend Lee Isley: Bill Poe
Second: Rodney Cheek
Vote: Unanimous

Motion to recommend Henry Chandler: Eric McPherson
Second: Rodney Cheek
Vote: Unanimous

Motion to recommend Catherine Dickens: Ernest Bare
Second: Bill Poe
Vote: Unanimous

VII. OLD BUSINESS

1. Minimum Lot Size Discussion

Rob Snow presented the board with some data on permitted lot sizes from 2019 until 2023. Sandy Ellington-Graves asked if there was data available on lots that were denied permitting and had to be made larger to be approved. There were some questions on community wells. Ray Cobb and Ernest Bare commented that subdivisions on community wells tended to have some problems with water quality. Bill Poe talked about the cone of depression that is created by a well, and went over some diagrams to illustrate how multiple wells can impact the groundwater.

Bill also brought up a number of potential talking points he had prepared. He suggested that the county should require groundwater studies for larger developments, increasing building setbacks, applying the stream buffers from the heavy industrial development ordinance to larger subdivisions, and adding language to require traffic studies and stormwater controls. It was mentioned by Rik Stevens that a significant portion of the county falls within the Jordan Lake Watershed and that the state had a lot of input on how the county implements buffer and watershed rules. Bill also proposed putting a 500-foot setback on present-use farm properties.

The board discussed how a lot of development was acquiring farmland and how the average farmer in the county would not be able to afford to buy land and to farm it with current prices. Ray mentioned that the county had not yet seen the impact from the Toyota megasite but that it would be coming and the county should try and prepare for that. It was also brought up that there was nothing in the ordinance that brought proposed subdivisions to the planning board for any kind of approval. Stephen Dodson mentioned that if that were to happen they would have to review those plans based on some kind of specific document or mechanism. He also mentioned the Technical Review Committee and suggested that there could be other board members as a part of that meeting.

The rock quarry was brought up in discussion and the fact that there is language in the heavy industrial development ordinance that these projects go to public hearings for approval. Sandy asked about how many residential developments went through the Technical Review Committee and Amie reminded the board that if subdivisions were brought to them for review then it would still be a recommendation for the Commissioners or not.

Ray asked the Commissioners in the audience what their opinions on an acre and a half minimum lot size would be. Craig Turner told the board that there are some areas in the county that would accept different density based on geology but it would be impractical to have only

one standard for lot size minimums. Ray discussed the problems with septic systems on smaller lots and how a larger minimum lot size would allow for better maintenance and repair. Vaughn Willoughby stated that the board needed to come to a decision on this or else they would just keep talking back and forth and not make any progress. He suggested that they pick a number to settle on and vote to recommend it or not. He proposed 65,000 square feet. Sandy proposed that they just consider 43,560 square feet, one acre exactly, saying that she was nervous about just doubling the minimum lot size right away.

Craig asked if the board had considered planned unit development, looking at allowing higher density on a smaller portion of a lot and leaving some green space. It was brought up that there is some options for cluster development in the ordinance but it was unlikely that they would allow for something exactly like that. There were suggestions for an acre and a half as well as an acre and a quarter. Bill asked if the board wanted to table the discussion for now or put it to a committee and Stephen asked if considering wells and septic systems was really the right approach to managing growing density. Rik told the board that he could put together a draft ordinance amendment without a specific number for the board to use as a framework for their discussion next month.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS/DISCUSSION

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn: Amie Perkins

Second: Bill Poe

Vote: Unanimous

Adjourned at 8:24 PM.

**Meeting Notes:*

- 1. Those wishing to make public comments should sign-in prior to the meeting.*
- 2. In order to be fair and ensure that all citizens wishing to speak may be heard, the Chair may place time limits on public comments.*
- 3. Any further discussion by the public on a given agenda item is subject to the discretion of the Chair of the Planning Board*