

Minutes of the Town of Huntersville Ordinance Advisory Board

The Town of Huntersville Ordinance Advisory Board met in person at 3:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 1, 2022, at Town Hall 101 Huntersville-Concord Road.

Call to Order/Roll Call

Chairman Jones called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm.

Voting Members Present: M. Jones, T. Taylor, A. Hallman, K. Jones, H. Whittaker, F. Gammon, B. Skelly, and T. Finlay

Voting Members Absent: J. Kluttz

Non-Voting Members Present: Commissioner Munger, J. Simoneau, T. Barron, E. Sloop, and J. Glass

Non-Voting Members Absent: None

Approval of Minutes

Item 2A. Consider approval of the November 3, 2022, Regular Meeting Minutes

Motion: A. Hallman made a Motion to Approve the Amended November 3, 2022, minutes. H. Whittaker seconded the motion.

Vote: The motion passed unanimously (8-0).

Public Comments

No comments.

Action Agenda

Item 4A. Consider recommendation on petition #TA22-13, a request by the Huntersville Planning Department for a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to amend Article 3.3.1(a) Manufactured Home Overlay District to update skirting requirements to comply with G.S. Chapter 160D-910 and to amend Article 11.6.1(a) Zoning Compliance to clarify application requirements and to amend Article 9.9 Commercial Communication Tower to comply with G.S. Chapter 160D-937 on co-locating wireless facilities on Town utility poles
K. Mielenz, Planner I presented text amendment TA22-13 in three parts, the first part related to amending Article 3.3.1(a) to update skirting requirements to comply with NCGS Chapter 160D-910 for manufactured homes. Staff reviewed the updated proposed amendment following the discussion of the text amendment at the November 2022 Ordinance Advisory Board meeting to reflect that masonry skirting would not be required but alternative skirting would still be required. The second and third part of the proposed amendment have not adjusted from the November 2022 Ordinance Advisory Board meeting.

Commissioner Munger asked staff if consideration was given for non-masonry skirting to be permitted in all manufactured home cases. Staff responded that was not a consideration.

M. Jones asked if this meets the test of equal protection, the question being, are similarly situated persons treated similarly. E. Sloop responded referencing the A. Lovelady statements that there are examples in our statutes where the form of ownership is distinct, and you can treat different situations differently based on ownership. Lease versus own can be considered differently because that authority has been granted to do so by the General Assembly.

M. Jones asked if constitutionally this met the requirements of equal protection. E. Sloop commented that since skirting is required in both cases they are being treated equally. M. Jones stated that since the materials are different, he does not find them to be equal.

Motion: F. Gammon made a Motion to recommend Approval of TA22-13, manufactured home skirting, permit application and tower co-location and advancement to Public Hearing, Planning Board and Town Board. B. Skelly seconded the motion.

Vote: The motion passed unanimously (8-0)

Item 4B: Consider an amendment to Section 7.3.3 of the Zoning Ordinance to increase the buffer yard width when a proposed development is more dense than adjoining existing development.

J. Simoneau, Planning Director explained that with the adjustments to land development that is now approved administratively versus through quasi-judicial occurred it removed the Town's ability to increase a setback requirement as they have done in the past. This amendment would require new development with twice the density of the adjacent existing development to increase the buffer to a minimum of 40 feet in all zoning except Town Center. Staff presented examples of how this has been applied to previously approved development. Staff presented three options based on the November 2022 discussion of this item by the Ordinance Advisory Board.

A. Hallman asked Staff to confirm that the buffer can be reduced if granted through conditional rezoning. Staff confirmed that is correct.

K. Jones commented on the conditional rezoning not effectively communicating the buffer reductions that are requested at neighborhood meetings. Staff confirmed that the legal requirement is to inform the adjacent properties.

H. Whittaker expressed support for Option 3 as presented.

M. Jones commented that in his opinion he does not see a consistent procedure when a parcel is adjacent to multiple parcels with varying densities and asked if there should be a formula with a weighted average applied to determine the buffer size. Staff responded that staff is comfortable with the clarity and process with what is presented but if the Ordinance Advisory Board wishes to make a recommendation, that will be presented with this amendment request as it moves forward.

M. Jones commented on the inefficiency of process and the non-tax performing land used for buffers and open space that must be subsidized by the structures on the land and increase housing costs. He continued to express the importance of considering the long-term impact created when deciding on land development requirements such as street trees and maintenance of sidewalks.

H. Whittaker asked Staff to clarify how lots adjacent to Town Center would be affected if redeveloped as well as homes sitting on large lots.

K. Jones asked Staff to clarify which density would be considered if there was in-fill development in a neighborhood such as her neighborhood. Staff responded that if multiple parcels were acquired, the parcels were adjacent to Town Center, and a development was proposed that was twice the density, the applicant could apply for rezoning and would be required to have the 40-foot buffer adjacent to existing development. If they could not meet the 40-foot buffer requirement, then they could apply for a conditional rezoning which would then allow them to request the Town Board grant them a reduced buffer.

E. Sloop advised that grammatically there should be commas added to Option 3 if selected to state, "20 feet minimum in Town Center zone, adjoining Town Center zone, and where density is less than two times greater than existing development. In all other cases 40 feet minimum is required."

T. Finlay asked if the three options reflect iterations or if staff has one specific option that it is recommending. Staff responded that option two was the original wording and found to be too wordy, option one is what staff recommended and option three is the iteration following last months discussion with this Board and staff would also find that option to be acceptable.

M. Jones commented that he would accept a motion, or he would be willing to propose a motion despite not being a fan of residential buffers since they are non-tax revenue generating. His proposed motion would include a weighted average for buffers.

Motion: A. Hallman made a Motion to recommend Approval amending Ordinance 7.3.3 with Option 3 as presented by staff with the commas recommended by Legal Department. F. Gammon seconded the motion.

Substitute Motion: M. Jones made a Substitute Motion to recommend Approval amending Ordinance 7.3.3 with Option 3 with the addition of the calculation of the density of the existing development is completed on a weighted average basis with the commas recommended by Legal Department. F. Gammon seconded the motion for discussion.

Staff responded that they are comfortable with the current method of determining buffers based on adjacent density.

F. Gammon commented that Staff has expressed their comfort with the process, and it is a process they do often so he will not support the substitute motion.

Substitute Motion Vote: The motion failed (1-8) with B. Skelly, K. Jones, A. Hallman, T. Taylor, T. Finlay, H. Whittaker, and F. Gammon opposed.

B. Skelly asked for clarification on the Legal department grammatical recommendations. Staff explained that it is really two options being presented in the proposed Option 3 and demonstrated it would read, “20 feet minimum in Town Center zone adjoining Town Center zone, and where density is less than two times greater than existing development. In all other cases 40 feet minimum is required.”

For clarity, B. Skelly recommended an amendment to the motion for the text to state, “20 feet minimum in Town Center zone when adjoining Town Center zone, and where density is less than two times greater than existing development. In all other cases 40 feet minimum is required.” Staff accepted that recommendation. A. Hallman and F. Gammon accepted the amendment.

Vote: The motion passed (8-0-1) with M. Jones abstaining.

Item 4C: Consider a Town Board sponsored amendment to Article 4, Urban Workplace and Shopfront Building Types clarifying how to count residential and non-residential floor areas in mixed-use buildings.

J. Simoneau, Planning Director presented the proposed amendment that would adjust ‘non-residential’ to ‘commercial’ use for shopfront and workplace building types with the added wording to achieve the percentage indicated being used for commercial purposes only. Staff reviewed research completed of a comparison of mixed-use standards in Downtown for local area municipalities.

F. Gammon referenced paragraph 5 of Article 4, Shopfront Building Types and asked about the reference to 40% habitable area requirement. Staff responded that this refers to an existing building and would be different criteria than the land development criteria being discussed.

F. Gammon shared that there is no definition for ‘commercial, residential or non-residential’ in the Ordinance and this could leave it open to interpretation which seems to lend to the confusion. Staff responded that the proposed amendment is to clarify the text and use and staff is comfortable with interpreting this in reviewing land development.

K. Jones commented that she would like the requirement to be 75% or greater for commercial use.

A. Hallman agreed that it should be 75% or greater for commercial use particularly because this is for Town Center, and we are focused on invigorating our Downtown and we do not have that many existing store front/shop front roads so we need this type of requirement to attract as

much commercial development as possible. She then expressed her support of definitions for words as F. Gammon stated. She agreed that the purpose of the definitions is not for staff but rather for developers who may have one use and definition of terms and may not choose to update the descriptions on their plans which can lead to lack of clarity between developers, planners, and citizens as to what the intended use is for that space. The definition and the implementation of the words would be important. Staff commented that the new software for the Ordinances will allow you to search for a word and find all references to that word which will assist with accessing existing definitions such as commercial.

F. Gammon commented that he agreed with the recommendations of 75% commercial, but he does not want to be too restrictive for a developer. He would recommend a 75% commercial, 25% residential through a modification request to be approved by the Town Board so they could view the circumstances of that development and not overregulate the developer.

Commissioner Munger agreed that the true definition of commercial would be beneficial to alleviate confusion. He then referred to the local area municipality research that was shared and commented that the wording of Concord is good phrasing. Staff agreed that presenting the definition with the proposed amendment would be beneficial. The current definition of commercial use is all encompassing.

Commissioner Munger responded that the goal is to clearly identify that a mailroom, storage room or other shared space are not what is intended. The intention is tax revenue generating space.

M. Jones requested staff bring up MuniCode and the definition for Commercial in the Zoning Ordinance.

F. Gammon recommended the implied understandings be included in the definition such as storage rooms, HVAC space when used for commercial only versus HVAC that is shared with commercial and residential. E. Sloop commented that the Ordinances currently define residential and commercial, and she would recommend the addition of non-residential to the definitions as 'everything not residential.'

M. Jones commented that the definition piece and interpreting Town Board conditions and the Ordinance in a consistent fashion is also critical, and he recommends it be wrapped into this as well.

Motion: M. Jones made a motion to call a virtual Special Meeting of the Ordinance Advisory Board on Thursday, December 15, 2022, at 3:30 p.m. to hear Items 4C, 5A, 5B & 5C from the December 1, 2022 agenda and to include an Item 5D to discuss forming sub-committees. K. Jones seconded the motion.

Vote: The motion passed unanimously (8-0).

Item 5A: Review table for School of Government checklist

Item 5B: Discuss making ordinances more user-friendly

Item 5C: Discussion on large-scale one building one lot apartment in certain zoning districts

Other Business

No other business.

Adjourn

Motion: K. Jones made a Motion to Adjourn. A. Hallman seconded the motion.

Vote: The motion passed unanimously (8-0).

Approved this ____ day of _____ 2022.

Chairman or Vice Chairman

Board Secretary