



Town of Pittsboro, North Carolina

Department of Planning

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Bryan Gruesbeck
FROM: Jeff Jones
DATE: October 8, 2015
SUBJECT: Work Session on Report from Conservation Ordinance Review Committee

This Work Session has been scheduled to allow further discussion between the Board of Commissioners and representatives of the Town-established Conservation Ordinance Review Committee.

Background

In December 2012, the Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution of support for the Planning Tools for Pittsboro project, with interest in the development of information and recommendations about strategies to protect natural resources. A Conservation Ordinance Review Committee was assembled (CORC) and this group met twice per month during the first half of 2015 to discuss possibilities, gather materials, and make recommendations.

A report was made to the Pittsboro Board of Commissioners on July 27, 2015. Included in that agenda item was a presentation summarizing key recommendations being offered by the Committee. Commissioners expressed interest in exploring whether these recommendations should be folded into the separate, ongoing initiative to complexly re-organize Pittsboro's regulations into a Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), or whether consideration and possible adoption of new rules should be considered independently. The board agreed that it would be desirable to schedule a work session to provide an opportunity for detailed discussions.

The Committee then presented the recommendations to the Planning Board on August 3, 2015. The Board received the presentation and discussed the benefits of having more up-to-date and specific provisions in the Town's policies, procedures, and ordinances. A copy of the minutes from the August 3 Planning Board meeting are attached.

Summary of Recommendations

The Committee has prepared two draft ordinances for the Town's consideration, each based on model ordinances and customized/adjusted by the Committee to reflect Pittsboro's context.

The first recommended ordinance is named Pittsboro Natural Resources Conservation Ordinance. It is based on a model developed by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission and the Duke University Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions. The recommended ordinance is attached, with the language that was specifically developed by the Committee highlighted in yellow. This is proposed as an overlay zoning district that would apply special standards, in addition to basic underlying zoning district standards, for specific areas that would be identified on the Town's Zoning Map. The recommended ordinance includes, on page 10, a recommended map indicating where these standards would be applied.

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The second recommended ordinance would be a Tree Protection Ordinance. This recommendation takes, as its base, a Guide to Local Ordinance Creation developed by the Duke University Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions, the Urban and Community Forestry Program of the NC Forest Service, and the NC Wildlife Resources Commission. Again, the Committee used this model as a base, and discussed Pittsboro's context. The Committee has prepared a set of changes/insertions into this model to create an ordinance that is being recommended for consideration by the Board of Commissioners. The ordinance would create a framework to monitor tree removal and protect trees/areas deemed to be of value to the community. It would include tree protection standards, define tree protection zones, and establish minimum tree canopy requirements.

Discussion

Committee representatives will present details regarding these two recommended ordinances at the Work Session. There are two other regulatory initiatives underway currently in Pittsboro that are related to this discussion of these draft ordinances.

- UDO: Work is underway to accomplish a complete reorganization and update of Pittsboro's land use regulations. The Town has received a "Code Assessment" document with analysis of the array of existing regulations. The next step, coming this fall, will be review and discussion of proposed segments of a new Unified Development Ordinance.
- Chatham Park: Materials to be prepared, required as part of the approved Chatham Park Master Plan, include a series of Small Area Plans and a series of topic-specific standards referred to as Additional Elements. Tree protection and environmental conservation are topics that are to be addressed in these documents.

Part of the discussion of next steps for consideration of these ordinances being recommended by the Conservation Ordinance Review Committee will be attention to how these ideas might be addressed and/or integrated into related ongoing efforts, and/or what other methods should be constructed for further consideration of these ideas.

Recommendation

We recommend that the Board receive the presentations of the Conservation Ordinance Review Committee at this Work Session, engage in questions and discussions with Committee members, and discuss preferences for next steps.