



**OAK RIDGE PLANNING & ZONING BOARD MEETING
SEPTEMBER 26, 2024 - 7:00 P.M.
OAK RIDGE TOWN HALL**

MINUTES

Board Members Present

Jason Streck, Chair
Nancy Stoudemire, Vice Chair
Patrick Fiorentino
Craig Rosenfeld, Alternate (Sitting)

Staff Present

Sean Taylor, Planning Director
Sandra Smith, Asst. Town Mgr./Town Clerk

Board Members Absent

Patti Paslaru
Ron Simpson
Tara Tillman, Alternate

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Jason Streck at 7:00 p.m.

2. APPROVE AGENDA

Vice Chair Nancy Stoudemire moved to approve the agenda, and Patrick Fiorentino seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

3. APPROVE MINUTES

Patrick Fiorentino moved to approve the minutes of the June 27, 2024, regular meeting, and Craig Rosenfeld seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

4. NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion of updated Thoroughfare/Collector Street Plan:

Planning Director Sean Taylor introduced the updated Thoroughfare/Collector Street Plan by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for consideration and approval. He stated that the last approved revision of the plan occurred in 2006. He noted that he and Town Manager Bill Bruce reviewed the MPO's proposed plan and suggested changes based on anticipated development plans and consideration of the topography and geography of the area. Among the changes recommended by Taylor and Bruce were the removal of most proposed connectors due to topographical,

geographical and environmental issues, the addition of a collector street off Hidden View Drive to Warner Road, and a change of NC 150 from Bunch Road from a minor to a major thoroughfare. Discussion ensued focusing on the recommended revisions to the MPO's Thoroughfare/Collector Street Plan. Taylor indicated that a revised version of the plan was expected to be reviewed at the next P&Z Board meeting and would be followed by Town Council's consideration and possible approval of the plan at the Town Council meeting in November.

B. Discussion of Text Amendment to Chapter 30, Article IV of the Oak Ridge Code of Ordinances

Taylor opened a discussion about combining the duties of the Planning & Zoning (P&Z) Board with those of the Board of Adjustment (BOA). He explained that the tasks of the Board of Adjustment included reviewing and rendering judgments on administrative zoning appeals and applications for Special Use Permits. He added that the BOA acted in a quasi-judicial manner and that P&Z Board decisions were not appealed to the BOA, thereby removing any potential conflict of interest between the two boards. He noted that if the combined board met on the same day, then one board would adjourn before convening as the other board.

Taylor explained the reasons behind recommending the merger of the two boards were that the P&Z members had the best knowledge of Town ordinances to be able to make judicial decisions on cases and because of the challenge to maintain membership and training of BOA members because they convened very infrequently. He pointed out that the last meeting of the BOA occurred in 2021.

Asst. Town Manager/Town Clerk Sandra Smith added that the BOA met more frequently in the past until the ordinance was changed to allow staff approval of variance requests.

Streck asked if the Town Attorney would participate in BOA hearings and how P&Z members would be trained in BOA responsibilities. Smith replied that the Town Attorney generally participated only if a lawsuit was involved in a case and that staff would train P&Z members. She explained that as BOA members, individuals would be sworn in, render judicial decisions, and be prohibited from sharing case details with any others. Taylor described the process of an appeal as beginning with a review and recommendation by staff. An appeal of a staff decision would proceed to the BOA for review and judgment. If the BOA decision is appealed, the case would then proceed to Superior Court for a review and decision.

Nancy Stoudemire commented that she found the BOA review process to be straightforward, noting that applicants were required to meet four specific criteria for their requests to be considered.

Smith pointed out that Town Attorney Michael Thomas would rewrite the ordinance to reflect the merger of the two boards if the merger were approved.

Streck asked for additional remarks and questions, and none were offered.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

6. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Nancy Stoudemire made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:39 pm and Patrick Fiorentino seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

Respectfully Submitted:

Sandra B. Smith, NCCMC, CMC
Asst. Town Manager/Town Clerk

Jason Streck
Chair