

MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC HEARING
AUGUST 29, 2005
MINUTES

Chairman Bryson convened the public hearing at 6 p.m. explaining the purpose of the hearing was to receive public comment on the proposed Ordinance Regulating High-Impact Land Uses in Macon County. All Board Members with the exception of Commissioner Shepherd who arrived late, the County Manager, Staff Attorney, Deputy Clerk, members of the news media and interested citizens were present.

Commissioner Leatherman gave the invocation. Chairman Bryson requested a period of silence for fellow Americans who were suffering from Hurricane Katrina. Ronnie Beale, Chairman of the Planning Board, was introduced and stated the Planning Board had worked long and hard on the proposed ordinance, had held public meetings to receive citizen input and felt the ordinance would be an asset to the citizens of the community.

The following comments were made:

Kenneth McKinney stated he had attended the community meeting held by the Planning Board in Cowee and was disappointed that the document didn't address more of the concerns voiced at that meeting. He stated by adding the word dwelling or residence to paragraph 157:20(a) the document would be a better, stronger document.

Gabe Cumming co-director of the Macon County Voices Project expressed appreciation to the Board and community for support of the project and stated the program had been presented to 250 people in the past month. Mr. Cumming distributed to the Board the top ten visions of the attendees. He expressed appreciation to the Planning Board for the proposed ordinance stating development had been a difficult task.

Ben Brown stated he was a member of Macon Tomorrow who co-sponsored Macon Voices and noted the Deputy Clerk had the original copies of feedback from the Macon Voices presentations, gave a brief history of a 1992 project which solicited public comment on planning stating 82% of those responding wanted some type of planning and noted that at recent public meetings most citizens thought there were regulations already in place. Mr. Brown reiterated Mr. Cumming's comments about the hard work of the Planning Board.

Faye Moore stated her family moved from Florida to Cowee about five years ago. They work and live in Macon County and love it but are devastated by what is happening in Cowee Valley (Wildflower Development). Ms. Moore noted the Wildflower Project shows the need for protection especially the ridge lines. She stated she and her family are very willing to help and asked that the Board not let the destruction of Cowee Mountain be in vain.

Bill & Sharon VanHorn, residents in the Cullasaja area, requested the Board to continue to work to establish more standards stating they were frustrated it has taken this long to get an ordinance presented. They expressed concern that the ordinance still does not address several issues and we cannot wait any longer to take control of what is happening. They noted (1) a survey of citizens showed the vast majority want development controls; (2) no matter what the standard, people will still flock here and (3) in order to maintain beauty ask enforcements officials, etc. to err on side of conservatism.

Edwin Poole, Highlands resident, advocated passing the ordinance stating it was a step in the right direction and agreed with other speakers we need to go further.

Bob Scott stated he was a member of the Franklin Town Board but was speaking as an individual and felt starting something like the proposed ordinance is thirty years late. Mr. Scott urged the Board to move forward to preserve the

good and beauty of the county. He added another problem is infrastructure and an ordinance like this will help while infrastructure development catches up.

Allan Allman stated he had read the ordinance and personally felt it was rather benign and would not affect him personally but, by the same token, felt this was another encroachment on private property rights and a step toward county wide zoning. Mr. Allman reminded the Board of the opposition to the previous proposed land use ordinance and stated people stayed home until the chips are down then they will come out and express their opposition.

Jimmy Goodman had registered to speak but stated he did not wish to make any comments.

Susan Erwin, Planning Board member, stated the proposed ordinance involved a lot of compromise and she personally would have liked to see something much stronger, that this is a first step and "will keep the biggest bull out of the china shop". She added that since the proposed ordinance had been presented the county has seen lots more development, there is still a lot more to do work to do, it must be done more quickly and be more comprehensive in order to do positive things with growth in the future.

Chris Fitzpatrick, Executive Director of LTWA, expressed appreciation to the Planning Board for their work and urged passage of the ordinance.

Charlie Cowie emphasized the impact of the proposed ordinance on the county citizens, stated there is a quiet majority that don't turn out for hearings that aren't being listened to, taxes are too high, it is the Board's responsibility to keep taxes down and there cannot be development without water/sewer expansion and the County needs to think about manufacturing. Mr. Cowie requested the Board to think about the ordinance as a logistic rather than an economical thing.

Bill Crawford stated he was a native of Macon County and long time member of WNC Alliance, that he supports the ordinance and hope it continues to evolve through grass root efforts of the community.

There were no further comments from the public. Commissioner Leatherman commended the Planning Board members for their effort and for completion of the difficult task assigned them. Chairman Bryson reiterated Commissioner Leatherman's comments and asked Planning Board members present to stand. Chairman Bryson adjourned the hearing.

Sam K. Greenwood, County Manager
Clerk to the Board

Daniel A. Bryson
Board Chairman