

Public Hearing

Date August 20, 2007

Item # 22

Public hearing to receive public comments on a request for a proposal by the Chatham County Board of Commissioners to amend **Section 5.2 A of the Chatham County Subdivision Regulations** to specify threshold criteria of when environmental assessments are required. The proposal requires assessments for all residential subdivisions of six or more lots. Assessments are also required of residential subdivisions of less than six lots and non-residential subdivisions if located within specified areas of the County.

LEGISLATIVE HEARING

Each speaker must sign up in advance of the hearing and his/her comments shall be limited to not more than three minutes. No speaker may yield unused time to any other speaker.

Check One		Name	Complete Address with Zip Code	Phone Number
		Allison Weakley		
For	Against			
9:24:54		Gretchen Smith	598 Jones Branch Road Chapel Hill	(919) 966-7145
9:25:53		Marny Austin	22 Farrington Pittsboro	(919) 548-3863
		Tom Dugan	60 P.O. Box 607 Pittsboro	542-2400
		Dave Philbrick	"	"
9:27:37		Catherine Deringer	124 Goldberry	542-6787
		Cindy Perry	179 Hillsboro St.	542 6202
9:30:45		Lynne Hurley	16 Matchwood Pk	967-3449
9:33:05	X	Jesse Farrington	729 Morris Rd	542-3181

**Chatham County Board Of Commissioners
Public Hearing on Environmental Assessments
August 20, 2007
Comments by Gretchen Smith**

My name is Gretchen Smith and I live at 598 Jones Branch Road in Chatham County. I support the Environmental Assessment (EA) thresholds for the Subdivision and Zoning Ordinances.

As I have said in the past, the time to stop a bad design is in the beginning. Environmental Assessments should be an important part of evaluating a design. Given the damage that has already occurred, the county needs stringent measures for preventing future negative impacts to environmental, historical, and cultural features.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments.

To the Chatham County Board of Commissioners
Public Hearing on Recommendations of the Environmental Review Board
August 20, 2007

By:

Mary Bastin

22 Fearington Post

Pittsboro NC 27312 bastinm@aol.com 919 548-38-63

Commissioners, County Staff, Members of the Chatham County Environmental Review Board

I am speaking as a member of the Chatham County Chamber of Commerce. I endorse the letter our President, Jody Minor has submitted to you that represents the members of the Board of Directors of the Chamber.

When I interviewed the newly elected Commissioners last November immediately after their election I was told in your words, "We recognize that we are a county divided. We seek to find Common Ground with the people of the county." I am calling on you this evening to keep the faith on that pledge. The Chatham Chamber is growing- new people are getting involved that are interested in contributing to community building. We do not know how to connect to the Commissioners and we hope you will let us know through whom and in what way we can open a dialog with county government.

Business people in the county are deeply invested in the future of the county. Plus their tax review is needed as well as they need to be very closely connected to what you are saying about backing economic development- so we look forward to hearing from you.

This hearing is about recommendations of the Environmental Review Board and I only have three minutes so what I have just said relates in that all of the builders and developers are people with a stake in the future of the county and it is very important that their voices not be totally ignored in this discussion.

We live in a Democracy. County Government has an obligation to represent all the people in the county- the people who live in the western part of the county as well as the business community- realtors and developers.

The Environmental Review Board is a government entity and is likewise obligated to serve the interests of all of the citizens of the county. So I am asking that you create a process for the ERB that will include discussion and input from

builders and developers who will be affected by changes in the law. It seems reasonable and democratic to include the people who will have to work with the ordinances on a daily basis to be included in the decision-making process.

Having said that, I want to address what I feel are problems caused by the fact the the Environmental Review Board is new and an understanding of what the Commissioners intended for it to do is not clear.

I don't understand the following and would at some point like to have these points explained to me:

At the county web site the mission of the ERB is to establish triggers for environmental assessments. Nowhere here or in the recommendations submitted is environmental assessments defined.

If it is your intention that recommendations from the ERB be written into law, I request that you go back to the drawing board and design a process that will include steps to be taken between the ERB, the Planning Department and the Planning Board before any changes are made in the laws.

Also, I would also like to know that there will be legal review as to whether the recommendations are enforceable after they are enacted.

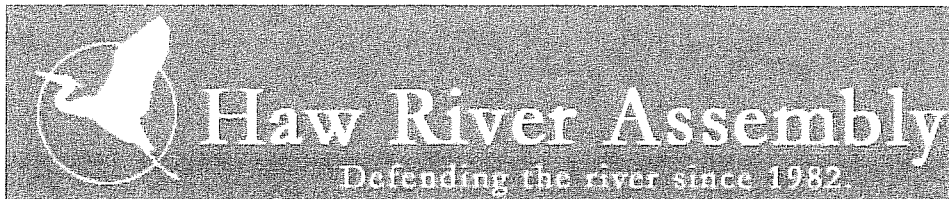
My request is for the Commissioners and the ERB to go back to the drawing board and get it right from the get go.

And as I have said, I don't think- I know the people who are opposed to this have some valid reasons that deserve the attention of the Commissioners as well as the ERB.

I applaud having the outstandingly qualified scientists and environmental research experts with a voice in these issues. It is something we have all wanted. However, I never envisioned that their voices would be the only voices heard. Now I would ask that citizens, environmental advocates and business leaders proceed to the next generation of community building where we develop innovative models for people listening and respecting each other and working together to create the future we all want for Chatham County.

Thank you.

Our 25th Year!



P.O. Box 187 Bynum NC 27228 (919) 542-5790 info@hawriver.org

August 20, 2007

To: Chatham County Board of Commissioners

**Comments on the Environmental Review Board Proposal
for Thresholds for Environmental Assessments**

The Haw River Assembly is a non-profit organization based in Chatham County whose mission is to protect all the waters of the Haw River basin. We support the Environmental Assessment threshold recommendations presented by the Environmental Review Board.

Environmental Assessments are a very valuable tool that enables planners, developers and interested citizens to look at possible impacts of proposed developments and make decisions accordingly. We agree that new development proposals in Chatham will benefit from the use of the threshold criteria as a screening tool. Modern mapmaking technology and data programs give us planning tools undreamed of just a few years ago and we would be wise to use these.

Proposals for major subdivisions, and smaller developments that trigger the EA because they meet these threshold criteria, will be required to provide much better information about the overall impacts of the destruction that goes hand in hand with land clearing and grading. This will result in much better decision making and planning in Chatham County as we strive to protect our natural resources.

The kind of information included in a good EA tells us about the most sensitive features on that piece of land – something we need because all land is not created equal. Some sites will have very special species of plants and animals – or support wildlife populations not seen elsewhere, some sites are close to public water supplies or lie within river corridor zones. Some places will contain or be adjacent to the last of Chatham's most significant and beautiful natural areas. Others will have remnants of history and archeology that once lost will never be seen again.

We need to take this kind of care as we develop our county. We must see what we risk losing and use that information to design the best proposals we can. We hope that this kind of information and better process we will help us all see the value of protecting what is most special here where we live.

We believe a good system can be set up in Chatham that balances the need for information with the size and impact of a development. The Environmental Review Board has made some good recommendations to do so.

We appreciate all the hard work of the ERB and Chatham County Board of Commissioners on this very important issue. Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Catherine Deininger
Haw River Stream Steward Coordinator



August 20, 2007

Chatham County Board of Commissioners

Re: Environmental Assessment Triggers

Gentlemen:

In case you were still wondering, I am Loyse Hurley, President of Chatham Citizens for Effective Communities (CCEC). I live at 16 Matchwood in Pittsboro. CCEC would like to express it's appreciation to the Environmental Review Board for working so hard to develop these triggers for such an assessment. We have attended many of these meetings and have seen the effort they've gone to develop a balanced proposal that would protect our environment and not pose unnecessary burdens on any developer. As a result of tonight's hearing, they may still have additional work to do, but this proposal is a very good start.

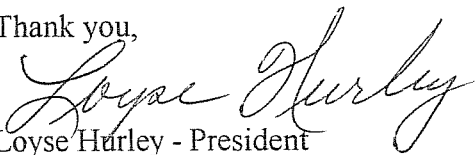
Over the past few years, we've seen increased development pressures in Chatham. This increase in land disturbing activity, naturally threatens our total environment. There is no reason to expect that development will stop, so it is wise and prudent for some system be established which will take pre-emptive action for a threatened environment.

An Environmental Assessment addresses critical environmental issues, it proposes and ultimately achieves, through appropriate mitigation measures, better protection of the precious environmental resources we have. In the past, there have been technical problems with stream identifications, a gap in our laws protecting our wetlands, the destruction of our wildlife habitats and the trampling of our rare flora and fauna. Our ecosystem has been threatened. This is not a desirable state for either the developers or the citizens of Chatham.

Once these triggers are finalized, developers, citizens, environmentalists - all - will know exactly what is expected and the review of development applications will achieve a consistency throughout the County that will benefit our environment and all of us.

CCEC whole heartedly endorses these triggers.

Thank you,


Loyse Hurley - President

PO Box 412 Pittsboro, NC 27312