

PLANNING & REVIEW NOTES

VI. A.

SUBJECT: Request for text amendments to the Chatham County Zoning Ordinance to provide the following new zoning districts: Neighborhood Business, Community Business, Regional Business, and Agricultural. Amendments also include the creation of a Table of Permitted Uses, revisions to Home Occupations that include reductions in accessory building sizes, environmental standards, and landscaping and buffering requirements for all non-residential developments.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. **Chatham County Zoning Ordinance (redline version showing staff changes since public hearing)**
2. **Public hearing comments-posted**

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND: The Planning Board held a forum on the draft ordinance on September 30. Comments from said meeting are posted on the Planning page of the County web site. A joint public hearing of the Board of County Commissioners and Planning Board was held October 20. Written comments that were received are also posted on the County web site.

DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS: The Planning staff reviewed the various comments received during the forum and public hearing and has made revisions to the public hearing draft. Said revisions are shown in the attached red line version. There are too many changes to explain but some are addressed below.

Comments were received from the County Agricultural Advisory Committee and Chatham Citizens for Effective Communities concerning the proposed Agricultural District found as Section 10.1. Said district has been removed from the staff recommended draft. The district is not proposed to be applied to any land in the current draft. The name is misleading to some since by State statute agricultural operations are exempt from zoning. The requirement of participation in the Voluntary Agricultural District program may prove problematic. The 5% or five acres maximum non-agricultural land requirement may prove to be a problem for smaller agricultural operations or not big enough for others. As stated in Charlie Bolton's comments to the Board, including such a district at this time could complicate on going efforts at developing a Farm Protection Plan. It is recommended that the proposal for such a district be coordinated with the efforts of the Agricultural Advisory Committee.

Section 10.13 the permitted use table has been revised to make uses more consistent within and in some cases across districts. All light industrial uses are now permitted within the heavy industrial district as they are in our existing ordinance.

Section 11.3 concerning environmental assessments has been changed to omit language that the County attorney's office has advised is not authorized. According to the attorney the statute that authorizes environmental assessments is an informational statute not a regulatory one. Specific design criteria addressing steep slopes has been incorporated into the Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Ordinance to address some of these issues. The conservation subdivision provisions are an attempt to encourage preservation of environmentally unique areas.

Re: Zoning Ordinance

DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

Section 12 regarding landscaping and buffering has been revised to provide consistency between the Appearance Commission guidelines and the Ordinance text. The table has been revised to clarify which buffer type is applicable when more than one was listed.

Section 16.1.6 has been revised to increase the maximum allowed accessory building for a neighborhood home occupation to conform to the size of the allowed accessory dwelling unit of 1,000 square feet instead of 750. Both are a decrease from the previously allowed 1,500 square foot accessory building for neighborhood home occupation.

Section 17.5 C.6 has been deleted as was previously recommended by Planning Department staff and the zoning committee.

Section 21 has been rearranged but is generally unchanged in substance.

RECOMMENDATION: The Planning Department recommends the ordinance be recommended to the Commissioners as revised.