



Chatham County Planning Board Agenda Notes

Date: August 2, 2011

Agenda Item: VII. 4.

Attachment #: 5

☐ **Subdivision**

☐ **Conditional Use Permit**

☐ **Rezoning Request**

☒ **Other: Text Amendment – Zoning Ordinance**

Subject:	Request by the Chatham County Board of Commissioners for a text amendment to the Chatham County Zoning Ordinance, Section 17.1, to remove the Environmental Review Board from the review process for conditional use permits that require an environmental impact assessment.
Action Requested:	See Recommendations
Attachments:	

Introduction & Background

The Board of Commissioners discussed this item and scheduled a public hearing at their regular meeting on June 6, 2011. The public hearing was held on July 18, 2011.

Discussion & Analysis

In December 2008 the Board of Commissioners adopted several amendments to the Chatham County Zoning Ordinance, which included a requirement for the Environmental Review Board (ERB) to review projects requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in Section 17.1. Since the adoption of this requirement there have been no projects submitted meeting the threshold requirement for ERB review of an EIA. Currently there is one pending project that will be submitted to the ERB for their review under the provisions of Section 17.1.

During the public hearing there were eight citizens who spoke on this topic and all were in opposition to the amendment. Some of the concerns presented by the citizens:

- The ERB is composed of volunteers with expertise in reviewing environmental documentation
- Large projects that may have significant impacts on adjoining properties should be reviewed by the ERB
- Environmental quality of the county is better protected with this requirement in place
- The ERB is an additional resource for the county

County staff has discussed the proposed amendment and have developed a strategy to address the review of EIA's if the amendment is adopted. The Environmental Quality Department staff will review any EIA's that are submitted for sufficiency with the adopted standards and forward their comments to Planning Department staff. The Planning Department will then incorporate those comments as part of the Board of Commissioner and Planning Board agenda abstracts.

The Planning Board has three regular meetings to make a recommendation on the proposed text amendment.

Recommendation

If the Board wants the ERB to continue to review projects in the zoned areas of the county that require an EIA, the recommendation should be denial. If the Board wants the ERB to be removed from the review process and allow Environmental Quality Department staff to review EIA's, the recommendation should be approval.