



Agenda Abstract

Department: Planning

Authorizing Signature: _____

Submitting Official: Jason Sullivan

Meeting Date:	9-6-11
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: (List Individually)	

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:	<p>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.</p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 <p>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</p>



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	<p>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.</p> <p>The Planning Board discussed this item at their meeting on August 2, 2011 and recommended approval by a vote of 4-2 with 1 abstention. Comments in favor of the amendment included that there were other county ordinances that had been adopted in recent years that address environmental issues and it will minimize the number of steps required for a project while still protecting the environment. Comments opposed to the amendment included that the ERB has members with expertise in environmental areas and can filter the scientific information provided in an EIA and the members are volunteers that do not provide an additional cost to the county.</p>
Budgetary Impact:	
Recommendation:	<p>The Planning Board by a vote of 4-2 with 1 abstention recommend approval of the amendment and adoption of an Ordinance amending the Zoning Ordinance of Chatham County to remove the ERB from the review process for conditional use permits requiring an EIA.</p>