



## Planning, Development & Inspections

A Division of Community Services  
P.O. Box 550 • Raleigh, NC 27602  
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### MINUTES OF REGULAR PLANNING BOARD - June 7, 2023

**LOCATION:** Wake County Justice Center, 301 S. Salisbury St., Room 2700, Raleigh, NC

#### MEMBERS PRESENT:

1. Mr. Thomas Wells (Chair)
2. Ms. Brenna Booker-Rouse (Vice-Chair)
3. Mr. David Adams
4. Mr. Amos Clark
5. Mr. Asa Fleming
6. Mr. Bill Jenkins
7. Dr. Kamal Kolappa
8. Mr. Ted Van Dyk

#### MEMBERS ABSENT:

1. Mr. Bill Jenkins
2. Mr. Danny Kadis

#### COUNTY STAFF:

1. Ms. Celena Everette
2. Mr. Steven Finn
3. Mr. Tim Maloney
4. Mr. Josh McClellan
5. Mr. Akul Nishawala
6. Ms. Liz Oliver
7. Ms. Terry Nolan
8. Ms. Sharon Peterson
9. Ms. Beth Simmons
10. Ms. Caroline Simpson

#### COUNTY ATTORNEY:

1. Mr. Kenneth Murphy, Deputy County Attorney

#### GUESTS:

1. Mr. Michael Haley, Executive Director, Wake County Economic Development

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1. **Meeting Called to Order:** Mr. Wells called the Planning Board meeting to order at 1:30 pm.
  2. **Petitions and Amendments:** Mr. Wells requested that the Board add an agenda item to discuss a Planning Board Retreat. Mr. Van Dyk made a motion to suspend normal Board rules to add an agenda item. Mr. Barron seconded the motion, and the additional agenda item was added unanimously.

3. **Approval May 3, 2023, Minutes:** Motion to approve the minutes from May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, was made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Ms. Booker-Rouse. The minutes were unanimously approved.
4. **Comprehensive Plan Amendment 01-23: Middle Creek Area Draft Plan - Presentation by Akul Nishawala, Planner III**

Mr. Nishawala began his presentation by explaining that this update was for the Planning Board's recommendation to send the adoption of the Middle Creek Area Plan (and a proposed amendment to the PLANWake Development Framework Map and text) to the Board of Commissioners for adoption. He began by noting that Land Use Plans were considered living documents designed to be amended and updated as the needs for future growth changed within the County. Mr. Nishawala provided some history into the Land Use Plan, which was originally adopted in 1999 and updated into the current PLANWake in 2021 after an extensive public engagement period. Mr. Nishawala noted that this plan implementation includes the addition of two plans, increasing from an initial five.

Mr. Nishawala brought the Board's attention to the Middle Creek Area Plan, noting that the current population outside of the municipal portions was nearly 55,000 residents. Land use analysis leaned primarily residential, but Mr. Nishawala relayed that a surprising 30% of agricultural areas are within Middle Creek. He noted that agricultural and forestry land uses had dwindled during expansion of both the municipal and unincorporated sections of Wake County. Preserving unincorporated portions of the County dedicated to agriculture and farming were considered a high priority, so long as that was consistent with the desires of the landowners. Mr. Nishawala informed the Board that, considering this priority, the County had added the designation of an Agriculture and Forestry Land Use to the Lower Swift Creek Area Plan. He noted that, in conjunction with Soil and Water Conservation, that programs like Voluntary and Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts and Conservation Easements would incentivize farmers to maintain existing land use.

As a result of the creation of Agriculture and Forestry Land Use Plan designation, Mr. Nishawala noted that staff planned to amend the Development Framework Map of PLANWake to shift Community Reserve and Community parcels totaling 6,160 acres to Rural parcels. In addition to being consistent with the Middle Creek Area Plan agricultural and forestry designations, the proposed amendment would also align with the Town of Fuquay-Varina's 2040 Community Vision Land Use Plan (adopted in 2022). Due to the lack of sewer and water utilities in the area, both the County and Fuquay-Varina believe that their designations are consistent with a low-density, limited residential use.

Mr. Nishawala identified community engagement periods dating back to November of 2022, which included social media engagement, in-person and virtual community events, interactive maps on-line, and an article in Wake County's The WIRE for employees living in the Middle Creek Area. Staff also attended the Keep the Farm Workshop and worked in conjunction with area municipalities, the Wake County Agricultural Advisory Board, the Wake County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Southern Region Center's Community Advocacy Committee (CAC). Feedback from the public described staff as informative and that the County's efforts to provide educational presentations had been met with positivity.

Mr. Nishawala closed his presentation by noting that staff findings were as follows:

- The Middle Creek Area Plan is consistent with the goals and visions set forth in PLANWake.

- The Middle Creek Area Plan received input from residents, municipal partners, and stakeholders.
- The Middle Creek Area Plan provides an update to the existing area land plan policies, development framework map, and land use designations.

He noted that staff recommends the Board advance the Middle Creek Area Plan to the Board of Commissioners for adoption at the June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023, meeting and offered to answer any questions that members had for him.

Mr. Wells and the Board Members thanked Mr. Nishawala for his presentation and complimented the thorough process he shared with them over the Middle Creek Area Land Use Plan.

#### **Public Comment**

Mr. Wells opened the floor for public comment at 1:47. Hearing none, he closed public comment.

#### **Board Discussion**

Hearing no comments from the Board, Mr. Wells entertained a motion in regard to CPA-01-23.

#### **Board Motion – Adoption of the Statement Consistency in CPA-01-23**

Motion was made by Mr. Barron in the matter of CPA-01-23, that the Planning Board recommend to the Board of Commissioners that they adopt the Middle Creek Area Plan as an amendment to the Wake County Comprehensive Plan, PLANWake; and amend the Development Framework Map and text on page 44 of PLANWake as outlined in the Staff Report and Presentation.

Mr. Fleming seconded the motion, and it was adopted unanimously.

### **5. Wake County Economic Development Update**

#### **Presentation by: Mr. Michael Haley, Wake County Economic Development**

Mr. Maloney introduced Mr. Haley as the Executive Director of Wake County Economic Development to continue in a series of updates from community stakeholders. Mr. Maloney noted that Mr. Haley's organization worked hard to bring jobs to Wake County and to encourage growth in the community, and that his presentation was designed to be brief to leave time for conversation with the Board members.

Mr. Haley approached the Board and reiterated that his presentation was, by design, brief so that he could answer any questions that members might have. He encouraged Board members to stop the presentation at any point for further details or clarification. Mr. Haley began his presentation by explaining that Wake County Economic Development was a public / private partnership program of the Raleigh Chamber of Commerce, designed to provide services for the City of Raleigh and across Wake County. Public Sector partners included Wake County, the City of Raleigh, Wake Tech, and NC State, along with 105 Private Sector investors.

Mr. Haley identified five pillars of economic development: Economic Prosperity, Talent + Workforce Solutions, Brand Awareness + Competitive Position, Innovation & Entrepreneurship, and Regional Collaboration + Place Development. He explained to the Board that Wake County distinguished itself from other regions due to its diverse talent pool, economy, higher education metrics, and quality of life. When working with the County and the 12 municipalities in the area, Mr. Haley stressed that

recruitment of new businesses and expansion of existing businesses focused on the above strengths, noting that he considered the key driver to be the talent pipeline for recruitment. Mr. Haley also noted that the Research Triangle region was unique, in that it did not feature a sole central business district but rather several large concentrations of employment bases throughout the County. He presented the Board with a slide indicating current project activity between WCED and businesses, accounting for 36 active projects, and 11,053 potential jobs with a possible investment in Wake County of \$5.8 billion dollars. Mr. Haley identified Life Sciences and Advanced Manufacturing as the industry drivers but noted that Smart Grid and Cleantech also accounted for a high percentage of potential jobs and investment. Since October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, 73 total projects accounted for 32,803 jobs with \$22.1 billion dollars in investment. Mr. Haley pointed to 15 site visits since their FY23 began.

Mr. Van Dyk asked about the division between county-wide and municipal projects and Mr. Haley explained that Economic Development operates as the lead between a company and both the County and Municipalities, providing the specific needs of corporations for each to consider what they could offer as a site. Mr. Barron asked what the trending active projects by industry appeared to be, relative to 2020 or prior, and Mr. Haley responded that since 2020, the realistic project loads have tended towards life sciences and advanced manufacturing, particularly from a capital investment perspective. He noted that technical and professional services accounted for a third of overall numbers prior to 2020, but the transition to remote and hybrid schedules shifted the emphasis away in recent years. Mr. Adams asked what the role incentives played in active projects, and Mr. Haley responded that while it was a component, talent led the priorities of most businesses. That said, he did note that incentives were performance based and paid when companies meet the parameters of the incentive agreement.

Mr. Haley turned to the status of Wake County Economic Development and that market fundamentals remained strong. He noted the project pipeline was consistent, averaging 1-2 per week, focused on life sciences and advanced manufacturing. Mr. Haley indicated that the need for industrial sites was a key objective, as well as monitoring changes to office structures (remote / hybrid), talent pipeline, the global economy, and federal policy. He also noted existing challenges included a demand for industrial sites and talent, housing affordability and supply. The complexity of projects, infrastructure, and issues surrounding widely shared opportunities for all residents were points of concern for Mr. Haley, as was avoiding complacency as a community. He noted that Wake County Economic Development anticipated market fundamentals to remain strong, as would market demand. Mr. Haley predicted that growth would continue, and bold actions would be required for future challenges as they monitor potential headwinds and tailwinds.

Mr. Haley closed his presentation and offered to address any questions from the Board.

### **Board Discussion**

Mr. Adams asked about the appeal of authenticity in attracting new employees or relocating staff for incoming businesses, and Mr. Haley agreed that maintaining a balance of highlighting existing appeal with a future-focused community to appeal to potential clients. He also noted that the flexibility of urban, rural, and suburban living opportunities provides great incentive for prospective new communities. Mr. Barron asked how the relationship with growing communities and other regional partners has changed as they increase in size. Mr. Haley responded that Wake County Economic Development worked with the Research Triangle Regional Partnership to represent the 12 surrounding counties to help foster growth and assist with the expansion in population and business, including the presence of life science, technology, and global manufacturing companies. Mr. Fleming asked Mr. Haley about the role of transportation infrastructure in recruiting new businesses, and

whether it came up during discussions with prospective clients. Mr. Haley responded that the ability to move goods and people across a fluid workforce region was critical. He pointed towards Wake County's increased role in improving traditional road infrastructure between Johnston County and RTP or the reliability of rail travel as positives when being prepared for growth in the future. Mr. Haley noted as an aside that Wake County is the least congested major metro area in America.

Ms. Booker-Rouse inquired about the role of housing affordability in attracting businesses and workforces, considering that 52% of the populace does not have a higher education. Mr. Haley replied that while housing is not a point of expertise for Wake County Economic Development, it is critical that opportunities for high paying jobs continue to be a priority. He noted that working with local government and the adjoining municipalities and counties were also factors to consider in maintaining affordable housing relative to comparable urban centers. Mr. Haley identified the role of Wake County Economic Development's discussions with corporations as an advisory and informational role. Mr. Wells offered the Board's assistance in providing input for Mr. Haley and Wake County Economic Development moving forward.

Mr. Wells and the Board thanked Mr. Haley for his presentation.

## **6. Planning Board Retreat Discussion**

Mr. Wells presented a list of items for the Planning Board to consider with respect to their role within the County as a future focused community advisory board. He indicated that the plan was for the Board to host a retreat in late September or early October at Yates Mill Pond County Park. Mr. Wells pointed out the passage in the Planning Board handbook that stated each Board member's primary responsibility was to represent the best interest of the County as a whole. He asked for any assistance in planning the retreat or additional input from other members.

Mr. Maloney noted that Staff would be willing to assist the Board in its goals, with the provision that the Planning Board work within its authority. He indicated that the list would be designed to be both educational and relevant either to Board meetings or the retreat. Mr. Barron responded that he appreciated Staff's willingness to assist if it did not impede on the Board's existing duties and did not create an undue burden on day-to-day staff operations. Mr. Wells noted that he had spoken to Mr. Maloney about resources like a representative from the School of Government attending the retreat, and asked for any advice in other resources that the members might consider.

## **7. Committee Reports**

### **Transportation Committee:**

Mr. Van Dyk updated the Board on Mr. Maloney's presentation on the I-540 Tree Planting initiative – at present, an intersection at I-540 and Hwy 54 had been proposed as a potential first demonstration project. Additionally, potential grants were being explored on the County or Federal level. Two foresters would be assigned to visit the location and provide cost estimates with a presentation before the full Planning Board to follow.

### **Code and Operations Committee:**

Mr. Adams reported that preliminary discussions were held regarding amendments to minor subdivisions in the UDO. The updates would close loopholes regarding developments with more lots than originally intended. The amendments, if approved by the Planning Board, would take adjustments to pre-2017 UDO standards..

## **8. Planning, Development, and Inspections Report**

Ms. Peterson informed the Board members that the Middle Creek Area Plan would be moving to the Board of Commissioners and that the next Land Use Area Plan would be for the Lower Neuse Basin, presented by Tim Gardiner. She noted staff had been in conversation with planning directors in Raleigh, Knightdale, and Garner about identifying areas for ETJ expansion. Ms. Peterson referenced a bill in the State Senate that might change the structure and use of ETJs in North Carolina moving forward. She noted that, per Mr. Haley's presentation, ETJ discussions and the use of potential industrial sites were components both of Land Use Plans and the role the Planning Department plays in advising Wake County Economic Development.

Mr. Finn provided the Board with updates involving development activities, noting a total of 279 zoning applications to 263 subdivision related applications to date. Subdivisions included minor, exempt, or minor-limited applications. Mr. Finn also noted that zoning enforcement activities continued to be active, which he attributed to the urbanization of the County (a net gain of 58 people a day), causing conversions to farmland in unincorporated areas and changing the layout of the landscape, sometimes literally. Zoning violation cases were not commonly known to be subject to litigation, but that currently a few were involved in the legal system, some involving what Mr. Finn classified as salvage or junkyard related. Previously, these large-scale operations would be unseen, but as the landscape of the County shifted towards urbanization, more complaints about their presence were being reported.

Mr. Finn did note that the text amendments approved by the Board and implemented by the County had seen largely positive results with no related appeals to the most recent and only one appeal in the last two years. He cited this as a positive reflection that of the UDO meeting its intended goal.

Mr. Maloney indicated that Mr. Wells would be needed at the June 20<sup>th</sup> Board of Commissioners meeting for the Middle Creek Area Plan presentation. He noted that a July 5<sup>th</sup> board meeting would be unlikely, but that a July 19<sup>th</sup> regular Planning Board meeting might be needed if members were available. Mr. Maloney explained that the amendments presentation from Code and Operations would be on the agenda along with an additional item to be added in the interim. Mr. Wells indicated he would not be available, but Ms. Booker-Rouse would be present as acting Chair.

Mr. Maloney also reiterated that the Lower Neuse River Area Plan would follow, the third of seven. Provided the current timeline, Mr. Maloney anticipated the Land Use Area Plan project would be completed by 2025 or 2026. He closed his presentation by informing the Board that staff would keep them updated on any movement in the ETJ legislation moving its way through the State Senate.

## **9. Chairman's Report**

Mr. Wells thanked the members and expressed his gratitude to be a part of the Planning Board.

## **10. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:57 p.m.

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REGULAR MEETING  
WAKE COUNTY PLANNING BOARD  
June 7, 2023

Chair Thomas Wells declared the regular meeting  
of the Wake County Planning Board for  
Wednesday, June 7, 2023, adjourned at 2:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



Thomas Wells  
Wake County Planning Board

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