



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 4, 2025

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

MEMBERS PRESENT:

1. Ms. Brenna Booker-Williams (Chair)
2. Mr. Ted Van Dyk (Vice Chair)
3. Mr. David Adams
4. Mr. Bill Jenkins
5. Ms. Suzanne Prince
6. Mr. Thomas Wells

MEMBERS ABSENT:

1. Mr. Amos Clark
2. Mr. Asa Fleming
3. Dr. Kamal Kolappa
4. Ms. Sally Rice

COUNTY STAFF:

1. Mr. Steven Finn
2. Mr. Tim Gardiner
3. Mr. Timothy Maloney
4. Mr. Josh McClellan
5. Ms. Akul Nishawala
6. Mr. Chris Snow

COUNTY ATTORNEY:

- Mr. Kenneth Murphy, Deputy County Attorney

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1. **Meeting Called to Order:** Ms. Booker-Williams called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.
 2. **Pledge of Allegiance**
 3. **Petitions and Amendments: None.**
 4. **Approval of April 2, 2025, Minutes:** Ms. Prince made a motion to approve the April 2, 2025, minutes with corrections. Mr. Wells seconded the motion, and the Board adopted it unanimously.
 5. **Wake County Parks Comprehensive Master Plan – Chris Snow, Wake County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Director**

Mr. Snow introduced himself as the Director of Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) for the County. He explained that the last Parks Comprehensive Master Plan was drafted in 2008, and that Wake County had changed considerably over the past 17 years. PROS encompasses twelve Parks and nature Preserves that provide three core services: Open Space, Recreation and Leisure Service, and Educational Programs. Mr. Snow noted that their focus is on outdoor recreation over gyms or community centers.

The Parks Department is working with Design Workshop to draft a new Comprehensive Plan that better reflects the needs of Wake County in 2025. Mr. Snow explained that the purpose of the Plan is to provide a long-range planning tool that sets values and goals and encourages the community to share their values and needs. It should provide data to the community and provide recommendations for implementation, operations, and prioritization, and exist as an opportunity to reflect the value of PROS to the County. It will not be a detailed design proposal for specific parks, greenways or facility, nor would it be a method to approve funding for new projects and programs.

The new Comprehensive Plan will build on previous plans to include the Consolidated Open Space Plan, the 2008 Comprehensive Plan, PLANWake, the Greenway System Plan, the NC Outdoor Recreation Plan, and the Park Facility Master Plan. Mr. Snow identified key project goals and outcomes, including ways to measure success after implementation. The Comprehensive Plan will also align with Commissioners' goals to prioritize Growth, Land Use, and Environment, Foundations of Service, Community Health and Wellbeing, Inclusive Prosperity, Lifelong Learning, and a Safer Community Together. Mr. Snow noted that the Comprehensive Plan is typically a ten-year plan, and that the current trajectory is to align with the Commissioner's goals, while being mindful that the goals of the Commissioners could change over time.

The Comprehensive Plan is a year-long process that began in December 2024 and is scheduled for adoption by Spring of 2026. Mr. Snow explained that staff is currently in Phase One: Discovery & Assessment, conducting inventory and analysis while surveying the community for their input. Phase One will also include stakeholder group meetings. Design Workshop is benchmarking Wake County relative to counties with similar population and demographics, as well as a robust university and governmental presence. Mr. Snow indicated that they have received nearly 600 survey responses to date, and his goal is to double that over the length of Phase One (Spring-Summer 2025). The Parks System hosts community open house workshops, including the most recent at Beech Bluff County Park, and staff attend various community events to offer information to the community. Staff also met with the Board of Commissioners to solicit their input, and will meet with the Open Space and Park Advisory Committee (OSAPAC) in July during Phase Two.

County Commissioners emphasized balancing development with preservation, and recommended focusing on facilities for youth and families. Mr. Snow noted that they are also enthusiastic about strengthening collaboration with municipalities and nonprofits in the area. He added that Parks would welcome ideas from the Board if they had recommendations on stakeholder groups, and that staff would be happy to set up meetings. A community meeting will be held on June 11th at the East Regional Center in Zebulon and asked the Board members to spread the word about the Comprehensive Plan survey.

Mr. Van Dyk asked if Parks were including underserved areas as potential sites for new facilities in the Plan, and Mr. Snow responded that they would be looking into areas of the County, but were not currently focused on specific sites. He noted that Beech Bluff County Park was originally designed to serve the Fuquay-Varina / Garner area, but that feedback coming in since the grand opening also included visitors coming from Johnston County. Mr. Van Dyk asked about updates on

plans for Lake Crabtree County Park, and Mr. Snow responded that, in light of RDU's decision to develop portions of the hiking trails, that they would shift focus to the waterfront and picnic areas.

Mr. Jenkins asked about collaboration between the County and municipalities, and Mr. Snow responded that they meet with municipal directors routinely to chat about their master plans, as well as greenway and bike/pedestrian plans. Mr. Adams asked if staff had seen changes in the desires of the public moving into the new Comprehensive Plan, and Mr. Snow mentioned an increase in requests for pickleball courts, which provides an opportunity for collaboration with the municipalities. Mr. Wells asked if the County had set aside land in the Little River reservoir, and Mr. Snow responded that separable recreation land was purchased in the 1990s, but any development was contingent on the functionality of the site. Right now, Raleigh's projections for the reservoir are decades into the future, surpassing the originally planned 2018 start date. Mr. Wells asked if the Parks program were involved with the Wake County Register of Deeds' Enslaved Persons Project, and Mr. Snow noted that the Historic Oakview County Park staff had assisted in their efforts.

6. Eastern Wake Area Plan Update – Akul Nishawala, Planner III

Mr. Nishawala reiterated that the Eastern Wake Area Plan encompasses 46,132 acres, or 72 square miles in the northeast part of the County. Since the previous meeting, staff held a virtual community meeting on March 6th, and an in-person meeting on April 16th at the Eastern Regional Center. A draft of the future land uses has been released, and meetings with municipalities, stakeholders, and partners are ongoing. A second in-person community meeting is scheduled for June 26th from 4:30-6:30pm at the Eastern Regional Center.

Mr. Nishawala included photos from the recent in-person meeting, with over 30 attendees and staff answering questions at stations covering the Area Planning process. After explaining the process, residents arrive at the "feedback station" to discuss their feelings about the area and how they see future development (or lack thereof). He added that the in-person events are a better indicator of how people feel, and that they are more likely to hear feedback than during virtual meetings or conversations on the phone.

The current land use in the Eastern Wake Area Plan is divided between Agricultural (20,522 acres), Residential (11,916 acres), Institutional (5,712 acres, including religious or government-owned property) and Vacant (4,836 acres). This portion of the County does not face similar development pressures, in part because of the Little River reservoir. Accordingly, staff is planning to continue fostering agriculture & forestry, with light industrial – primarily a small airport (formerly a landfill) in the southern area. Eight Multi-Use Districts (MUDs) currently exist, reflective of municipal growth, but staff determined three to the South can be removed as they are no longer within the County's jurisdiction. Mr. Nishawala identified the other current MUD's, noting that any changes to them would be contingent to rules in the Little River Inter-Local Agreement (ILA). Development is also determined by the landowners who choose to develop their property.

Mr. Nishawala identified the Development Framework for the Area Plan, noting that the Rural Classification is their primary goal, with some Community Reserve and Community areas, and potential walkable centers. There is one proposed amendment currently in place, and Mr. Nishawala indicated that after meeting with municipalities, there might be additional changes. He added that as any changes take place, the Board will be updated. Additional considerations include walkability/greenway network analysis – can they connect to other County lines? Staff are also reviewing commercial location strategies, specifically current trends rather than speculative. He provided additional feedback from the Proximity & Access Survey, noting that farmland and green spaces remain the most popular.

The Eastern Wake Area Plan's timeline includes a second round of public engagement from June to August, with a draft Plan Proposal in September and potential Commissioner approval in October. He invited the Board members to attend the next Community Meeting at the Eastern Regional Center on June 26th.

Ms. Prince noted that many of the MUDs seem to be undeveloped or vacant, and Mr. Nishawala clarified that while they are currently zoned for commercial use, it is up to the landowner to decide to make the change. Several areas remain underutilized, but the pathway is in place if the landowners decide to develop. Mr. Adams asked if stakeholders had expressed a desire to develop but felt stifled by preservation efforts. Mr. Nishawala noted that he had heard from residents looking to develop, but did not hear that concern. Most of the parcels are already zoned residential and can be developed to the extent allowed.

Mr. Maloney provided clarification regarding the Little River reservoir, which was not in operation. Some of the reasons that it did not open in 2018 include water-saving measures, new policies, and building code changes. Water usage does not exceed what the City of Raleigh currently needs to supply its customers, and has pushed back opening the reservoir, possibly until 2050. Mr. Wells asked how significantly the reservoir footprint will change the area, and Mr. Nishawala provided an overview of the Area Plan, indicating where the reservoir is located. Mr. Wells asked if water and sewer was available in the area, and Mr. Maloney and Mr. Nishawala explained that it was not in unincorporated areas, and moreover, it was prohibited in the watershed pursuant to ILA that the stakeholders agreed to.

7. Highway Corridor Tree Update - Tim Gardiner, Planner III

Mr. Gardiner explained that, since the presentation earlier this year, discussions have taken place between the County and the DOT Planting team. When the DOT completes new projects, the County would like to work with them to bring back the tree canopy, particularly in right-of-way areas. Sites along NC-540 were identified near the west side of Cary, and with residual money from the tree canopy study, plantings took place at the interchange areas of NC-540 and NC-54. Tree survival rates are currently being monitored. At a higher level, the County has been making sure highway funds are available for planting. Mr. Gardiner noted that funds were being allocated for planting, not for beautification or ornamental use. These areas would not be designated for maintenance, strictly for tree canopy restoration.

Mr. Gardiner explained that, at present, the project is in a state of flux, contingent on construction being completed. He noted that his discussion before the Board was to get a better idea of how they want to approach updates in the interim. Staff is currently waiting for a response regarding the project completion dates, the planting windows, and other potential areas for future planting. Mr. Van Dyk confirmed that staff had not received updates on their request to use enhancement funds, and Mr. Gardiner responded that they were currently in a holding pattern, waiting for information or material from NCDOT.

Mr. Jenkins suggested that the County might consider NCDOT's reforestation pay-item and specification – perhaps it would be possible to include in the contract for use during the public bidding process. He asked if it would be possible to incorporate this into the jobs NCDOT is planning, even if it pushed out the ultimate planting window until the contractor was finished. Mr. Van Dyk echoed that sentiment, noting that it would provide more assurance on NCDOT's end that the reforestation would be built into the process. Mr. Gardiner noted that it would be a helpful conversation to have with NCDOT, and that he would invite any other input from the Board about how to approach the period in-between construction and planting. Ms. Prince asked the Board if it would be advisable to keep

this item on the agenda, and Mr. Van Dyk agreed. Mr. Maloney indicated that he would make a request from NCDOT to return this summer.

Mr. Maloney added that the Board of Commissioners' 2025 Strategic Plan includes an initiative related to tree canopies to "collaborate with partners to identify resources and opportunities to support tree canopies based on results and priorities identified in the Wake County Land Cover analysis and Tree Canopy Assessment." He noted that Environmental Services hosts quarterly meetings with the municipalities to discuss trees, which is also attended by the State forester to discuss grant opportunities. Staff are also pursuing a \$25,000 Duke Energy Grant to work with partners for more planting. Updates will be provided as they occur.

8. Wake County Transportation Plan / Guidelines Update - Timothy Maloney, Director, Planning Development & Inspections

Mr. Maloney updated the Board on the Wake County Transportation Plan, which is designed to replace the 2004 plan. The 2004 plan is outdated and does not provide accurate information relative to development reviews, which are necessary in determining information relative to street plans. The Board of Commissioners adopted the FY26 budget on June 2nd, which allocates \$350,000 for staff to update the plan. Staff intend to solicit consultants and put out RFP with the hope to start updating the plan later in the summer. The Wake County Transportation Guidelines will be reflective of the fact that the County is not involved in roads per statute – only NCDOT handles roads in the State. This plan will guide staff's development decisions as they come in. Mr. Maloney explained that he would keep the Board updated throughout the process. The Transportation Committee is welcome to weigh in, or the full Planning Board – he left it to their discretion.

9. Committee Reports

None.

10. Planning, Development, and Inspections Report

Mr. Maloney informed the Board that there would not be a July meeting – the August meeting would include a rezoning case and an update from the Raleigh Affordable Housing. The Board of Commissioners will be considering the RTP rezoning request from April during their June 16th meeting, and Mr. Maloney indicated Ms. Booker-Williams would be representing the Planning Board. Mr. Wells asked for any updates on the ETJ legislation, and Mr. Maloney explained that two bills were under consideration in the Senate: the local moratorium related to the Garner ETJ, and an additional bill that would remove existing and future ETJ requests, returning the land to the County. This was cause for concern to the County, as resources were not allocated for those areas. Mr. Maloney explained this to the County Manager's office, who would relay these concerns to their lobbyist to the State Legislature.

Mr. Finn reported that Board of Adjustment cases remain active, with over 40 cases in the last two years. Many are tied to code violations, which has seen an increase over the past fiscal year by 24%, which he noted was unique. The appeals process can be time-consuming, with an initial 30-day window followed by a lengthy negotiation period between staff and the owner, which results in a staggered caseload for the Board. Mr. Finn also noted that information requests remain active – while the walk-in requests have decreased, they are now equally spread between the website, emails, phone calls, and direct contacts. Staff are working with Information Services to analyze the volume of requests and to increase efficiency.

Mr. Finn closed by informing the Board that they could expect rezoning cases in the near future. Mr. Jenkins asked what percentage of Board of Adjustment cases were approved, and Mr. Finn explained the nature of quasi-judicial hearings, noting that he would estimate 80-85% of variances are approved. He invited the Planning Board members to attend any meeting if they were interested.

11. Chairman's Report

None.

12. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

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REGULAR MEETING
WAKE COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
June 4, 2025

Chair Brenna Booker-Williams declared the regular meeting
of the Wake County Planning Board for
Wednesday, June 4, 2025, adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brenna Booker-Williams", is written in a cursive style.

Brenna Booker-Williams
Wake County Planning Board