



Planning, Development & Inspections

A Division of Community Services
P.O. Box 550 • Raleigh, NC 27602
www.wake.gov

MINUTES OF REGULAR PLANNING BOARD - January 7, 2026

LOCATION: Virtual Meeting Via Microsoft Teams

MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

COUNTY STAFF:

1. Mr. Steven Finn
2. Ms. Teresa Furr
3. Mr. Tim Gardiner
4. Mr. Loren Hendrickson
5. Ms. Ashley Jacobs
6. Mr. Heath Jones
7. Mr. Timothy Maloney
8. Mr. Josh McClellan
9. Ms. Terry Nolan
10. Ms. Beth Simmons

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. **Petitions and Amendments:** None.
 3. **Approval of November 5, 2025, Minutes:** Mr. Clark made a motion to approve the November 5, 2025, minutes as submitted. Ms. Prince seconded the motion, and the Board adopted the minutes unanimously.

4. Farmland Preservation Plan, Teresa Furr, Wake County Soil & Water Conservation District Director & Loren Hendrickson, Wake County Soil & Water Farmland Preservation Coordinator

Ms. Furr began by explaining that her presentation was a condensed version of the 78-page Farmland Preservation Plan, which staff is hoping to present to the Board of Commissioners in the spring. She invited the Board members to share their thoughts and suggestions, as any feedback would be incorporated into the draft plan.

In 1985, North Carolina passed the Farmland Preservation Enabling Act, which authorized counties to establish preservation programs, and in 2002 Wake County adopted the first Voluntary Agriculture District (VAD). In 2013, the Board of Commissioners approved the Wake County Agricultural Economic Development Plan (AEDP) and in 2022 expanded the VAD program to include Enhanced Voluntary Ag Districts (EVAD) and the Conservation Easement Program (CE). The Board of Commissioners voted to dedicate 100% use of PUV rollback taxes. In 2024, the County worked with the University of Mount Olive to complete a Cost of Community Services study, which is a physical analysis of land uses. Ms. Furr noted that the study indicated that agriculture provides a surplus of \$5.7 million to the County property tax base, providing a net gain.

The vision of the Farmland Preservation Plan is to ensure that the remaining farmland is prioritized for now and future generations in the County. The plan identifies actions the County can take to protect local farmers and agricultural resources, including prime soils, to preserve rural character. Plan Goals include assessing current farmland conditions across the County, identifying priority areas for long-term farmland and rural preservation, evaluating tools and funding strategies, and developing policy recommendations to support long-term farm viability. The Plan seeks to promote awareness of the value of farmland by strengthening coordination with municipalities and key partners.

Ms. Furr presented a map of the location of Prime Farmland Soils around the County, explaining that preservation is key because once these soils are developed, their agricultural value is permanently lost. The Farmland Preservation Plan uses soil data to identify priority areas for protection and ensure limited County, State, and Federal funds are invested where they deliver the highest agricultural return. Development pressure is strongest where historically rural lands are transitioning to subdivisions. Land fragmentation – not total loss – is now the greatest threat for farmland preservation. Ms. Furr presented the Board with a photo of an agricultural parcel being developed with an adjacent small subdivision. The prime farmland soil is removed from the property, and the low-density residential development also contributes to stormwater runoff which erodes the crop fields of the adjacent farm.

The Farmland Preservation Plan seeks to bring together components of other existing plans and policies, from the Open Space Plan to the One Water Plan and uses the overlapping goals to create a sustainable course of action in the future. Over the past decade, the total acreage of farmland has decreased by 36,604 acres, most commonly becoming low-to-medium density residential. As of October 2025, 543 parcels enrolled in Voluntary Agricultural Districts, 17 into the County Agricultural Easements, and 3 parcels enrolled in the Enhanced Voluntary District, for a total of 18,220.6 acres of land.

Ms. Furr explained that the County held a Stakeholder Engagement Workshop in July 2025, which included 35 participants representing farmers, land trusts, municipalities, conservation nonprofits, business leaders and planning professionals. A public survey was conducted with 679 respondents indicating that 96% agreed that preservation of farmland, forests, and agricultural operations is very important. Respondents also believed Wake County is losing too much farmland and that they support policies and initiatives to expand protection of farmland. The survey also included feedback about concerns around growth in the County and provided demographics including the average age of

farmers (over 60). Many reported that they were approached about selling their farm, and 75% indicated that they were not considering the offers.

The Farmland Preservation Plan will focus on four areas: 1) Farmer-Friendly Land Use Policies, 2) Farm Ownership Support, 3) Agricultural Protection Funds, and 4) Environmental, Economic & Social Benefits of Farmland. Ms. Furr expanded on each focus area, explaining the need for action and Wake County's role in supporting them. Each Focus Area comes with its own set of recommended initiatives to meet the goals. From 2025-2028, Ms. Furr hopes the Plan will expand capacity within the County, align growth, secure funding, improve decisions, formalize collaboration, ensure accountability, and build consensus between PlanWAKE, OneWater, and the Farmland Preservation Plan.

Mr. Fleming asked for clarification regarding land fragmentation, and Ms. Furr explained that when fragmentation occurs, it makes it harder for farmers to focus on acreage divided into smaller areas. Mr. Fleming asked what tools could be adopted to limit fragmentation, and Mr. Maloney clarified that it becomes tricky when opposition arises against potential policies and regulations. Mr. Jenkins asked about coordination with other counties, and Ms. Furr responded that they have been meeting with the preservation coordinator in Johnston County, and that Chatham and Franklin Counties have dedicated farmland preservation members as well. At a national conference in 2025, Ms. Furr learned that Pennsylvania has seen the most success in farmland preservation, dating back to their initiatives in the 70s and 80s.

Mr. Van Dyk recommended a dedicated education campaign, perhaps with legislative funding if possible. Ms. Furr noted that one of the Farmland Preservation Plan's recommendations is to investigate educational resources and to develop them with the County's communication office. Mr. Wells asked how the Board could assist with the Preservation Plan, and Ms. Furr suggested that they review the land use policies in the draft proposal and weigh in on proposed mitigation ordinances coming from the Planning staff. If the Planning Board has reviewed these proposals and are supportive, it will help influence the Commissioners. Mr. Adams advocated that the Board read the entire document and noted that he planned to attend municipal planning meetings and use his public comment time to educate them about the Farmland Preservation Plan.

5. Neuse North Area Plan, Akul Nishawala, Planner III

Mr. Nishawala introduced the Board to the most recent Area Plan, Neuse North. The sixth of seven area plans will kick off on January 12th and encompasses 10,890 acres (17 square miles) located just west of the Eastern Wake Area Plan. It is currently subject to the Northeast Land Use Plan (2001) and the E. Raleigh / Knightdale Land Use Plan (2003), and falls within municipal jurisdictions of Wake Forest, Rolesville and Raleigh. It is also adjacent to Knightdale and Franklin County. Mr. Nishawala noted that because of how divided the County's jurisdictional land is, Neuse North was more unique than the other land area plans. It is less cohesive than the Eastern Wake plan and poses unique challenges due to its irregular nature. He noted that parts of the area plan are left over from municipal expansion.

The Neuse North Area Plan's currently development framework is divided into Rural, Community Reserve, Community, and Walkable Centers. Its zoning is majority Residential, with six Mixed-Use Districts, located outside of watershed districts with established subdivision surrounded by municipalities. The current land use is broken into 3,729 acres of Agricultural, 4,508 of Residential, 519 acres of Exempt (religious or government-owned property), and 1,919 vacant acres. The County plans to review the current development framework, as it was marked Community during the development of PLANWake and opinions may have changed. Mr. Nishawala added that recent

changes to ETJ laws would also affect the municipalities' approach to adjacent land. Mr. Wells asked for clarification regarding the marked ETJ areas, and Mr. Nishawala identified the unincorporated areas on the slide. He also noted a few Industrial areas (Highway District), Commercial Districts, and multiple quarries.

Mr. Nishawala noted that staff would be looking at vulnerable communities like the mobile home parks spread throughout the Neuse North area relative to land use but also to preserve affordable housing. He identified three areas in the Plan: Wake Forest / Rolesville, US-1, and East Raleigh. Each have distinct features that staff hope to explore with residents – large parcels with limited roadway access, industrial areas with a mobile home subdivision, and larger rural areas that are expected to remain unincorporated. Public outreach to discuss plans for the area will begin on January 28th with a virtual community meeting and two in-person meetings to follow. Staff have shifted from Social Pinpoint as their primary interactive outreach tool to an extension of the ArcGIS online system. Residents are encouraged to leave a comment on the map and to take a survey, with a secondary Proximity and Access Survey to follow. Road signs and Listservs are underway to coincide with the Plan Kickoff on January 12th. Mr. Nishawala explained that they currently plan on conducting public engagement through March, followed by a Draft Plan in the summer, with additional public engagement, and proposal and plan approval in late 2026.

Mr. Van Dyk asked if the long-term goal was to connect the subdivisions to municipalities, and Mr. Nishawala responded that it was a question worth exploring with residents. He noted that in the Western Wake Area Plan, there was an expressed desire to drive further for amenities than to live near growth. The proximity of the developments in Neuse North to municipalities like Wake Forest could change, and they hoped to explore this further. Mr. Maloney added that municipalities have chosen not to annex areas, including the mobile home park near Capital Boulevard, which gives the County the opportunity to preserve it for affordable housing.

Ms. Furr noted that she would be at the in-person events to help educate residents about the Farmland Conservation Plans. She asked if staff had parcel data for the landowners for outreach purposes, and Mr. Nishawala responded that staff had isolated the agricultural parcels and would be happy to coordinate with Soil and Water Conservation. Mr. Wells asked why the municipalities were not interested in the commercial and industrial areas along Capital Boulevard and Mr. Nishawala responded that those are primarily quarries that would not make sense to annex into their jurisdiction.

6. Committee Reports

None.

7. Planning and Development Services Report

Mr. Finn reported that development activity remains consistent, and code enforcement has kept staff engaged. He added that staff member Leila Coe recently left County employment to work for the Town of Apex.

Mr. Maloney informed the Board that there are no current items for the February agenda and that staff will touch base with any developments. He added that in November the County underwent a re-organization merging the Watershed Management Division with Planning, Development, and Inspections to create Planning and Development Services. Mr. Maloney was named the Director and has informed the County Manager that after 32 years, he is planning to retire in the middle of 2026. Mr. Maloney will be working with the County Manager's office to aid in the recruitment and transition

of the new Director once hired. He welcomed the Board to send him any questions, and he will provide more information as it is available.

8. Chairperson's Report

Ms. Booker-Williams noted that she attended the December 5th Board of Commissioners meeting to speak on behalf of the Shearon Harris rezoning request. She thanked staff for the opportunity and credited Mr. Van Dyk for the work he does with the Commissioners.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

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REGULAR MEETING
WAKE COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
January 7, 2026

Chair Brenna Booker-Williams declared the regular meeting
of the Wake County Planning Board for
Wednesday, January 7, 2026, adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ted Van Dyle', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ted Van Dyle
~~Brenna Booker-Williams~~
Wake County Planning Board