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BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS **ALEXANDER COUNTY**
PLANNING WORK SESSION October 20, 2025 **STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA**

PRESENT: Marty Pennell, Chairman
Larry Yoder, Vice-Chairman
Josh Lail
Kent Herman
Ronnie Reese (left at 7:06 PM)

STAFF: Victor Breininger, Code Compliance Officer
Patrick Creech, Planning Director
Alex Starnes, Parks Director
Jamie Starnes, Clerk to the Board

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a work session on Monday, October 20, 2025 in the Administration Building first floor conference room in Taylorsville, North Carolina. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss potential revisions to the Alexander County Land Development Code.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Pennell called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Patrick Creech, Planning Director, advised that special events were currently governed by 3 separate ordinances – the Parks Ordinance, the Special Events Ordinance, and the Land Development Code, which contain contradictory processes and deadlines. For example, the Parks Ordinance requires a permit for events with 100 people and 30 days in advance, the Special Events Ordinance requires a permit for events with 500 people and 90 days in advance, and the LDC requires a permit for events with 250 people and varying days in advance, dependent on the number of attendees.

Potential updates discussed:

- update the LDC and the Parks Ordinance to include a unified special events process / timeline and repeal the Special Events Ordinance.
- determine if the 250-person requirement should remain on special events not held on County property.
- update the LDC to reflect a unified timeline for a special events permit.

Mr. Creech suggested a unified special events process handled entirely by the Planning Department to include all applications and issuance of permits delivered through the Planning software and all major events reviewed by the Technical Review Committee. The Board agreed.

In reference to the 250-person requirement for special events not held on County property, the Board asked Mr. Creech to investigate special event capacity requirements in other counties.

INDUSTRIAL ZONING

Mr. Creech explained that present regulations in the LDC could potentially create barriers to attracting industrial businesses, specifically due to regulation inflexibility, separation requirements, and lack of differentiation between light and industrial zones. For example, all zoning regulations contained in the Land Development Code apply uniformly to all incoming businesses and N.C.G.S. 160D does not allow local jurisdictions to grant variances for land uses. Additionally, several industrial uses include separation requirements from not only residences, but also schools, libraries, daycare and healthcare facilities, parks, and religious institutions. Also, many potential industrial prospects look at parcels specifically zoned for light or heavy industrial, something provided in our previous zoning ordinance.

Potential updates discussed:

- relax some requirements such as setback or structure height for all potential projects in the industrial zone.
- add language to the LDC to allow for conditional zoning districts. The LDC currently allows conditional zoning for residential subdivisions and planned use districts only.
- remove religious institutions from separation requirements OR remove community facilities and update with new residential separations.
- create light and heavy industrial zones; however, due to downsizing restrictions enforced by N.C.G.S. 160D, these could only be placed on parcels owned by the County or at the request of property owners.

Mr. Creech recommended adding language to the LDC to allow conditional zoning districts to be created for industrial/commercial projects as well as removing community facilities (schools, libraries, daycare facilities, healthcare facilities, parks, and religious institutions) from separation requirements and updating the LDC with new residential requirements.

The Board was in favor of removing community facilities from separation requirements, updating the LDC with new residential separations, and creating light and heavy industrial zones for the Alexander Industrial Park.

RESIDENTIAL ZONING

Mr. Creech discussed issues with manufactured home restrictions, noting that residential zoning changes had been the largest source of rezoning petitions since the LDC was adopted in May 2024. The most common issue has been the requested placement of manufactured homes, with 29 properties rezoned from R2 to R2R, 3 from R1 to R2, one from R1 to R2R. The goal of the LDC's manufactured home restrictions is to encourage denser, more taxable development in Urban Services Areas of the county; however, if not converted to real property, state calculations for manufactured home tax value depreciation is 10% per year.

Potential updates discussed:

- eliminate manufactured home restrictions (in all zones or in targeted zones).
- relax manufactured home zones by one step (in all zones or in targeted zones) such as allowing singlewides in a zone that only allows doublewides or allowing doublewides in zones that prohibit any manufactured homes.
- establish an overlay district to permit manufactured homes in certain areas.

Mr. Creech felt the best approach to address this issue was to relax restrictions on manufactured homes.

Vice-Chairman Yoder preferred the establishment of an overlay district.

Chairman Pennell was concerned that many individuals could not afford stick-built homes in the present housing market and was therefore opposed to any restrictions that might hinder a person's ability to secure a home.

Commissioner Lail preferred the LDC not prevent citizens from upgrading their manufactured home to a larger model in certain districts (replacing a singlewide with a doublewide for example).

No decisions were made. The Board requested additional time to consider all available options.

DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS

Mr. Creech informed the Board of one potential update related to subdivision sidewalks that would be beneficial to the creation of multimodal infrastructure in conjunction with development of the County's Multimodal Plan. The LDC currently requires interior sidewalks along all adjacent streets in Planned Development Units as well as residential developments with less than 100 units. Exterior sidewalks are required along all adjacent streets in Downtown Overlay Zones, Commercial Corridor Overlay Zones, and commercial and industrial developments.

Mr. Creech recommended exterior sidewalk requirements for all subdivisions with more than 100 units, along with an HOA maintenance requirement.

The Board was concerned that the requirement for exterior sidewalks in rural areas could discourage development and felt they were more appropriate in areas where infrastructure improvements, such as sewer lines, were already required.

PLAN REVIEW

The LDC includes procedures for subdivision approval that follows a 3-part process – master plans, development plans, and final plats. Mr. Creech stated that more differentiation was needed between master and development plans as well as minor and major site plans, noting that the current process required developers to repeat steps between plans.

Potential updates discussed:

- rename "Master Plan" to "Concept Plan" or "Sketch Plan."
- provide more detailed submittal differentiation between plans.
- update the approval authority for each plan with administrative approval vs. legislative unless there are major deviations from the initial approved plan.

The Board agreed to all of the above.

CODE COMPLIANCE

Mr. Creech reviewed several consistent code enforcement issues involving zoning and nuisance complaints – RVS, junked vehicles, and feather flags.

The LDC specifically prohibits the use of RVs as permanent residences but references the ability to use an RV as a temporary residence for up to 180 days in the case of construction of a single-family home. Mr. Creech also noted that the LDC included two separate definitions of "Recreational Vehicles."

Potential updates discussed:

- use the RV-Flood Damage Prevention definition of RV as the singular definition.
- establish a temporary residence permit with more clear standards; most are for 6 months, but some jurisdictions allow extensions (usually 12 or 18 months). The code could also specify additional special circumstances such as a disaster to allow for temporary residence.

The current Nuisance Section of the LDC prohibits accumulation of junked motor vehicles but allows an exclusion for parcels over 3 acres. Mr. Creech advised that the Planning Department had received complaints that staff cannot take action on due to the 3-acre exemption. Therefore, he recommended the exemption be removed.

The Prohibited Signs Section of the LDC bans feather flags and other moving signs, including inflatable man-made signs. Many Alexander County businesses use feather flags to attract customers and in August, the Planning Department sent letters to approx. 20 businesses notifying them that feather flags were prohibited.

Mr. Creech recommended allowing feather flags as a temporary sign pursuant to rules related to quantity, size, and distance from roadways.

The Board agreed to update the LDC to allow feather flags as a temporary sign; however, commissioners asked Mr. Creech to investigate RV and junked vehicle requirements in other counties.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Pennell made a motion to adjourn at 7:43 PM. Commissioner Lail seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

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Marty A. Pennell, Chairman Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board