

Draft

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PLANNING WORK SESSION** August 31, 2026

**ALEXANDER COUNTY
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA**

PRESENT: Larry Yoder, Chairman
Josh Lail, Vice-Chairman
Kent Herman
Marty Pennell
Ronnie Reese

STAFF: Patrick Creech, Planning Director
Ben Faulkenberry, County Attorney
Gary Herman, PIO
Josh Mitchell, Assistant County Manager
Justin Mundy, County Manager
Chad Pennell, Sheriff
Alex Starnes, Parks Director
Jamie Starnes, Clerk to the Board

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a work session on Monday, August 31, 2026 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, including several that were previously discussed at the October 20, 2025 work session that have been reviewed and accepted by the Planning Board.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Yoder called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Patrick Creech, Planning Director, explained that the County current regulates temporary events through multiple provisions that are not fully consistent with each other. The existing process uses attendance thresholds to determine when a special event permit is required and when TRC review is necessary, while separate requirements apply to circuses, carnivals, fairs, religious services, and similar events. This has created overlap between ordinances, uncertainty for applicants, and limited coordination among County departments.

Proposed changes:

- Create a unified special event permitting process that would be administered through the Planning Department rather than through separate or overlapping processes.
- Define special events by event type rather than attendance.
- Centralize departmental coordination by allowing the Planning Department to distribute applications, coordinate permits and reviews, and handle schedules for County facilities.
- Refer events requiring substantial coordination due to traffic impacts, alcohol, temporary structures, food vendors, emergency services, etc. to the TRC.
- Combine existing standards for circuses, carnivals, fairs, religious services, and attendance-based events into one set of requirements.

Mr. Creech advised that he and Alex Starnes, Parks Director, had been working together to develop a unified process and had piloted a few special events through the TRC, including the upcoming Hiddenite Celebration of the Arts. He clarified that family reunions and gatherings would not be subject to this process and that payment of all applicable fees would be required upfront rather than staff invoicing the applicant after the event.

MANUFACTURED HOME RESTRICTIONS / URBAN SERVICES OVERLAY

The most common reason for rezoning requests is to allow the placement of manufactured homes. Under the current zoning map, the R2R district allows both singlewide and doublewide manufactured homes, while the R2 district allows only doublewides. The original designation of these districts was based mainly on the size of the zoning area and access to infrastructure. However, this has resulted in areas where similar properties are subject to different manufactured home standards, requiring some property owners to seek a rezoning for a use that may already be allowed nearby.

Proposed changes:

- Establish an Urban Services Overlay District that would apply additional development standards to areas served by public infrastructure.
- Restrict new manufactured homes within the overlay district unless specifically protected by the existing zoning allowance.
- Properties where manufactured homes are currently permitted would retain home allowance.
- The overlay district would add restrictions without changing the property's underlying zoning classification.

Mr. Creech advised that proposed changes would expand opportunities for manufactured homes in areas where they are currently restricted, while the Urban Services Overlay District would preserve existing restrictions in areas with greater access to public infrastructure. No property would lose a manufactured home allowance under the current zoning map; the amendment would only maintain or relax existing restrictions. No changes will be made to manufactured home park or waterfront residential regulations.

FOOD TRUCK REGULATIONS

Although food trucks are currently permitted in certain zoning districts, the LDC does not require a permit or registration before a food truck begins operating. Planning staff has received complaints about food truck operations, including questions about where trucks are allowed to operate and whether they have authorization from the property owner. Without a permitting process, the County does not have a reliable method of identifying food trucks operating in the county, verifying approved locations, confirming property owner consent, or determining whether regulatory approvals have been obtained.

Proposed changes:

- Require an annual Food Truck Permit from the Planning Department beginning January 1, 2027. Applications would require specific information to verify compliance including operator information, applicable Environmental Health or other regulatory approvals, proposed locations of operation, etc.
- Require authorization from the property owner.
- Establish basic location and operating standards by allowing food trucks only in permitted zoning districts to not obstruct required parking, fire lanes, emergency access, building entrances, etc. Operators would also be responsible for trash, grease, wastewater, and other waste generated by the operation.
- Require permits to be prominently displayed.

Commissioner Pennell asked how multiple food truck vendors participating in a festival or large event would be handled. Mr. Creech felt those could be addressed as part of the required special events process.

MULTIMODAL PLAN REGULATIONS

As part of implementing the Multimodal Plan in June 2026, Planning staff has identified small amendments to the LDC that would help incorporate multimodal connections into new development when appropriate. The proposals focus on creating connections between developments and existing or future pedestrian and bicycle facilities, reserving opportunities for future greenways, and improving pedestrian safety.

Proposed changes:

- Allow bikeable shoulders as an alternative to sidewalks where appropriate.
- Require exterior sidewalks for subdivisions within the Urban Services Overlay District that contain 100 dwelling units or have a residential density greater than two dwelling units per acre.
- Require subdivisions that abut schools, parks, libraries, government facilities, commercial centers, etc. to provide a shared-use path or pedestrian and bicycle easement where a practical connection can be made.
- Reserve greenway corridors in conservation subdivisions that abut streams or utility corridors.

- Require clearly marked pedestrian routes in large commercial parking areas between principal building entrances, sidewalks, and other pedestrian access point by using striping, pavement markings, raised walkways, etc.

FLOOD DAMAGE PREVENTION ORDINANCE UPDATES

In March 2026, the state released an updated Model Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance for non-coastal communities. The model ordinance includes new and revised language intended to keep local floodplain regulations consistent with current National Flood Insurance Program requirements. The state recommends that jurisdictions update their existing floodplain ordinances and coordinate with their NFIP branch planner prior to adoption to ensure compliance.

Proposed changes:

- Update definitions and terminology for flood zones, critical facilities, repetitive loss properties, recreational vehicles, etc.
- Revise documentation requirements for floodplain development including elevation and floodproofing certifications and related construction documentation.
- Add procedures for substantial damage determinations, notices of violations, appeals, permit enforcement, and other actions to address noncompliant development.
- Add/revise standards for structural fill, accessory structures, commercial storage, recreational vehicles, and other development within regulated flood areas.
- Update engineering and FEMA review requirements for projects that affect flood elevation, floodway boundaries, or stream locations.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROCESS

The LDC requires both a Master Plan and a Development Plan for major subdivisions, but the details required at each stage are vague. Additionally, under the current process, a subdivision must also return to the applicable board for approval of a Development Plan even when it is consistent with the previously approved Master Plan and no substantive changes have been made. Because Development Plan review often involves several rounds of technical revisions between the applicant and staff, this can add unnecessary time to the approval process.

Proposed changes:

- Clearly define the purpose of each plan.
- Establish specific submission requirements.
- Clarify the approval authority by delineating that the Planning Board and Board of Commissioners act on Master Plans, while Development Plan review is structured to allow staff to conduct reviews of construction level documents.
- Define that minor amendments may be approved administratively when they do not alter the essential layout or character of the project. Major amendments, including changes to density, circulation, or subdivision configuration, must return to the original approval authority for review.

COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL CONDITIONAL ZONING

The LDC currently references the use of conditional zoning only for planned developments, mixed-use projects, and residential development. It does not include a comprehensive process for establishing conditional zoning districts for individual commercial or industrial projects.

Proposed changes:

- Establish a conditional zoning process for commercial and industrial projects.
- Tie conditional districts to an underlying base zoning district.
- Require plans and supporting information to evaluate the proposed development and its impacts.
- Require applicants to participate in a community meeting prior to the Planning Board meeting, with comments and resulting revisions summarized for the Board of Commissioners.
- Define allowable conditions to address uses, site design, access, buffering, infrastructure, phasing, and other issues agreed to by the applicant and board.

Mr. Creech emphasized that creation of this conditional zoning process would provide a tool for reviewing development that does not fit perfectly within existing zoning districts but could still be suitable for a site with appropriate safeguards.

FEATHER FLAG RESTRICTIONS

The LDC prohibits feather flags as part of the updated Sign Regulations; however, the prohibition was not initially enforced and many businesses continued using feather flags without realizing they were in violation. After the Planning Department notified affected businesses in August 2025, several expressed concerns that the signs were an inexpensive and effective form of advertising. The Board of Commissioners discussed this issue on October 20, 2025 and agreed to lifting the prohibition and revising the temporary sign standards.

Proposed changes:

- Remove feather flags from the specific prohibitions listed in 154.204.
- Add specific language in 154.216 (E) to allow feather flags for temporary use (30 days) with some restrictions on number and size.
- Add a definition of Feather Flags to Article XV: Definitions.

Mr. Creech reported that the wacky waving inflatable tube men would remain banned by the LDC.

ADDITIONAL AMENDMENTS

In addition to amendments discussed above, Planning staff has identified several smaller changes that could be incorporated into the LDC update.

Proposed changes:

- Revise floodplain requirements for approval of docks.
- Establish a 12-month expiration for TRC Site Plan approvals if the project has not proceeded.
- Remove mylar plat and physical copy requirements to match requirements from the Register of Deeds.
- Update off-street parking and residential appearance regulations to comply with changes in NC law.

FEE CHANGES

Mr. Creech pointed out that many of these proposed amendments would create new permit processes or infrastructure requirements; therefore, he recommended that the Board consider corresponding changes to the fee schedule.

Proposed changes:

- Establish an annual fee for new Food Truck Permits beginning January 1, 2027.
- Establish a fee for Special Event Temporary Use Permits to account for Planning Department review and coordination with other County departments and outside agencies.
- Consider allowing the County to accept a fee in lieu of constructing a required sidewalk or bikeable shoulder when construction at the development site would be impractical or would create an isolated facility with little immediate benefit. Funds collected could be reserved for pedestrian or bicycle improvements in locations where they can provide greater connectivity.
- Consider establishing a contribution from qualifying subdivision, commercial, and industrial development to help fund closure of gaps in the existing pedestrian network. Unlike a fee in-lieu, the connectivity contribution would provide a mechanism for new development to participate in broader sidewalk network improvements.

CLOSING COMMENTS

The Board was in agreement with all proposed changes and agreed to consider them collectively during a single public hearing. Mr. Creech said he would consult with staff to prepare the necessary designations and bring them before the Board in the near future.

CLOSED SESSION – N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3, 5, & 6) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & CONTRACTUAL

Chairman Yoder made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 6:28 PM to allow for attorney/client and to discuss contractual matters and personnel issues pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5). Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Yoder made a motion to adjourn at 8:11 PM. Vice-Chairman Lail seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Larry G. Yoder, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board