



## Planning, Development & Inspections

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### MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

#### Wake County Planning Board

Wednesday August 4, 2021, 1:30 p.m.

Online Meeting via WebEx

**Members Present:** (6) Mr. Amos Clark (Chair), Mr. Asa Fleming (Vice-Chair), Mr. Jason Barron, Ms. Brenna Booker-Rouse, Mr. Thomas Wells, Mr. Tony Yao

**Members Absent:** (4) Ms. Meredith Crawford, Mr. Bill Jenkins, Mr. Daniel Kadis, Mr. Ted Van Dyk

**Participating County Staff:** (6) Mrs. Loretta Alston (Clerk to the Board), Ms. Jenny Coats (Community Services Operations Director), Mr. Steven Finn (Land Development Administrator), Mr. Tim Maloney (PDI Director), Ms. Sharon Peterson (Planning Administrator); Mr. Akul Nishawala (Planner III)

**County Attorney:** (1) Mr. Kenneth Murphy (Senior Assistant County Attorney)

1. **Meeting Called to Order:** Mr. Clark called the Planning Board meeting to order at 1:32 p.m.
2. **Petitions and Amendments:** None
3. **Approval of Minutes from July 21, 2021:** Motion to approve the minutes from July 21, 2021 was made by Mr. Wells and seconded by Mr. Fleming. The minutes were unanimously approved as presented.
4. **PLANWake Implementation Area Plans**

Mr. Nishawala provided an update on the implementation of PLANWake. He began his presentation by introducing himself and his project colleagues, Celena Everette (Planner III) and Bill Shroyer (Senior GIS Analyst). He reminded the Board that the former plan was adopted in 1997-1999. The current plan, which was adopted in April 2021, is a document that plans for future growth while maintaining resources, the environment, and the general public's health, safety, and welfare, and it is constantly evolving. He stated the plan has changed how the County considers land use planning and the vision for the County over the next 20-30 years.

Mr. Nishawala mentioned the Area Land Use Plans (ALUPs) are just one of the planning areas that must be updated in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan. Amendments to the UDO and updates to the land use policy would also be needed.

Mr. Nishawala stated that these are localized plans that focus on our county's local neighborhoods and areas, and that they are adopted and developed with extensive municipal and public input. He explained that even though PLANWake is our adopted Comprehensive Plan, these ALUPs are still the governing documents until the current updates are adopted. He envisions the process to take approximately two years.

Mr. Nishawala stated that the first step in this process is to establish a baseline and get a sense of where we are now and what the unincorporated areas of the county look like. He pointed out that these are all municipal planning jurisdictions. This includes corporate limits and ETJs, as well as their respective long-term and short-term urban service areas.

Mr. Nishawala stated that another consideration was that staff did not want to do work where such extensive work and planning had already taken place, and non-urban areas were not addressed in the ALUPs. Mr. Nishawala presented various maps to show how the area plan borders have changed and acknowledged that the alignment of the plans may need to be adjusted.

Mr. Nishawala stated that to determine where our geography would be or how these area plan boundaries would eventually look like, we must first establish some logical and defensible constraints. Staff began by looking at the watersheds, as they are an effective and comprehensive way of dividing the county into logical compartments. A third consideration for determining plan borders was to use census block groups. A final consideration was the use of rights-of-way and roads. Mr. Nishawala presented a Wake County map of the updated planning geographies as well as a new naming scheme based on watersheds: Western Wake, Middle Creek, Lower Swift Creek, Neuse Basin, the Eastern Watershed, and Falls Lake. Mr. Nishawala stated that the areas are larger than anticipated, in that staff wanted to ensure they were providing a framework that can be analyzed in the future as populations grow and statistics change.

To get a sense of the scope of activity within the geographies, Mr. Nishawala stated that staff researched annexations, building permits and the vulnerability index, to help direct analysis. Mr. Wells asked Mr. Nishawala to define what vulnerability index is based on. Mr. Nishawala explained that the index considers a large amount of socioeconomic census data, and pointed out that Ms. Peterson listed the five indicators used for Wake County's 455 block groups in WebEx chat as follows:

- Percentage of people living below the federal poverty line
- Percentage of unemployed civilians aged 16 and up in the labor force
- Percentage of youth under the age of 18 plus
- Percentage of adults over the age of 60 and adults over the age of 65
- Percentage of vacant housing units and
- Percentage of adults aged 25 - 64 do not earn a high school diploma or GED

In closing, Mr. Nishawala presented a plan map that showed a high-level summary of the area plan inventory developed by staff.

Mr. Maloney stated that they are planning to update all six area plans (not to include the RTP plan). This will require significant public engagement and stakeholder outreach, as well as guidance, input, and feedback from the Board and eventually the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Maloney stated that this presentation will be shared with municipal planners as well, and their feedback will be presented to the Board in September.

### **Board Discussion**

Mr. Clark inquired about the two small sections designated as Middle Creek area but are adjacent to the Western Wake area. Mr. Nishawala stated that they designated those parcels as Middle Creek to be consistent with watershed boundaries.

Mr. Wells inquired about the walkable center and community designations, and whether they were only county designation or if any of the municipalities had adopted them. Mr. Nishawala confirmed

that those are designations in the development framework from PlanWake. Mr. Nishawala further explained that another component is how to overlay the development framework with the area plans. He stated that the plans cover a larger area than county jurisdiction covers, in order to include entire census block groups for future statistical analysis and to prevent the skew of data.

Mr. Fleming inquired how staff is comparing highest annexation versus vulnerability, and which one is staff placing more importance on. Mr. Nishawala stated that staff is not ranking the criteria yet. Mr. Fleming stated that he believes that there is more opportunity in areas of vulnerability, and Mr. Nishawala stated that there is an argument that more development activity will be happening in the municipalities. As protocols are established and the less rapidly developing areas are completed, staff hopes to have more tools to work with to complete the more rapidly developing areas.

In response to Mr. Fleming's earlier question, Mr. Wells agreed and stated that he believes we must address the most vulnerable populations, and that Western Wake is developing at such a rapid pace that if the County does not get involved with it now, there will be a missed opportunity.

Mr. Barron stated that he feels that Western Wake was already growing at an exponential rate and will be developing even more quickly with recent announcements of large companies coming to the area. Mr. Barron does not feel that there will be a lot of meaningful planning available in the Western Wake/Swift Creek corridor. He feels that looking at the vulnerable areas and within areas that are not growing as quickly, since the plans will not be finalized for another two years.

Mr. Wells stated that he would rank Falls Lake as a low priority but wanted to understand why some staff may have ranked it higher on the slide.

Mr. Nishawala reiterated as before, staff concentrating on areas where development was not happening so that when the processes were established, staff could more efficiently finish the plans that needed more strategy. He also stated that Falls Lake has never had an area plan, so developing that plan within the first year was considered a priority.

Mr. Maloney addressed the board regarding staff views. He feels that both Apex and Holly Springs will continue to grow and annex parcels in accordance with their own plans. Middle Creek is a higher priority because of future 540 Highway and walkable center designations that are in county jurisdiction, and to lose that ability to develop there would be a missed opportunity. Lower Swift Creek is a lower priority for staff. Mr. Maloney stated that Little River and Eastern Watershed have the most potential and has the vulnerable populations, however continued conversations need to take place with surrounding towns about growth into the watershed with municipal services. Falls Lake is primary residential with good current regulations, so the urgency is not immediate. Ms. Peterson stated that another consideration for Falls Lake is recent requests for nonresidential development outside of the activity centers in that area, could be a case for a higher priority listing.

Mr. Wells asked staff if these plans could be finalized all at the same time. Mr. Maloney replied that current staffing resources would be a challenge, but they have applied for funding to hire a technical expert that could help with the public outreach aspect which is the most time consuming and difficult part of the project.

Mr. Clark feels that Middle Creek appears to be at the top of the list for most, and he agrees that although he initially thought Western Wake would be a great place to begin the process, perhaps there will not be meaningful planning outside ETJ.

Mr. Maloney stated that the Neuse Basin is an unusual area in that it has the most shared borders with municipalities, and it will be interesting to see what those municipalities think of the plan. He expects the next ETJ request to come out of the lower area of the Neuse Basin from Raleigh, and that could prompt staff to make the Neuse Basin a higher priority. Mr. Wells agrees that the Neuse Basin aligns with Middle Creek in rank. Mr. Barron feels that the Neuse Basin could be divided into a Neuse Basin North and Neuse Basin South, as they are two entirely different areas in terms of how growth is experienced and whom it is affecting. As an example, Mr. Barron stated that annexation rates are higher in the north and vulnerability population are higher in the south.

Mr. Barron further stated that if the Neuse Basin was separated into two plans, Neuse Basin North would be ranked similarly with Western Wake. Mr. Barron stated that Neuse Basin South would be ranked higher than the North, due to discussions about development in the watershed that will impact much of the developable area within it. Mr. Wells and Mr. Fleming both agreed that staff should look at separating the Neuse Basin into two separate plans.

Mr. Maloney stated that the next step would be to have this same conversation with the municipalities and bring all the input together for an overview presentation in September for an additional discussion. Mr. Wells stated that he would like more information on the vulnerability index, and Mr. Maloney suggested that Ms. Peterson present the County's vulnerability index criteria and map at the next meeting.

## **5. Committee Reports**

There were no committee reports.

### **Staff Report**

Mr. Maloney informed the Board that all three PlanWake areas will be discussed with the municipalities and their planners in the last week in August, and then back to this board to present the feedback received. There may be a potential comprehensive plan amendment in the next few months, depending on when the applicant can submit the application.

He said the Board will continue to meet virtually with allowable, and in-person when necessary. The September 1 meeting will mostly be discussion, and we will inform the board later if the meeting will be virtual or in-person. All in-person meetings will require masks. Mr. Fleming inquired if vaccinations will be required for in-person meetings. Mr. Maloney stated that there is no mention of requiring vaccinations.

Steven Finn noted that the past month of July was the second busiest in terms of applications volume since LDS (Energov) came online. He indicated the balance of zoning applications and site plans with subdivision plats. Two recent preliminary subdivisions totaling 58 lots were received. Mr. Finn closed by stating current planning is still in the swing space on the fifth floor of the County office building.

## **6. Chairman's Report**

There was no Chairman's report.

Ms. Coats reported that the SharePoint site has been created to replace the FTP site, and it will be sent out in preparation for the next meeting.

## **7. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:38 p.m.

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REGULAR MEETING  
WAKE COUNTY PLANNING BOARD  
August 4, 2021

Vice Chair Asa Fleming declared the regular meeting  
of the Wake County Planning Board for  
Wednesday, August 4, 2021 adjourned at 2:38 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Amos Clark  
Wake County Planning Board

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