



MINUTES
Town of Atlantic Beach, North Carolina
Planning Board Meeting
125 W Fort Macon Road
Tuesday, August 8, 2023 at 6:00pm



The regularly scheduled meeting of the Atlantic Beach Planning Board was held Tuesday, August 8, 2023 at 6:00p.m. in the Town Boardroom, 125 West Fort Macon Road, Atlantic Beach, North Carolina.

Members Present

Neil Chamblee, Chair
Phillip Hursey
David Johnson
Phil Jones
Llewellyn Ramsey
Sharron Wilson
Curt Winbourne

Members Absent

Others Present

Jennifer Ansell, Planning Director
Katrina Tyer, Clerk
Elisabeth Webster, Planner
Casey Arthur, Fire Marshal
John O'Daniel, Town Manager

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Chamblee called the meeting to order at 6:00pm. Mayor A. B. Cooper, III, Mayor Pro Tem Waters and Councilmembers Renea Baker, Danny Navey and Joseph Starling were present.

EXCUSE ABSENT BOARD MEMBERS

None.

ZTA-23-2 – CAUSEWAY SMALL AREA PLAN/COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR (COR) TEXT AMENDMENT

Mayor Cooper wanted to present the amendments tonight for clarity. He reminded the board the reason these amendments have been suggested is to preserve and enhance commercial character, make the area better for walking and biking, and improve the appearance and quality of buildings. He is asking the board to provide input on the location of residential uses, building height, side and rear setbacks, front setbacks and building frontage, building materials, permitted uses, and parking.

He noted that at the last meeting COR-4, consisting mostly of the main intersection, was deleted and absorbed into COR-2 and COR-3. Stand-alone commercial use is still allowed in COR-2 and COR-3. He asked the board if they thought these amendments met their intent.

Building height: current height limits are 45 feet for residential and 55 feet for commercial - proposed new heights are 45 feet for COR-1 and 55 feet for COR-2 and COR-3. Should they limit the number of building stories? These will be the same rules we use in all other areas of town. The board was consistent that 55 feet would be acceptable, and they would rather see height measured by height rather than stories.

Side and Rear Setbacks: Proposed side setbacks for all zones are five feet for buildings less than 5,000; ten feet for buildings 5,000 feet and larger; and ten feet from the adjacent zoning district (outside of COR). The graduated setback is designed for combined lots, if three 60-foot lots are combined a five-foot setback would overwhelm neighboring properties, which is why ten is proposed. Currently, there is a three-foot setback from the alley off Davis Boulevard. The board felt they needed more protection from commercial development on West Fort Macon Road and agreed with the staff's suggestion of a ten-foot setback.

Front setbacks: Updates will result in buildings being built closer to the edge of the sidewalk. Sidewalks will, over time, move from the edge of the Causeway to the front of the commercial uses. Building frontage requirements include doors facing the sidewalk, transparency/window requirements, and permitted frontage types based on subzone. There are no changes in storage and inventory displays. The town does not have funding to upgrade the NCDOT right-of-way and to update the parking therefore over time enforcing the sidewalk construction on developers.

Building materials: You can restrict materials for commercial uses. We learned from the surveys that people really like the uniqueness of the Causeway with different types of buildings and designs so we decided to not say you must have certain materials but to identify some prohibited and preferred, still allowing the developer to propose materials at the site plan review for approval. It is proposed that chain link and vinyl fencing be prohibited. The board does not think chain link and vinyl fencing should be prohibited, there are some very nice vinyl options available.

Signage rules: These were updated to require pedestrian scale signs and prohibit temporary signs on the roadside. Roadside signage is not as important now as it was years ago since everyone uses Google. The town can use wayfinding signage to direct people.

Permitted uses: The current draft has been updated to remove industrial-type uses that are not compatible with a downtown district. Stand-alone commercial units will still be allowed in COR-2 and COR-3 districts. The question is whether we should limit the types of uses?

Parking: Do we want to use existing parking standards for all uses in the COR zone and add provisions for offsite, on-street, and shared parking requirements for the entire COR zone. There was discussion on establishing shared parking similar to the Circle District and use of the NCDOT right-of-way.

Chairman Chamblee asked if anyone in the audience had any comments.

Worth Baker, Ft Macon Road. He owns the old Captain Jim property on the corner of Fort Macon Road and the Causeway. His property does not have a state right-of-way, if he is required to bring his building up to the road frontage there will not be any room for parking, and he is asking how to address this. If he adds the required parking under his building, it will have to be sprinklered and that will cost a fortune. He thinks the 70% commercial requirement is too much to expect to stay in business off-season. He does not support spot zoning but thinks his lot should be due to location and the fact that it is hard for traffic to enter. He cannot build on the lot the way the amendments are presented because he will be right on the street. If he were to build the way the current ordinance is written, he would have a sidewalk and greenery. He thinks all of these changes hinge on the upcoming sewer. The attorney called him today and Redbird has submitted all of the paperwork and the state has 180 days to review it. If approved, they must build a plant for the Causeway usage which he estimates could take a year and a half. He is asking the town to slow things down until the sewer is ready. He cannot build until the sewer is approved, right now he could probably only get an 8-bedroom septic permit.

Chairman Chamblee suggested the town meet with developers and property owners on the Causeway and work on a plan.

Mack Baker owns two homes at 516-518 Causeway on 50x100 lots. His houses are eye sores he wants to rebuild but cannot build commercial. It just will not work. He wants the Causeway to look good but cannot based on these rules.

Ron Cullipher, Engineer. Understands the purpose the town is trying to accomplish with these amendments and does not have a problem with the goal. The problem he has is with parking. The way the amendment is proposed the parking would have to be on the side instead of with straight driveways and garages like now. He thinks COR-1 should be excluded from the parking requirements. He does not see the need to force parking on private lots, there should be a way to get an encroachment agreement with NCDOT as part of the town's enhancement for a public parking area. If parking on the side is required, you would need at least 40 feet to get a car in. He thinks you can get the storefront look along property lines but suggested doing something different in the NCDOT area.

Jim Lynch represents the Maxwell properties located at 109, 106 and 111 Old Causeway Drive. He wanted to confirm the side parking. Mayor Cooper explained there was some confusion in the parking presentation, it should be the same parking requirements.

Jim Bailey wants to know if there is that much of a demand for commercial property. He thinks the worst thing we can do is build more commercial and it sits empty. He does not see the demand, but yes if have sewer we will have bars, etc.

It was the consensus the parking should not be required to be on the side of the buildings. The board discussed setback

options, suggesting seven like the rest of town. The board was not in agreement, suggesting seven and ten, not five based on square footage. They do not want to create a huge setback and a pencil-tall building.

There was discussion about a temporary moratorium. Mayor Cooper stated he does not feel a moratorium can be used for residential development, but we can ask Attorney Taylor for guidance. Jones asked if they could make a recommendation on a few amendments without redoing the whole ordinance and creating new districts.

Chairman Chamblee made a motion *to table* review of the amendments for a response to a moratorium. Seconded by Wilson. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.

PLANNING BOARD/STAFF COMMENTS

None.

ADJOURN

There being no further action taken or business before the Board the meeting stood adjourned. The time was 7:34pm.

These minutes were approved at the October 3, 2023 meeting of the Atlantic Beach Planning Board.

ATTEST:


Katrina Tyer - Town Clerk



TOWN OF ATLANTIC BEACH


Neil Chamblee, Chairman