

Petition To Chapel Hill Town Council

Date: May 5, 2008

To: Chapel Hill Town Council

From: George Cianciolo (PB & CDC), Michael Collins (PB), John Ager (PB), Del Snow (PB), Michael Gerhardt (PB), Judy Weseman (PB), James Stroud (PB), Glenn Parks (Greenways & CDC), Laura Moore (CDC), Chris Culbreth (CDC)

Re: Process for Advisory Board Review of Applications

We would like to request that the Town Council consider the process by which its advisory boards are asked to review and make recommendations on various types of applications, including Zoning Atlas Amendments, Land Use Master Plans, and Special Use Permits. Usually these applications, many of which involve large projects with potential for long-term effects on the growth and character of Chapel Hill, are received by the Planning Board (PB) a few days before its meeting. On a number of occasions applicants have proposed last minute changes to their applications (often right at the advisory board meeting) which often preclude the planning staff from conducting a review of the proposed change(s) and making a recommendation regarding the proposed change(s). In the case of the PB, which meets twice a month, we can ask the staff to review the proposed change(s) and bring their analysis of the proposed change(s) back to us for our next meeting. In some instances the applicant proposes additional changes at this next meeting which, because of the time restriction for the PB to make its recommendations, necessitates the PB acting upon the new changes without staff guidance or obtaining a waiver from the applicant regarding the time restriction.

Other advisory boards, such as the Community Design Commission, which meet once a month are less fortunate and often need to make a recommendation on newly-proposed changes without additional staff guidance. Furthermore, in some cases the application which the Council sees has often undergone several changes since being reviewed by some of the advisory boards. While we think the give-and-take process between the planning staff and developers ultimately allows for a better product we think the process might be improved if the time limit for advisory board review was extended each time an applicant makes a major change to their application. This would be somewhat analogous to the extension of project completion deadlines for a developer each time a client makes a major work order change. In any case we think consideration of the extension of review times is warranted if for no other reason than to give the planning staff sufficient time to review applications coming before them, more and more of which involve a re-zoning request.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.