

**TOWN OF EMERALD ISLE
PLANNING BOARD MEETING
MONDAY, JANUARY 26, 2015**

Chairman Jim Craig called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. Members present were, Tom Kelly, Candace Dooley, Ken Sullivan, Ryan Ayre, Pete Wachter, and Paul Schwartz. Also present was Jim Jennings, Interim Director of Planning and Inspections.

A motion was made by Pete Wachter to approve the minutes of the Planning Board meeting held on December 15, 2014. The motion was seconded by Candace Dooley and passed unanimously (6 to 0).

For the month of January 2015, the Planning and Inspections Department had issued permits with a total value in excess of \$1,609,321. This brings the fiscal year total to over \$7.8 million in construction value for all permits and the department has collected approximately \$71,050.40 in permit fees.

SUBJECT: Potential Text Amendments to Chapters 2, 5, and 6 of the Unified Development Ordinance regarding signs, elevator heights, natural areas, and engineering reviews

Over the last few months, several issues related to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) have arisen, such as deficiencies and inconsistencies in the Sign Code, the maximum permitted height for elevator shafts, and “natural areas”. In addition, the NC General Statutes now require that municipalities with delegated State authority, such as the CAMA and stormwater programs, must develop ordinances that establish specific review procedures for stamped, Engineer-prepared documents.

Signs: The Sign Code allows a 50-square foot freestanding sign for one business on a street frontage and, then, a second 50-square foot freestanding sign to be shared by any other businesses on that same lot.

So, say there are 2 adjoining lots, each the same size and each with the same 48-foot wide building that has two 24-foot storefronts. If the first lot has two businesses, each business could have its own 50-square foot freestanding sign, for a total of 100 square feet. And, if the second lot has just one business in the two 24-foot storefronts, only one 50-square foot freestanding sign is allowed. That doesn’t seem to be very fair or equitable.

Then, there is the situation of a business on more than one frontage. It is allowed a freestanding sign on each frontage, up to 100 square feet total, which is fine ... if there are only 2 frontages. If the business had 3 or 4 frontages, it would only be allowed the same 100 square feet total as are allowed for 2 frontages. And, a corner lot across the street would be allowed the same 100 square feet total of freestanding signage and 2 corner lots across the street could have 200 square feet. Again, this doesn’t seem to be very fair or equitable.

Finally, there is the subject of wall signs. Each business is allowed 32 square feet ... period, whether on a single- or multiple-frontage. But, the larger and more visually-dominating freestanding signs are allowed on each frontage. Why can’t a business have 32 square feet of wall signage (which is less-intrusive than freestanding signage) on each frontage ... or 50 feet total ... or?

These situations are why many places allow signage on a frontage basis, instead of a per business basis, for freestanding and/or wall signs, usually 1.0-1.5 square feet per foot of frontage. And, some towns allow the business owner to decide how to allocate the authorized square footage between freestanding and wall signs.

Elevator Shafts: The UDO is somewhat unclear as to the height limit intended for elevator shafts; it could be 10 feet or feet, depending on one’s interpretation of the wording. Rather than continuing to leave it open to interpretation, Staff is suggesting that it be stated as 15 feet or, alternatively, make elevator shafts exempt from the height limits, much as the County does.

Natural areas: It has been custom that, when determining “natural area” for a Dunes and Vegetation Permit, the water area within the property lines that extend into the Sound are counted as “natural area” but the UDO wording stating this explicitly has been missing. In addition, it would seem fair to allow a homeowner to remove “natural area” from one part of a lot, as long as it is replaced with the same or more elsewhere on-site.

Staff recommends that the Planning Board begin the review of these potential Text Amendments at the January meeting, with the goal of finalizing the review at the February or March Planning Board meetings. Staff will be glad to answer any questions regarding these potential Text Amendments.

There being no further business to come before the Board, a motion was made by Pete Wachter to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Candace Dooley and passed unanimously (6 to 0). The meeting was adjourned at 7:36 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Peggy Grammer, Secretary
Town of Emerald Isle Planning Board