

**MINUTES OF A PUBLIC HEARING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
OCTOBER 04, 2022**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners held a Public Hearing on October 04, 2022, at 5:50 p.m., Justice & Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Brian McMahan, Chairman
Boyce Deitz, Vice Chair
Mark Jones, Commissioner
Tom Stribling, Commissioner
Gayle Woody, Commissioner

Don Adams, County Manager
Heather C. Baker, County Attorney
Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board

Chairman McMahan called the public hearing to order and stated the purpose of the public hearing was to receive public input on the proposed Text Amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).

Michael Poston, Planning Director, presented proposed UDO Amendments to Section 6.4 Industrial Development Standards, Table 9.5.4 US 441 Permitted Use Table and Article XI Definitions. The Planning Department worked with the Planning Board and the US 441 Planning Council on proposed amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance.

The proposed amendments included Section 6.4 Industrial Development regulations to address small scale animal processing facilities, crypto-currency facilities and renewable energy facilities. The amendments also included proposed new definitions for these new uses in the Article XI.

The proposed text amendment to the U S 441 Planning Corridor table of uses (table 9.5.4) was a request made by Greg Wasik to allow micro-breweries/breweries in the Gateway zoning district. Staff also recommended allowing the use in the industrial zoning district. The 441 Planning Council held a public hearing regarding the proposed amendment to allow for breweries/microbreweries and recommended approval of the proposed amendment unanimously.

The Planning Board also reviewed the proposed changes to the table of uses and unanimously recommended approval. The Planning Board also held a public hearing for the proposed changes to the Industrial Development Standards and the proposed definitions and unanimously recommended approval. Both the 441 Planning Council and the Planning Board adopted Statements of Consistency with the land use plans that stated the proposed amendments were consistent with the adopted plans.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

(a) Lisa McBride stated that she represented WNC Farm to Table, which was a local food hub. They had a need for the amendment because they had a shortage of being able to process meat. K&B was the only plant they could work with in the area and they were backed up. Also, they had the lack of being able to process meat for commercial use and those were needed in the community for local food.

(b) Matthew Taylor stated he was the co-owner of Lewis and Taylor Farms, LLC, a newly formed business in the county. They were farming land that had been farmed for five generations and they were proud of that.

There was a need for the amendment they were discussing. They ran 75 to 100 head of sheep on their farm. K&B was the most local processor they had. They were on the NC Department of Ag Certified. For cuts of meats to be sold, it had to be USDA packaged with their label. There was federal legislation for startups for small and medium process facilities. They could not technically do this in the county because of the ordinance. There were numerous reasons why the amendment would benefit the county.

Chairman McMahan stated the Board received one written comment from former County Commissioner Ron Mau:

“The ordinances being proposed tonight put a constraint on what can be built and where. These types of constraints have been empirically proven to result in an increase in prices which in the case of the renewable energy ordinances means an increase in land prices and ultimately an increase in housing prices. The Jackson County land use plan recognized affordable housing is an issue in Jackson County, three current commissioners up for re-election commented, in recent interviews published in the Smoky Mountain News, that affordable housing is an issue in the county;

The visual for the slope (35 percent not 35 degrees) is the slope in front of the old courthouse. Could solar or wind power work on slopes steeper than that the answer is yes. For an example, let’s assume there is a higher density development that has a desire to be off-grid as much as possible. For the project to work the developer plans to build solar and or wind adjacent to the project. However, due to the steepness of the slope all the energy production needs to take up a portion of the project property where residential structures could have been located. The project might still go forward but, less housing stock would be created resulting in higher prices of the housing units that do get built. The developer will still want to make their necessary/desired profits. The constraint on the renewable energy creates the issues and drive housing prices up. Or more simply by forcing any renewable energy onto flatter ground you lose potential housing, commercial, and/or other projects.

You can vote for affordable housing and renewable energy or you can vote against affordable housing and vote against renewable energy by making it harder for renewable energy to be built in Jackson County.”

There being no further public comment, Commissioner Woody moved to adjourn the public hearing. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 6:07 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk

Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman