



Questions Surface on Moratorium

BY MATTHEW MORIARTY: STAFF WRITER

The Southern Pines Town Council has a lot of its own questions to answer before it votes on a proposed moratorium Tuesday.

Will the moratorium include the Morganton Road land? Will it include only planned development (PD) zoning? Will it be just on subdivisions over 20 acres? Will it be confined to areas north of Midland Road?

What does the council want to see develop along N.C. 22? Does the moratorium have a chance to cover the Pine Needles land, or does the property owner have vested rights to develop? What is the moratorium intended to defend against? What will it actually do?

"If the work we have to do is larger than any moratorium can adequately address," Mayor Mike Haney said, "how can we make a moratorium useful to the process?"

"It might not

be," Council member Abigail Dowd said.

During its agenda meeting Wednesday, the council identified PD zoning as particularly problematic. Ways to address that with a moratorium would be to confine it to only PD zoning or link it geographically to areas north of Midland Road. Both moves would require significant changes to the moratorium ordinance.

The current draft of the moratorium ordinance would prohibit Planned Unit Development (PUD) projects and subdivisions of more than 20 acres. If the ordinance in its present form comes up for a vote Tuesday, it is unclear whether it will pass.

Dowd, who first pushed for the council to consider a moratorium, has expressed doubts that the proposed moratorium will accomplish her goals.

"So much needs to be done," she said. "I'm not sure we know where to start."

Mayor Pro Tem Chris Smithson insists that he hasn't made up his mind. Councilman David Woodruff said he wants to adopt a moratorium to force the rest of the council to address long-term planning.

"Everybody I talk to, without exception, -- and mind you, I don't talk to contractors and developers -- says stop and get it right, then let's move on," Woodruff said. "We can't seem to get to the part where we stop and get it right. ... The moratorium is a way to force action."

Haney and Councilman Fred Walden have come out against the moratorium because they say it sends the wrong message.

"We've got this to vote on," Smithson said. "It's probably a matter of getting something we can vote in favor of."

Previous stories

[3/2/08 - S.P. Council Puts Finishing Touches on Moratorium Ordinance](#)

[3/12/08 - Moratorium Foes, Proponents Heard](#)

[4/9/08 - S.P. Council OK's Church's Plan](#)

[4/20/08 - Closer Look: Seminar Considers Moratoriums](#)

[4/30/08 - S.P. Council Weighs Scope of Freeze](#)

Dowd added, "It's overwhelming."

Haney said that he was willing to stay and work with the two of them if they want to pound out an ordinance that more reflects their vision.

"I'm going to vote against it," Haney said, "but I'd consider it a shallow victory if it fails because the document isn't what you want."

Smithson said that they would be just as successful calling each other and trying to work something out before Tuesday.

"It's really a waste of time," Smithson said. "Too many people are not participating in the discussion for whatever reason. It's not productive anymore."

The council has called a special meeting for 3 p.m. Monday to discuss the moratorium issue. It will be held in the Boyd Room of the Planning, Finance and Utilities office building on Broad Street next to the post office.

Earlier in the meeting, the council had gone over several architectural reviews, including Home Depot and the Mill Creek Village off N.C. 22, which includes a Harris Teeter. The council specifically seemed to like the Mill Creek design.

"I think you came up with some nice designs there," Woodruff said.

The council opened up some fresh wounds by arguing the merits of the Pine Needles Village rezoning to Planned Unit Development (PUD).

Smithson started the ball rolling by bringing up Pine Needles as an example of what was wrong with PD zoning. He said that one of the reasons he voted for the application was the threat of what might go on the land under PD zoning.

Dowd said that the problem with the Pine Needles process was that the residents didn't feel like the council was listening to them.

"The council arrogantly stood there and said, 'Don't you worry,'" she said. "There are a lot of reasons why that trust is running out."

"We gave the citizens input," Walden responded, "and we came up with one of the best plans this county has ever seen."

Dowd said that the council learned during the process that it could incorporate into its Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) and land-use plan.

"We can look at the UDO and make sure we require good development," she said.

"Well, we missed a good opportunity," Walden said. "The process was tough, but it produced something good. That's the way things come about. That could have been a standard, but we threw it out."

"It still can," Dowd said. "Why are you on the council if you think that was the last opportunity to do anything good?"

Contact Matthew Moriarty at 693-2479 or by e-mail at moriarty@thepilot.com.