

JACKSON COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

MINUTES

Date: March 2, 2017								
Time Begin: 6:00 p.m.								
Time End: 6:55 p.m.								
Location: Jackson County Department on Aging, Heritage Room								
Members	Present	Absent		Present	Absent		Present	Absent
Scott Baker	X		Keven Hawkins	X		Steven Johannessen	X	
Kirk Stephens	X		Bonnie Claxton	X		Scott Ogle	X	
Jeremy Hyatt	X		Ken Brown	X		Julie Painter		X
Vickey Wade	X		Jim Mincey	X				

Others Present:

Michael Poston, Planning Director
 John Jeleniewski, Senior Planner
 Caroline Edmonds, Planner 1
 Shelby Cook, Administrative Assistant
 Heather Baker, County Attorney
 Gary Thompson, NCGS Chief
 Kevin Jamison, GIS Director

Call to Order and Quorum Check

Chairman Scott Baker called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and a quorum was present.

Approval of the Agenda

Steven Johannessen made a motion to approve the March 2nd agenda. Kirk Stephens seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Approval of the Minutes

Ken Brown made a motion to approve the minutes from February 9th, 2017. Bonnie Claxton seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Public Comment

Jason Kimenker – Jason is a resident of Jackson County. He would like to commend the Planning Board and the Jackson County staff on their work to protect not only ridgetops, but all of the other important environmental components of the county, like water quality and forests. He is here to support the strong protected ridge ordinances the county already has, and the growing technologies the county plans to use to better enforce those ordinance regulations.

New Business: Protected Ridges Discussion – NCGS Chief, Gary Thompson

Planning Director, Mike Poston, introduced North Carolina Geodetic Survey (NCGS) Chief, Gary Thompson, to the board. Mr. Thompson explained the history behind the Mountain Ridge Protection Act of 1983. Without the mapping technology of today, ridges had to be identified manually with help from United States Geological Survey (USGS) topo maps. “Adjacent valley floor” is not defined anywhere in North Carolina’s statutory language. Mr. Thompson has looked to the USGS for guidance on what might have been used in the ‘80s, and it’s likely that they looked for water bodies to identify the valley floor. If there are two valley floors in question, Mr. Thompson said you should choose the most restrictive to go

by. For example, in a situation where there's a 300 ft. valley and a 500 ft. valley on either side of a ridge, you should go by the 500 ft. side.

If the protected ridge maps were recreated today, modern technology would make the process much easier. Aircrafts are used to send thousands of laser pulses per second to capture very detailed land information. Laser pulses are now able to identify different pieces of landscape – trees, water, etc. LIDAR technology can be used in the air or on the ground via truck, and it captures 4 different angles of everything it picks up.

Jackson County's Mountain and Hillside Development Ordinance (MHDO) is more restrictive than the state's Ridge Protection Act, and a map has never been created to reflect the county's protected ridge requirements. Mike Poston said it might be possible to reverse engineer the process from the '80s to identify where adjacent valley floors should be, in order for Jackson County to come up with their own protected ridge map. Planning staff is currently working with the GIS Department to see what mapping options there are. As Mr. Thompson said, the state does have some baseline data that could be used as a jumping-off point for the county's GIS automation. There's also flood plain data to identify a valley's lowest point.

As Scott Baker explained, the protected ridge issue has been a topic of discussion for the Planning Board since a proposed development in Cullowhee was approved in July, 2016. Conflicting language in the county's MHDO and the Mountain Ridge Protection Ordinance prompted the board to look into protected ridge and adjacent valley floor definitions. Having a map that depicts the county's specific protected ridges would make ordinance enforcement easier.

Mike Poston said the county would love to produce the map in-house. If that is possible, paying for the map would just be an allocation of staff time. GIS Director, Kevin Jamison, explained that North Carolina is leading the country in GIS technology. Even though Jackson County's GIS department is only comprised of two people, they have many resources that could help aid the mapping process, like the base GIS layers from NCGS.

Mr. Thompson is teaching an upcoming class to professional land surveyors in the area. Protected ridges is a topic he plans to cover during the workshop. He plans to go through some historical NCGS files to see what other information he can uncover that might be useful for the county.

Informal Discussion

Mike Poston gave a quick update on the Jackson County Comprehensive Land Use Plan, which was recommended by the Steering Committee on Wednesday, March 1st. The comp plan will be coming before the Planning Board in April.

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, Chairman Scott Baker adjourned the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

Submitted by:


Shelby LeQuide Cook,

Administrative Assistant - Planning

Approved by:


Scott Baker, Chairman