

Dear Chairman Dasher and County Manager LaMontagne,

We are following up from the meeting on Monday night as suggested.

We are open to meeting with Commissioners and staff to provide more input before the next BOC meeting.

Below are my comments that I am submitting from Monday night that I was unable to provide due to time considerations at the meeting with copies to the full BOC:

The application is at its essence a simple text amendment request by Congruus to add a portion of land owned by Congruus to the Compact Community map.

That is all.

In fact, the planning staff opinion was that this text amendment should be approved based on the goals and objectives noted in Plan Chatham for expansion of the compact community area.

Once the text amendment is approved by this Board, then Congruus can apply to the County with a full blown Compact Community application.

That process is the appropriate place for addressing the questions and concerns brought up during this text amendment request.

At the October 5th planning board meeting the District 5 appointee to the planning board, Mr. Andrews, stated during the meeting that "...he does not see how we give up our rights in the decision-making process to include these parcels in the CCO map..."

Mr. Andrews, a professional in the real estate business, also made the point that if the parcels were not added, Congruus could apply for a standard subdivision of one acre lots, which would likely mean homes built in the range of \$700,000 to \$1,000,000 ...prices which are not considered affordable housing.

Given the fact that home construction starts nationwide are down 55% from its high point in 2006---is it any wonder that the average sales price in Chatham County is now up 17.4% to \$584,670, the median sales price is up 20.2% to \$559,310 and the inventory levels are down 48.8% in October of 2021. [See attached building and market information.]

For context when Plan Chatham put forth its "**Big Idea**" for affordable/workforce housing which was to build 100 new affordable or workforce housing units a year this was at a time four years ago when the median home sale price in Chatham County was \$260,500.

This means that the median sales price of a home in Chatham County has **increased by 115%** since Plan Chatham was adopted four years ago.

And with just one month of inventory available it is obvious why we have an affordability crisis.

An integrated Compact Community with a 100 workforce units could move the needle on this "**Big Idea**".

This is a key reason why we respectfully request that you approve the text amendment so the applicant can submit a full blown CCO master plan to the county for review.

To this point, Mr. West, who is also a District 5 appointee, stated during the October 5th meeting that "this is an opportunity to examine on a case-by-case basis and (he) does not see any forgoing of our responsibility by approving this request and allowing it to come forward with a rezoning request."

He felt that would likely be the best way to "exert the most control over this situation".

And

Mr. West also said "it makes more sense to me to let them present their application to us under the CCO rather than reject it all together and put them back to square one

We feel this is a reasonable position.

And a position that reflects the guidance of Plan Chatham, which states on **page 45** under the map for the Land Use Plan:

"...though each land use area is geographically delineated on the map, **strict adherence to the Land Use and Conservation Plan in making land use decisions is not recommended. Instead, when making decisions about specific sites or contemplating new initiatives, decision makers are encouraged to use the map as a guide while taking into account economic, environmental, and social factors**".

And what would some of those factors be?

The economic snapshot issued in August of 2021 by the Budget and Tax Center of the NC Justice Center highlights some these [See attached snapshot of Chatham]:

The living income standard for Chatham County is \$51,800 which is higher than the state by 8.6%.

Median worker earnings are \$41,300 and the median household income is \$67,000.

This means that half of our workers make less than \$41,300 per year and half of the households have income less than \$67,000.

45% of renters pay at least 30% of their income on rent while 20% of our renters pay half of their income in rent.

The fair market rent for a two bedroom home is \$1,134 per month which is 18% higher than the state average.

And if you make minimum wage it will take 120 hours of work per week to afford to rent a two bedroom home in Chatham County.

An integrated CCO application committed to adding more affordable units, allowing for a large conservation easement as well as the economic impact of a typical NC home of \$85,400 would seem to address the guidance offered on Page 45 of Plan Chatham. [See the attached economic information]

Finally, in regards to the simple text amendment request by Congruus to add a portion of land owned by Congruus to the Compact Community map I offer the following points:

- The county staff recommended approval
- The two appointments from District 5 recommended approval as well as the planning board member who lives in Briar Chapel.
- Most of the property is adjacent to the current CCO area which also bisects two of the parcels. [See the attached map]
- The remaining two parcels are on the west side of Parker Herndon Road which is literally across the street. The only reason they are not adjacent on the north side to the CCO area is because the applicant subdivided the property for the Parker heirs during the purchase that closed last July.
- A site plan is NOT required to approve a text amendment to the CCO map
- Nor is consideration of infrastructure
- Or frontage to 15-501. If you look at the current CCO map [attached below] you will notice that dozens and dozens of parcels are 1 to 2 miles to the west of 15-501. They have zero frontage on 15-501.
- In fact, page 45 of Plan Chatham states that "**strict adherence to the Land Use and Conservation Plan in making land use decisions is not recommended**".
- The applicant has made it clear that it will cooperate with the new wastewater advisory board that the County is putting in place, but to get there it needs the text amendment approved.
- Furthermore, the applicant showed the County an area on this property in January of 2021 that could be evaluated for a regional wastewater system. [See the attached map]
- The applicant is merely requesting that the text amendment be approved in order to submit a full CCO plan to the County.
- The applicant owns approximately 6,500 feet of Pokeberry Creek and did not create any of the problems with Pokeberry Creek. In fact the property owner [applicant] is a victim of the issues created by upstream development. The

applicant is offering to work with Adam McIntyre and his team at Water and Land Solutions to remediate these issues and create a permanent conservation easement. [An outline attached below] This outcome will only occur if a text amendment is approved and the conservation easement is integrated into a CCO master plan.

The applicant respectfully requests that the County pass the text amendment and give the applicant the opportunity to submit a fully integrated CCO plan for consideration.

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"We cannot solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them." Albert Einstein

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