



Williamson County, Tennessee

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STAFF REPORT RE: MAXIMUM BUILDING SIZE IN THE HAMLET (H) ZONING DISTRICT

July 2012

On May 14, 2012, the Williamson County Board of Commissioners (County Commission) adopted a new Zoning Ordinance, which will apply to land in the unincorporated County beginning on January 1, 2013. During the Public Hearing regarding the new Ordinance, a number of individuals expressed a concern regarding a provision which limits the size of individual commercial and industrial buildings within the Hamlet (H) Zoning District to 5,000 square feet. In response to those concerns, the Commission directed Planning Department Staff to meet with affected citizens regarding this issue and, based on the feedback received, to re-evaluate the building size requirement in these Hamlet (H) District prior to the January 1, 2013 effective date of the new Ordinance.

This report is intended to provide the County Commission, the Planning Commission, the Zoning Ordinance Update Steering Committee and citizens with background information regarding this issue, to summarize the two public meetings that were held in June, and to outline the next steps in addressing this issue.

CURRENT ZONING

In April of 1988, the Williamson County Board of Commissioners (County Commission) adopted a revised Zoning Ordinance, which has applied since that time to the unincorporated areas of the County. Among other things, this Ordinance divides the unincorporated County into various Zoning Districts, which specify the type of development that can occur in those areas.

The vast majority (approximately 95%) of the land in the unincorporated County was placed in one of several Zoning Districts that allow primarily agricultural and low-density residential uses. Examples include the Rural (R), Estate (E) and Suburban Estate (SE) Zoning Districts.

However, some areas were zoned Crossroads Center (CC), which is a mixed use district that allows a number of commercial and light industrial uses in addition to agricultural and residential uses. The Crossroads Center (CC) district was applied to a relatively broad range of communities and does not distinguish between larger communities, such as Leiper's Fork and College Grove, and smaller communities such as Arrington, Bending Chestnut, Bethesda, Burwood, Fernvale, Kirkland and Peytonsville.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

In 2007, the County adopted a revised Comprehensive Land Use Plan, which establishes policies related to growth and development and articulates a vision for how the County should grow over the next 20 years. As such, the Plan forms the foundation for the County's planning efforts and served as the basis for the development of the County's new Zoning Ordinance. The Comprehensive Plan update process involved extensive public participation over a two-year period.

The Comprehensive Land Use Plan divides the unincorporated County into various Land Use Categories. The Plan differentiates between the larger and smaller Crossroads Center (CC) areas by identifying the larger of these communities as Villages and the smaller ones as Hamlets. The Comprehensive Plan establishes an overall policy of preserving the existing character of the Hamlets through the sensitive design of new development that maintains the Hamlet scale. Several of the specific Development Policies for Hamlets in the Comprehensive Plan refer to the need for new development to respect the scale and character of the Hamlet, and provide compatible density and intensity. The Comprehensive Plan further specifies that only "small scale" commercial uses are appropriate within Hamlets.

NEW ZONING ORDINANCE/HAMLET ZONING DISTRICT

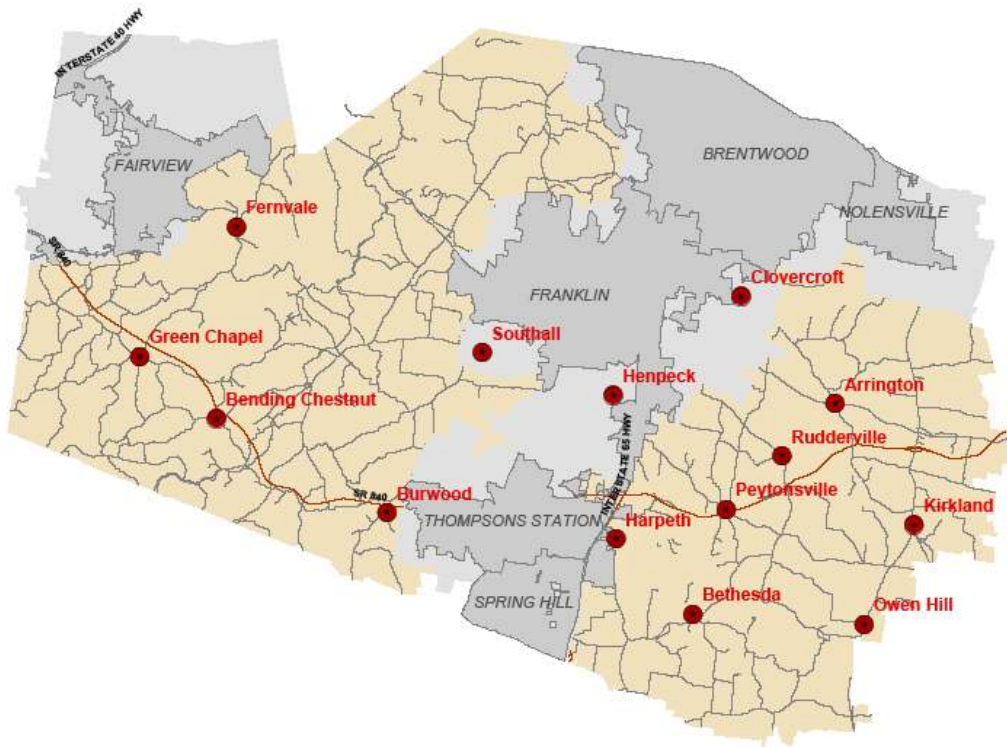
Following the adoption of the revised Comprehensive Land Use Plan, the County began working to update the Zoning Ordinance as a means to help implement the development-related policies contained within the Plan. As was the case with the Comprehensive Plan, public participation was a major point of emphasis during the Zoning Ordinance update process, and numerous public meetings were held throughout the community to solicit citizen input.

Like its predecessor, the new Zoning Ordinance establishes various Zoning Districts, which were applied to land within the unincorporated County based primarily on the land use recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. One of those new Zoning Districts is the Hamlet (H) district, which will be applied to many of the communities that have been zoned Crossroads Center (CC) since 1988. Other Crossroads Center (CC) areas, such as Leiper's Fork, College Grove and Triune, will be zoned Village (V) in accordance with Comprehensive Plan recommendations. Special Area Plans will be developed for each of the Villages. During the Special Area Plan processes, Staff will work with the Village communities individually to create more detailed Plans for those areas. A Citizens Advisory Committee comprised primarily of people who live or own property within the Village will be formed to help guide the process. Further, there will be numerous public meetings in which residents and property owners will have an opportunity for input into the development of the Special Area Plan. The Plans will then be presented to both the Planning Commission for adoption and the County Commission for endorsement. Finally, based on those Village Plans, Staff will again work with those communities to create individual Zoning Districts for each of the Villages. The Zoning District



Standards will then be presented to the Planning Commission for recommendation following a public hearing, and then presented to the County Commission for adoption following a public hearing. At this time, Special Area Plans have already been adopted for the College Grove and Leiper's Fork Villages, and the College Grove Village District standards have been developed and incorporated into the new Zoning Ordinance. Staff has worked with the Leiper's Fork Village Citizens Advisory Committee to prepare a draft of the Zoning District standards for the Leiper's Fork Village and will be meeting with the community to receive feedback on those standards. This same process will be repeated in the Grassland Village and the Triune Village.

Hamlets are mixed use districts, which allow a variety of residential, commercial and light industrial uses. The map below illustrates the various Hamlet District areas, which include Arrington, Bending Chestnut, Bethesda, Burwood, Clovercroft, Fernvale, Green Chapel, Harpeth, Henpeck, Kirkland, Owen Hill, Peytonsville, Rudderville, and Southall.



The Comprehensive Plan emphasizes that development in and around Hamlets should be limited and that the scale of new development should be small and in keeping with the character of these existing rural communities. For this reason, the Hamlet (H) District was drafted with a requirement that limits the size of individual new commercial and industrial buildings to 5,000 square feet or less. This requirement was included in the adopted version of the new Zoning Ordinance in an attempt to implement the policies of the County's Comprehensive Plan.



JUNE 2012 PUBLIC MEETINGS

In response to the direction given by the County Commission, Staff held two public meetings (one on the east side of the County and one on the west) which were designed to obtain public input regarding the appropriate size for new buildings in the Hamlet (H) District. The meetings were held on June 19 at Hillsboro Elementary/Middle School and on June 21 at Page Middle School.

To help maximize citizen participation, a letter advertising these meetings was sent to each property owner within the Hamlets. Additionally, letters were sent to owners whose properties fall within a three hundred foot boundary of the Hamlets, since they too have a direct interest in how these Hamlet areas develop in the future. Because the focus of the meetings was related solely to the Hamlets and not also to the Villages, letters were only sent to property owners within and adjacent to the areas that will be zoned Hamlet (H) under the new Zoning Ordinance. Notices were not mailed to those properties that will be zoned Village (V) because the focus of the meeting was on the Hamlet (H) District only, and because property owners within the Villages have already determined what zoning would be best suited for their Village (in the case of College Grove) or will soon determine those standards through the processes outlined above.

The two primary objectives for the June public meetings were to provide citizens with background information related to the new Zoning Ordinance in general and the Hamlet District in particular and, most importantly, to receive feedback from attendees regarding appropriate commercial and industrial building sizes in Hamlets. Based upon the experience of the Planning Department, staff sought to format the meeting in a manner that was fair and objective, that would provide meaningful input, and that would allow those in attendance to express their wishes in a variety of ways.

Find Your Parcel on the Map: Attendees were provided a sticky dot and asked to place it on an aerial map of their Hamlet. This activity provided an opportunity for community members to not only see where they live in relation to the Hamlet boundaries, but also provided staff with an understanding of the Hamlets represented during each meeting.





Power Point Presentation: The presentation provided background information and a timeline of events leading up to the community meeting, touching on the current zoning ordinance, the County’s Comprehensive Land Use Plan, and the new Zoning Ordinance, with particular emphasis on the Hamlet District and the building size issue. The presentation also included a number of photographs of existing buildings within the Hamlet (H) District.



Questionnaire: A questionnaire, which focused specifically on building size preference, was provided to all those in attendance. Respondents were also asked the specific types of uses they would like to see in their Hamlets, in addition to various ranges of building sizes. The questionnaire also provided an opportunity for respondents to give written comments and suggestions.



Sticky Dot Survey: Using a sticky dot attached to their questionnaire, attendees were given the option to vote for their preferred maximum building size on a board showcasing real world examples of various types of buildings in various size categories.



Note: Although each person was only given one sticky dot for use in this exercise, a number of individuals noted that some participants placed more than one sticky dot in support of their preferred building size maximum. This is confirmed by the data that follows in regard to the number of surveys returned in relation to the number of dots placed on the boards.



THE FINDINGS

The chart below provides a basic snapshot of information compiled from the meetings. Information is divided by meeting date, with totals to the right. The top responses are recorded in each category.



	June 19, 2012 – Hillsboro Elementary/Middle School		June 21, 2012 - Page Middle School		Total	
Attendees	38		65		103	
Surveys	30		54		84	
Sticky Dots	29		67		96	
Survey Results: Top 5 Building Size Categories						
1 st	2,501 – 5,000 sq ft	12	25,001 & greater sq ft	18	25,001 & greater sq ft	27
2 nd	25,001 & greater sq ft	9	10,001 – 25,000 sq ft	9	2,501 – 5,000 sq ft	19
3 rd	5,001 – 10,000 sq ft	3	0 – 2,500 sq ft	8	10,001 – 25,000 sq ft	11
4 th	0 – 2,500 sq ft	2	2,501 – 5,000 sq ft	7	0 -2,500 sq ft	10
5 th	10,001 – 25,000	2	5,001 – 10,000 sq ft	6	5,001 – 10,000 sq ft	9
Sticky Dot Exercise Results: Top 5 Building Size Categories						
1 st	25,001 & greater sq ft	8	25,001 & greater sq ft	31	25,001 & greater sq ft	39
2 nd	0 – 2,500 sq ft	7	0 – 2,500 sq ft	15	0 – 2,500 sq ft	22
3 rd	5,001 – 10,000 sq ft	6	10,001 – 25,000 sq ft	9	5,001 – 10,000 sq ft	13
4 th	2,501 – 5,000 sq ft	5	5,001 – 10,000 sq ft	7	10,001 – 25,000 sq ft	12
5 th	10,001 – 25,000 sq ft	3	2,501 – 5,000 sq ft	5	2,501 – 5,000 sq ft	10
Top 3 Use Types						
1 st	Dry Cleaner	24	Mom & Pop Grocery Store	48	Mom & Pop Grocery Store	63
2 nd	Gas/Convenience Store	20	Mom & Pop Restaurant	32	Gas/Convenience Store	50
3 rd	Mom & Pop Grocery/Restaurant (tie)	15	Gas /Convenience Store	30	Mom & Pop Restaurant	47
Top 3 Hamlets Represented						
	Green Chapel	9	Rudderville	12		
	Bending Chestnut	7	Peytonsville	11		
	Burwood	6	Arrington/Burwood /Clovercroft (3-way tie)	5		

The new Ordinance limits commercial and industrial buildings to 5,000 square feet in size. In both the survey and the sticky dot exercise, staff divided the preferred building size categories as follows: 0 – 2,500 square feet, 2,501 – 5,000 square feet, 5,001 – 10,000 square feet, 10,001 – 25,000 square feet and 25,001 square feet or greater in an attempt to gauge accurate community preference regarding building size. The chart above reflects these categories in regard to these preset maximum building sizes.

As seen above in both the survey and sticky dot exercise, the majority of respondents indicated a building size preference of 25,001 square feet or greater. This is followed by preference for 0 – 2,500 square feet maximum building size. 2,501 – 5,000 square feet is listed third overall, with 10,001 – 25,000 square feet and 5,001 – 10,000 square feet, respectively.

NEXT STEPS

Having held two public meetings to solicit input from affected property owners, the next step in the process will be for Staff to meet with the Zoning Ordinance Update Steering Committee,



which was established by the County Commission to help guide and direct the drafting of the new Zoning Ordinance, to determine how best to address this issue. Based on direction provided by the Steering Committee, staff will then update this report to include a recommendation for addressing the issue. Assuming the recommendation involves a change to the current building size limitation in the Hamlet (H) District, Staff will prepare an amendment to the new Zoning Ordinance for consideration by the Planning Commission and County Commission.

Any amendment would involve a Public Hearing before the Planning Commission, which will make a recommendation to the County Commission regarding the change. The County Commission would also hold a Public Hearing in conjunction with their consideration of the change. Notices advertising these Public Hearings would be sent to all owners of property within the Hamlet (H) District areas as well as those immediately surrounding these areas. If approved by the County Commission, the change would be officially incorporated into the new Zoning Ordinance, which will become effective on January 1, 2013.

