



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 3, 2014

Statement from Wilmington Chamber of Commerce President & CEO Connie Majure-Rhett Regarding the County Commissioner's Vote on Special Use Permit Revisions

The Wilmington Chamber of Commerce was disappointed with the votes last night of New Hanover County Commissioners Dawson and Barfield, who voted against the modifications that would have added clarification to the Special Use Permitting (SUP) process.

At no time did the Chamber ask for the existing SUP process to end, but the Chamber does believe revisions are necessary. Our concerns continue to revolve around the constant feedback we are receiving from businesses and site selectors that New Hanover County will not be on the list of considered locations for investment due to the lack of specificity of the County's Special Use Permitting process. They have provided an objective, independent assessment of existing barriers to business entry and sustainable job growth within our community.

Last night's vote adds another hurdle to overcome in an already difficult business climate. From year-end 2002 to year-end 2012, New Hanover County lost 1,987 manufacturing jobs, 26% of our manufacturing base. The current SUP process was put in place in 2011 so it certainly did not cause these losses. However, the current SUP process will prevent us from replacing the jobs that were lost.

As a community, we need to work to strengthen our tax base so that the schools, roads, and other amenities our fellow citizens deserve can be paid for. We need to be proactive in making our community more business friendly, not hope to prove the site selectors wrong. We feel confident they are not.

We commend the County staff and others for the open dialogue and hard work that went into the proposed modifications. We also appreciate the support of Commissioners White and Wolfe, who strongly supported these proposed changes. We feel comfortable we would have set our community on a stronger economic course if they had been adopted.