



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wilmington Chamber Applauds Commissioners' Approval of SUP Revisions

Wilmington, NC—Four years of efforts to create an improved New Hanover County industrial special use process culminated today when the NHC Commissioners approved revisions recommended by the Planning Board on February 2, 2017. The Wilmington Chamber of Commerce applauds this decision and congratulates all parties who have been involved in the process. The revisions approved today provide for more transparency in the application process, a more specific timeline for consideration of a permit application, and more inclusiveness in permitted uses. This extraordinary, years-long effort unified several area economic development groups, including the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce, the NC Business Alliance for a Sound Economy, Wilmington Business Development, the Wilmington-Cape Fear Homebuilders Association and the Coalition for Economic Advancement, and, ultimately, the proposed revisions received support from other stakeholders, including the North Carolina Coastal Federation.

“The approval of these revisions to our County’s special use permit process helps address the ambiguity created by changes to the process enacted in 2011, ambiguity which site selectors tell us has had a detrimental effect on new business investment in our region,” said 2013 Chamber Chairman Hal Kitchin, who has been the frontline advocate for the Chamber on this issue. “Creating more objectivity and transparency in the process, while maintaining additional review for certain intensive uses, will better enable us to attract the types of businesses we want and need in our community and ultimately to increase our traded-sector employment, while at the same time protecting our area’s environmental and quality of life. Planning Board Chair Donna Girardot, in particular, deserves credit for allowing a thorough deliberation of the issues and for going the extra mile in order to reach a consensus.”

“This has been a defining issue for the Chamber over the course of the last few years,” said 2017 Chamber Chairman Charlie Mattox. “Bringing a diverse set of organizations together to rally for these improvements is a great example of what can be achieved through open, honest dialogue among all interested parties. I’d like to personally thank Hal Kitchin for all of the work he has put forth, and Tyler Newman at BASE and our other partners for remaining committed to achieving a positive outcome. These revisions include something for everyone.”

The improved special use permit process will encourage job creation and a diverse economy, while including safeguards to protect our quality of life. The revised process will also complement the work both the City and County undertook last year to update their respective comprehensive plans, and the on-going work on the County’s Unified Development Ordinance.

The Chamber board of directors would like to thank Commission Chairman Woody White, Vice-Chairman Skip Watkins, Commissioner Jonathan Barfield, Jr., Commissioner Patricia Kusek and Commissioner Rob Zapple for voting unanimously to approve the revisions.

“Being able to celebrate an achievement like this with those responsible is a great way to start my first official day on the job,” said new Chamber President & CEO Natalie English. “I look forward to working in partnership on issues such as the SUP with our economic development organizations in the region and our very dedicated board members.”

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