

MANUFACTURED HOME STAKEHOLDER GROUP
Minutes from January 5, 2006
Innovation Station Conference Room
Government Center – 8th Floor
6:00 to 8:00 PM

Attendees:

Elizabeth Barnhardt
Andy Munn
Steve Cartee
Judith Jeffries
Mattie Marshall
Henry Gunn
Tammie Keplinger
Sandra Montgomery

Sandra Montgomery welcomed the group and asked the new members to introduce themselves.

Ms. Montgomery reviewed the three outstanding questions from the December 15, 2005 meeting.

1. When was the manufactured home overlay district and standards first adopted?
2. Can a modular home have a permanent chassis”?
3. What recourse do older neighborhoods have when adding covenants is so difficult, if not impossible, particularly in rental neighborhoods?

The residential manufactured home district (RMH) was adopted in 1962 and the manufactured home overlay (MH-O) was adopted in 1987. The current definition and size of a manufactured home dates back to 1982. In 1980, the Housing and Community Development Act changed the wording from “mobile” home to “manufactured” home, to reflect the fact that newer units were more durable (built to HUD standards) and less mobile in nature. Units constructed prior to 1976 are still referred to as “mobile” homes. The stakeholders noted that the zoning ordinance definition for a “mobile” home should be modified to reflect construction prior to 1976 without HUD certification.

Ms. Montgomery stated that modular homes can be divided into two groups: those that are “on-frame” and those that are “off-frame”. When a unit is “on-frame” it is connected to permanent I-beams between 12” to 18” wide. If it is an “off-frame”, the unit is brought to the site on a flatbed and hoisted onto a permanent foundation by a crane. This method is more expensive, however, the appraisal of “off-frame” units is higher, because of the more permanent foundation.

Steve Cartee from Charlotte-Mecklenburg Housing Partnership explained some of the differences between a manufacture home and modular homes. The discussion included explanations of “on-frame” and “off-frame,” that the serial number on the eye beam is for the steel, differences in appraisal values and stud systems.

Ms. Montgomery also noted that it Homeowners associations protect the quality of the neighborhood through restrictions. Older neighborhoods that do not have homeowner associations do not have that protection. It also can be difficult for existing Homeowner’s Associations to gain the percentage of votes needed to pass new restrictions, or covenants. It is also difficult for neighborhoods that do not have a homeowner’s association to form one and pass covenants. The State regulates Homeowner’s Associations, not the local government. A copy of the North Carolina Planned Community Act, which regulates Homeowner’s Associations and a copy of the 2005 amendments to the Act were distributed.

Ms. Montgomery asked if the definition of a manufactured home is still acceptable. The group discussed the definition and Ms. Montgomery explained that the definition could not be more strict than the state regulations. There was discussion that the length of the unit could be changed to 40’ from 32’.

The discussion evolved to the issues with the definition for modular homes. The stakeholders noted that the State definition for modular homes did not go far enough, particularly in light of the N.C. Supreme Court ruling of 1998. The issues around low quality and poor design are significant issues especially for older neighborhoods.

A discussion about 1016 Dooley Drive and a commercial modular on Beatties Ford Road ensued. The home on Dooley used “dry stack” blocks, which meets building code if it is banded or wiring is added to prevent shifting. Mr. Cartee stated that when a manufactured home is sited and maintained properly, it would appreciate in value at the same rate as a stick built home.

The stakeholders noted that the definition of modular home needs to include that it will be on a permanent foundation. Ms. Montgomery said that is already in the current definition which reads, “A dwelling unit which is constructed in compliance with the State Building Code and composed of components substantially assembled in an off-site manufacturing plant and transported to the building site for final assembly on a permanent foundation.” Ms. Montgomery noted that she would talk with the City Attorney and ask if language can be added to the modular definition referencing that modularity must be able to be moved like a “stick-built” home.

Sandra provided a summary on what staff would research for the next meeting and after some discussion, noted that the next meeting of the stakeholders is February 2, 2006.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.