

**Agenda**  
**April 2, 2024**

**REGULAR MEETING OF TOWN OF COLUMBUS  
BOARD OF PLANNING AND ADJUSTMENT**

**RULES FOR PERSONS ADDRESSING BOARD MEMBERS**

1. Each speaker will identify himself or herself by giving his or her **name and place of residence**.
2. Each speaker will be limited to speaking one time on any topic. When you are finished speaking, please step away from the podium and be seated.
3. Each speaker will be limited to **three (3) minutes** and each group's representative will be limited to a **maximum of ten (10) total minutes**. Each group is encouraged to designate a single spokesperson for their group.
4. Each speaker will confine himself or herself to the general question before the Council and avoid irrelevant comments.
5. Each person entering the Council Chamber will wear a mask until they get to their seat.

**PUBLIC MEETING**  
**(6:00 PM)**

**Planning Board**

1. Planning Board Call to Order
  2. Roll Call
  3. Approval of the minutes of the March 5, 2024 Regular Planning Board Meeting.
  4. Discussion regarding a preliminary potential housing plan.
  5. Board Member Comments
  6. Adjourn
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1 **COLUMBUS PLANNING BOARD & BOARD OF ADJUSTMENTS**

2 **Minutes of Regular Meeting**

3 **Tuesday, March 5, 2024**

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5 The Town of Columbus Planning Board and Board of Adjustments met on  
6 Tuesday, March 5, 2024, at 6:09 p.m. in the Columbus Town Hall Council Chambers.

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8 **Roll Call**

9 Mark Blanton, Chairman  
10 Virginia Green, Board Member  
11 Jimmi Buell, Board Member  
12 Ernie Kan, Voting Alternate Member

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14 **Staff Present:**

15 Timothy J. Barth, Town Manager  
16 Stephanie Serrano, Administrative Assistant

17 The meeting was called to order at 6:09 p.m. A roll call was taken, and Chairman, Mark Blanton  
18 acknowledged all present with the exception of Chairwoman, Cathy Elliott, and Board Member,  
19 Marshall Watkins.

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21 **Approval of the minutes of the February 2, 2024, Regular Planning Board Meeting**

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23 Mr. Blanton made a motion to accept the minutes of the February 2, 2024, Regular Planning  
24 Board Meeting with the changes requested. Mrs. Green seconded, and the motion carried  
25 unanimously.

26  
27 **Discussion Regarding Density of Single-Family Housing in the R-2 Zoning Area**

28 Mr. Barth stated that there are concerns about the Town's minimum lot size potentially being too  
29 small in relation to the density of Single-Family Housing in the R-2 Zoning Area, despite its  
30 recent increase to 14,000 square feet from 10,000 square feet a few months ago. Mr. Barth stated  
31 that the Mayor, Patrick McCool has requested the Planning Board to review this matter. Mr.  
32 Barth added he, along with Mayor McCool and Councilwoman Becky Kennedy, inspected the  
33 second development. Mr. Barth stated that the houses, located on Black Mountain, NC, appeared  
34 to be quite costly, with around ten modular homes on the street. Mr. Barth stated that these  
35 homes, manufactured in Alabama under controlled conditions, likely occupy less than a quarter  
36 of an acre each. Mr. Blanton asked for further clarification regarding whether the company's aim  
37 was to bring these modular homes into the community. Mr. Barth stated that the company's  
38 objective is to bring the homes to this area but he has no objection to the homes as the modular  
39 homes are of good quality but his concern primarily lies with the small lot size. Ms. Buell asked  
40 about the minimum lot size required for developments in Columbus, NC. Mr. Barth stated that if

41 you have both water and sewer the minimum lot size will be approximately 14,000 square feet,  
42 equivalent to a third of an acre. Ms. Buell stated that the lot size should certainly exceed a third  
43 of an acre, as she worries about the small lot size. Mr. Blanton asked who would be responsible  
44 for financing these modular homes, or if the company is involved in both financing the homes  
45 and subsequently profiting from them later. Mr. Barth stated that it is probable the company  
46 would both finance and profit the homes. Mrs. Kan stated these homes will resemble the home  
47 developments in Boiling Springs, where trees are clear-cut and identical homes are placed next  
48 to each other. Mr. Barth added that in Fairview, NC, the company did not clear-cut the lots  
49 during the construction of their home developments. Mr. Barth stated that during his first  
50 meeting with the company, they mentioned offering homes of 1,800 square feet for prices  
51 running between \$310,000 to \$320,000. Mr. Blanton asked whether the company is considering  
52 any other proposed sites other than the R-2 Zoning Area. Mr. Barth stated that to his knowledge,  
53 the R-2 Zoning Area is the only location the company is considering, however, he is unsure if the  
54 company has already purchased the plot of land from the owner. Mrs. Green stated that  
55 increasing the lot size would be beneficial based on her husband's experience of working on  
56 retention ponds in developments such as these and emphasized that the main issue is insufficient  
57 land, leading to runoff. Mrs. Green stated that additionally, parking is problematic, making it  
58 challenging to accommodate families without causing street congestion. Mrs. Green added that  
59 emergency vehicle access is vital in the event of a house fire, stressing for better clearance  
60 between houses. Mr. Blanton stated that he has encountered numerous neighborhoods where it is  
61 impossible for fire trucks to navigate easily, which can pose significant difficulties. Mr. Blanton  
62 asked whether the Town Council intended to set a minimum lot size of ½ acre and how much  
63 consideration they had given to determining the lot size. Mr. Barth stated that the company might  
64 decide against coming to this area if they perceive the project as unprofitable, and this decision  
65 largely hinges on the agreed-upon lot size. Mrs. Kan stated that the Town's Ordinance mentioned  
66 that if you cut down too many trees you need to replace them. Mrs. Kan stated that she is just  
67 worried that the more cement that is poured the more runoff it causes which would result in the  
68 river getting bigger thus affecting the residents. Ms. Buell asked if the Town would be supplying  
69 water to the developments and inquired about the size of the public works team.  
70 Mr. Barth stated the public works team consists of a total of 6 individuals, and currently, they are  
71 not operating at full capacity. Mr. Barth stated that the average resident would only have a minor  
72 impact on the water system. Mr. Barth added that the company has bought 26 acres of land  
73 behind the Apartment Complex, and they are expected to present a proposal for single-family  
74 homes. Mrs. Kan stated that she has concerns about the town's infrastructure, citing numerous  
75 instances where residents experienced water shortages and water line breaks. Mrs. Kan stated the  
76 need to protect the town and asserted the importance of controlling growth, which is why they  
77 have the ordinance in place.

78  
79 Mr. Blanton made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the increase of the minimum lot  
80 size of half an acre. Mrs. Green seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

81 Mr. Blanton asked if the company intends to develop the property behind the Credit Union for  
82 residential purposes. Mr. Barth stated that while the field is designated for commercial purposes,  
83 the company is solely interested in the area behind the field for residential development. Ms.  
84 Buell stated her reluctance to reside in the development due to the extent of traffic noise that  
85 would come through the area. Mrs. Green stated that the development would likely generate  
86 significant traffic, particularly during peak times such as when residents are taking their children  
87 to school. Mrs. Kan stated that during the Town Council meeting, the committee emphasized  
88 their hesitancy to install more traffic lights, as they believe it would exacerbate traffic congestion  
89 by slowing down the flow of vehicles. Mr. Barth stated the Town would likely need to install  
90 traffic lights, and when the company presents their project, if it proves to be a violable  
91 development, they would have to request a copy of the plans. Mr. Barth added that they would  
92 have to inquire about the measures the company intends to take to address the traffic issues the  
93 developments would create. Mr. Barth stated the company would also need to be required to  
94 conduct a traffic study to assess whether the development would impact the intersections. Mrs.  
95 Kan asked if the company should also be required to conduct an ecology study, particularly  
96 focusing on water runoff. Mrs. Kan added that she is concerned that runoff could not only affect  
97 their property but also neighboring properties. Mr. Barth stated that an ecology study would  
98 indeed be necessary, in addition to the traffic study. Mr. Barth stated that he would like to  
99 address three applications for the positions on the Planning Board. Mr. Barth added that these  
100 applicants are interested in joining the board, especially since some current members are  
101 considering stepping down. Mr. Barth added that the Town Council is interested in hearing  
102 thoughts on staggered terms and asked for preferences. The Planning Board requested a three-  
103 year term for Mr. Blanton, a one year term for Mrs. Green, and two-year terms for both Ms.  
104 Buell and Mrs. Kan, however, Mrs. Kan would like to remain as an alternate. Mr. Barth stated  
105 when Mrs. Green decides to step down from the Planning Board, her position will be left vacant  
106 for Mrs. Kan, resulting in two vacancies for alternate positions. Mr. Barth stated that he will get  
107 in touch with Chairwoman, Cathy Elliott, and Board Member, Marshall Watkins, about their  
108 staggered terms and he will then play around with all of the staggered terms in order to  
109 determine which terms to give each member. Mr. Barth stated his intention to communicate with  
110 Chairwoman, Cathy Elliott, and Board Member, Marshall Watkins regarding staggered terms.  
111 Mr. Barth added that he would then work on arranging staggered terms for all members to  
112 determine the most appropriate allocation for each.

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#### 114 **Board Member Comments**

115 Mr. Blanton asked about the performance of the new tank recently purchased for the town,  
116 asking if it is functioning well thus far. Mr. Barth stated that the new tank is operating smoothly,  
117 and outlined the next steps, which involves hiring a new company to assess the tank for any  
118 potential failures. Mr. Barth added that the tank will be capable of holding a million gallons,  
119 doubling its previous capacity of 500,000 gallons. Mrs. Kan asked whether the Town was able to  
120 obtain a grant for the assessments. Mr. Barth stated he was unable to secure a grant for the

121 assessment of the old tank because the process did not progress that far but would try again. Mr.  
122 Blanton asked about the financial implications associated with the replacement of a water tank,  
123 seeking to understand the investment required for such infrastructure. Mr. Barth stated that the  
124 expense of installing a new water tank is approximately 2 million dollars. Mrs. Kan added that  
125 their existing tank is relatively new, being around 10 years old.

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127 There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Blanton made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Green  
128 seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:51 PM.

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Mark Blanton, Chairman

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Stephanie Serrano, Administrative Assistant