



Town of Beaufort, NC

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Town of Beaufort UDO Steering Committee Meeting 10:00 AM Monday, August 18, 2025 - Virtual via Zoom Minutes

Call to Order

Planner Eitner called the meeting to order at 10:00am. Those in attendance were Paula Gillikin, Commissioner (UDO Steering Committee Member), Ryan Neve, Planning Board Chairman (UDO Steering Committee Member), Vic Fasolino, Planning Board Member (UDO Steering Committee Member), Tyson Smith, White Smith Cousino (UDO Consultant), Kelly Cousino, White Smith Cousino (UDO Consultant), Sean Scoopmire, White Smith Cousino (UDO Consultant), Caitlin Cameron, White Smith Cousino (UDO Consultant), and Michelle Eitner, Planner (Town Staff). One member of the public attended to observe the meeting.

Minutes Approval

1. UDO Steering Committee Draft Minutes 8.4.25

The UDO Steering Committee meeting minutes from August 4, 2025, were approved by consensus without any changes.

Items for Discussion and Consideration

1. Coastal Resilience Overlay Single-Family Residential Exemption Language

Kelly Cousino of White Smith Cousino presented the revised language for the Coastal Resilience Overlay District regarding exemptions for nonconforming single-family houses. She explained that the language had been tied to the flood damage prevention ordinance, using terms like "substantial damage" and "substantial improvements," which are both defined in that ordinance.

The proposed language would allow nonconforming single-family houses in the overlay district to be rebuilt to pre-event dimensions on the pre-event footprint if they meet all applicable building codes, meet or exceed the regulatory flood protection elevation (unless a variance has been granted), and if applicable, receive a certificate of appropriateness for historic houses.

Additionally, the language included a provision for houses that are nonconforming with respect to height or would exceed the base zoning district height limit after improvements due to elevation requirements. In such cases, the house could be built to its height at the time of damage or the base zoning district height plus one foot for each foot the house is elevated above the regulatory flood protection elevation, up to a maximum of three feet. This aligns with the incentive in the increased construction standards that allows new construction to get an extra three feet in height if elevated above the required freeboard.

The committee members agreed that the language captured their expectations from the previous meeting's discussion and had no changes to request.

Kelly confirmed that this language would be the draft going out to the Planning Board and the BOC for their work session the following week.

2. Preliminary Drafting Discussion: Trees, Landscaping, & Bufferyards

Sean Scoopmire of White Smith Cousino led the discussion on trees, landscaping, and bufferyards based on the questions provided on Konveio last week, beginning with a disclaimer about the legal risks with adopting tree regulations in North Carolina. He noted that local governments may not have clear legal authority to regulate tree preservation, and that the limitations depend on context and framework. He mentioned that several jurisdictions have local legislation authorizing tree preservation, but the specifics vary by community.

Ryan Neve noted that the current wording in Beaufort's LDO hasn't saved a single tree since implementation because it is unenforceable and lacks consequences. He cited examples of developers cutting trees without permission and then seeking approval afterward.

The committee discussed community aesthetics, with Paula Gillikin expressing a preference for natural areas but acknowledging that a hybrid approach might be more realistic for businesses and larger developments. She referenced Mount Pleasant's (South Carolina) goal of integrating natural conditions, preserving existing plant material, and maintaining a healthy attractive appearance.

Regarding the regulatory approach, Vic Fasolino expressed concerns about using incentives, noting they create a bookkeeping burden for staff and questioning what the town would give up in exchange (parking spaces, height restrictions, etc.). The committee agreed that specific requirements would be preferable to incentives.

Michelle Eitner, Town Planner, confirmed that the administrative burden of tracking incentives could be difficult, especially in a small department.

The committee discussed goals for commercial landscaping, including:

- Screening parking areas from the street, while keeping businesses visible
- Emphasizing building foundation plantings
- Requiring shade trees in parking areas
- Providing shade along sidewalks where possible

Ryan Neve suggested that if parking is placed behind buildings, the buildings themselves can serve as effective screening.

The committee agreed that landscaping standards should apply uniformly across town rather than focusing on specific corridors.

Regarding tree selection and survival, the committee discussed:

- Requiring native species
- Using smaller caliper trees (1-inch instead of 2-inch or 3-inch) which have better survival rates
- Potentially increasing the number of required trees while allowing them to be smaller
- Requiring bonds to be held for up to two years to ensure tree establishment

On tree preservation, the committee favored:

- Protecting specific larger trees, especially native species like live oaks
- Requiring species-specific size thresholds rather than a one-size-fits-all approach
- Implementing protections for mature trees in existing residential areas
- Creating a prohibited species list for invasive plants
- Potentially requiring elevated review and permitting for removal of significant trees

The committee discussed the potential to regulate herbicides and pesticides but acknowledged enforcement challenges. They also expressed interest in regaining Beaufort's Tree City USA designation.

Sean Scoopmire noted that the consultants would research these topics further, including Pine Knoll Shores' tree regulations (which were mentioned as a potential model), and prepare a draft for the committee to review.

Kelly Cousino explained that the next meeting with the Steering Committee would likely be in mid-October, when they would have a draft of the trees, landscaping, and bufferyard ordinance for review. In the meantime, the consultants would work with staff to develop the draft.

She also shared the continued schedule for Module 1, including the BOC worksession the following week on August 25th and a panel discussion at the train depot on August 26th (both in-person and broadcast on Facebook Live), with Planning Board review scheduled for September 15th and Board of Commissioners review at the end of October.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned by consensus at about 11:50am.

_____ Committee Staff – Approved _____