

Sometimes it is hard to keep track of legislation in Raleigh. Let me either correct or provide an update on the pending land-use legislation I cited last week. Looks like Highlands may be exempt from several parts of that legislation.

The building height allowances to 60 feet, contained in one piece, apparently applies to towns with populations over 50,000 people. The same is true with the changes regarding accessory dwelling units on any residential property. The off-street parking exemption I mentioned does appear to apply to all towns.

The property tax issues are moving toward a vote on a constitutional amendment in November. But outgoing Senate leader Phil Berger still seems to be pushing a moratorium on property tax reevaluations with SB-889, the Property Tax Reappraisal Moratorium. If passed, it may apply to selected counties or statewide.

Another legislative issue in this short session is amending SB 382, the downzoning legislation passed at the end of the 2024 session. That downzoning statute limited a municipality from passing a zoning amendment that lessened the permitted use of a property without the unanimous consent of all affected property owners. SB 382 caused concern and confusion among municipalities and counties, especially those in the process of revising their Unified Development Ordinances (UDO). It also limited municipalities' ability to even make adjustments to zoning ordinances. Two pieces of legislation, HB 24 and SB 587, were introduced in the current session to clarify the issue of downzoning. Some organizations that are tracking their progress now believe these bills have stalled or been changed and will not provide clarity or correct the original downzoning bill, SB 382.

If there is no clarification, future changes to the Highlands UDO may be problematic. The North Carolina League of Municipalities is keeping track of these developments.

I want to thank in advance the work Commissioner Amy Patterson has done on researching county districting and the election of county commissioners. It is a major topic of review at this time in Macon County. Amy has found several workable options for the voters and commissioners of Macon County to consider. I know Amy and I are willing to present these options at meetings throughout the county in the coming weeks and months. We both believe this decision will have a major impact on Macon County and should not be rushed to a final decision.

At the upcoming June 18 town board meeting, Mike Hansen of McGill Engineering will return to discuss engineering costs and the phases and dredging work schedule for Mirror Lake. I encourage folks in the Mirror Lake area to attend and hear Mike's presentation. The question is whether we let both dredging phases run simultaneously, thereby generating

significant heavy construction activity but shortening the project's duration. Or do we do the phases in sequence, thus reducing construction activity for a given period of time but extending the dredging time? I know commissioners would like to hear citizens' views on this issue. That scheduling decision will be made later in the summer. The focus of this meeting will be on reviewing the remaining engineering and design costs for the project.