

## **TOWN OF SOUTHERN SHORES**

# PLANNING BOARD REGULAR MEETING

5375 N. Virginia Dare Trail, Southern Shores, NC 27949 Phone 252-261-2394 / Fax 252-255-0876 www.southernshores-nc.gov

**PITTS CENTER** 

Monday, March 18, 2024 at 5:00 PM

	MINUTES
1	Call Meeting to Order
2	Pledge of Allegiance
3	
4	Present
5	Chairperson Ward
6	Vice Chairperson Tony DiBernardo
7	Planning Board Member Lawler
8	Planning Board Member McClendon
9	Planning Board Member (alternate #1) Michael Zehner
10	Planning Board Member (alternate#2) Charlie Reis
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12	Approval of Agenda
13	Motion made by Vice Chairperson DiBernardo to approve the agenda as presented, Seconded by
14	Chairperson Ward. The motion passed unanimously. The motion passed unanimously.
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16	Approval of Minutes – December 18, 2023
17	Motion made by Chairperson Ward to approve the minutes as amended, Seconded by Vice Chairperson
18	DiBernardo. The motion passed unanimously.
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20	Public Comment
21	None
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23	Old Business
24	ZTA-23-05, Zoning Text Amendment application submitted by the Town of Southern Shores to amend
25	Town Code Sections 36-57, 36-202(d)(2), 36-203(d)(2), 36-204(d)(2), 36-205(d)(2), and 36-206(d)(2) to
26	amend the Town's current lot width requirements by amending the definitions of building setback line
27	and lot width and by establishing new measuring points for lot width
28	District District Health was and the staff Land Late (1774-22 OF Control Late Late Late Late Late Late Late Late
29 30	Planning Director Haskett presented the staff's latest draft of ZTA-23-05 for consideration. He stated,
31	Town staff is now proposing to amend the Town's minimum lot width requirements in all of the residential zoning districts by amending the definition of "building setback line" in Section 36-57 by
32	defining the building setback line as a line parallel to or concentric with the front lot line instead of the
33	street right-of-way and by removing "minimum". The proposed amendments also include another new
34	definition of "lot width" in Section 36-57 which is the width of a lot at the required building setback line
35	measured at right angles to the rear lot line. Lastly, the proposed amendments include amendments to
36	Sections 36-202(d)(2), 36-203(d)(2), 36-204(d)(2), 36-205(d)(2), and 36-206(d)(2) that reestablish the
37	building setback line as the measuring point for lot width and establishes that the building setback line is

measured 25 feet from the front lot line, or the point where the lot is 100 feet wide, whichever distance is closer to the front lot line.

Planning Director Haskett walked the board through the language as it pertained to an example of a cul de sac lot, showing where the lot becomes 100 ft wide that would be the building set back line.

Planning Board Member McClendon asked a question from page 2, line 27 "for all other Lots the building setback line shall be established 25 ft from the front line", does that mean that all houses have to be built based on 25 ft from the front line. Planning Director Haskett explained that the yard setback requirement is a minimum distance 25 ft, this is saying that the building setback line where it has to be 100 feet wide shall be at 100 but the house can be anywhere within the building window of 25 on the front and rear and 15 on the sides.

Chairperson Ward read a portion of his correspondence letter to Planning Director Haskett which read as, I believe when we started this process as directed by Town Council the objective was and still should be how to minimize reconfiguration of non-conforming adjacent lots to other Lots under the same ownership per section 36 132(2)(a-e) that could possibly result in flag Lots or other irregular non-conforming Lots. Our focus should be on this situation rather than existing Standalone lots that are legally non-conforming but are absolutely entitled to be developed. He further stated that the cul de sac lot is a prime example of a standalone lot.

Planning Director Haskett stated the staff's main purpose was to make this ordinance or lot width requirement less ambiguous.

Planning Board Member McClendon asked if it is the intention of preventing lots from being developed as flag lots. Chairperson Ward stated he did not know if it was the board's intention or not.

Planning Board Member felt a lot size of 20,000 square feet should be sufficient and he is comfortable with the language as it was before this was brought to the board. He stated, there are very few lots that are left that could be re-subdivided and still meet the criteria that we're talking about. This is reactive and not necessarily better.

Chairperson Ward stated that we are trying to eliminate the development of smaller lots under same ownership. All that non-conforming language was put into place, which is solid language. The question is what do we want to do as far as lot width goes?

Planning Director Haskett stated there is some confusion between setback line and yard setback and he is open to changing the term *building setback line* to something else. Call it what it is, lot width line or something to that effect. It also has multiple definitions which add to the confusion, one definition in subdivision ordinance and the other in the zoning ordinance.

Planning Director Haskett asked the board if they would be agreeable to creating a new term with respect to lot width.

Planning Board Member Zehner asked what the minimum frontage requirement is. Planning Director Haskett answered the minimum standard is 30 ft.

Planning Board Member Zehner recommended using either *setback* or *yard* for structures, not both. He stated the only reason you would usually have the yard provision is for exemptions for what can be in the yard, but you could easily just say that these are exempt or not subject to a setback or subject to a lesser setback. Just define what a building setback is, front and side and rear building setbacks and how the lot width relates to those is different but is simplified.

Planning Board Member Lawler asked how you define the front lot line. Planning Director Haskett stated the zoning ordinance defines it as the line separating said lot from that street which is designated as the front street on the building permit certificate of occupancy or Subdivision plat that is the front lot line.

Vice Chairperson DiBernardo asked why we would change the terminology that is being used in the surveys that are being submitted with applications. Why not match the same terminology that is being submitted.

Chairperson Ward felt the building setback line in both the subdivision section and general zoning section needed to be the same definition. He further stated that he still maintains the board is talking about how we treat lots that have the potential to be recombined and or subdivided.

Planning Board Member McClendon agreed with Vice Chairperson DiBernardo in keeping the same terminology. If the term building setback line is used, then it should be identified with the term MBSL utilized by surveyors.

Planning Director Haskett asked the board what they thought about using the term Lot Width Line, rather than Setback Line.

Planning Board Member Zehner stated the minimum building setback line front is 25 feet or where the lot meets the minimum lot width required (100 ft). The minimum building setback line of the front would be reset to whatever the distance the lot meets the minimum lot width.

Chairperson Ward asked if a lot didn't come to 100 feet until nearly the rear of the parcel, where would that fall in this ordinance. Planning Director Haskett stated if it was a proposed lot, it wouldn't be able to be approved and if it was an existing lot, it would be non-conforming.

Chairperson Ward stated he felt the main purpose of the discussion is trying to limit what you can do at the subdivision and recombination situations and was not concerned with the lots that are non-conforming legally.

Planning Board Member Zehner asked what the objective is. Chairperson Ward stated it was to minimize small lots.

Planning Board Member Zehner stated the ordinance already does that by stating the minimum lot size.

Planning Board Member McClendon felt that if a property owner wanted to subdivide their lot and each divided parcel was a minimum of 20,000 sq. feet then the property owner should be allowed.

Planning Board Members McClendon and Zehner both were not concerned with flag lots if the minimum lot size was met.

133 Planning Board Member McClendon stated if a parcel meets the minimum width requirement, the 30 ft. 134 access requirement along with the minimum 20,000 sg. foot lot size, then they should be allowed to 135 develop it. He stated in his mind the 20,000 minimum square foot size is low density. 136 137 Chairperson Ward stated he would think many residents would not agree with McClendon's low-density 138 explanation and would like to see bigger lots. Planning Board Member McClendon stated people may 139 prefer that, but the truth is several smaller lots were platted in Southern Shores and it just happens they 140 have same ownership, what if they weren't owned by the same owner. 141 142 Chairperson Ward felt the Land Use spirit is that of homes on large lots. The town has made a real 143 concerted effort to go in that direction and that is why the non-conforming lot language was put 144 together and an ordinance created. If there is some subdivision as a byproduct of recombination, then 145 that the lot might not be a rectangle. 146 147 Vice Chairperson DiBernardo requested the board focus on today's agenda item and move forward. The 148 board is focusing too much on some rare situations. 149 150 Chairperson Ward recommended building setback line definition mirror each other in both the zoning 151 and subdivision sections. 152 153 Planning Director Haskett stated to make it clearer, building setback line or minimum building setback 154 line should be for structures and add another term for width of lots. 155 156 Planning Director Haskett stated he appreciated the conversation and the feedback received to this 157 point and could ask the board if they are in favor of not in favor of flag lots, or no minimum lot width, 158 but really would like to get a sense of whether the board would recommend approval or disapproval of 159 what is in front of them. Also, would the board like to see something different that would allow any lot if 160 you had 20,000 sq. feet? 161 162 Chairperson Ward did not feel comfortable recommending the ZTA in this current form to go to Town 163 Council. 164 165 Planning Board Member McClendon's opinion was to keep the 30 feet wide requirement at the street, 166 20,000 square foot lot, but the rest of it including lot widths he did not have a strong opinion about. 167 168 Planning Board Member Zehner asked who initiated the text amendment and what is the goal. Planning 169 Director Haskett stated staff initiated the text amendment with the goal of making it clearer. What is 170 current is clear but very strict. 171 172 Chairperson Ward would like to have more time to work with the ZTA and stated not having the 100 ft 173 wide requirement runs against the grain. 174 175 Vice Chairperson DiBernardo stated MBSL should be added under the definition to make it consistent.

Chairperson Ward recommended at a minimum that the ordinance says a lot has got to be 100 feet at

some point on a newly subdivided lot and by the way it's got to be 20,000 square feet minimum. Vice

Chairperson DiBernardo agreed for a newly subdivided lot.

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Planning Board Member Zehner stated that most municipalities have a minimum lot width requirement in order to create some regularity on the dimensions of lots so that you have this rectangular grid layout where all of the houses are set back almost equidistant and where they're set back the lots are approximately consistent.

Chairperson Ward stated for simplicity you've got to hit the 100 feet at some point., without it you cannot subdivide.

Planning Director Haskett stated that we have recommended previously and what we have right now is that it would have to maintain 100 feet after it gets to that point, without this there could be some very irregular shaped lots.

Planning Board Member McClendon stated you are going to have irregular shaped lots with subdividing. Over the years different sections of Southern Shores was platted by different people and at different times and there are lots of irregular funny shaped lots. He stated the 20,000 square feet keeps Southern Shores in the low-density business.

Chairperson Ward added the 100 ft which has always been there should be maintained.

Planning Board Director Haskett polled the board, we agree that we want the same definition of building set back line or something similar whatever that term may be yeah as long as they're consistent in zoning and subdivision. The board members agreed.

Planning Director Haskett asked, should we create a new term for lot width and not use building set back line. Planning Board Member Zehner disagreed as he felt there was some relationship between the two.

Planning Director Haskett asked if the lot needed to be 100 ft. wide at some point. Planning Board Members McClendon and Zehner, and Vice Chairperson DiBernardo opposed. Planning Board Member Zehner stated the point the goal needs to be defined.

Chairperson Ward asked Planning Board Member McClendon if he was comfortable with the lot being less than 100 ft as long as the lot size was 20,000. Planning Board Member McClendon answered yes in the case of a subdivision. Both Zehner and DiBernardo stated they need to know the goal behind the 100 ft. and were not comfortable agreeing to it without knowing the goal.

Chairperson Ward stated he would like to keep the 100 ft. lot width requirement for subdivisions, regardless of where on the parcel it reaches the 100 ft.

Planning Director Haskett stated at this point staff will amend the ZTA so that building setback line is changed to lot width line in this proposed definition, everything else stays the same in that section. Section 36-22 would be amended to eliminate for lots that front a cul de sac the building setback line shall be established 25 ft from the front lot line or the point where the lot is 100 ft whichever distance is closer to the front lot line and get rid of for all other Lots the building setback line should be established 25 feet from the front lot line. The board was not in consensus.

MOTION: Hearing the need for further discussions and consideration, Chairperson Ward moved to not approve ZTA-23-05 this evening, Seconded by Vice Chairperson DiBernardo. The motion passed unanimously.

After the motion Planning Board Member McClendon added that singling out cul-de-sac is pretty arbitrary in his mind because there are many streets that have very sharp curves on them and they create a very similar pie-shaped lot, obviously narrow on the outside of the curve and very wide on the inside of the curve, and to make this irregular thing specific to cul de sacs doesn't seem appropriate.

# Chairperson Ward called for a five-minute recess 6:21 pm meeting recessed at 6:25 pm

### **New Business**

ZTA-24-02, a Zoning Text Amendment application submitted by the Town of Southern Shores to amend Town Code Section 36-171 to amend the Town's lot disturbance/stormwater management permit requirements by establishing that a lot disturbance/stormwater management permit is required to remove trees greater than 6 inches in diameter, measured at 4.5 feet above the ground, within a front, side or rear yard (setback) on any unimproved lot in the general commercial zoning district and the penalty for not obtaining a lot disturbance/stormwater management permit to remove trees greater than 6 inches in diameter, measured at 4.5 feet above the ground, within a front, side or rear yard (setback) on any unimproved lot in the general commercial zoning district

The staff report read as, at the February 6, 2024, Town Council meeting, the Town Council directed Town Staff to draft Town Code amendments to modernize the Town Code. At the March 12, 2024, Town Council meeting, the Town Council adopted ZTA-24-01 (with revisions) which included amendments to Chapter 24, Planning and several sections in Chapter 36, Zoning. The initial draft of ZTA-24-01 included amendments to Section 36-171, Lot Disturbance and Stormwater Management which were withdrawn by Town Staff prior to February 21, 2024, Planning Board meeting. Town Staff is now proposing similar amendments to Section 36-171, Lot Disturbance and Stormwater Management which if approved, would do the following:

• Establish that a Lot Disturbance/Stormwater Management Permit is required to remove trees greater than 6 inches in diameter, measured at 4.5 feet above the ground, within a front, side or rear yard (setback) on any unimproved lot in the general commercial zoning district.

•Establish the penalty for not obtaining a Lot Disturbance/Stormwater Management Permit to remove trees greater than 6 inches in diameter, measured at 4.5 feet above the ground, within a front, side or rear yard (setback) on any unimproved lot in the general commercial zoning district.

O It would be an offense for any person to remove a tree greater than 6 inches in diameter, measured at 4.5 feet above the ground within a front, side or rear yard (setback) on any unimproved lot within the general commercial zoning district without first obtaining a Lot Disturbance/Stormwater Management Permit.

O it would be an offense for a property owner to employ, authorize or direct any third person or entity to remove a tree greater than 6 inches in diameter, measured at 4.5 feet above the ground within a front, side or rear yard (setback) on any unimproved lot within the general

commercial zoning district without first obtaining a Lot Disturbance/Stormwater Management Permit.

O A separate offense shall be deemed to have been committed for each tree greater than 6 inches in diameter, measured at 4.5 feet above the ground within a front, side or rear yard (setback) on any unimproved lot within the general commercial zoning district that is removed without first obtaining a Lot Disturbance/Stormwater Management Permit.

O When a tree greater than 6 inches in diameter, measured at 4.5 feet above the ground within a front, side or rear yard (setback) on any unimproved lot within the general commercial zoning district is removed without first obtaining a Lot Disturbance/Stormwater Management Permit, a warning citation would be issued to the offender allowing 30 days to abate the violation. A replacement tree similar in size would be required to abate the violation. If the violation is not abated within 30 days, the offender would be subject to a civil penalty in accordance with Town Code Section 1-6(d).

The Town's currently adopted Land Use Plan contains the following Policy that is applicable to the proposed ZTA:

• Policy 2: The community values and the Town will continue to comply with the founder's original vision for Southern Shores: a low-density residential community comprised of single-family dwellings on large lots (served by a small commercial district for convenience shopping and services located at the southern end of the Town. This blueprint for land use naturally protects environmental resources and fragile areas by limiting development and growth.

Policy 26: Promote open space, tree protection, and natural vegetation diversity.

O Action Item 26-b Encourage lot preparation methods that preserve natural vegetation and minimize clear cutting.

### RECOMMENDATION

 Town Staff has determined that the proposed amendments are consistent with the Town's currently adopted Land Use Plan and Town Staff recommends that the Planning Board recommend approval of the application to the Town Council.

Planning Board Member Lawler asked what size is proposed to be replanted if cut. Planning Director Haskett stated similar in size to what was cut or similar in size to the potential growth size.

Planning Board Member McClendon asked for confirmation if they pertained to an existing commercial property owner if they want to have a tree taken down. Planning Director Haskett answered it applies if the lot is vacant and if the tree is in a side, front or rear setback. If the lot is not vacant then they are not required to get a lot disturbance permit and they may remove the tree.

Planning Board Member Zehner stated that the replanting requirement may not accomplish anything if the tree is removed before it goes through site plan review. He inquired if the town could require the applicant to replant if they were found in violation of not obtaining a permit during the site plan review. Planning Director Haskett stated he felt the applicant could be forced to replant trees if the applicant removed the trees during the site plan review.

Planning Board Member Zehner recommended asking the town attorney whether or not there's any ability to put a provision in there that says violation shall be taken into account or tree removal taken into account during site plan review. He stated with the planting requirement you're not going to get them to plant the same size tree and you don't necessarily want them to either, and anything over six inches is going to be challenging from a survivability standpoint.

Chairperson Ward inquired what the offence was for removing a tree. Planning Director Haskett answered a warning citation with 30 days to abate the violation and if it's not abated then the fine could be up to \$500 each day it continues to exist.

Vice Chairperson DiBernardo stated when a similar ordinance was brought before a previous Planning Board, they approved the language with, if the property owner cut down a large tree you must replace it on a 1:1 ratio with a tree at least 4 feet high or a replacement at a smaller height with a 2:1 ratio. He recommended having some regulations in place ahead of time.

Chairperson Ward stated there have been three versions of the ordinance and the current version does not include residential, and he would like to know why only a draft pertaining to commercial only is being considered. He stated he understands why one portion was being pulled out, the portion where a survey would require showing every tree 6 inches in diameter but is questioning why the first provision is being pulled out. Planning Director Haskett answered staff agreed it was quite a burden to have someone hire a surveyor and show all trees greater than six inches in diameter, measuring four and a half feet above the ground and had that removed, with respect to just applying it to commercial districts in light of a recent special use permit application the town went through it became apparent to staff that there are concerns with buffers with respect to vacant lots and adjoining property and this is a way to encourage retention of trees inside and rear setback areas, that's why it is commercial only.

Chairperson Ward stated all districts could be left in. Planning Director Haskett stated the same answer applies and the board can recommend residential use.

Chairperson Ward read section 36-171 from the original ZTA (not the version on the agenda) starting with line 6.

subject to the requirements of GS 16d if applicable in all Town zoning districts no grading filling topography alteration or removal of any tree greater than 6 inches in diameter measured at 4.5 feet above the ground on any unimproved lot or demolition and clearing of improved property nor any man-made change....

Chairperson Ward felt the ZTA should certainly have some allowance to restrict cutting trees down in residential area without getting a lot disturbance permit and that this stated language would be the proper language to be included. He recommended adding residential to the ZTA. He stated he was trying to avoid having residential lots clear cut and then not being developed on for a number of years. Planning Board Member Zehner stated this would not stop someone from clear cutting a lot. Planning Director Haskett stated that is correct, the property owner would need just need to obtain a permit first.

Planning Board Member Zehner recommended for commercial it be expanded to any tree removal, regardless of size.

370 Planning Director Haskett stated with this version one of the reasons for commercial is because buffers 371 are in some cases required and buffers can retain existing vegetation, so this is a was a way to try to 372 encourage retaining existing vegetation. In residential when you have single family dwelling there's no 373 buffer required. 374 375 Vice Chairperson DiBernardo agreed with adding residential as he has been advocating for it since 2007 376 and recommends maintaining the trees to lessen the water runoff. He also recommended as a compromise to at least add residential areas that buffer commercial. 377 378 379 Chairperson Ward was adamant about including residential, as written in the original and second 380 version. 381 382 Planning Board Member Lawler stated that you have to take into consideration that trees are not just an aesthetic you see but there is a storm water function that they are providing, and the town should not 383 384 allow that infrastructure to go without being evaluated. 385 386 Chairperson Ward questioned how you regulate taking trees down when some people just do not want 387 them, and it is their property rights. 388 389 Vice Chairperson DiBernardo stated we are talking about undeveloped lots. 390 391 Planning Board Member Zehner was fine having residential regulations according to a six-inch diameter 392 for undeveloped lots but felt all trees should be considered for commercial. 393 394 Chairperson Ward was amenable to having residential and commercial broken out separate but wants a 395 regulation which covers all districts. 396 397 Planning Board Member McClendon stated he can see having to remove trees from the permittable 398 building area but not touch the setback areas. 399 400 Vice Chairperson DiBernardo asked Planning Director Haskett what would be more efficient, to go with 401 combining the residential and commercial or separate the two. Planning Director Haskett stated 402 whatever the board recommends. If the board would like both then the reference to the general 403 commercial zoning district would need to be removed (page 3, line 30 of ZTA 24-02) 404 405 Vice Chairperson DiBernardo stated in earlier versions the tree was always 10 or 12 inches in diameter 406 and there may be pushback with the lower circumference. 407 408 Chairperson Ward stated all applications for a lot disturbance and storm water management permit shall 409 be accompanied by a survey and preliminary site plan prepared by a state licensed professional surveyor for all districts and asked what prevents an owner from cutting trees and then not developing the 410 411 property for several years. Planning Director Haskett answered nothing changes about what they have to 412 submit for a lot disturbance in storm water management permit including they don't have to show any trees on said survey. Also, nothing will prevent someone from obtaining a lot disturbance storm water 413

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Chairperson Ward asked what the criteria is for a lot disturbance permit. Planning Director Haskett answered a survey that shows spot elevations in reference to mean sea level throughout the lot.

management permit and removing the trees and not developing it for 10 years.

Chairperson Ward suggested also requiring a preliminary site plan be submitted with the lot disturbance permit, this would show the property owner is more serious about developing the lot and not just
removing vegetation and having it undeveloped for years. He would even like to tie a time limit with the lot disturbance and building permit requirement.
Planning Board Member Zehner stated that this is challenging.
Planning Board Member Charlie Reis stated presumably what's going on is that people are clearing the
lot to increase the value of the unbuilt lot.
Vice Chairperson DiBernardo suggested regulating it so nothing can be removed in the setbacks, perhaps
until construction starts.
Chairperson Ward would like preliminary site plan required too. He stated there needs to be a way to
move people towards not cutting trees until they are ready to build.
Planning Board Member Zehner stated if Chairperson Wards recommendations cannot be achieved
within this ZTA then maybe the board should move this ZTA along as stipulated subject to commercial
only and he made that motion.
Planning Board Member Zehner stated he thinks this is serving a purpose.
Planning Board Member McClendon stated he would like to add there is a high interest in residential and
he doesn't think the board is ready for it tonight.
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Chairperson Ward would like to see both residential and commercial approved together as he felt
residential would get pushed to the side.
Planning Board Member Zehner stated his rationale is the agenda for tonight's meeting where ZTA 24-02
is described for the public's benefit speaks about commercial only, it doesn't talk about this being
something for other districts and he believes it would be appropriate to only address what has been
advertised. Planning Board Member McClendon agreed.
Chairperson Ward thought it should be readvertised for both residential and commercial and brought
back.
Vice Chairperson Ward asked what properties would primarily be affected by this. Planning Director
Haskett stated properties owned by the Stone Family and Saga.
MOTION: Planning Board Member Zehner moved to recommend approval of ZTA 24 as presented with
the only change is to correct a typo on page two line 30 an underlined "or", Seconded by Planning
Board Member McClendon. The motion passed 4-1; opposed by Chairperson Ward
By consensus, the Planning Board recommended that these requirements should apply to the
residential district.
Public Comment
None

466 467 468 469 470 471 472 473 474	Planning Board Member Comments Planning Board Member Zehner stated Dare County is holding Affordable Task Force Meetings and requested to add talks to the Planning Board's May agenda; talk about how we as a town intend to address housing and housing affordability within Town relative to that Initiative.  Vice Chairperson DiBernardo recommended adding the commercial design standards to a future agenda.  Chairperson Ward would also like to add PUD's and regulating accessory dwelling unit language.
475 476 477 478	Planning Board Member McClendon announced the Coastal Studies Institute will be holding an Open House on Saturday, April 20 <sup>th</sup> ,
479 480 481	Announcements Planning Director Haskett announced the next meeting will be April 15, 2024.
482 483	Adjourn  Motion to adjourn the meeting by Vice Chairperson DiBernardo, Seconded by Chairperson Ward. The
484	time was 7:30 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.
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486	ATTEST: Respectfully submitted,
487 488 489	Andy Ward, Chairperson  SEAL SHOP Shella Kane, Town Clerk