

Town of Unionville Planning Board

Meeting Minutes

May 4, 2026, 7:30 PM

1102 Unionville Church Road, Unionville, NC 28110, US

The Town of Unionville Planning Board held its regular meeting on Monday, May 4, 2026 at Unionville Town Hall. Chairman JR Hayes and members Mark Arrowood, Will Crook, Annette Harris and Steve Outen and alternate Jerry Adams were present. Members Devin Clontz and Doug Helms and alternate Whitney Wall were absent.

1. Pledge of Allegiance to the United States Flag

2. Invocation

The invocation was led by Planning Board Member Jerry Adams.

3. Welcome and Call to Order

Planning Board Chairman JR Hayes the May 4, 2026 Regular Meeting of the Town of Unionville Planning Board to order.

4. Approval of Minutes of April 6, 2026, Meeting

The minutes of the April 6, 2026 meeting were presented for approval. No revisions were offered.

Annette Harris made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted and Will Crook seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Consideration of Recommendation for ZC-26-01

a. A Rezoning Request for 6.46 Acres on Concord Highway from RA-40 to B-2 Zoning

Clerk/Land Use Administrator Melody Braswell advised the Board that this item had been before the Board previously but required reconsideration due to procedural technicalities. All adjoining property owners had since been properly notified and the property duly posted. No substantive changes to the application had occurred. The request involves the rezoning of 6.46 acres on Concord Highway, within the Martin Ridge development area, from RA-40 to B-2. Administrator Braswell noted that the parcel falls within the Future Land Use Commercial District and confirmed, in her professional opinion, that the request is consistent with the Town's Future Land Use Map and Land Use Ordinance. The Board was advised that a public hearing and public comment period is scheduled for May 18, 2026 at 7:00 PM at Town Hall, at which time members of the public will have the opportunity to speak.

Back-up Land Use Administrator Michael Harvey clarified the motion language required of the Board, noting that a recommendation of approval should affirm consistency with the adopted comprehensive plan, and that the Planning Board Chair would be required to sign a statement of consistency to be presented to elected officials at the subsequent legislative hearing.

Motion to recommend approval of ZC-26-01 as consistent with the recommendation provided in the staff report and the adopted comprehensive plan was made by Board Member Mark Arrowood and seconded by Board Member Steve Outen. The motion carried unanimously, 6-0.

6. Review of Recommended Article 7 of Unified Development Ordinance – Michael Harvey

Back-up Land Use Administrator Michael Harvey presented a review of the recommended revisions to Article 7 of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), covering subdivision standards. The presentation addressed several significant policy and procedural changes, with Board feedback requested by the following month's meeting.

Consolidation of Subdivision Standards. The revised Article 7 consolidates what are currently Articles 14 and related sections of the existing Land Development Ordinance into a single, unified chapter for ease of use and access.

Equestrian-Oriented Subdivisions. Harvey noted that the ordinance currently contains provisions for equestrian-oriented subdivisions (Section 180A), applicable in RC-80, RA-40, and RA-20 districts, but that the Town has never processed a single such application. The Board was asked to consider, as homework for the following month, whether this provision serves a meaningful purpose and whether it should be retained, modified, or removed in favor of allowing horse-keeping subject to general lot size and accessory structure standards. Board Member Annette Harris noted the provision likely originated from early model ordinance work mirroring Union County, coinciding with the beginning of the Bonterra development era.

Elimination of 20-Foot Private Easements. Harvey strongly recommended discontinuing the current allowance for lot divisions served by 20-foot private access easements, citing liability concerns related to emergency vehicle access and inconsistency with the comprehensive plan's goal of a coordinated street network. All previously approved easements would be grandfathered. Going forward, private roads developed to specified standards and maintained through recorded agreements would replace individual easements.

Subdivision Review Authority. Harvey recommended that subdivision approvals be handled at the staff level rather than by the Planning Board, on the basis that subdivision review is a binary, non-discretionary determination. He noted that the North Carolina General Assembly has legislation pending that would likely strip local advisory boards of subdivision approval authority statewide. Several Board members expressed a preference for retaining Planning Board review of preliminary plats for major subdivisions, at least in the near term, and Harvey indicated he would accommodate that preference in the draft while advising that a future amendment may be necessary. Administrator Braswell noted that the formalized Technical Review Committee process established in an earlier article would provide additional staff-level oversight, including review by outside engineers and referral to DOT and DEQ as appropriate.

Subdivision Categories. Harvey outlined the hierarchy of subdivision types under the revised ordinance: exempt divisions (defined by state law, NCGS 160D-903), minor expedited subdivisions (meeting specific statutory criteria allowing bypass of the preliminary plat requirement), minor subdivisions, and major subdivisions. He emphasized that approval of an exempt plat does not constitute a guarantee of any building or zoning permit.

Additional Revisions of Note. Other substantive changes discussed included: requirements that all approved plats be recorded at the Union County Register of Deeds within a defined period or the approval expires; prohibition on land-disturbing or development activity on individual lots prior to plat recordation; phasing standards ensuring each development phase is self-sufficient with respect to stormwater, infrastructure, and access; performance guarantees and bonding provisions; mandatory subdivision agreements to be recorded with all final plats; expanded suitability of land standards; flexible/cluster subdivision standards allowing lot size reductions in exchange for a minimum 30% open space dedication; and a centralized section containing all plat drawing specifications.

Table of Permitted Uses. Harvey briefly introduced the reformatted table of permitted uses, which organizes land uses into broad categories rather than an A-to-Z listing, providing staff greater flexibility to classify novel or unlisted uses without requiring a code amendment. He noted the table will be finalized with a side-by-side comparison to the current table prior to Board action. He flagged that data centers would be recommended as prohibited in all districts due to their incompatibility with the Town's infrastructure. He also advised the Board that sexually oriented businesses, currently subject to a special use permit in the light industrial district, would

be required under state law to be permitted by right, though robust separation standards authorized by statute would be incorporated.

Floodplain and Watershed Ordinances. Harvey advised that these ordinances are substantially governed by state and federal mandates, leaving little discretionary latitude for the Board. He noted he would not be recommending adoption of FEMA's suggested four-foot freeboard standard, citing unresolved legal conflict with North Carolina's prohibition on down-zoning and the creation of nonconformities, a position not yet formally resolved by the state attorney general.

Warranty Period. Harvey reminded the Board that NFocus provides a two-year warranty period following ordinance adoption, during which any amendments required to address compliance issues—including those necessitated by legislative changes—would be made at no additional cost.

The Board was asked to review the materials and provide feedback to Administrator Braswell prior to the June meeting, at which signage, parking, and landscaping (Article 6) would be discussed.

7. Other Business

No other business was raised.

8. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Board Member Jerry Adams and seconded by Board Member Annette Harris. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Sonya W. Gaddy

Deputy Clerk

Note: These minutes were drafted with the assistance of Clerk Minutes by HeyGov. All content was reviewed and approved by the Deputy Clerk prior to submission.