

Adjourned Meeting
 September 22, 1970
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An Adjourned Meeting of the City Council of the City of Charlotte, North Carolina, was held jointly with the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners, on Tuesday, September 22, 1970 at 4:00 o'clock p.m., in the Commissioners Board Room, Fourth Floor, County Office Building, with Chairman Charles M. Lowe presiding.

PRESENT FOR THE CITY: Mayor John M. Belk, Fred D. Alexander, Sandy R. Jordan, Milton Short, Jerry Tuttle, James B. Whittington and Joe D. Withrow.

ABSENT: Councilman John H. Thrower.

PRESENT FOR THE COUNTY: Chairman Charles M. Lowe, and Commissioners James G. Martin, Charles T. Myers, Wallace S. Osborne and M. W. Peterson.

ABSENT: None.

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING.

Presentation of Apartment Communities and Land Use Controls recommendations by Planning Staff.

PRESENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APARTMENT COMMUNITIES AND LAND USE CONTROLS.

Mr. McIntyre, Planning Director, stated they would like to discuss the large scale multi-building apartment projects and the need for better regulations and guides for development in the City and County.

Recently there has been a trend toward ever increasing sizes of multi-building apartment projects that are being developed; they range now up to 3,000 units. As the projects increased in size, our policies and regulations have become increasingly inadequate to deal with the situations that arise in the development of these kinds of multi-family projects.

He stated aspects of large scale apartment projects that in their judgment pose problems include streets, address identification, fire protection, trash and garbage collections, storm drainage, open space, recreation, livability and compatibility of these developments with space and development and good site design.

Mr. McIntyre stated in assessing these aspects of apartment developments, the Planning Commission and the Planning staff has had the benefit of the experience and judgments of several departments of government - Fire Department, Building Inspection, Public Works, Police and Traffic Engineering. Each department has contributed to the evaluation of our present deficiencies and has also concurred in the recommendations we have to make in the matter. It was the consensus of all of the agencies that the zoning ordinance and the subdivision ordinance were the regulatory devices that should be used to resolve the situation.

Mr. McIntyre stated he would like to briefly discuss the principal matters that concern them in the development of the large scale apartment projects. That many large projects are being developed without any public street systems or without any reasonably well planned private street or driveway system. This can have many adverse consequences:

- (1) Efficient collection of garbage and trash may be impossible, adding to the cost of such services.
- (2) Adequate, quick and convenient access for fire fighting equipment may be non-existent as the apartment projects are laid out and developed.

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- (3) Apartments in the interior of large projects may be difficult to find since they cannot be numbered by any conventional property numbering system. Mail delivery, police protection and fire protection services become difficult.
- (4) Streets that may be needed through the project as a part of the community's planning major street thoroughfare system may be blocked by the development of the apartment project. Streets needed for a good neighborhood circulation system may be blocked also.

He stated at the present time, the Fire Department cannot exercise any surveillance over the location of fire hydrants within these projects nor can they exercise any surveillance over the supply of water within the project for fire fighting purposes.

As matters now stand the Public Works Department can exercise no surveillance over storm drainage; and large apartment projects particularly change the runoff characteristics. The Department has received many complaints in this area from property owners adjoining apartment projects. Some apartment projects have been planned with little evident concern for their effect on their single family neighbors and some home owners have been needlessly harmed by careless planning of apartment projects. In too many projects the amount of green open space is inadequate and the green open space that does exist is so poorly organized or poorly developed that it adds little or nothing to the livability of the project.

He stated apartment projects are now, and will be moreso, the home of many small children. The projects should have built into them in proper location adequate sized play spaces that will serve the needs of little children who need to have recreation activities close to their homes.

Some projects developed recently might be characterized as a series of buildings rising out of a sea of asphalt. The amenities of trees, grass and shrubbery are almost totally foreign to these developments. The effect of this is a stark, grim, harsh cheerless environment - complete wall to wall bricks, mortar and asphalt unrelieved by a fresh breath of vegetation.

Mr. McIntyre stated in too many instances there is a general lack of design quality in the way the whole project is laid out on the ground. This has to do with the design and relationship between the location of streets, buildings, driveways, parking lots, open space and recreation facilities to each other.

He stated he is not talking about all projects; that there are a good many that are highly commendable as far as they are concerned. But there are also a good many that pose some of the problems.

He stated in general terms they recommend that the developers of all multi-building apartment projects be required to submit to the Planning Commission plans for such projects. This plan submission procedure would be similar to the way we now handle subdivision. They recommend that the developments be subject to a series of new standards and regulations. These regulations are set forth on Pages 10-13 of the booklet entitled: "Apartment Communities and Land Use Control". For comparison purposes the present regulations governing such projects are on Page 20.

Councilman Tuttle stated one of the objections to the proposed plan by the Builders is the proximity of parking to buildings. Mr. McIntyre stated one of the provisions the Builders objected to specifically is a recommendation that on the front face of the apartment building there be a 20 foot space between the front of the building and the nearest asphalt or paving that would provide parking or circulation.

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Mr. Bob Landers, Planning Architect, showed some graphics developed showing how some apartment projects in the city have been built and how in these projects they found some of the conditions talked about.

From the illustrations he pointed out a private drive that serves as a parking area and a circulation area through the project. He stated private drives and driveways are not subject to requirements or standards for public streets. He pointed out the difficulties when all residents receive their street address from one street making identification for deliveries difficult. He stated the Engineering Department assigns street addresses but they have no authorization at present to recognize any private drives. There is no official notification for the post office or fire department or any others and this means the departments spend weeks finding where the private driveways are located.

He pointed out a problem of fire protection. A project that is served by 2 inch water meter lines; there are fire hydrants in the project, but the Fire Department advises if there is only a 2 inch meter they cannot get adequate water supply. That a meter compatible with a 6-inch water line is needed for fire fighting purposes.

He pointed out single family residences abutting the project, and stated in some cases the apartment buildings are within 16 feet of the common property line. One illustration was of a project that lacked any useful open space and the parking and circulation have been combined to form a multi-purpose. The areas are the only large open areas suitable for play; the rear areas are service areas where the garbage cans are located for storage and collection purposes.

He pointed out a public street stub that was completely ignored when a project was built and a building was located directly in front of it, and a parking bay constructed right on the property line. He stated the adjoining property owner's home actually faces on the street stub.

One was an illustration of a cul-de-sac which served four homes and which was opened with the development of the apartment project, and made the principal secondary access to the apartment project. He stated this changes substantially the character of the area.

Mr. Landers then presented slides of the projects which were illustrated on the graphs just discussed, calling attention to the problems.

Mr. McIntyre advised it will require a public hearing to modify the zoning regulations of both the City and County and a simple modification of the subdivision ordinances.

RESOLUTION SETTING DATE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13 FOR CHANGES IN ZONING ORDINANCE AND SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE.

Councilman Whittington moved adoption of the subject resolution setting date of public hearing on Tuesday, October 13 at 2:00 o'clock p.m. in the Commissioner's Board Room, Fourth Floor, County Office Building. The motion was seconded by Councilman Tuttle, and carried unanimously.

The resolution is recorded in full in Resolution Book 7, at Page 145.

Commissioner Osborne moved that the County Commissioners set a date of public hearing on Tuesday, October 13, at 2:00 o'clock p.m., in the Commissioner's Board Room, Fourth Floor, County Office Building. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Martin, and carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT.

There being no other business before the joint bodies, the meeting was adjourned.

Ruth Armstrong
 Ruth Armstrong, City Clerk