

# Bill revamps city's zoning powers

BY PAT KIMBROUGH  
ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

HIGH POINT — A city advisory board would see its powers increase under proposed state legislation being sought at High Point's request.

A draft of a bill before the

N.C. House of Representatives would transfer authority in at least some types of zoning decisions from the City Council to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

This would streamline the approval process for developers who need a rezoning from

the city to allow construction of commercial, industrial or residential projects.

"I think it could be an opportunity to initiate something that continues our efforts of making High Point a more business-friendly, competitive environment out

there, and help it be more efficient in the process," said Councilman Britt Moore.

City Legislative Counsel Fred Baggett said he's drafted a bill that will be filed in the coming weeks that would give the council the authority to delegate final action

on zoning decisions to the commission, which currently issues only recommendations to the council on rezoning requests.

Typically, the applicant in a rezoning, such as a developer

SEE BILL/PAGE A9

## BILL

FROM PAGE A1

or property owner, has their case heard by the commission, and then has to make the same presentation to the council about a month later.

The bill would eliminate one of the hearings and the expenses that come with it, often in the form of an attorney, engineer and other experts the applicant hires.

Baggett said the draft of the bill allows for an appeals process to the council if the applicant's case is voted down by the commission.

It's what's known as a "local bill" — a type of measure that applies only to one county and is typically

deemed noncontroversial.

If it's passed by the legislature, it will be up to the council to decide on the specifics, such as the appeals process, as well as the types of zoning matters the commission would be empowered to decide.

"I think it's best to go in and ask for as broad authority as you can get, and then it's up to the nine of us to decide how to enact it within our ordinance," Mayor Jay Wagner told the council in a briefing on the bill last week.

The issue has come up for discussion before, but prior councils have opted not to pursue the state action needed to make the change.

Officials said most local governments in North Carolina use High Point's current

system, with the elected body making the final decision on most types of zoning cases.

Local exceptions are the city of Greensboro and Guilford County, as well as Randolph and Davidson counties.

"Some are using the authority and some are not," said Planning and Development Director Lee Burnette. "I don't think some of the nearby counties are using it to the full extent they were enabled."

Some give their zoning bodies power only over cases for property that's already in their jurisdiction and not requests involving annexations.

High Point's draft bill would give the council the authority to delegate all types of zoning cases, although council members cautioned that they plan to have more discussion about the scope of any changes.

pkimbrough@hpenews.com | 336-888-3531

*Don't get married...*

