

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2021

H.B. 853  
May 4, 2021  
HOUSE PRINCIPAL CLERK

H

D

HOUSE BILL DRH40513-MQ-98

Short Title: Plan Review & Cert of Occup. Scope Changes. (Public)

Sponsors: Representative Brody.

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
2 AN ACT TO LIMIT THE SCOPE OF REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATES OF  
3 OCCUPANCY AND TO ESTABLISH GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR LOCAL  
4 GOVERNMENTS WHEN APPROVING DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATIONS.

5 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

6 SECTION 1. Article 4 of Chapter 160D of the General Statutes is amended by  
7 adding a new section to read:

8 "**§ 160D-403.1. Commercial plan review for sealed plans.**

9 For development approvals, a local government reviewing plans, or a local government that  
10 contracts with a private engineering or architectural firm for plan review, for commercial  
11 buildings that are submitted under the seal of any design professional licensed under Chapters  
12 83A, 89A, or 89C of the General Statutes shall not place additional requirements as a condition  
13 of the issuance of a certificate of occupancy unless otherwise required by an applicable code, as  
14 defined in G.S. 160D-931(2)."

15 SECTION 2. Article 4 of Chapter 160D of the General Statutes is amended by  
16 adding a new section to read:

17 "**§ 160D-407. General requirements for approving permit applications.**

18 The following shall apply to local governments evaluating and approving construction  
19 permits related to site construction and land use permitting:

20 (1) All standards or requirements for the issuance of a construction permit shall  
21 be included in a written policy, standard procedure, or ordinance adopted or  
22 authorized by the governing body and shall be available for public inspection.  
23 A written policy, standard procedure, or ordinance may include formal  
24 land-use maps, capital improvement plans, or fiscally constrained road  
25 improvements established by the local government or the Department of  
26 Transportation.

27 (2) The governing body shall adopt a written policy, standard, procedure, or  
28 ordinance establishing or authorizing a department to establish a schedule that  
29 shall be used by the department in reviewing permit applications, including  
30 the maximum number of days in which a department shall have to approve or  
31 deny a complete application. The schedule may allow for extenuating  
32 circumstances which make adherence impractical; provided, however, that  
33 any schedule exceptions imposed shall be noted in the quarterly report, as  
34 defined in subdivision (4) of this section. The schedule shall be made available  
35 for public inspection and shall be published on the local government's website,  
36 if available. If the governing body authorizes a department to establish a



- 1 schedule as provided in this subdivision, the governing body shall approve the  
2 schedule before it is implemented for use by the public.
- 3 (3) A local government shall not require a permittee to reserve land, dedicate  
4 rights-of-way, adhere to planning or land use conditions, or make  
5 accommodations for future construction activities, including the installation  
6 of future infrastructure, unless the requirement is included in a written policy,  
7 standard procedure, or ordinance adopted or authorized by the governing  
8 body.
- 9 (4) A department responsible for reviewing construction permit applications  
10 shall, on a quarterly basis, submit to the governing body a report detailing the  
11 department's compliance with the schedule established under subdivision (2)  
12 of this section, including the number of permit application reviews that were  
13 completed within the time periods specified in the schedule, the number  
14 completed prior to the expiration of the time periods, and the number  
15 completed after the expiration of the time periods. The department's report  
16 shall be made available for public inspection and shall be published on the  
17 local government's website, if available. The local government may present  
18 the data in the format of its choosing provided it is in compliance with this  
19 section.
- 20 (5) A written policy, standard procedure, or ordinance shall not require a  
21 construction permit to be reviewed if another agency or department, including  
22 a State agency or department, has conducted its own review of the same or  
23 another permit related to the same project. Written policies, standard  
24 procedures, or ordinances adopted by the local government shall require that  
25 construction permits issued by the local government shall be reviewed  
26 concurrently with another permit related to the same project. The requirement  
27 for departments or agencies to review concurrently does not apply if the  
28 project is proposed to be constructed in phases, making a concurrent review  
29 impractical, or if the permittee requests nonconcurrent reviews.
- 30 (6) A local government may establish an online permit application and review  
31 process and require its use.
- 32 (7) A local government shall not require a permittee to construct off-site  
33 infrastructure improvements, including improvements related to utilities or  
34 traffic, unless the improvements are roughly proportionate and reasonably  
35 proximate to the impact of the permittee's development.
- 36 (8) A sedimentation and erosion control plan sealed by an engineer licensed under  
37 Chapter 89C of the General Statutes and submitted to a local government as  
38 part of the development plan shall not be altered by a local government unless  
39 the development plan has been altered. A local government may not impose  
40 changes to the sealed sedimentation and erosion control plan if the licensed  
41 engineer attests that the changes will not function properly, unless the local  
42 government accepts all liability.
- 43 (9) A voluntary agreement, or any other type of agreement that has the intent or  
44 effect of reversing, subverting, or modifying State law, shall be prohibited.  
45 The plan initially submitted to the local government for approval shall be  
46 recognized as the determinant of the voluntariness of any subsequent  
47 agreement. Nothing in this Chapter shall prevent the developer and the local  
48 government from entering into an agreement in which the developer  
49 voluntarily, knowingly, and willingly conveys real property, donates personal  
50 property, constructs amenities, or otherwise agrees to provide benefits to the  
51 public in conjunction with the development project; provided, however, that

1 the agreement is not directly or indirectly conditioned upon a development  
2 approval by the local government for that development or any other  
3 development by that developer. Except as specifically authorized in this  
4 Chapter, a development regulation shall not require a financial extraction or  
5 concession of any kind from a developer as a condition of any development  
6 approval.

7 (10) A development fee ordinance shall not allow for an automatic adjustment of  
8 a development fee, absent a subsequent ordinance enactment by the local  
9 government. All local government development fees shall be provided in a  
10 single fee schedule adopted as an ordinance on an annual basis after a public  
11 hearing in which all of the following apply:

12 a. Beginning not less than 24 hours prior to the public hearing, the public  
13 is provided a means by which persons may sign up to speak which  
14 must include an online portal if that local government maintains a  
15 website or other similar means.

16 b. Persons speaking at the public hearing shall have not less than two  
17 minutes to speak. No limit is placed on the number of persons who  
18 may speak.

19 (11) A local government shall not require a tree survey as part of the development  
20 process if that local government does not have a tree ordinance approved in  
21 accordance with applicable statutes. Nothing in this subdivision shall be  
22 deemed to prohibit a local government from establishing development  
23 parameter buffer zones and other designated preservation areas; provided that  
24 any buffer zones or designated preservation areas are provided in the written  
25 policy, standard procedure, or ordinance as required in subdivision (1) of this  
26 section.

27 (12) A local government shall have the authority to regulate the portion of any  
28 private road, driveway, or parking lot that lies upon the public right-of-way as  
29 to slope, width, thickness of the pavement, and design that matches any  
30 existing roadway. All other aspects pertaining to private roads, driveways, and  
31 parking lots contained within a submitted plan shall be approved by the local  
32 government if they (i) are designed by a design professional licensed in this  
33 State and (ii) meet or exceed all applicable federal and State laws and  
34 regulations."

35 **SECTION 3.** This act is effective when it becomes law and applies to site plans  
36 submitted for approval on or after that date.