

STAFF REPORT

Hearing Date: NA

Case File #: NA

General Description: Memo from Planning Board to Town Council concerning approval process for subdivisions.

Town Initiated

Citizen Initiated

Applicant(s): NA



STAFF COMMENTARY

Please find the following memo concerning subdivision plat approval prepared by Planning Board Chairman, Tom Vincenz, and approved by the Board on 1/5/17. The purpose of this memo is to provide some background on the subdivision approval process. As noted in the memo, staff and the Planning Board are finalizing a text amendment that would require the completion of necessary infrastructure (roads/utilities) before final plat approval.

PLANNING BOARD MEMO

Plat Review and Approval by Town Council

Councilman Cerrato raised a question some time ago as to when and why it was decided to remove Council from the plat approval process. Following are the Planning Board’s findings and a number of considerations on the subject. As to when and why, Wes MacLeod has looked into the approval authority for preliminary and final plats since 4/7/1997, and found it to have been with the Planning Board. If Council ever had approval authority, it goes back more than 20 years.

Should Council have approval authority? Consider the following:

1. First and foremost, Council would have no more authority than does the Planning Board to disapprove an unpopular, yet compliant project.
2. While it can always be said that two eyes are better than one, giving plat approval authority to Council would add to its already heavy workload.
3. A change in the process would further delay plat approval.
4. In an environment where development projects would result in added capital and maintenance expense to the town (roads, public landscaping, street lighting, etc.) a higher level of Council involvement might be justified. This is not the case in a largely developed town such as Sunset Beach.
5. In regard to unpopular projects, changing the process to require Council approval would result in an administrative approval becoming political.

Early in the Planning Board's discussion on this subject, Wes MacLeod suggested a text amendment which provides a great deal of added protection. This amendment, which will be presented to Council in February, will require completion of infrastructure before approval of the final plat. In so doing, title to lots cannot be conveyed to buyers before the infrastructure is completed.