

“The Score” and “The Schedule”

-Chris Smithson, Southern Pines native, resident, and Councilmember

I'd like to start by quoting from Pinehurst's Comprehensive Long Range Plan. Page 5-2, under the heading “County Image” states:

Some County residents seem to perceive Pinehurst as a community concerned with issues that are different from the issues that concern other parts of the County. At the same time, some Pinehurst residents seem to want to express opinions about issues in other jurisdictions.

The Pilot has printed a fair number of letters and editorials related to the proposed development at Pine Needles. They also publish web logs (blogs) on their website. Here's a good-faith effort at summarizing the authors and their residency. I only counted web-posters and their entries once.

Pinehurst- 6 (2 from Pinewild- sorry, but IMHO you're from Pinehurst)
Whispering Pines- 3 (all from the same person)
Unincorporated areas- 3
Southern Pines- 6

Final Score (as of 10-25-06)
Southern Pines residents- 6
Others- 12

Pinehurst residents continue to be the county leaders in telling others what to do, but Whispering Pines appears to be gaining fast, and that's just the efforts of one person. It should be noted that the guy from WP seems to think current residents should vote on who new gets to move to town- kind of like a private country club (Pilot letter, “Let Residents Decide” 10-14-06). I guess you'll have to “know people” and be “like-minded” to be allowed to move to town.

Perhaps I'm too idealistic, but I have decided the “score” is just how it should be. I like to think that most in Southern Pines who care (see my piece, “Does Anyone Really Care”) are taking a pragmatic approach to the growth issue and specifically the PUD and Pine Needles proposals. I think they are waiting for real facts and will ask the right questions at the right times. They trust and understand that the Planning Board and Council are not “fast-tracking” the proposals and will consider everything with due diligence.

Of course, if “fast-tracking” *were* going on, the Council could have voted on and approved developer plans in September. As it stands, the Planning Board has not voted yet, much less the Council, which usually has a hearing based on their recommendations the month after the Planning Board meets. It also should be noted that the Council need

not wait on any Planning Board recommendation as long as they have held a public hearing. The schedule as I see it now would likely be **no shorter** than the following:

-November 15: Planning Board hearing on PUD ordinance. (If they continue the hearing to the next meeting, the schedule may move back by a month.)

-December 12: First possible date for PUD ordinance hearing at Council meeting. Even if there is a hearing, it is unlikely there would be a vote until January.

-January 9: Likely first possible date for Council to vote on PUD ordinance

-January 17: Unless Pine Needles chooses to submit their development proposal before a PUD ordinance is passed, this would be the first possible Planning Board public hearing on the Pine Needles Village application.

-February 13: Likely first possible Pine Needles Village hearing at Council meeting. Even if there is a hearing, it is unlikely there would be a vote until March.

-March 13: Likely first *possible* date for Council to vote on PUD ordinance. This is EIGHT months after Pine Needles proposal went public at a July Council workshop. Considering most other amendments and proposals before the Town happen on more like a 3-4 month cycle from introduction to hearings to final voting, frantic claims of “fast-tracking” are surely unfounded. That is not to say the Town is dragging things out either, but due diligence is required.

I believe most Southern Pines residents prefer facts to speculative fear-mongering and knee-jerk NIMBYism. The process will take as long as it needs to take and not one second more *or* less. There has been and will be plenty of time to evaluate the FACTS of various proposals. Only with the real facts can we judge them. The people of Southern Pines already have my pledge to carry out my duties as their Town Councilmember. In turn, it is the duty of every resident to evaluate the facts as they come forward and make informed opinions on their own.

Agree or disagree with what you just read? Want to provide feedback? Please do so. It's not even necessary to send anonymous letters or create anonymous “concerned citizens” websites. Just send an e-mail. e-mail: Chris@ChrisSmithson.com