



## Think Quality – Think Future

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### Blount County Planning Department

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Attached are the comments that were received from the public hearing for campgrounds and recreation vehicle parks held on August 25, 2011.

# RV Campgrounds

My name is Brad Ansley and I have lived in Happy Valley for the past 11 years. I'm the Chair of The Raven Society and I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you this evening. The Raven Society supports the concepts of quality growth, and we know that takes a big commitment on the part of the County.

We believe that quality camping facilities are a wonderful way for regular working families from Tennessee and beyond to experience the awesome beauty of nature we've been blessed with in Blount County.

But to be brief, these are some of our concerns about the proposed zoning changes regarding campgrounds:

- A very large part of rural Blount County would be affected by this regulation, especially when you add the considerable areas included on smaller roads intersecting the larger roads. This could be nearly a mile in either direction.
- Are 5 acres enough to accommodate a quality campground and RV park, while protecting the quality of life of its neighbors? What about visual buffers or rules on location of dumpsters and dumping sites or whether litter-proof and bear-proof cans would be required? Does the county have the personnel to monitor these things? Those details we would expect to see when a commercial enterprise is imbedded within a rural neighborhood were missing.
- Is this in keeping with the admonition of the Hunter Growth Study to protect our corridors from sprawl? As one of the premiere gateways to the Smokies, it is important to maintain this gateway in a manner that is safe, attractive, economical, and healthy for our permanent residents and guests alike, and one that also enhances that critical "first impression" that visitors see when first they come here.
- We believe that allowing an RV to remain in an RV park for 270 days out of every 365 is excessive. That is nine months – the length of the school year. That sounds a lot more like a mobile home park than a campground. And it isn't clear at all what the limits of stay are for cabins or tents. There is anecdotal evidence that long term RV parks can be hot beds of criminal activity and even provide habitation for sex offenders. Is this the sort of risk that we want to subject nearby residents to? What will it do to the property values of their lots and homes? Is it the sort of thing you would like to have in YOUR backyard? The vagaries of this new regulation have the potential to negatively impact the quality of life of current taxpayers.

Like you, we at the Society love this great community and we recognize tourism as vital to preserving the qualities that make Blount County such a desirable place to live, work and play. What this County will look and feel like in the future depends to a large extent on decisions we make now. Tourism is our golden goose. In the interest of the health of that goose and in the interest of the average resident of Blount County, for whom I believe the benefits would not outweigh the negatives, I urge you to vote "no" on this resolution.

Mr. Chairman,  
Board of Commissioners of Blount County:

August 25, 2011

I spoke to this group in regard to Resolution 00-06-0/0 known as DESIGN FOR STANDARDS for CAMPGROUNDS and RECREATIONAL VEHICLE PARKS, on April 12, 2011. I think my statements still apply and I'd like to reiterate them and apply them as well to some other items on the agenda.

First, I still believe that camping is a good outdoor activity. It can be a family activity. It can also be a good survival teaching/ learning activity. As I stated, I have been camping since childhood. However, most of my activities have been far more remote than what is described here.

### **The Main Point In Any Such Discussions Is Still The Following:**

The **aim for adopting standards** for campgrounds for Blount County or any other such procedures, should be the same as stated for other zoning regulations in TCA 13-7-103. The aim is given as **promoting the health, safety, morals, convenience, order, prosperity and welfare of the present and future inhabitants.**

**There is a set of tests** given in The Tennessee Planning Commissioner Handbook (page 18) that is intended to expedite the review and adoption of amendments by the commission. Included in the tests and always worthy of consideration are these:

1. Has it been determined that there will be no adverse impact on adjoining property or that any adverse impact can be justified by the overwhelming public good or welfare?
2. Has it been determined that no one property owner or small group of property owners will benefit materially from the changes to the detriment of the general public?
3. Has it been determined that public services and facilities will not be adversely affected?

With that background in mind, I would like to discuss certain points in the proposed amendments to the Zoning Resolution of Blount County. They are as follows:

#### I. In regards to the Campground resolution:

1. What is a recreational vehicle? Does this definition include All Terrain Vehicles and Motorcycles?
2. Policy Plan 3B tells us that any regulation should be based on a clear relationship to **public health, safety and welfare.**

In the safety area, a recent TV program discussed the problem of sex-offenders operating from campgrounds near Atlanta. Another report from Orlando, Florida on February 20, 2011 stated that at least two dozen sex-offenders had lived at a campsite nearby. The campground was being closed.

Other safety hazards arise including fire, floods and sewer infiltrations.

Who will police the proposed campsites and recreational areas?

In the welfare area, How will we protect the neighbors? Site plans should give consideration to the impact on the neighborhood including clear air, noise and water quality.

Will there be a vegetative buffer along lot lines as well as along roads?

Will there be specific rules as to when lighting will be subdued and generators, radios and other motor devices be quieted?

Will a storm water drainage control system be required?

Who will police the area?

3. Under section 5b(1) the specific roads and sections are named that will accommodate such campgrounds and parks. There is also an allowance for roads directly intersecting the listed roads of as much as 5000 feet.

Applying that to the intersection of Six Mile Road and Hwy 129 that would seem to indicate that a campground could be established almost 1 mile from the intersection. Imagine a campground at Nelson's Chapel Church. The same scenario would exist on Four Mile Road off Hwy 129.

The same could be true in several other situations. One might be set up by going 5000 foot further up Old Walland Highway from Melrose bridge to establish another campground on Little River.

Are the roads wide enough to accommodate recreational vehicles?

4. Set backs from streams: Recreational Vehicle Campsites must be at least 15 feet from any river bank or stream bank. Tent campsites must be at least 15 feet. Camping cabins (6c6) must be 25 feet from any stream and 50 feet from Little River. Will this protect the county's drinking water?  
Do we have a Flood Plain system in place that will minimize flood infiltration and septic discharge in a flood situation?
5. Section 7.8cb allows vehicles to remain up to 270 days. I assume this allows campers to stay 270 days. This could be a whole school term and might be cheaper than an apartment.  
Who will police these campsites?
6. Such campgrounds, campsites and cabin sites are zoned commercial. Will they be taxed at the commercial rate?

II. In regard to Ridge-Top Regulations:

1. The committee has recommended no separate zone for Ridge-Tops. My estimation is that special measures do need to be taken to protect Blount County's mountain tops from turning out like many of those in Sevier County.

Expenditures from tourist produce a large portion of the taxes collected for use in Blount County. It is my belief that tourist come to see out beautiful unaffected landscapes.

2. Even roads build into, across or over our ridge-tops produce unwanted results. Road-ways change waterways. Sediment comes down off mountains in amounts and different pathways than before. Streams are changed. Come with me to view Montvale (Sidney Lanier) Lake.
3. Residences built on mountain tops still use public utilities. An electrical utility line can have as much detrimental effect as a roadway. Sewer and water run-off can cause serious problems especially if such enter the water shed that furnishes our drinking water.

North Carolina law 113A-209 © states No county or city may authorize the providing of the following utility services to any building or structure constructed in violation of subsection (b) of this section: electricity, telephone, gas, water, sewer, or septic system. That sounds like North Carolina is pretty serious, when you think about it.

Enough for now, in conclusion, I must say that Blount County is a very special place to live. We must be very careful how we plan its future.

Wm .B.(Booty) Miller

August 25, 2011

Statement for consideration at the Public Hearing for  
the proposed regulations for commercial campground and recreational parks.  
Blount County Planning Commission

My name is Don Headrick. I live in the Townsend Community of Tuckaleechee Cove. I would like to comment on the proposed campground ordinance by the Blount County Planning Commission. Having been present at most of the meetings when the ordinance was crafted, I would commend the planning commission and staff for doing an excellent job incorporating in general the needs and desires of the people who would be mostly impacted by this ordinance.

I want to mention some facts which will support the content of the ordinance that seemed to be of the greatest concern. One of these concerns was the size requirements of a campground. I talked to some of the campground owners and looked at tax maps and found campgrounds in the Townsend area to be from 3.5 acres to 13.5 acres in size. There was a question about how many camping sites one can get per acre. One has seventy three sites on three and a half acres. Another campground in the same area has about three acres with forty-nine campsites. A larger campground with a camper storage area has 13.8 acres with seventy seven sites and another large campground on 13 acres has one hundred and forty sites which also has a dozen or more camping cabins. This will give you an idea of the number of sites you could get on a particular tract of land. One could conclude that a requirement of a minimum of 5 acres would be practical.

The campground with the storage area of about one storage space for every two campsites gives one a good idea how the storage area is integrated into the campground business. I've been told this storage area is a very viable part of that business and could be a "make or break" issue of a start up campground business. For various reasons campers need to be stored. It could be because of other regulations where they live or because of not having the proper towing vehicle. The storage area could also be used as a tool which might discourage long term stays that most attractive campgrounds don't want.

Next, consider the camping cabins. This is another part of the camping business that is up and coming. One campground owner says it gives their clientele a camping experience versus staying in a motel or the cabins might be used by people just wanting to stay near friends or family but don't have the equipment to camp.

The planning commission worked very hard on where to allow campgrounds. It had been suggested to have an overlay area, but that didn't seem to work out very well. The planners

proposed the road designation approach but this idea seemed to leave Tuckaleechee Cove with very few options. Considering the topography and size requirement of a particular tract of land, this alone would greatly reduce the number of sites available for campgrounds in Tuckaleechee Cove.

Let's not lose site of the intent of this ordinance which is guidelines for campgrounds which would give opportunities for a "camping experience". Tourism in general and camping in particular is a major part of the economy of Tuckaleechee Cove. I encourage you to pass an ordinance broad enough that the people of Tuckaleechee Cove will continue to have opportunities to live and work in the same community.

Thank you for your consideration.

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Aug. 25, 2011

To the Blount County Planning Commission :

I am submitting written comments on the proposed campground regulations, which I hope may be considered.

My primary concern is with impacts on water quality. First, since the campsites or cabins may be on septic, it concerns me that each campsite could be as little as 1400 ft.<sup>2</sup>. This works out to a significant potential number per acre (theoretically ~ 31). Even if it were half that, this represents a density concern, especially given the proximity to streams and rivers (and the water table).

As a related matter, the proposed 15 foot or 25 foot stream "set-back" for sites (with the exception of cabin sites to the Little River) seems potentially problematic. In particular, allowing RV's to park as close as 15 feet away from a waterway presents a strong likelihood of vehicle pollutants. Cars are similarly polluting. The water table is close to the surface near waterways. Parking run-off from a potentially very numerous number of vehicles needs to be considered, perhaps by enlarging the minimum campsite footprint, and/or increasing distance from streams and rivers.

Thank you. Sincerely, Ingrid Hauns  
3135 Little Dug Gap