

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2009

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SENATE BILL 831
Commerce Committee Substitute Adopted 5/11/09

Short Title: Extend Permits Regarding Land Development.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

March 25, 2009

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO EXTEND CERTAIN PERMITS AND APPROVALS AFFECTING THE
3 PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT OF REAL PROPERTY LOCATED WITHIN THE STATE
4 OF NORTH CAROLINA, THEREBY SUPERSEDING ALL STATUTORY AND
5 REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS TO THE CONTRARY.

6 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

7 **SECTION 1.** This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Permit Extension
8 Act of 2009."

9 **SECTION 2.** The General Assembly makes the following findings:

- 10 (1) There exists a state of economic emergency in the State of North Carolina
11 and the nation, which has drastically affected various segments of the North
12 Carolina economy, but none as severely as the State's banking, real estate,
13 and construction sectors.
- 14 (2) The real estate finance sector of the economy is in severe decline due to the
15 creation, bundling, and widespread selling of leveraged securities, such as
16 credit default swaps, and due to excessive defaults on sub-prime mortgages
17 and the resultant foreclosures on a vast scale, thereby widening the mortgage
18 finance crisis. The extreme tightening of lending standards for home buyers
19 and other real estate borrowers has reduced access to the capital markets.
- 20 (3) As a result of the crisis in the real estate finance sector of the economy, real
21 estate developers and redevelopers, including homebuilders, and
22 commercial, office, and industrial developers, have experienced an
23 industry-wide decline, including reduced demand, cancelled orders,
24 declining sales and rentals, price reductions, increased inventory, fewer
25 buyers who qualify to purchase homes, layoffs, and scaled back growth
26 plans.
- 27 (4) The process of obtaining planning board and zoning board of adjustment
28 approvals for subdivisions, site plans, and variances can be difficult, time
29 consuming, and expensive, both for private applicants and government
30 bodies.
- 31 (5) The process of obtaining the myriad other government approvals, such as
32 wetlands permits, treatment works approvals, on-site wastewater disposal
33 permits, stream encroachment permits, flood hazard area permits, highway
34 access permits, and numerous waivers and variances, can be difficult and
35 expensive; further, changes in the law can render these approvals, if expired
36 or lapsed, difficult to renew or reobtain.



- 1 (6) County and municipal governments, including local sewer and water
2 authorities, obtain permits and approvals from State government agencies,
3 particularly the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, which
4 permits and approvals may expire or lapse due to the state of the economy
5 and the inability of both the public sector and the private sector to proceed
6 with projects authorized by the permit or approval.
- 7 (7) County and municipal governments also obtain determinations of master
8 plan consistency, conformance, or endorsement with State or regional plans,
9 from State and regional government entities that may expire or lapse without
10 implementation due to the state of the economy.
- 11 (8) The current national recession has severely weakened the building industry,
12 and many landowners and developers are seeing their life's work destroyed
13 by the lack of credit and dearth of buyers and tenants due to the crisis in real
14 estate financing and the building industry, uncertainty over the state of the
15 economy, and increasing levels of unemployment in the construction
16 industry.
- 17 (9) The construction industry and related trades are sustaining severe economic
18 losses, and the lapsing of government development approvals would
19 exacerbate, if not addressed, those losses.
- 20 (10) Financial institutions that lent money to property owners, builders, and
21 developers are experiencing erosion of collateral and depreciation of their
22 assets as permits and approvals expire, and the extension of these permits
23 and approvals is necessary to maintain the value of the collateral and the
24 solvency of financial institutions throughout the State.
- 25 (11) Due to the current inability of builders and their purchasers to obtain
26 financing under existing economic conditions, more and more
27 once-approved permits are expiring or lapsing, and, as these approvals lapse,
28 lenders must reappraise and thereafter substantially lower real estate
29 valuations established in conjunction with approved projects, thereby
30 requiring the reclassification of numerous loans, which, in turn, affects the
31 stability of the banking system and reduces the funds available for future
32 lending, thus creating more severe restrictions on credit and leading to a
33 vicious cycle of default.
- 34 (12) As a result of the continued downturn of the economy and the continued
35 expiration of approvals that were granted by State and local governments, it
36 is possible that thousands of government actions will be undone by the
37 passage of time.
- 38 (13) Obtaining an extension of an approval pursuant to existing statutory or
39 regulatory provisions can be both costly in terms of time and financial
40 resources and insufficient to cope with the extent of the present financial
41 conditions; moreover, the costs imposed fall on the public as well as the
42 private sector.
- 43 (14) Obtaining extensions of approvals granted by State government is frequently
44 impossible, always difficult, and always expensive, and no policy reason is
45 served by the expiration of these permits, which were approved only after
46 thorough review of the application.
- 47 (15) It is the purpose of this act to prevent the wholesale abandonment of already
48 approved projects and activities due to the present unfavorable economic
49 conditions by tolling the term of these approvals for a finite period of time as
50 the economy improves, thereby preventing a waste of public and private
51 resources.

1 **SECTION 3.** Definitions. – As used in this act, the following definitions apply:

- 2 (1) Approval. – Except as otherwise provided in Section 4 of this act, any
3 detailed statement by a State agency under G.S. 113A-4; any detailed
4 statement submitted by a special purpose unit of government or a private
5 developer of a major development project under G.S. 113A-8; any finding of
6 no significant impact prepared by a State agency under Article 1 of Chapter
7 113A of the General Statutes; any approval of an erosion and sedimentation
8 control plan granted by a local government or by the North Carolina
9 Sedimentation Control Commission under Article 4 of Chapter 113A of the
10 General Statutes; any permit for major development or minor development,
11 as defined in G.S. 113A-118, or any other permit issued under the Coastal
12 Area Management Act (CAMA), Part 4 of Article 7 of Chapter 113A of the
13 General Statutes; any water or wastewater permit issued under Article 10 or
14 Article 11 of Chapter 130A of the General Statutes; any building permit
15 issued under Article 9 of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes; any discharge,
16 nondischarge, or extension permit issued under Part 1 of Article 21 of
17 Chapter 143 of the General Statutes; any stream origination certifications
18 issued under Article 21 of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes; any water
19 quality certification under Article 21 of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes;
20 any air quality permit issued by the Environmental Management
21 Commission under Article 21B of the General Statutes; any approval by a
22 county of sketch plans, preliminary plats, plats regarding a subdivision of
23 land, a site specific development plan or a phased development plan, a
24 development permit, or a building permit under Article 18 of Chapter 153A
25 of the General Statutes; any approval by a city of sketch plans, preliminary
26 plats, or plats regarding a subdivision of land, a site specific development
27 plan or a phased development plan, a development agreement, or a building
28 permit under Article 19 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes; any
29 certificate of appropriateness issued by a preservation commission of a city
30 under Part 3C of Article 19 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes; when
31 the approval under this subdivision pertains to the development of land or to
32 the provision of water or wastewater services by a government entity and
33 whether the approval under this subdivision is in the form of a permit,
34 approval, license, certification, permission, determination, interpretation,
35 exemption, variance, exception, waiver, letter of interpretation, no further
36 action letter, agreement, or any other executive or administrative decision
37 that allows the development or provision of services to proceed.
- 38 (2) Area of environmental concern. – An area designated under G.S. 113A-113
39 by the Coastal Resources Commission.
- 40 (3) Development. – The division of a parcel of land into two or more parcels,
41 the construction, reconstruction, conversion, structural alteration, relocation,
42 or enlargement of any building or other structure or facility, or of any
43 grading, soil removal or relocation, excavation or landfill, or any use or
44 change in the use of any building or other structure or land or extension of
45 the use of land.
- 46 (4) Extension period. – The period beginning January 1, 2007, and continuing
47 through December 31, 2010.
- 48 (5) Government. – Any municipal, county, regional, or State government, or any
49 agency, department, commission, or other instrumentality thereof.
- 50 (6) Substantially altered. – Any change to the plans regarding the approval
51 under subdivision (1) of this section that does not constitute a "permit

1 amendment" or a "new permit," including a change in ownership or
2 corporate structure of a permitted facility, a change to the permit that is the
3 subject of the approval that increases by ten percent (10%) or more the
4 population or the geographic area to be served by the development project,
5 or a change in the category or characterization of the development project.
6 As used in this subdivision, "permit" includes any license, certification,
7 permission, determination, interpretation, exemption, variance, exception,
8 waiver, letter of interpretation, no further action letter, agreement, or any
9 other executive or administrative decision that allows a development or
10 governmental project to proceed.

11 **SECTION 4.(a)** For any government approval in existence during the extension
12 period, the running of the period of approval is automatically suspended for the extension
13 period, except as otherwise provided hereunder; however, the tolling provided for herein shall
14 not extend the government approval more than six months beyond the conclusion of the
15 extension period. Nothing in this act shall shorten the duration that any approval would have
16 had in the absence of this act, nor shall this act prohibit the granting of such additional
17 extensions as are provided by law when the tolling granted by this act expires.

18 **SECTION 4.(b)** Nothing in this act shall be deemed to extend or purport to extend:

- 19 (1) Any permit or approval under Section 3 of this act when the permit or
20 approval is for a development project that has been substantially altered
21 since the permit or approval was granted, as determined by the government
22 that granted the permit or approval.
- 23 (2) Any permit or approval issued by the government of the United States or any
24 agency or instrumentality thereof, or to any permit or approval by whatever
25 authority issued of which the duration of effect or the date or terms of its
26 expiration are specified or determined by or pursuant to law or regulation of
27 the federal government or any of its agencies or instrumentalities.
- 28 (3) Any permit or approval issued within an area of environmental concern.
- 29 (4) Any Department of Transportation permit other than a right-of-way permit.

30 **SECTION 4.(c)** This act shall not affect any administrative consent order issued by
31 the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in effect or issued during the extension
32 period.

33 **SECTION 4.(d)** Nothing in this act shall affect the ability of the Secretary of
34 Environment and Natural Resources to revoke or modify a specific permit or approval, or
35 extension thereof pursuant to this act, when that specific permit or approval contains language
36 authorizing the modification or revocation of the permit or approval by the Department of
37 Environment and Natural Resources. Nothing in this act shall affect the ability of the
38 Environmental Management Commission to revoke or modify a specific permit or approval, or
39 extension thereof pursuant to this act, when that specific permit or approval contains language
40 authorizing the modification or revocation of the permit or approval by the Environmental
41 Management Commission.

42 **SECTION 4.(e)** In the event that any approval tolled pursuant to this act is based
43 upon the connection to a sanitary sewer system, the approval's extension shall be contingent
44 upon the availability of sufficient capacity, on the part of the treatment facility, to
45 accommodate the development whose approval has been extended. If sufficient capacity is not
46 available, those permit holders whose approvals have been extended shall have priority with
47 regard to the further allocation of gallonage over those approval holders who have not received
48 approval of a hookup prior to the effective date of this act. Priority regarding the distribution of
49 further gallonage to any permit holder who has received the extension of an approval pursuant
50 to this act shall be allocated in order of the granting of the original approval of the connection.

1 **SECTION 4.(f)** Nothing in this act shall be construed or implemented in such a
2 way as to modify any requirement of law that is necessary to retain federal delegation to, or
3 assumption by, the State of the authority to implement a federal law or program.

4 **SECTION 5.** Each State agency shall, within 30 days after the effective date of this
5 act, place a notice in the North Carolina Register tolling all approvals in conformance with this
6 act.

7 **SECTION 6.** The provisions of this act shall be liberally construed to effectuate
8 the purposes of this act.

9 **SECTION 7.** This act is effective when it becomes law.