

§ 152.045 APPEALS.

(A) This subchapter does not apply to §§152.400 through 152.462, Flood Damage Prevention.

(B) Appeals from the enforcement and interpretation of this chapter, may be taken to the Board of Adjustment by any person aggrieved. An appeal is taken by filing with the administrator and the Board of Adjustment a written notice of appeal specifying the grounds therefor. A notice of appeal shall be filed with the Town Clerk or Town Deputy Clerk. The notice of appeal must state the grounds for the appeal and the date and time of filing.

(C) An appeal must be taken within 30 days after the interested party or parties receive written notice of an order, requirement, decision, or determination .

(D) Whenever an appeal is filed, the administrator shall forthwith transmit to the Board of Adjustment all the papers constituting the record relating to the action appealed from. A copy of the record shall also be provided to the appellant and to the owner of the property that is subject to the appeal if the appellant is not the owner .

(E) After receipt of notice of appeal, the Chairman of the Board of Adjustment shall fix a reasonable time, not to exceed 60 days, for the hearing of the appeal. All applications must be accompanied by an application fee as set by Town staff to help defray costs in advertising and administration.

(F) An appeal stays all actions by the administrator seeking enforcement of or compliance with the order or decision appealed from, unless the administrator certifies to the Board of Adjustment that (because of facts stated in the certificate) a stay would, in his opinion, cause imminent peril to life or property or because the violation is transitory in nature, a stay would seriously interfere with enforcement of the ordinance. In that case, proceedings shall not be stayed except by a restraining order which may be granted by a court. If enforcement proceedings are not stayed, the appellant may file with the official a request for an expedited hearing of the appeal, and the Board of Adjustment shall meet to hear the appeal within 15 days after such a request is filed. All appeals to the Superior Court and all applications to the Superior Court for a stay shall be made within 30 days of a party's receipt of notice of the decision of the Board of Adjustment . The official who made the decision being appealed shall be present at the hearing as a witness. The Board of Adjustment may reverse or affirm (wholly or partly) or may modify the order, requirement, decision, or determination appealed from and shall make any order, requirement, decision, or determination that in its opinion ought to be made in the case before it. To this end, the board shall have all the powers of the officer from whom the appeal is taken.

(Ord. 2005-O3, passed 3-15-2005; Am. Ord. passed 6-16-2009; Am. Ord. passed 1-21-2014; Am. Ord. 2021-O3, passed 5-24-2021)

§ 152.065 QUASI-JUDICIAL DECISIONS.

(A) Boards shall follow quasi-judicial procedures in determining appeals of administrative decisions, special use permits, certificates of appropriateness, variances, or any other quasi-judicial decision .

(B) The hearing shall be open to the public and all persons interested in the outcome of the application shall be given an opportunity to present evidence and arguments and ask questions of persons who testify.

(C) Boards may place reasonable and equitable limitations on the presentation of evidence and arguments and the cross-examination of witnesses so that the matter at issue may be heard and decided without undue delay.

(D) The Board may continue an evidentiary hearing that has been convened without further advertisement. If an evidentiary hearing is set for a given date and a quorum of the Board is not then present, the hearing shall be continued until the next regular Board meeting without further advertisement.

(Ord. 2005-O3, passed 3-15-2005; Am. Ord. 2021-O3, passed 5-24-2021)

§ 152.066 NOTICE OF HEARING.

The Administrator shall give notice of any hearing required by §152.065 as follows:

(A) Notice shall be mailed to the person or entity whose appeal, application, or request is the subject of the hearing; to the owner of the property that is the subject of the hearing if the owner did not initiate the hearing; to the owners of all parcels of land abutting the parcel of land that is the subject of the hearing; and to any other persons entitled to receive notice as provided by the local development regulation . In the absence of evidence to the contrary, the town may rely on the county tax listing to determine owners of property entitled to mailed notice;

(B) The notice must be deposited in the mail at least ten days, but not more than 25 days, prior to the date of the hearing;

(C) Within that same time period, the town shall also prominently post a notice of the hearing on the site that is the subject of the hearing or on an adjacent street or highway right-of-way; and

(D) The notice required by this section shall state the date, time, and place of the hearing, reasonably identify the property that is the subject of the application, and indicate the action requested or proposed.

(Ord. 2005-O3, passed 3-15-2005; Am. Ord. passed 6-16-2009; Am. Ord. passed 1-21-2014; Am. Ord. 2021-O3, passed 5-24-2021)

§ 152.067 EVIDENCE.

(A) The provisions of this section apply to all hearings for which a notice is required by §152.065.

(B) The applicant, the local government, and any person who would have standing to appeal the decision shall have the right to participate as a party at the evidentiary hearing . Other witnesses may present competent, material, and substantial evidence that is not repetitive as allowed by the Board.

(C) The Chair of the Board or any member acting as Chair and the Clerk to the Board are authorized to administer oaths to witnesses in any matter coming before the Board. Any person who, while under oath during a proceeding before the Board determining a quasi-judicial matter, willfully swears falsely is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

(D) The Board making a quasi-judicial decision under this chapter through the Chair or, in the Chair's absence, anyone acting as Chair may subpoena witnesses and compel the production of evidence.

(Ord. 2005-O3, passed 3-15-2005; Am. Ord. 2021-O3, passed 5-24-2021)

§ 152.068 MODIFICATION OF APPLICATION AT HEARING.

(A) In response to questions or comments by persons appearing at the hearing or to suggestions or recommendations by the board, the applicant may agree to modify his application, including the plans and specifications submitted.

(B) Unless such modifications are so substantial or extensive that the board cannot reasonably be expected to perceive the nature and impact of the proposed changes without revised plans before it, the board may approve the application with the stipulation that the permit will not be issued until plans reflecting the agreed upon changes are submitted to the planning staff.

(Ord. 2005-O3, passed 3-15-2005; Am. Ord. 2021-O3, passed 5-24-2021)

§ 152.069 VOTING.

(A) The concurring vote of four-fifths of the board shall be necessary to grant a variance.

(B) A majority of the members shall be required to decide any other quasi-judicial matter or to determine an appeal made in the nature of certiorari.

(C) For the purposes of this section, vacant positions on the board and members who are disqualified from voting on a

quasi-judicial matter under G.S. § 160D-109(d) shall not be considered members of the board for calculation of the requisite majority if there are no qualified alternates available to take the place of such members.

(Ord. 2021-03, passed 5-24-2021)

§ 152.070 WRITTEN DECISION.

(A) The board shall determine contested facts and make its decision within a reasonable time. Every quasi-judicial decision shall be based upon competent, material, and substantial evidence in the record.

(B) Each quasi-judicial decision shall be reduced to writing, reflect the board's determination of contested facts and their application to the applicable standards, and be approved by the board and signed by the chair or other duly authorized member of the board.

(C) A quasi-judicial decision is effective upon filing, the written decision with the clerk to the board or such other office or official as the development regulation specifies. The decision shall be delivered within a reasonable time by personal delivery, electronic mail, or first-class mail to the applicant, landowner, and any person who has submitted a written request for a copy prior to the date the decision becomes effective. Special use permits will be recorded in the office of the Onslow County Register of Deeds.

(D) The Administrator shall certify that proper notice has been made, and the certificate shall be deemed conclusive in the absence of fraud.

(Ord. 2005-03, passed 3-15-2005; Am. Ord. 2014-09, passed 4-15-2014; Am. Ord. 2021-03, passed 5-24-2021)

§ 152.071 JUDICIAL REVIEW.

Every quasi-judicial decision shall be subject to review by the Superior Court by proceedings in the nature of certiorari pursuant to G.S. § 160D-1402. Appeals shall be filed within the time specified in G.S. § 160D-1405(d).

(Ord. 2021-03, passed 5-24-2021)

§ 160D-405. Appeals of administrative decisions.

(a) Appeals. – Except as provided in G.S. 160D-1403.1, appeals of administrative decisions made by the staff under this Chapter shall be made to the board of adjustment unless a different board is provided or authorized otherwise by statute or an ordinance adopted pursuant to this Chapter. If this function of the board of adjustment is assigned to any other board pursuant to G.S. 160D-302(b), that board shall comply with all of the procedures and processes applicable to a board of adjustment hearing appeals. Appeal of a decision made pursuant to an erosion and sedimentation control regulation, a stormwater control regulation, or a provision of the housing code shall not be made to the board of adjustment unless required by a local government ordinance or code provision. Appeals of administrative decisions on subdivision plats shall be made as provided in G.S. 160D-1403.

(b) Standing. – Any person who has standing under G.S. 160D-1402(c) or the local government may appeal an administrative decision to the board. An appeal is taken by filing a notice of appeal with the local government clerk or a local government official designated by ordinance. The notice of appeal shall state the grounds for the appeal.

(c) Repealed by Session Laws 2020-25, s. 10, effective June 19, 2020.

(d) Time to Appeal. – The owner or other party has 30 days from receipt of the written notice of the determination within which to file an appeal. Any other person with standing to appeal has 30 days from receipt from any source of actual or constructive notice of the determination within which to file an appeal. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, notice given pursuant to G.S. 160D-403(b) by first-class mail is deemed received on the third business day following deposit of the notice for mailing with the United States Postal Service.

(e) Record of Decision. – The official who made the decision shall transmit to the board all documents and exhibits constituting the record upon which the decision appealed from is taken. The official shall also provide a copy of the record to the appellant and to the owner of the property that is the subject of the appeal if the appellant is not the owner.

(f) Stays. – An appeal of a notice of violation or other enforcement order to the board of adjustment and any subsequent appeal in accordance with G.S. 160D-1402 stays enforcement of the action appealed from and accrual of any fines assessed during the pendency of the appeal or during the pendency of any civil proceeding authorized by law or related appeal. If, however, the official who made the decision certifies to the board after notice of appeal has been filed that, because of the facts stated in an affidavit, a stay would cause imminent peril to life or property or, because the violation is transitory in nature, a stay would seriously interfere with enforcement of the development regulation, then enforcement proceedings are not stayed except by a restraining order, which may be granted by a court. If enforcement proceedings are not stayed, the appellant may file with the official a request for an expedited hearing of the appeal, and the board shall meet to hear the appeal within 15 days after the request is filed.

Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, appeals of decisions granting a development approval or otherwise affirming that a proposed use of property is consistent with the development regulation does not stay the further review of an application for development approvals to use the property; in these situations, the appellant or local government may request and the board may grant a stay of a final decision of development approval applications, including building permits affected by the issue being appealed.

(g) Alternative Dispute Resolution. – The parties to an appeal that has been made under this section may agree to mediation or other forms of alternative dispute resolution. The development regulation may set standards and procedures to facilitate and manage voluntary alternative dispute resolution.

(h) No Estoppel. – G.S. 160D-1403.2, limiting a local government's use of the defense of estoppel, applies to proceedings under this section. (2019-111, s. 2.4; 2020-3, s. 4.33(a); 2020-25, ss. 10, 50(b), 51(a), (b), (d); 2022-62, s. 59(a).)

§ 160D-406. Quasi-judicial procedure.

(a) **Process Required.** – Boards shall follow quasi-judicial procedures in determining appeals of administrative decisions, special use permits, certificates of appropriateness, variances, or any other quasi-judicial decision.

(b) **Notice of Hearing.** – Notice of evidentiary hearings conducted pursuant to this Chapter shall be mailed to the person or entity whose appeal, application, or request is the subject of the hearing; to the owner of the property that is the subject of the hearing if the owner did not initiate the hearing; to the owners of all parcels of land abutting the parcel of land that is the subject of the hearing; and to any other persons entitled to receive notice as provided by the local development regulation. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, the local government may rely on the county tax listing to determine owners of property entitled to mailed notice. The notice must be deposited in the mail at least 10 days, but not more than 25 days, prior to the date of the hearing. Within that same time period, the local government shall also prominently post a notice of the hearing on the site that is the subject of the hearing or on an adjacent street or highway right-of-way. The board may continue an evidentiary hearing that has been convened without further advertisement. If an evidentiary hearing is set for a given date and a quorum of the board is not then present, the hearing shall be continued until the next regular board meeting without further advertisement.

(c) **Administrative Materials.** – The administrator or staff to the board shall transmit to the board all applications, reports, and written materials relevant to the matter being considered. The administrative materials may be distributed to the members of the board prior to the hearing if at the same time they are distributed to the board a copy is also provided to the appellant or applicant and to the landowner if that person is not the appellant or applicant. The administrative materials shall become a part of the hearing record. The administrative materials may be provided in written or electronic form. Objections to inclusion or exclusion of administrative materials may be made before or during the hearing. Rulings on unresolved objections shall be made by the board at the hearing.

(d) **Presentation of Evidence.** – The applicant, the local government, and any person who would have standing to appeal the decision under G.S. 160D-1402(c) shall have the right to participate as a party at the evidentiary hearing. Other witnesses may present competent, material, and substantial evidence that is not repetitive as allowed by the board.

Objections regarding jurisdictional and evidentiary issues, including, but not limited to, the timeliness of an appeal or the standing of a party, may be made to the board. The board chair shall rule on any objections, and the chair's rulings may be appealed to the full board. These rulings are also subject to judicial review pursuant to G.S. 160D-1402. Objections based on jurisdictional issues may be raised for the first time on judicial review.

(e) **Appearance of Official New Issues.** – The official who made the decision or the person currently occupying that position, if the decision maker is no longer employed by the local government, shall be present at the evidentiary hearing as a witness. The appellant shall not be limited at the hearing to matters stated in a notice of appeal. If any party or the local government would be unduly prejudiced by the presentation of matters not presented in the notice of appeal, the board shall continue the hearing.

(f) **Oaths.** – The chair of the board or any member acting as chair and the clerk to the board are authorized to administer oaths to witnesses in any matter coming before the board. Any person who, while under oath during a proceeding before the board determining a quasi-judicial matter, willfully swears falsely is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

(g) **Subpoenas.** – The board making a quasi-judicial decision under this Chapter through the chair or, in the chair's absence, anyone acting as chair may subpoena witnesses and compel the production of evidence. To request issuance of a subpoena, the applicant, the local government, and any person with standing under G.S. 160D-1402(c) may make a written request

to the chair explaining why it is necessary for certain witnesses or evidence to be compelled. The chair shall issue requested subpoenas he or she determines to be relevant, reasonable in nature and scope, and not oppressive. The chair shall rule on any motion to quash or modify a subpoena. Decisions regarding subpoenas made by the chair may be immediately appealed to the full board. If a person fails or refuses to obey a subpoena issued pursuant to this subsection, the board or the party seeking the subpoena may apply to the General Court of Justice for an order requiring that its subpoena be obeyed, and the court shall have jurisdiction to issue these orders after notice to all proper parties.

(h) Appeals in Nature of Certiorari. – When hearing an appeal pursuant to G.S. 160D-947(e) or any other appeal in the nature of certiorari, the hearing shall be based on the record below, and the scope of review shall be as provided in G.S. 160D-1402(j).

(i) Voting. – The concurring vote of four-fifths of the board shall be necessary to grant a variance. A majority of the members shall be required to decide any other quasi-judicial matter or to determine an appeal made in the nature of certiorari. For the purposes of this subsection, vacant positions on the board and members who are disqualified from voting on a quasi-judicial matter under G.S. 160D-109(d) shall not be considered members of the board for calculation of the requisite majority if there are no qualified alternates available to take the place of such members.

(j) Decisions. – The board shall determine contested facts and make its decision within a reasonable time. When hearing an appeal, the board may reverse or affirm, wholly or partly, or may modify the decision appealed from and shall make any order, requirement, decision, or determination that ought to be made. The board shall have all the powers of the official who made the decision. Every quasi-judicial decision shall be based upon competent, material, and substantial evidence in the record. Each quasi-judicial decision shall be reduced to writing, reflect the board's determination of contested facts and their application to the applicable standards, and be approved by the board and signed by the chair or other duly authorized member of the board. A quasi-judicial decision is effective upon filing the written decision with the clerk to the board or such other office or official as the development regulation specifies. The decision of the board shall be delivered within a reasonable time by personal delivery, electronic mail, or first-class mail to the applicant, landowner, and any person who has submitted a written request for a copy prior to the date the decision becomes effective. The person required to provide notice shall certify to the local government that proper notice has been made, and the certificate shall be deemed conclusive in the absence of fraud.

(k) Judicial Review. – Every quasi-judicial decision shall be subject to review by the superior court by proceedings in the nature of certiorari pursuant to G.S. 160D-1402. Appeals shall be filed within the times specified in G.S. 160D-1405(d). The governing board of the local government that is a party to the judicial review of the quasi-judicial decision shall have the authority to settle the litigation, subject to Article 33C of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes. (2019-111, s. 2.4; 2020-3, s. 4.33(a); 2020-25, s. 51(a), (b), (d); 2021-168, s. 3(a).)

§ 160D-1402. Appeals in the nature of certiorari.

(a) Applicability. – This section applies to appeals of quasi-judicial decisions of decision-making boards when that appeal is in the nature of certiorari as required by this Chapter.

(b) Filing the Petition. – An appeal in the nature of certiorari shall be initiated by filing a petition for writ of certiorari with the superior court. The petition shall do all of the following:

- (1) State the facts that demonstrate that the petitioner has standing to seek review.
- (2) Set forth allegations sufficient to give the court and parties notice of the grounds upon which the petitioner contends that an error was made.
- (3) Set forth with particularity the allegations and facts, if any, in support of allegations that, as the result of an impermissible conflict as described in G.S. 160D-109, or locally adopted conflict rules, the decision-making body was not sufficiently impartial to comply with due process principles.
- (4) Set forth the relief the petitioner seeks.

(c) Standing. – A petition may be filed under this section only by a petitioner who has standing to challenge the decision being appealed. The following persons have standing to file a petition under this section:

- (1) Any person possessing any of the following criteria:
 - a. An ownership interest in the property that is the subject of the decision being appealed, a leasehold interest in the property that is the subject of the decision being appealed, or an interest created by easement, restriction, or covenant in the property that is the subject of the decision being appealed.
 - b. An option or contract to purchase the property that is the subject of the decision being appealed.
 - c. An applicant before the decision-making board whose decision is being appealed.
- (2) Any other person who will suffer special damages as the result of the decision being appealed.
- (3) An incorporated or unincorporated association to which owners or lessees of property in a designated area belong by virtue of their owning or leasing property in that area, or an association otherwise organized to protect and foster the interest of the particular neighborhood or local area, so long as at least one of the members of the association would have standing as an individual to challenge the decision being appealed, and the association was not created in response to the particular development or issue that is the subject of the appeal.
- (4) A local government whose decision-making board has made a decision that the governing board believes improperly grants a variance from or is otherwise inconsistent with the proper interpretation of a development regulation adopted by the governing board.

(d) Respondent. – The respondent named in the petition shall be the local government whose decision-making board made the decision that is being appealed, except that if the petitioner is a local government that has filed a petition pursuant to subdivision (4) of subsection (c) of this section, then the respondent shall be the decision-making board. If the petitioner is not the applicant before the decision-making board whose decision is being appealed, the petitioner shall also name that applicant as a respondent. Any petitioner may name as a respondent any person with an ownership or leasehold interest in the property that is the subject of the decision being appealed who participated in the hearing, or was an applicant, before the decision-making board.

(e) Writ of Certiorari. – Upon filing the petition, the petitioner shall present the petition and a proposed writ of certiorari to the clerk of superior court of the county in which the matter arose. The writ shall direct the respondent local government or the respondent decision-making board, if the petitioner is a local government that has filed a petition pursuant to subdivision (4) of subsection (c) of this section, to prepare and certify to the court the record of proceedings below within a specified date. The writ shall also direct the petitioner to serve the petition and the writ upon each respondent named therein in the manner provided for service of a complaint under Rule 4(j) of the Rules of Civil Procedure, except that, if the respondent is a decision-making board, the petition and the writ shall be served upon the chair of that decision-making board. Rule 4(j)(5)d. of the Rules of Civil Procedure applies in the event the chair of a decision-making board cannot be found. No summons shall be issued. The clerk shall issue the writ without notice to the respondent or respondents if the petition has been properly filed and the writ is in proper form. A copy of the executed writ shall be filed with the court.

Upon the filing of a petition for writ of certiorari, a party may request a stay of the execution or enforcement of the decision of the quasi-judicial board pending superior court review. The court may grant a stay in its discretion and on conditions that properly provide for the security of the adverse party. A stay granted in favor of a city or county shall not require a bond or other security.

(f) Response to the Petition. – The respondent may, but need not, file a response to the petition, except that, if the respondent contends for the first time that any petitioner lacks standing to bring the appeal, that contention must be set forth in a response served on all petitioners at least 30 days prior to the hearing on the petition. If it is not served within that time period, the matter may be continued to allow the petitioners time to respond.

(g) Intervention. – Rule 24 of the Rules of Civil Procedure governs motions to intervene as a petitioner or respondent in an action initiated under this section with the following exceptions:

- (1) Any person described in subdivision (1) of subsection (c) of this section has standing to intervene and shall be allowed to intervene as a matter of right.
- (2) Any person, other than one described in subdivision (1) of subsection (c) of this section, who seeks to intervene as a petitioner must demonstrate that the person would have had standing to challenge the decision being appealed in accordance with subdivisions (2) through (4) of subsection (c) of this section.
- (3) Any person, other than one described in subdivision (1) of subsection (c) of this section, who seeks to intervene as a respondent must demonstrate that the person would have had standing to file a petition in accordance with subdivisions (2) through (4) of subsection (c) of this section if the decision-making board had made a decision that is consistent with the relief sought by the petitioner.

(h) The Record. – The record shall consist of the decision and all documents and exhibits submitted to the decision-making board whose decision is being appealed, together with the minutes of the meeting or meetings at which the decision being appealed was considered. Upon request of any party, the record shall also contain an audio or videotape of the meeting or meetings at which the decision being appealed was considered if such a recording was made. Any party may also include in the record a transcript of the proceedings, which shall be prepared at the cost of the party choosing to include it. The parties may agree that matters unnecessary to the court's decision be deleted from the record or that matters other than those specified herein be included. The record shall be bound and paginated or otherwise organized for the convenience of the parties and the court. A copy of the record shall be served by the local government respondent, or the respondent decision-making board, upon all petitioners within three days after it is filed with the court.

(i) Hearing on the Record. – The court shall hear and decide all issues raised by the petition by reviewing the record submitted in accordance with subsection (h) of this section. The court shall allow the record to be supplemented with affidavits, testimony of witnesses, or documentary or other evidence if, and to the extent that, the petition raises any of the following issues, in which case the rules of discovery set forth in the North Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure apply to the supplementation of the record of these issues:

- (1) Whether a petitioner or intervenor has standing.
- (2) Whether, as a result of impermissible conflict as described in G.S. 160D-109 or locally adopted conflict rules, the decision-making board was not sufficiently impartial to comply with due process principles. A failure to object at a hearing by a person with standing under subsection (c) of this section shall not constitute a waiver of a right to assert impermissible conflict involving a member of the decision-making board.
- (3) Whether the decision-making body erred for the reasons set forth in sub-subdivisions a. and b. of subdivision (1) of subsection (j) of this section.

(j) Scope of Review. –

- (1) When reviewing the decision under the provisions of this section, the court shall ensure that the rights of petitioners have not been prejudiced because the decision-making body's findings, inferences, conclusions, or decisions were:
 - a. In violation of constitutional provisions, including those protecting procedural due process rights.
 - b. In excess of the statutory authority conferred upon the local government, including preemption, or the authority conferred upon the decision-making board by ordinance.
 - c. Inconsistent with applicable procedures specified by statute or ordinance.
 - d. Affected by other error of law.
 - e. Unsupported by competent, material, and substantial evidence in view of the entire record.
 - f. Arbitrary or capricious.
- (2) When the issue before the court is one set forth in sub-subdivisions a. through d. of subdivision (1) of this subsection, including whether the decision-making board erred in interpreting an ordinance, the court shall review that issue de novo. The court shall consider the interpretation of the decision-making board, but is not bound by that interpretation, and may freely substitute its judgment as appropriate. Whether the record contains competent, material, and substantial evidence is a conclusion of law, reviewable de novo.
- (3) The term "competent evidence," as used in this subsection, does not preclude reliance by the decision-making board on evidence that would not be admissible under the rules of evidence as applied in the trial division of the General Court of Justice if (i) except for the items noted in sub-subdivisions a., b., and c. of this subdivision that are conclusively incompetent, the evidence was admitted without objection or (ii) the evidence appears to be sufficiently trustworthy and was admitted under such circumstances that it was reasonable for the decision-making board to rely upon it. The term "competent evidence," as used in this subsection, shall, regardless of the lack of a timely objection, not be deemed to include the opinion testimony of lay witnesses as to any of the following:
 - a. The use of property in a particular way affects the value of other property.

- b. The increase in vehicular traffic resulting from a proposed development poses a danger to the public safety.
- c. Matters about which only expert testimony would generally be admissible under the rules of evidence.

(j1) Action Not Rendered Moot by Loss of Property. – Subject to the limitations in the State and federal constitutions and State and federal case law, an action filed under this section is not rendered moot, if during the pendency of the action, the aggrieved person loses the applicable property interest as a result of the local government action being challenged and exhaustion of an appeal described herein is required for purposes of preserving a claim for damages under G.S. 160D-1403.1.

(k) Decision of the Court. – Following its review of the decision-making board in accordance with subsection (j) of this section, the court may affirm the decision, reverse the decision and remand the case with appropriate instructions, or remand the case for further proceedings. If the court does not affirm the decision below in its entirety, then the court shall determine what relief should be granted to the petitioners:

- (1) If the court concludes that the error committed by the decision-making board is procedural only, the court may remand the case for further proceedings to correct the procedural error.
- (2) If the court concludes that the decision-making board has erred by failing to make findings of fact such that the court cannot properly perform its function, then the court may remand the case with appropriate instructions so long as the record contains substantial competent evidence that could support the decision below with appropriate findings of fact. However, findings of fact are not necessary when the record sufficiently reveals the basis for the decision below or when the material facts are undisputed and the case presents only an issue of law.
- (3) If the court concludes that the decision by the decision-making board is not supported by competent, material, and substantial evidence in the record or is based upon an error of law, then the court may remand the case with an order that directs the decision-making board to take whatever action should have been taken had the error not been committed or to take such other action as is necessary to correct the error. Specifically:
 - a. If the court concludes that a permit was wrongfully denied because the denial was not based on competent, material, and substantial evidence or was otherwise based on an error of law, the court shall remand with instructions that the permit be issued, subject to any conditions expressly consented to by the permit applicant as part of the application or during the board of adjustment appeal or writ of certiorari appeal.
 - b. If the court concludes that a permit was wrongfully issued because the issuance was not based on competent, material, and substantial evidence or was otherwise based on an error of law, the court may remand with instructions that the permit be revoked.
 - c. If the court concludes that a zoning board decision upholding a zoning enforcement action was not supported by substantial competent evidence or was otherwise based on an error of law, the court shall reverse the decision.

(l) Effect of Appeal and Ancillary Injunctive Relief. –

- (1) If a development approval is appealed, the applicant shall have the right to commence work while the appeal is pending. However, if the development

approval is reversed by a final decision of any court of competent jurisdiction, the applicant shall not be deemed to have gained any vested rights on the basis of actions taken prior to or during the pendency of the appeal and must proceed as if no development approval had been granted.

- (2) Upon motion of a party to a proceeding under this section, and under appropriate circumstances, the court may issue an injunctive order requiring any other party to that proceeding to take certain action or refrain from taking action that is consistent with the court's decision on the merits of the appeal.

(1) Effect of Appeal of Quasi-Judicial Relief. – If a special use permit is issued by the applicable decision-making board after remand from an order of the court of competent jurisdiction and no injunction prevents the issuance of a special use permit, any appeal of the court's remand order or the subsequently issued special use permit is rendered moot.

(m) Joinder. – A declaratory judgment brought under G.S. 160D-1401 or other civil action relating to the decision at issue may be joined with the petition for writ of certiorari and decided in the same proceeding.

(n) Stays. – An appeal under this section is stayed as provided in G.S. 160D-405. (2019-111, s. 2.4; 2020-3, s. 4.33(a); 2020-25, ss. 45, 50(b), 51(a), (b), (d); 2021-168, s. 4.)