

Dear councilmen of Chapel Hill,

I am writing to you to bring to your attention a topic of utmost importance: small business owners. We know them and we love them, so why not assist these entrepreneurs in their endeavors? Especially since the town of Chapel Hill has seen a major spike in residents recently. That would correlate with an influx of creative entrepreneurs, young professionals, and service providers in different industries. Many of which are seeking to start a business in the comfort of their own home. Chapel Hill is such a perfect place to live and work, why not combine the two? There's an opportunity here to create a fertile ground for these individuals by encouraging and supporting their budding businesses which can add value to the community. Another small, local business that makes Chapel Hill unique and so charming, with the added bonus of keeping money flowing in the community.

There's currently a very specific module that allows a small business owner to open their own business at home. I'm not entirely sure when the last time the home occupation permit was revised, but the world has changed dramatically, and although the intentions stay the same, some guidelines and regulations need to be updated/refreshed to catch up with the fast-changing world. The key here is the state of mind: promoting small businesses. Currently the guidelines limit what you can do, which doesn't concur with the aforementioned intentions. We need guidelines that promote, encourage, and offer support and assistance to these businesses and their owners. The fact of the matter is, regardless of regulations, business from home will continue to happen, even if it means breaking guidelines. For some novice, inexperienced entrepreneurs, starting their own business for the first time, they may not even know the basic business affairs, or that they need to regulate their business. This creates tricky situation for both the business owner and the town. I believe there are two good options to handle this:

1. Let anyone goes about his business the way he knows, or see fit; lacking any guidance and assistance, which could lead to numerous issues.
2. Create a path for business owners to thrive in their home occupation; facilitate their needs so their business can succeed

The latter is by far the much more fit option and can happen in a smart way. A propose the creation of a program that sets specific boundaries and guidelines on how to go about your business from home. The business could be supervised properly, and even taxed higher. A committee could be formed can assist people with starting their home business and maintain the compliance and supervision, as well as help the town deal with issues that arise from those business. This creates an outlet in which inexperienced business owners can seek guidance, reassurance and encouragement.

Another topic I would like to discuss is the zoning in relation to small home businesses. Is there room to create a new zone category? Specifically, one that can permit a looser 'home occupation permit'? Can the town create parameters and conditions for the a 'home occupation' to be less strict? For example:

- At least 150 ft from a neighboring home
- Not in an HOA neighborhood
- Must have parking space not visible - in the back of the property
- Reduce the required livable area

- Any other issues that came up in the past that needs to be considered?

Revising the zoning to allow more flexibility would assist these businesses in prospering and is in congruence with the mindset of encouraging and helping local businesses. This would be vital for option 2, albeit not necessary.

As times progress change needs to happen and I believe supporting home businesses is a great reason to spark change. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing your response and discussing my ideas as well as their implementation.

Sincerely,

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