

## *Restoring Petition Power to Greensboro*

March 18, 2008

Take action today to persuade the North Carolina Legislature to reverse Greensboro's exemption from the protest petition law!

Representative Pricey Harrison is introducing legislation for the reinstatement of the protest petition and will try to get this acted upon during the short session that begins in May.

The Legislature will reverse this exemption, *IF* all members of the Guilford County delegation request it. Therefore, it is important for those delegates to hear from *YOU*.

Not all are in favor of reinstatement. A Greensboro attorney "warned that the law allows too much power, sometimes to a single individual who owns enough adjoining property to invoke a petition by himself" (from *N-R* opinion 3/2/2008). One city council member worries about discouraging new development. Some real estate people and developers think it would be unfair for a few people to stop a development or "decrease my property rights ...when I want to change what I want to do with my own property" (*N-R*, "Officials rethink development process," 3/11/2008, B1). Clearly, government officials and developers felt they couldn't trust citizens in 1971, when the exemption from the protest petition law was first passed.

But citizen participation in government is vital. Moreover, citizens were very active in the development of our long-range plan, which should be more than a "guide" to development. Amendments should be few, and the council should more often be following the recommendations of the Zoning Commission and the Planning Board.

Check your voter registration card to identify your NC Senate district and NC House district. Then call or e-mail your representatives to let them know you strongly support reinstatement of the petition power. If you personally participated in the long-range planning a few years ago, tell them that, too. If you have had personal experience with a zoning/planning decision that the city council made, tell them about that as well.

It would be helpful for you to send copies of your message to *all* the delegates, for all are needed to get this exemption reversed. In particular, the positions of Stan Bingham and Phil Berger are not known, and they do not live in Greensboro or in a larger city that has this petition power. So it is important that they hear from us.

Names and addresses are included with this message.

B. J. Weatherby