



Legislative Bulletin

July 14, 2023 | nclm.org

The Weekly Recap

WHAT HAPPENED: The House took a few notable actions this week on legislation that relates to cities and towns, including [HB378 Firefighters Criminal History Record Checks](#) and two local land use bills. Those are covered in depth in this bulletin.

WHAT IT MEANS: Otherwise, business tended to focus on bills nearing the finish line, again indicating that this session may be close to a conclusion. And yet, budget negotiations continue on. Rep. Jason Saine spoke on the matter this week. “To get to a good agreement, sometimes it’s better to wait,” [Saine told the Associated Press](#). “This is really more about us being very pragmatic and working through a very complicated multibillion-dollar budget that sets our state on course.”

ON TAP: Veto overrides were tabled this week, but will be back on the schedule starting Wednesday. With those on the calendar, we’re expecting additional House business to take place that day as well. As always, we’ll keep you updated each Friday in this publication.

THE SKINNY: Below, we also take another dive into the issue of short-term rentals and a look at how they are impacting neighborhoods in Asheville.

Legislature Reduces Burden for Firefighter Applicant Record Checks

Local governments will face reduced burdens when conducting criminal background checks on firefighter applicants, under a bill given final legislative approval Wednesday. In a unanimous vote, the House concurred with Senate changes to [HB378 Firefighters Criminal History Record Checks](#), and the bill has now been sent to the Governor for consideration. The bill resolves challenges encountered by local governments when hiring firefighters. A 2022 law created an unnecessarily broad mandate for local governments to check the criminal history for all firefighter applicants, as opposed to just the candidates who would be offered a position. HB 378 eliminated the

requirement to conduct criminal history record checks for every applicant, and further, it provided a fingerprint-free background check option for North Carolina residents who have resided in the state for more than five years.

Collaboratively, the League worked with bill sponsors to address unintended complications stemming from previous legislation, and appreciates legislators addressing the concerns of city officials over the 2022 legislation.

Local Bills Restrict Land Use Authority

Two N.C. towns lost certain land use authorities under a pair of local bills that received final legislative approval this week. Annexation authority for the town of Leland, a fast-growing suburb near Wilmington, was suspended indefinitely in [HB 267 Holly Springs Deannex/Leland Annex Moratorium](#). And various planning and development authorities, including extra-territorial jurisdiction, development moratoria, and down-zoning, [were suspended](#) until January 1, 2028, for the town of Maggie Valley, a mountain tourist community.

In both cases, the affected towns did not support the legislative action, which grew out of local tensions over each towns' growth and development practices. Because the Governor does not review local bills, these two bills became law upon their final passage this week.

Short-term Rental Blues

A new article from the Asheville Watchdog looks at neighborhood and market impacts

This week, an Asheville publication became the latest to take a look at some of the downsides of the short-term rental market and its effects on other homeowners and local housing markets. The online newspaper Asheville Watchdog [provides a portrait of one Asheville neighborhood](#) where roughly half of the condos are being rented through online platforms like Airbnb.

One neighbor, in describing the party-like atmosphere on some weekends, states: "What was a lovely, peaceful place, now there's a hot tub in my backyard with revolving people like loud men with stinky cigars talking about women's breasts ... Projectile vomiting bachelorettes off the back porch, that was another night."

The piece also critically examines a local study that focused on the positives of the industry, quoting an academic expert who said he believed the proliferation of short-term rentals is a contributing factor to rising home prices and increases in long-term rental housing costs.

This article and [others](#) come as [legislation](#) has been filed – though so far not acted on – that would pre-empt local regulation of short-term rentals.



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