

Town of Pittsboro, North Carolina Legislative Priorities

2024



Satellite Annexation Size
Waiver



Support in Dealing with
Unregulated Contaminants

Background

NCGS §160A-58.1 regulates satellite annexations. This law aims to control the spread of municipalities and ensure orderly growth. However, this one-size-fits-all approach may not suit all communities, especially those with unique growth challenges and opportunities like Pittsboro.

Understanding § 160A-58.1

North Carolina General Statute §160A-58.1 regulates satellite annexations, requiring that satellite areas not exceed 10% of the annexing city's primary corporate limits by area. This law aims to control the spread of municipalities and ensure orderly growth. However, this one-size-fits-all approach may not suit all communities, especially those with unique growth challenges and opportunities like Pittsboro.

Pittsboro's Context

Pittsboro is a small town with a unique set of characteristics:

1. It is experiencing rapid growth due to its location in the Triangle area, with increasing demand for housing and commercial space.
2. The town is surrounded by large tracts of undeveloped land that could be potential areas for annexation to accommodate growth.
3. A mix of rural and urban development patterns complicates straightforward annexation strategies.
4. Rapid Growth Management: Pittsboro is experiencing significant growth, necessitating expanded jurisdiction to manage and guide development effectively in line with community goals and the comprehensive plan.

Justification for Waiver

1. **Economic Development:** An exemption would facilitate economic development by enabling Pittsboro to attract and accommodate business and residential developments beyond the restrictive 10% limit, boosting the local economy and job creation.
2. **Infrastructure and Service Delivery:** Expanding the town's ability to annex would improve the efficiency of infrastructure development and service delivery, aligning with the structured development process Pittsboro adheres to.
3. **Environmental Stewardship:** With strategic annexation, Pittsboro can better manage ecological resources, ensuring sustainable growth that respects the town's natural assets.
4. **Community Needs and Goals:** The exemption would allow Pittsboro to better meet its growing population's housing, recreational, and service needs per its Land Use Plan and development goals.
5. **Similar Communities:** Currently exempted jurisdictions like Liberty, Ramseur, and Siler City, along with others such as Angier, Ayden, Benson, Bunn, Carthage, Clayton, and Fuquay-Varina, share similarities with Pittsboro in size, demographic, and economic/development-activity aspects. These towns typically have populations ranging from a few thousand to over ten thousand and face similar growth pressures, emphasizing the need for flexible annexation policies to manage expansion, support economic development, and address community needs effectively.

These reasons underscore the town's commitment to managed, responsible growth that benefits current and future residents while addressing the challenges of rapid regional development.

Requested Action

Place the Town of Pittsboro on the list of exempted jurisdictions from the 10% non-contiguous cap under NCGS §160A-58.1(b)(5).

Background

The treatment and removal of "forever chemicals" from drinking water have significantly impacted local governments. They face the challenge of upgrading water treatment facilities with advanced technology, which is often costly and technically complex. These efforts strain budgets and resources, as local governments must invest in research, infrastructure, and ongoing maintenance to ensure water safety and compliance with evolving regulations. Additionally, there's the burden of monitoring and testing water supplies, further emphasizing the need for federal and State support in addressing this pervasive issue.

Understanding "Forever Chemicals" and Unregulated Contaminants

"Forever chemicals," known as PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), are a group of manufactured chemicals used in various consumer products and industrial applications for their resistance to water, oil, and heat. These substances are called "forever chemicals" because they do not break down in the environment, leading to persistent contamination in water, soil, and living organisms. Due to their widespread use and durability, PFAS have been detected in numerous locations worldwide, raising concerns about their potential health impacts on humans and ecosystems. Many of these substances are unregulated. Other examples of unregulated contaminants include 1,4 dioxane and others, which frequently impact jurisdictions downstream from industrial areas. Frankly, almost everyone is downstream of someone, and these issues are faced statewide.

Legislative Support for Local Governments and Utility Providers *in re* this Issue

The North Carolina General Assembly can play a supportive role by:

- **Allocating Funds for Research:** The General Assembly can allocate funding specifically for scientific research into the health effects of PFAS and the development of more effective water treatment technologies. This could involve grants for universities and public health institutions to study the long-term impacts of PFAS exposure and to innovate on filtration methods that could be more broadly applied across the State's water systems.
- **Enacting Laws to Regulate Emissions:** By enacting stricter regulations on the industrial release of PFAS, the General Assembly can limit future contamination. Legislation could mandate better containment and disposal practices, require industries to switch to safer alternatives, and enforce penalties for non-compliance, thereby reducing the overall environmental footprint of PFAS.
- **Providing Financial Support for Water Treatment Upgrades:** Financial assistance or state-funded programs could support local governments and utility providers in upgrading their water treatment plants with advanced technologies capable of removing PFAS. This might include subsidies, low-interest loans, or grants to offset the high costs of installing and operating state-of-the-art filtration systems like Granular Activated Carbon (GAC) or reverse osmosis systems.
- **Establishing Statewide Monitoring and Reporting Standards:** Implementing a uniform statewide protocol for monitoring PFAS in water sources would standardize testing methods, frequency, and the specific PFAS compounds to be reported. This could facilitate a centralized database for tracking PFAS levels across North Carolina, enabling more coordinated public health responses and informing policy development.
- **Supporting Public Education Initiatives:** Awareness campaigns funded by the State can educate the public about the risks associated with PFAS, ways to minimize exposure, and the efforts to address contamination. Information dissemination could take various forms, including online resources, community meetings, and educational materials distributed through public schools and healthcare facilities.

Conclusion

The health, safety, well-being, and confidence of municipal water customers are essential for local communities. Support from the NCGA is vital to combatting these complex issues. Without continued and enhanced support from the NCGA, local communities, especially those in rural and underfunded areas, will continue to struggle to address these concerns.