



TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL

Town Council

Meeting Minutes - Draft

Town Hall
405 Martin Luther King Jr.
Boulevard
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Mayor Jessica Anderson
Mayor pro tem Amy Ryan
Council Member Camille Berry
Council Member Melissa McCullough
Council Member Paris Miller-Foushee

Council Member Theodore Nollert
Council Member Adam Searing
Council Member Elizabeth Sharp
Council Member Karen Stegman

Wednesday, February 12, 2025 6:00 PM RM 110 | Council Chamber

Language Access Statement

For interpretation or translation services, call 919-969-5105.

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Para servicios de interpretación o traducción, llame al 919-969-5105.

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In-Person Meeting Notification

View the Meeting

- View and participate in the Council Chamber.
- Live stream the meeting - <https://chapelhill.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>
- Spectrum is replacing 1998 encoder that transmits programming to cable channel 18. It remains offline until complete later this spring.
- The Town of Chapel Hill wants to know more about who participates in its programs and processes, including Town Council meetings.
- Participate in a voluntary demographic survey before viewing online or in person - <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/demosurvey>

Parking

- Parking is available at Town Hall lots and the lot at Stephens Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.
- See <http://www.parkonthehill.com> for other public lots on Rosemary Street
- Town Hall is served by NS route and T route, and GoTriangle Routes of Chapel Hill Transit.

Entry and Speakers

- Entrance on the ground floor.
- Sign up at the meeting starting at 5:30 PM with the Town Clerk to speak.
- If more than 14 people sign up for an item, Council will reduce speaking time from 3 minutes to 2 min./person.
- Please do not bring signs.

ROLL CALL

Present: 9 - Mayor Jessica Anderson, Mayor pro tem Amy Ryan, Council Member Camille Berry, Council Member Paris Miller-Foushee, Council Member Adam Searing, Council Member Karen Stegman, Council Member Theodore Nollert, Council Member Melissa McCullough, and Council Member Elizabeth Sharp

OTHER ATTENDEES

Interim Town Manager Mary Jane Nirdlinger, Deputy Town Manager Loryn Clark, Town Attorney Ann Anderson, Strategic Communications and Marketing Executive Director Susan Brown, Planning Director Britany Waddell, Affordable Housing and Community Connections Director Sarah Vinas, Business Management Director Amy Oland, Mobility and Greenways Manager Bergen Watterson, Mobility and Greenways Planner Ben Berolzheimer, Fire Marshal Rob Pruitt, Police Officer Danny Lloyd, Assistant Director for Business Management Matt Brinkley, Technology Solutions Director Chris Butts, Library Director Atlas Logan, Public Works Director Lance Norris, Deputy Fire Chief Stacey Graves, Police Chief Celisa Lehew, Parks and Recreation Director Atuya Cornwell, Transit Director Brian Litchfield, HR Director Anita Badrock, Building Services and Development Director Chelsea Laws, Special Projects Manager Cliff Turner, Town Clerk Brittney Hunt, and Deputy Town Clerk Amy Harvey.

OPENING

Mayor Anderson called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. Council Member Berry arrived at 6:14 pm.

Mayor Anderson noted that the agenda would include workshop items that had been deferred due to winter weather. She reviewed the agenda and mentioned that a legislative hearing for 200 South Elliott Road had been postponed to March 12, 2025, at the applicant's request.

0.01 Resolution Regarding Foreign Assistance Programs and USAID (R-0.01).

[\[25-0076\]](#)

Mayor Anderson noted the Trump Administration's funding freeze on the US Agency for International Development (USAID), which had a significant economic impact on North Carolina.

Council Member Stegman introduced a resolution between the Town and the NC Global Health Alliance, calling for the immediate lifting of the stop-work order on foreign assistance programs and the reopening of USAID. The resolution highlighted violations of federal acts, the

detrimental effects on North Carolina, and urged the US Treasury to pay organizations for services rendered. It also requested the NC Attorney General to take action and encouraged community members to contact their Congressional delegation.

Briana Clark, Executive Director of NC Global Health Alliance, emphasized USAID's global impact, gave examples of USAID projects, and noted that North Carolina is the fourth highest recipient of USAID funding. Ms. Clark highlighted the importance of fighting for both global lives and local jobs, and expressed pride in local governments considering the resolution.

Council Member Searing proposed a friendly amendment urging US Senators Ted Budd and Thom Tillis to support their constituents. The Council unanimously adopted the amended resolution.

A motion was made by Council Member Stegman, seconded by Council Member Miller-Foushee, that the Council adopted R-0.01 as amended. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

0.02 Mayor Anderson Regarding Funding for Federal Programs. [\[25-0077\]](#)

Mayor Anderson stated that the Town is closely monitoring any changes to federal policy, programs, and funding, and will keep everyone informed. She shared that the Town Manager's Office has been sharing relevant data with the Council, and the Council plans to send a letter to the Town's federal delegation.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY COUNCIL MEMBERS

0.03 Mayor Anderson Regarding Future Work Session. [\[25-0078\]](#)

Mayor Anderson stated the Council will hold a Work Session at the Chapel Hill Public Library on February 19th at 6:00 p.m.

0.04 Council Member Miller-Foushee Recognizes CM Stegman and the Piedmont Health Dental Office. [\[25-0079\]](#)

Council Member Miller-Foushee thanked Council Member Stegman for bringing the resolution regarding USAID funding (Item 0.01) forward. She also congratulated Piedmont Health for opening a new dental office and thanked them for continuing to enhance the health and wellbeing of the community.

0.05 Council Member Berry Regarding Chapel Hill Transit Fireside Chat. [\[25-0080\]](#)

Council Member Berry expressed pride in the Town's transit system and its progress over the years, following a fireside chat held by Chapel Hill Transit at the Public Library on February 10th.

0.06 Council Member McCullough Regarding Video of Fireside Chat. [\[25-0081\]](#)

Council Member McCullough pointed out that the fireside chat that Council Member Berry mentioned was recorded and would be available online.

PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS NOT ON PRINTED AGENDA AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC AND COUNCIL MEMBERS

Petitions and other similar requests submitted by the public, whether written or oral, are heard at the beginning of each regular meeting. Except in the case of urgency and unanimous vote of the Council members present, petitions will not be acted upon at the time presented. After receiving a petition, the Council shall, by simple motion, dispose of it as follows: consideration at a future regular Council meeting; referral to another board or committee for study and report; referral to the Town Manager for investigation and report; receive for information. See the Status of Petitions to Council webpage to track the petition. Receiving or referring of a petition does not constitute approval, agreement, or consent.

0.07 Mark and Azadeh Perry Request To Use The South Estes Community Center. [\[25-0082\]](#)

Mark Perry, representing the South Estes Drive Extension community, petitioned the Town to allow approximately 40 people to continue using the South Estes Community Center for neighborhood programs, which include children's classes, junior youth groups, ESL classes, and monthly family gatherings.

Resident Azaden Perry explained that a Buddhist woman had initiated the children's classes, initially in her home, but moved them to the Community Center as the program grew.

Lee Moavenzader read a letter from the woman who started the classes, stating that she is not a Baha'i and does not receive payment for teaching, highlighting the community's diversity and the positive impact of the classes on children.

Sofia (age 11) and Devin (age 9) also spoke, emphasizing the importance of the Center as a place for learning and friendship.

Kyi Kyi Lay, an East Chapel Hill High student who teaches at the Community Center, expressed that she had never asked anyone to become a Baha'i, and that the children's classes, which help with reading and writing, had been invaluable to her and other immigrants since she arrived in the US in 2012.

Britta Souman, a resident who moved to the neighborhood from New York four years ago, noted that the children's classes had helped her three boys calm down and that the center also provided English language support for her and other residents.

This item was received as presented.

0.08 Elizabeth Losos Requests the Council Accept Planning Commission Recommendations. [\[25-0083\]](#)

Elizabeth Losos, Planning Commission (PC) chair, petitioned the Council to accept the PC's recommendations regarding greenways, approved on December 3, 2024, emphasizing the need for prioritization and creative thinking. The recommendations included specific revisions for greenways and bicycle parking that should be incorporated into the LUMO rewrite.

A motion was made by Council Member Berry, seconded by Council Member Miller-Foushee, that the Council received and referred the petitions to the Manager and Mayor. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

0.09 Anita Wright Requests Emergency Housing. [\[25-0084\]](#)

Anita Wright asked for emergency housing for her son and four grandchildren who were being forced from their home because it had not passed code.

Mayor Anderson advised Ms. Wright to meet with a staff member in the lobby.

This item was received as presented.

CONSENT

Items of a routine nature will be placed on the Consent Agenda to be voted on in a block. Any item may be removed from the Consent Agenda by request of the Mayor or any Council Member.

Approval of the Consent Agenda

A motion was made by Mayor pro tem Ryan, seconded by Council Member Berry, that R-1 be adopted as amended, which approved the Consent Agenda. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

1. Approve all Consent Agenda Items [\[25-0062\]](#)

This resolution(s) and/or ordinance(s) was adopted and/or enacted.

2. Amend the 2024-25 Council Calendar [\[25-0063\]](#)

This resolution(s) and/or ordinance(s) was adopted and/or enacted.

2.1 Continue the Legislative Hearing and Defer Considering the Application for 200 S. Elliott Road [\[25-0071\]](#)

This resolution(s) and/or ordinance(s) was adopted and/or enacted.

DISCUSSION

ZONING ATLAS AMENDMENT

Zoning Atlas Amendment: The Zoning Atlas Amendment, to change the zoning designation on this property, is Legislative. The Council receives and considers public comment on the merits of the proposed rezoning, including opinions, when making Legislative decisions.

3. Close the Legislative Hearing for the Conditional Zoning Application at 200 South Elliott Road [\[25-0064\]](#)

This matter was deferred to the March 12, 2025 Council Meeting.

WORK SESSION ITEMS

The Council will transition to a work session format for the remaining items. This format differs, as work sessions are a less formal opportunity for the council to dive into specific topics. Council doesn't vote or take public comment during work sessions and the topics will come back to a formal meeting for action.

4. FY2026 Budget Update [\[25-0065\]](#)

Interim Town Manager Mary Jane Nirdlinger outlined the FY 2026 budget update, which would cover budget basics, influencing factors, and opportunities and challenges. She noted that staff would recommend a non-revenue-neutral tax rate and would discuss the factors driving this recommendation.

Business Management Director Amy Oland highlighted that the Town's annual revenues (property tax, sales tax, department fees) were growing more slowly than expenditures. She warned of a potential \$1 million shortfall in FY 2025-2026 due to declining sales tax revenue.

Ms. Oland presented on Town expenditures emphasizing that employee salaries and benefits (74% of the budget) had increased annually. Other expenses included operations, facilities, vehicles, debt and capital management, Enterprise Funds, and community priorities. She noted the Town's four Enterprise Funds (Transit, Parking, Public Housing, and Stormwater) faced staffing, operational, and infrastructure challenges.

Ms. Oland pointed out that the Town's Debt Fund, which had been established in FY 2010, was about 15 percent of the current 59.2 cent tax rate. The intent of the Debt Fund was to ensure a dedicated revenue

source, but there were more needs than it could fund, she said. Human Resource Director Anita Badrock discussed increasing employee turnover and hiring challenges, noting the current Pay and Classification study, enhancement of the employee wellness program, and the importance of a competitive cost of living adjustment for employee morale and recruitment.

Technology Solutions Director Chris Butts outlined an enterprise strategy for software and hardware that had improved cost-effectiveness. He described the process for evaluating technology proposals, including a cross-departmental steering committee. Butts noted annual increases in technology costs and provided an example of cost reduction negotiations.

Public Works Director Lance Norris emphasized the multi-year priority of addressing backlogs for Town facilities, fleets, and streets. He highlighted the importance of timely maintenance and the negative impacts of deferred maintenance, including higher costs and lower community satisfaction.

Assistant Director of Business Management Matt Brinkley discussed the impact of inflation on core programs and services. Department heads faced difficult decisions to hold budgets flat, and the Town had only funded about 10% of departmental requests over the past five years. He emphasized the need to reduce the expenditure gap and reliance on fund balance and lapsed salaries.

Transit Director Brian Litchfield noted that all Enterprise Funds (Housing, Stormwater, Transit, Parking) faced challenges due to rising costs and aging infrastructure. He mentioned the pressure from uncertain federal funding and potential tariffs, and despite a half-cent tax increase for Transit, all Enterprise Funds would require additional investment in FY 2026.

Ms. Oland informed the Council that a planned property revaluation by Orange County in 2025 presented a strategic opportunity to set a tax rate that could meet multiple fiscal interests. She reviewed Council actions during the first two years of the five-year budget strategy and proposed a schedule for budget deliberations that extended to final budget approval on June 11, 2024.

The Council confirmed that the fund balance was typically around 22% of the General Fund and that the Town was not required to have a Debt Fund. Council members requested data on the impact of a non-revenue-neutral tax rate on homeowners and expressed interest in supporting lower-income residents.

Council Members made suggestions on more thought be given to

tradeoffs, cutting Town spending, requested financial information in chart forms, and the importance of community input.

Council Members requested more information on the Town's over-arching pay philosophy, preparations for the growing housing crisis, impact of toxic cleanups, vacancy rates at the new Rosemary Parking Garage, and the impact of different budgeting approaches on stakeholders.

This item was received as presented.

5. Mobility and Greenways Update and Everywhere-to-Everywhere Greenways Feasibility Study Introduction [\[25-0066\]](#)

Planning Director Britany Waddell stated staff's planning efforts for the Town's greenway network had begun with creation of the Office of Mobility and Greenways (OMG). She introduced staff to provide an update and an overview of an Everywhere-to-Everywhere Greenways Feasibility Study.

Mobility and Greenways Manager Bergen Watterson stated the purpose of the OMG and reviewed current and future projects. Ms. Watterson reported that Chapel Hill had become a state leader due to "Vision Zero" project and the successfully secured external funding of five of the six programs being federally funded.

Ms. Watterson noted the challenges posed by the rising costs of construction and design but stated that the Town's four capital projects are set to begin in Fall 2025. She also expressed hope that the Safe Streets for All project would start in the coming months.

Iona Thomas, a principal with McAdams consulting firm, outlined the goals of the Everywhere-to-Everywhere Greenways Feasibility Study to enhance the Town's ability to budget for projects, engage with developers, and secure funding. Ms. Thomas noted the study will analyze the natural, human, and overall vision for the greenway network, leading to recommendations for routes, design, and implementation. The process will involve a steering committee and public engagement, with a focus on building trust and ensuring inclusive participation.

Mitchell Silver, Interim Planning Manager at McAdams, highlighted the community engagement approach, which will use the Town's existing Community Connections Strategy to ensure that all voices are heard. The engagement process, running from January 2025 to December 2026, will help identify and test feasible projects and develop reliable cost estimates.

Council Members emphasized the importance of coordinating with the School District for safe routes to schools, discussed the potential of a Safe Streets for All grant to improve temporary car deterrents, and requested a

draft map to the starting point for Everywhere-to-Everywhere Greenways.

Council Members and McAdams staff discussed need for guardrails to ensure safe connections, concerns about community opposition, restorative justice in the planning processing, and the important of respectful and inclusive engagement.

Ms. Waddell addressed zoning concerns noting the discussions would be premature until greenway placement is determined highlighting any necessary zoning adjustments could be brought to Council as LUMO text amendments. Council requested regular updates before December 2026 regarding process.

This item was received as presented.

ADJOURNMENT

This meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.