

Approve a Contract Amendment for a Planning Systems Evaluation

Staff:

Dwight Bassett, Director of Economic Development & Parking Services
Colleen Willger, AICP, Director of Planning

Department:

Economic Development
Planning

Overview: In February 2021, the Chapel Hill Town Council demonstrated unanimous support for a comprehensive assessment of the Town's current planning functions to be led by an independent consultant and guided by a Council subcommittee, now known as the Mayor's Planning Steering Committee.

The overall purpose of this assessment is to improve the efficiency and outcomes in all aspects of land use planning and project review by learning lessons from our past and considering best practices being used in other communities.



Recommendation(s):

That the Council adopt the attached resolution declaring its intent to amend the existing contract with The Keesmaat Group to conduct a Planning Systems Evaluation to achieve better outcomes in our planning processes and land use decisions.

Key Issues:

- The assessment must reflect a solid understanding of the limitations and challenges faced by North Carolina cities and towns since we are a Dillon's Rule state and should address the following interests:
 - Achieving a stronger long-term planning culture to realize town goals and create complete neighborhoods, with infrastructure to support them;
 - Creating a shared understanding across the organization and with Council of the goals and outcomes we want to achieve through the planning and review processes;
 - Determining ways in which our planning processes can arrive at these outcomes in more efficient and effective ways than previously;
 - Ensuring that our processes create solid connections between town policies and outcomes and that they support our interest in maximizing community benefits from our land use decisions;
 - Identifying best practices for applying various lenses such as equity and environment to our work; and
 - Helping us think about how our planning processes can help us to balance our various interests as we grow including:
 - Affordability and affordable housing
 - Environmental stewardship and stormwater mitigation
 - Multi-modal mobility and connectivity
 - Parks, greenspaces, and public spaces
 - Economic vitality and resilience

- Placemaking, placekeeping, and urban design.
- The general approach for the proposed process review is to conduct interviews, evaluate key projects and identify lessons learned, clarify drivers for change (i.e. culture, climate, etc.), identify efficiencies and new process options, and ultimately position the Town to change to achieve better outcomes.

Fiscal Impact/Resources: The funding for the Planning Systems Evaluation has not yet been identified. Staff hope to fund this project with FY 2022 excess fund balance. Staff do not know if that funding source is currently an option. To help move this project forward, staff propose temporarily reallocating street resurfacing dollars, recognizing that if there is not excess fund balance available, the Town will not be able to move forward with the complete street resurfacing list of projects as planned.



Attachments:

- Resolution

A RESOLUTION A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR A CONTRACT AMENDMENT FOR A PLANNING SYSTEMS EVALUATION (2022-09-14/R-#)

WHEREAS, WHEREAS, the Chapel Hill Town Council initiated in partnership with the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill a Housing Needs Analysis: 2020-2040, which found housing demand is outpacing housing supply and that new housing for individual households is expected to increase to approximately 440 units per year; and

WHEREAS, the Chapel Hill Town Council initiated a Council-led project for a Complete Community Strategy to assess capacity throughout the entire town of Chapel Hill to determine where and how to meet current and future housing needs; and

WHEREAS, the Chapel Hill Town Council unanimously petitioned for an assessment to improve the efficiency and outcomes in all aspects of land use planning and project review by learning lessons from our past and considering best practices being used in other communities; and

WHEREAS, to help guide this work, the Mayor created a Mayor’s Planning Steering Committee, which includes the Mayor, three Councilmembers, Town Manager, Director of Economic Development & Parking Services, and the Director of Planning, to align ongoing and future planning initiatives; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor’s Planning Steering Committee, recommends a Planning Systems Evaluation to understand and have a roadmap toward implementation for a cultural change at the Council, Leadership, and Cross-Departmental levels to change from a reactive regulatory process that produces outcomes misaligned with the Town’s vision and values to a proactive, strategic, forward-thinking process that builds a complete community; and

WHEREAS, the funds for the Planning Systems Evaluation have not yet been identified. Once a proposal for the project has been received and the total cost is known, staff will return to Council with a funding plan and budget ordinance amendment to allocate the budget for the project.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Town of Chapel Hill that the Council amend the existing contract with The Keesmaat Group to oversee and conduct the Planning Systems Evaluation.

This the 14th day of September, 2022.

The Agenda will reflect the text below and/or the motion text will be used during the meeting.

By adopting the resolution, the Council
[takes what action ... should be similar to the BE IT RESOLVED clauses].