

Amy Harvey

From: CHRIS BLUE
Sent: Thursday, April 25, 2024 5:01 PM
To: Amy Ryan; Jess Anderson; Karen Stegman; Paris Miller-Foushee; Adam Searing; Camille Berry; Melissa McCullough; Theodore Nollert; Elizabeth Sharp; Town Council
Cc: Mary Jane Nirdlinger; Loryn Clark; Ann Anderson; Sabrina Oliver; Amy Harvey; Amy Oland; Susan Brown; Christina Strauch; Alex Carrasquillo; Jeanne Brown; Matthew Brinkley
Subject: RE: UPDATED: 4/26/24 - meeting agenda and related materials

All: Please see a few questions that came in today and which may be helpful in advance of tomorrow's conversation.

Council Question: What's the affordable housing reserve fund?

Staff Response: The Affordable Housing Development Reserve (AHDR) is one of the Town's local funding sources available to support affordable housing development and preservation projects. The AHDR was established in FY15 and most recently in FY24 included approximately \$970,000 in funding. The AHDR is dedicated exclusively to the development and preservation of affordable housing. Priority project areas are:

- 1. Land bank and land acquisition*
- 2. Rental subsidy and development*
- 3. Homeownership development and assistance*
- 4. Future development planning.*

AHDR applications are accepted as many as three times per year (~ every 4 months). Applications are reviewed and evaluated by Town staff and then presented to the Town Council for final approval.

For more information on the Affordable Housing Development Reserve, see

<https://www.townofchapelhill.org/government/departments-services/housing-and-community/funding/affordable-housing-development-reserve>.

Council Question: I don't support plastic grass. I'm not happy about putting acres of plastic in the landfill every x years ad infinity, not to mention the health issues and production issues.

Staff Response: The Town replaced the previous artificial turf play surface at Cedar Falls Park in 2023 with a 2-inch fiber turf with padding, as well as an infill blend that is made from natural cork and premier-grade elastomers, which is environmentally friendly and engineered using all-recycled materials.

A significant amount of water, fertilizer, and mowing is required to maintain regular grass on athletic fields. The new turf installed at Cedar Falls Park helps us conserve all those resources while using sustainable materials.

In alignment with the Town's commitment to sustainability, future turf replacement projects will incorporate infill and turf recycling practices. Additionally, we will continue to prioritize selecting turf and infill products that are environmentally friendly, and surfaces that provide safe and quality play experiences for our community.

Council Question: It's my understanding that we don't want to delay the 828 remediation once we get the scientific data and consensus on the best path forward; that would put it in the timeframe of this bond issue. Why is it not included as a funded project? Do we expect to seek grant funding? Even so, would we need to budget for local match?

Staff Response: *Under the EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant, the Town could apply for up to \$2 million with a 20 percent cost share requirement. Our consultants have informed us that this grant is very competitive. Once the Town Council decides what form of remediation is best, our plan is to further evaluate the grant under the chosen scope.*

Since the project scope and total cost is not yet known, Town staff did not believe this was a good fit for the bond referendum.

Council Question: Why is the ADA transition plan an urgent priority?

Staff Response: *The project is urgent because some facilities and public spaces are hard to access for people with disabilities and, thus, the Town is out of compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Though no immediate legal risks are imminent from the State or Federal government, the Town is required to be making consistent good faith efforts towards becoming compliant through making the fixes identified in the ADA Transition Plan.*

In 2023, the Town completed an ADA Transition Plan as required by the ADA which assessed our communications; programs, activities, and services; public rights of way and intersections; and facilities including publicly accessible buildings, parks and greenways. The \$2,000,000 ask for ADA improvements would be used to bring the Town's facilities and public spaces into compliance with the ADA. Part of the funding would go towards our facilities to make parking lots, bathrooms, public spaces, and key routes through facilities accessible. The rest of the funding would be used for trails, sidewalks, and intersections to install requirements such as curb ramps and audible pedestrian signals as well as fix tripping hazards caused by trees. Project is estimated to take 2 years to complete.

Council Question: What criteria were used to prioritize Raleigh Road and Ephesus Church Road sidewalk/sidepath projects? Would it be possible to split the Raleigh Road Sidepath into smaller sections (Glen Lennox to campus; Meadowmont to Glen Lennox) and do it in stages?

Staff Response: *The Raleigh Road Sidepath was a priority project in the Mobility and Connectivity Plan and the Everywhere-to-Everywhere Greenways map. It was one of the 6 priority bike-ped projects identified by both the Transportation and Connectivity Advisory Board and the Parks, Greenways, and Recreation Commission for the last several years. The project would connect Glen Lennox and Meadowmont to UNC Campus and Downtown, where there are currently no direct, safe connections. The project would be a sidepath, most likely on the north side, connecting the Glen Lennox shopping center to Country Club Road.*

The Raleigh Road sidepath extends from the 15-501 underpass to Country Club Road. It does not extend out to Meadowmont. With those termini, there is not a reasonable place to split the

project, as it would not provide the connectivity that it is intended to provide. One option would be to fund the design of the Raleigh Road sidepath, which would set it up to score better in future MPO calls for projects (existing projects in advanced phases get higher scores than new projects).

The Ephesus Church Road Sidewalk project would provide broad public benefit along a road linking major mobility corridors – Fordham Blvd./US 15-501/Durham-Chapel Hill Blvd. and Interstate 40. This project was number three of the top ten sidewalk projects approved on October 10, 2016, by the Town Council. The necessary right-of-way has been acquired and the project design is completed. This project is shovel ready. Federal Community Project Funding has allocated \$500,000 towards this project. The Town must encumber these grant funds by September 30, 2027, and we are not able to repurpose these funds for another project. Pedestrian safety in this area will continue to be a concern until these sidewalk connections are completed which will allow pedestrians to not have to walk on rough unimproved surfaces or within the lanes of vehicular traffic.

Council Question: Why are we not seeing a public housing project on the funded project list?

***Staff Response:** Public Housing is one of the Town's four enterprise funds. Best practice is for an enterprise fund to be self-supporting meaning the revenues generated are sufficient to cover the expenditures necessary to operate. Expenditures would include personnel, operations, and capital. The Town receives an annual housing capital grant allocation of about \$1 million that is available to help maintain and preserve our public housing units.*

In the call for department heads to provide their top three capital project requests, two public housing projects were submitted that are included under the Affordable Housing bond order category.

Council Question: It would be useful to know for all of these projects which could have alternative funding sources (like grants) and where that money just isn't available for that particular kind of project.

***Staff Response:** Most of the capital projects for public facilities (fire stations, administration buildings, etc.) do not have alternate funding sources outside of debt financing. Some capital projects are good candidates for grants with the NCDOT (sidepaths, sidewalks, greenways, etc.) but there is no guarantee that we will receive that funding (competitive nature of grants, projects not aligning with grant requirements, size and socioeconomic makeup of our town, focus on Justice 40, meaning that at least 40% of the funding will go to what the federal government describes as low-income and disadvantaged communities (LIDAC, etc.). Other projects have annual funding allocations in the operating budget (affordable housing, climate action, parks & recreation, etc.) but the backlog of project needs or the outside collaborations for project funding are much larger than the annual amounts we have available.*

Council Question: Is there a reason to transition both grass fields to artificial turf in the near term, while other projects on the list remain only partially funded (climbing wall, pickleball, splash pad)? Do the turf field rental revenues cover maintenance/refurbishment costs going forward?

Staff Response: *At the current funding recommendation level for artificial turf category, staff recommend prioritizing the Homestead Park Multipurpose Rectangle Athletic Fields turf replacement and the Millhouse Road Park Property Project which will incorporate artificial and natural grass rectangle athletic fields. Southern Community Park Rectangle Athletic Fields will continue to have a natural grass play surface until an alternative funding source can be identified to create a championship level artificial turf field with the addition of LED lighting.*

Homestead Park Multipurpose Rectangle Athletic Fields play surface is currently artificial turf. These fields will be due for replacement no later than 2029 based on best practice recommendations and industry standards. By not replacing the current artificial turf, play conditions will deteriorate for community usage and the fields may have to close if surface is deemed hazardous and unplayable.

The funding in this category also could help support a potential collaboration opportunity with Orange County to develop Millhouse Road Park Property which would feature several multipurpose rectangle athletic fields. The Complex plan would incorporate artificial and natural turf play surfaces.

Artificial turf and natural grass field rental revenues currently go into the Town's General Fund to help support the Parks and Recreation budget. Total athletic field revenues received in FY 2023 were \$427K and are expected to be about \$500K in FY 2024. There is \$48,000 allocated within Parks and Recreation's annual operating budget for athletic field maintenance and facility repairs. Currently, there is not an establish funding source designated specifically for the replacement of artificial turf fields. It is recommended to replace the artificial turf every 8 to 10 years pending usage levels. Within our inventory, we have artificial multipurpose rectangle athletic fields at Cedar Falls Park (newly replaced in 2023) and Homestead Park (installed in 2019).

*An example of an alternative funding source for an artificial turf field project occurred for the 2019 installation of artificial turf at the Homestead Park Multipurpose Rectangle Fields. The project was completed due to a pre-paid rental agreement with two local soccer associations. The soccer associations provided payment for their future field rental usage with the Town. This approach can be beneficial, however, there are third-party organizations that are only willing to enter into this type of an agreement if they are guaranteed a special field allocation priority. The 2019 pre-paid rental agreement **did not** provide special priority for the soccer organizations that participated in the agreement. When considering the pre-paid rental agreement approach, staff is mindful of ensuring public access and access for programming facilitated by the Town for the public as well. In addition, with the prepaid arrangement, field rentals are paid up front to cover the costs of the turf project. These are annual revenues that we rely on in the General Fund to help balance the annual budget and without those funds, we have to find other funds to cover the gap made.*

Council Question: Are we paying for all of the Bolinwood Greenway Extension, or is the \$2M just our local contribution to the total?

Staff Response: *The Bolin Creek Greenway Extension will connect Umstead Park to Estes Drive Extension and upcoming bike-ped improvements, and ultimately to the Carrboro greenways when they are constructed. Design and engineering for the project is almost underway and the preferred alignment for the project should be selected by later this fall.*

The proposed \$2 million bond funding would be used for right-of-way acquisition and construction. The project has scored well in the NCDOT prioritization process this round. We will not have solid information on award information until winter 2025 so we can't count on any grant funding at this time. If we do receive federal funding for the project, we will only need the bond funding to provide the local match (20% of project cost) and the remaining funding would be freed up for another open space/greenway project.

Council Question: How much farther behind does it put us to not include any street resurfacing in this bond issue?

Staff Response: *We have ~165 center line miles and ~760 town-maintained streets. Based on best practices, as an average, a street should be paved once every 15 years. Based on current operating funds of ~\$568,515, we will be paving our streets once about every 82.5 years. The Town has 128 streets or sections that are currently rated in poor to very poor condition for which funding is unavailable to improve the quality of the streets.*

Continued deterioration of the roads leads to significantly increased maintenance costs and could result in the eventual need to reconstruct the street. There's a rule of thumb for estimating the cost of deferred streets maintenance – a dollar spent repairing a street in good condition turns into 6 dollars for a street in fair condition, and 14 dollars for a street in poor condition. (Due to the current state of deterioration, the funding required to address the backlog of needs is \$17.3M.)

The best funding source for streets is an annual appropriation in the Town's operating budget. Our goal is to increase this allocation over time to an amount that will provide a sufficient stream of funding to address our backlog.

Council Question: Do you have estimates for how much money/carbon emissions the public facility projects will save the town annually?

Staff Response: *As part of an RFQ process, we will soon be working with a consultant to identify engineering estimates for cost savings and emissions reduction.*

For the sustainable Town buildings project, we have identified two possible grant opportunities that could support part of this work. The first is a federal grant (C-SITE) that is one-time funding and has an application deadline of May 31. For that grant we are focused on our community centers only. The other grant is a potential state opportunity (CPRG) that, if approved by the

EPA later this summer, could provide statewide competitive grant funding for energy upgrades to municipal facilities. As with any competitive grant, none of the funding is guaranteed; however, any funding we do receive would expand the number and types of sustainable technologies we can add to our Town facilities (e.g., more energy efficiency measures, EV charging infrastructure, water conservation). In other words, we view these grants as potential supplements to the overall project.

Council Question: At an earlier meeting, we discussed seeing some kind of bar chart comparing the need for different categories with the progress toward meeting that need (how big is the hole, how fast are we filling it across our different funding sources). Please provide that kind of information for Friday's meeting.

Staff Response: *We will include a slide to chart this information in the 4/26 final work session presentation.*