



TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL

Town Council Meeting Minutes

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

Mayor Pam Hemminger
Mayor pro tem Karen Stegman
Council Member Jessica Anderson
Council Member Camille Berry
Council Member Tai Huynh

Council Member Paris Miller-Foushee
Council Member Michael Parker
Council Member Amy Ryan
Council Member Adam Searing

Tuesday, June 21, 2022 4:30 PM Virtual Meeting

Language Access Statement

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

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如需口头或
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919-969-5105.

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

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Virtual Meeting Notification

Town Council members will attend and participate in this meeting remotely, through internet access, and will not physically attend. The Town will not provide a physical location for viewing the meeting.

The public is invited to attend. The Town of Chapel Hill wants to know more about who participates in its programs and processes, including Town Council business meetings and work sessions. Please participate in a voluntary demographic survey <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/demosurvey> before accessing the Zoom webinar registration. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar in listen-only mode. Phone: 301-715-8592, Meeting ID: 850 9582 6180

View Council meetings live at <https://chapelhill.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx> – and on Chapel Hill Gov-TV (townofchapelhill.org/GovTV).

OPENING

Mayor Hemminger opened the virtual Special Work Session at 4:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Mayor Hemminger called the roll and all Council Members replied that they were present, with the exception of Council Member Huynh, who arrived at 4:39 p.m.

Present: 9 - Mayor Pam Hemminger, Mayor pro tem Karen Stegman, Council Member Jessica Anderson, Council Member Camille Berry, Council Member Paris Miller-Foushee, Council Member Tai Huynh, Council Member Michael Parker, Council Member Amy Ryan, and Council Member Adam Searing

OTHER ATTENDEES

Deputy Town Manager Mary Jane Nirdlinger, Deputy Town Manager Loryn Clark, Town Attorney Ann Anderson, Planning Director Colleen Willger, Economic Development Officer Dwight Bassett, Assistant Planning Director Judy Johnson, Deidra Whittenberg-McEntyre, Economic Development Specialist Laura Selmer, Planning Manager Corey Liles, Affordable Housing and Community Connections Director Sarah Viñas, Transit Development Manager Matt Cecil, Communications and Public Affairs Director and Town Clerk Sabrina Oliver.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY COUNCIL MEMBERS

0.01 Mayor Hemminger Regarding Town Manager Absence. [\[22-0571\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger reminded the Council that Town Manager Maurice Jones was on break but would view a recording of the current meeting at a later time.

AGENDA ITEM

1. A Strategy for Where and How to Build Complete Communities and How That Dovetails with the Transit Oriented Development and Land Use Management Ordinance Projects. [\[22-0565\]](#)

Economic Development Officer Dwight Bassett introduced consultants Jennifer Keesmaat, of The Keesmaat Group, and Jennifer Hurley, of Hurley-Franks & Associates, to present information regarding their roles in visioning and planning for Chapel Hill's future housing needs.

Ms. Keesmaat gave a PowerPoint presentation on a "complete communities" strategy that could lead to more inclusive, sustainable and economically competitive communities. She said the basic criteria included diverse housing types and a mix of uses with transit and the public realm layered in. Complete community designs resulted in more inclusive neighborhoods, less driving, more access to amenities, and more mobility choices, she said.

Ms. Keesmaat said that transforming Chapel Hill would be possible despite its unique and special character. She outlined an immediate plan

for the Town that included the following objectives: identify shared interests about where and how to build; determine where a complete community could be advanced; explore opportunities and trade-offs; identify a viable pilot project that could demonstrate what a complete community would look like.

Ms. Keesmaat said that critical components of the planning work would include recruiting community leaders to engage in a dialogue about growth. The Town would then hold focus groups with those leaders and the Council, conduct technical analyses of housing capacity and demand, and identify a pilot project, she said. She outlined a six-phase work plan that would unfold over the summer and discussed each phase in detail. A chart showing a breakdown of the six phases and tasks would be posted in Town Hall, she said.

Ms. Keesmaat proposed that the goal of the current work session would be for the Council to provide feedback on the critical components of the work. It would be an opportunity to further refine and clarify a work plan and reach consensus on what needed to be changed, she said.

Ms. Hurley discussed a plan for stakeholder interviews that would take place during July and August 2022. The goal would be to widen circles of influence by talking with those who had particular insights but might not always show up to regular Town meetings, she said. She said that the ultimate objective would be to identify potential community champions.

Ms. Hurley explained that selected community champions might include employers who had been harmed because their employees were not able to live near work. It could include people who want to live in Chapel Hill but cannot afford to do so. It might include developers who could potentially build missing middle housing but are not doing that. People who were opposed to greater density might share their perspective as well, she said.

Ms. Hurley said that a list of potential participants had been narrowed down to about 15. Those 15 people would be interviewed and there would be opportunities for additional perspectives that might be missed in that first round, she said.

Council Members confirmed with Ms. Keesmaat that the goal of the interviews was to identify people who want to have a more intense role in the process by becoming community champions for change. The Council verified that there would be about 40 targeted interviews. The short list of 15 had been developed through various channels -- such as recommendations from Council Members and Town department heads and a Google document that Mr. Bassett put out.

The Council emphasized the importance of broadening the list of

interviewees beyond those who typically participate in Town processes. Council Member Miller-Foushee stressed the importance of all involved being aware of the Town's history. Council Member Huynh spoke about getting more participation from young people as well. Council Member Ryan emphasized the importance of including environmental groups in the discussions.

Ms. Keesmaat pointed out that the Town had information from surveys that it had completed in the past. However, some Council Members said that those results had not captured the views of some members of the demographically diverse Chapel Hill community. Ms. Keesmaat noted that a request for names had gone out to Council Members, and she emphasized that everyone was free to suggest potential interviewees.

Council Member Parker pointed out that community survey responses regarding affordable housing projects had often been inconsistent with the later reality. Council Member Ryan cautioned against taking the survey at face value as well. The Town had many shared values that received more push-back as they moved into implementation, she said. Council Member Anderson noted that community members had various thoughts regarding what should be preserved.

Council Member Searing recommended approaching the process with a positive attitude, and he pointed out that the Town already had several affordable housing projects underway.

Mayor Hemminger pointed out that the Town survey had a high response rate and had always been randomized and administered across all communities. However, the Town was currently trying to look deeper into some of the statistics, she said, adding that the Equity and Diversity Officer Shenekia Weeks would be working with the survey company to devise better questions.

Council Member Parker asked how diverse opinions about growth would be converted into a consensus, and Ms. Keesmaat replied that the parameters that Council approved for the study would be the basis for proceeding. She and others would be looking at a way to create complete communities by identifying where and how growth could take place, she said. She proposed proceeding with the assumption that the Town survey was statistically valid and that there was a commitment to improving it. Regardless of the survey, however, the Council would be the body making the final decision on whether or not to support the complete communities plan, she pointed out.

Ms. Keesmaat presented the following three "hard truths", which were based on her early observations and meant to help reach a shared understanding:

1) *This Council can put a stake in the ground and reset the trajectory for the future.* Chapel Hill is an exclusive place where 92 percent of Town employees do not live. It is not a live/work community, and one can assume that a significant number of people do not want to commute.

2) *No one is happy with the planning process or planning outcomes.* Missteps regarding the Chapel Hill 2020 Comprehensive Plan had combined with voices that resist and reject change to lead to a lose/lose dynamic that is driving the best developers away.

3) *Chapel Hill has a difficult urban form to remediate.* If the goal is to create an inclusive and walkable Town, where and how to grow will need to focus on a multi-centered approach.

Ms. Keesmaat said that reaching consensus on those three truths would be useful going forward, where the structure would lead to a pilot project rather than principles. The plan was to begin with a pilot project and start talking about something tangible, she said.

Council Members generally agreed with the three hard truths, and some said that more could be added to the list. They agreed that retrofitting for density would be a complicated process, but they stressed the importance of keeping to a timeline and budget. The Council said that it wanted Chapel Hill to be a place that was accessible to all, not an exclusive bedroom community, and some noted the importance of remediating past discrimination as part of the process.

Mayor Hemminger agreed on the importance of coalescing around the three hard truths. She said that the Town's long and cumbersome process had not yielded desired outcomes. It had led to less affordable housing and developers had said that the Town's process keeps them from doing what they could do to build a better community, she said.

Mayor Hemminger pointed out that there was an undeveloped Gateway area in Town that could be an opportunity for a pilot project. Another area at Timberlyne would be redeveloped at some point as well, she said. She mentioned several factors that made Chapel Hill different from other communities, and she stressed the need for the Town to become more diverse and inclusive. She thought that the Council and community were ready for change but that they wanted the Town to grow in a "Chapel Hill-esque" manner, she said.

Ms. Keesmaat said that the Council's high level of consensus around the vision for creating an inclusive community was an asset. She had heard loud and clear that Council Members wanted to act, she said. She said that fixing mistakes of the past was a powerful frame to add to the hard

truths.

Council Member Anderson left the meeting at 6:20 p.m. in order to attend to a personal matter.

Tom Henkle, a Chapel Hill resident, expressed concern about how public services in Town were funded through property and sales taxes. He said that residential development made up 83 percent of the residential/commercial/light industrial mix, when it should be about 65 percent. He proposed that the Council create a better balance by encouraging more commercial and light industrial development.

Mayor Hemminger pointed out that sales tax revenue had increased in recent years. She said that there were differences of opinion on the other percentages that Mr. Henkle had mentioned. She did not expect to see light industrial development in Chapel Hill, but the Town had worked hard to increase its commercial opportunities zones and was working toward a 60/40 balance, she said.

This item was received as presented.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:25 p.m.