



TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL

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

Town Council

Meeting Minutes - Draft

Mayor Pam Hemminger
Mayor pro tem Jessica Anderson
Council Member Donna Bell
Council Member Allen Buansi
Council Member Hongbin Gu

Council Member Nancy Oates
Council Member Michael Parker
Council Member Rachel Schaevitz
Council Member Karen Stegman

Friday, July 12, 2019

9:00 AM

RM 110 | Council Chamber

Roll Call

Present: 9 - Mayor Pam Hemminger, Mayor pro tem Jessica Anderson, Council Member Donna Bell, Council Member Allen Buansi, Council Member Hongbin Gu, Council Member Nancy Oates, Council Member Michael Parker, Council Member Karen Stegman, and Council Member Rachel Schaevitz

Other Attendees

Town Manager Maurice Jones, Deputy Town Manager Florentine Miller, Town Attorney Ralph Karpinos, Police Officer Rick Fahrer, Communications Specialist Mark Losey, Transit Director Brian Litchfield, Transit Development Manager Matthew Cecil, LUMO Project Manager Alisa Duffey Rogers, Fire Marshal Tommy Gregory, Communications and Public Affairs Director and Town Clerk Sabrina Oliver.

OPENING

Mayor Hemminger opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. Council Members Stegman, and Schaevitz arrived at 9:01 a.m. and 9:10 a.m., and Mayor pro tem Anderson arrived at 9:03 a.m., respectively.

AGENDA ITEM

1. North South Bus Rapid Transit Station Design and Land Use Development Community Engagement Event - July 12 - 15, 2019

[\[19-0663\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger explained that the upcoming weekend of workshops would focus on the Town's North-South Bus Rapid Transit (N-S BRT) plans. The Town would submit a grant application for the 30 percent design phase at the end of August, she said.

Transit Director Brian Litchfield gave a PowerPoint presentation that provided context and background on the BRT project, which would run through Town from the Eubanks Park & Ride in the north to the Southern

Village Park & Ride in the south. He said that the current transit system was close to capacity, with approximately 4,500 rides per day. Planners were envisioning a second BRT corridor between Highway 54 and Eastowne Drive, he said, and he described other possible connections as well.

Mr. Litchfield said that the current development stage included addressing environmental aspects, doing a traffic impact analysis (TIA), beginning to integrate bike and pedestrian facilities, and discussing aspirations for station areas. The 30 percent design and environmental analysis would be completed by the end of the summer and that staff would ask the Federal Transportation Authority (FTA) for a project rating at the end of August, he said.

Mayor pro tem Anderson confirmed with Mr. Litchfield that guiding principles for the project included meeting transit, economic development, and overall mobility needs. Mr. Litchfield said that BRT would expand the corridor's diverse ridership and improve access for riders.

Julia Suprock, representing AECOM, reviewed plans for the workshops, gave an overview of BRT design work, and discussed the goals and principles of a study on transit-supported development. She said that the three major categories of the work plan were: to develop a typology framework; to hold an urban design workshop; and to define an implementation plan. She discussed a similar project that AECOM had developed in Texas and said that Chapel Hill's implementation plan would be developed over a few months.

Council Members confirmed with Ms. Suprock that the typical walking distance from station areas would be a half mile to three miles and that discussions regarding transitions to neighborhoods had already begun. The half-mile radius around each station would be eligible for active FTA funding, but anything beyond that would not, she said.

Mr. Litchfield said that staff would begin talking with the Metropolitan Planning Organization and others about additional funding sources and that he would provide more information on that as the project moved into the 30 percent design phase.

Council Members verified that the Town's Mobility Plan was already being integrated into the process. They emphasized the importance of incorporating the Town's unique characteristics and values and of having a people-friendly system that included green spaces and provided safe, efficient, and accessible transportation for all. Council Member Buansi stressed the importance of reaching out to include all residents in the process and Council Member Gu asked to see hard numbers on the type and amount of greenspace that would be in the corridor.

Council Member Schaevitz asked Ms. Suprock to elaborate on a proposed fresh approach to parking, and Ms. Suprock said that part of the implementation plan would be to address minimizing the visual impact of parking at station areas. She said that tools for doing that included having a maximum, allowing shared use; reducing overall supply; designing in a less visually obtrusive way and having a signage system that directs drivers to park somewhere else.

The Council confirmed with Mr. Litchfield that sustainability was a major part of the project and would be emphasized as a Town goal. He said he hoped to have a recommendation for an electric bus vendor in September and would focus on other features, such as green spaces and options for solar lighting as well. Council Members expressed enthusiasm over the possible range of public spaces and the potential for displaying public art at stations.

Mr. Litchfield said that there were 800 parking spaces in the corridor at the current time and that 3,500 additional riders primarily walked to the 62 bus stops along the way.

Council Member Oates asked how the new approach to parking would fit with developers' business models and parking requirements.

Mr. Litchfield replied that staff would recommend best practices, but the Council would make the ultimate decisions regarding land use around stations.

Council Member Oates confirmed that staff had invited business people and land owners to participate in the weekend workshops and would hold additional stakeholder meetings in future months. She stressed the importance of including private equity developers who are accustomed to the business model.

Mayor pro tem Anderson confirmed with Mr. Litchfield that staff would be talking with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NC DOT) over the summer and fall about what would work in the corridor. NC DOT appeared to be open to having the multi-use paths and understood the Town's interest in having amenities such as stations, he said. He would have a more definitive answer after the TIA had been completed and discussed with NC DOT, said Mr. Litchfield.

Mayor Hemminger confirmed with Mr. Litchfield that there might be funding to buy more property to expand the Eubanks Park & Ride lot later on in the process. She asked him to look into the possibility of obtaining property behind the Town Operations Center. She stressed the importance of considering an art component at stations and emphasized the need to inform citizens about the people-friendly nature of the

stations themselves.

Amy Groves, a principal with Dover, Kohl and Partners, described how workshop presentations would help people visualize and think about station area design. She reviewed the weekend schedule and described the goal of reaching a common vision. She gave a PowerPoint presentation that showed different scenarios for design and how station areas might change over time.

Urban Designer Victor Dover continued the PowerPoint presentation, showing maps that compared sample areas and designs. He said that he planned to ask workshop participants the following questions: What opportunities are you most excited about? What are your concerns? What existing public realm features should remain in the long-term future, and what uses are missing? Is it easy to walk or bike, and where are better pedestrian, bike and vehicular connections needed near proposed stations? What kinds of buildings and public spaces need to be created?

Mayor Hemminger said that Council Members were more interested in converting the road than expanding it, but they realized that this may not be possible everywhere. The Council did not want a big highway coming into Town and wanted to reduce the Town's carbon footprint. Additionally, they were more interested in moving people more effectively, she said.

Council Member Schaevitz left the meeting at 10:25 a.m.

Council Members stressed their interest in making the BRT an attractive and enticing means of transportation. They emphasized the importance of having a system that would be inclusive and accessible to all. There was much discussion regarding the Town's desire for pleasant, welcoming stations where people would want to be.

Council Member Stegman left the meeting at 10:30 a.m.

Council Member Parker expressed concern that the BRT would not be well-connected to other bus routes. He also stressed the importance of not having plans that are driven by NC DOT's tendency to focus on moving cars rather than moving people.

Council Member Buansi said that a wide spectrum of people such as students, renters, homeowners, and people who live in mobile home parks might not be involved in the weekend workshops. He also raised concerns about BRT lanes becoming crowded with non-approved vehicles.

Mr. Dover replied that there would need to be guidelines for when other vehicles, such as private shuttles, would be allowed to use the lane.

The Council asked the consultants to return with information about other communities that they had helped transition out of cars. They asked for more information about the character of individual destinations and who those destinations would be designed to attract. Council Members stressed the importance of setting realistic expectations and about being careful regarding how questions were framed. They discussed how the BRT would be integrated with other Town plans and place-making goals.

Mayor Hemminger cautioned against showing the public pictures of trees and green infrastructure and then delivering something that was all concrete. She emphasized the need to pay attention to the corridor itself and to show what would actually be delivered.

Mr. Dover pointed out that any transition would be gradual and that the system would not appear all at once. He said that adding transit-supported development would mean making choices. He confirmed with Mayor Hemminger that in addition to trees and green space, historic features, public access, and safety were important to people in Town.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:53 a.m.