



## Legion Property Committee Recommendations on the Future Use of the American Legion Property

### **Background**

On May 18, 2022, the Council received a [petition](#)<sup>1</sup> from several Council members requesting the Town move forward with developing and implementing a plan for the future use of the property. The Council discussed this further at their [June 1, 2022 work session](#)<sup>2</sup>.

In October 2022, the Mayor formed the Legion Property Committee (LPC) to discuss key interests and make high level recommendations to the full Council about the future use of the property. In addition to Mayor Hemminger, the LPC is composed of Mayor Pro Tem Karen Stegman, Council Member Michael Parker, and Council Member Amy Ryan. Staff from the Town Manager's Office, Affordable Housing & Community Connections, Parks & Recreation, and Planning also participated in the meetings. The LPC met in October and November to formulate their recommendations.

### **Recommendations**

The LPC recommends that the Town retain full ownership of the Legion Property, rather than selling off any portion of the property.

From there, the LPC's recommendations focus on three areas: Uses, the Pond, and Next Steps.

- **Uses.** The Council purchased the approximately 36-acre Legion Property with the intention of meeting multiple needs. Since that time, the Town has identified many community needs related to affordable housing, recreation, and climate resilience.
  - The LPC recommends combining approximately 27 acres of the property with Ephesus Park (an additional 11-12 acres) to create a world-class park that includes both active and passive recreation and can also accommodate the cultural arts. Within this parkland, the LPC recommends preserving the existing natural areas, including stream features and forest (about 8.6 acres), as passive greenspace.
  - The LPC also recommends setting aside 8-9 acres fronting on Legion Road for affordable housing, to be designed in a creative and complementary manner with the park consistent with the Town's Complete Community strategy.
- **The pond.** The earthen dam that created the pond is failing. The pond itself does not serve a stormwater function for most of the property. The LPC recommends evaluating the current pond to identify if there is an underground water source, and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://chapelhill.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5657154&GUID=4074EEBD-655E-4DB0-8F82-766B9CEE4DE4&Options=&Search=>

<sup>2</sup> <https://chapelhill.legistar.com/MeetingDetail.aspx?ID=907493&GUID=FC7DC11D-E78E-4DB5-AB7B-BAE025A6EB3E&Options=&Search=>

then determining the best placement of stormwater feature(s) on the site, which might include a reduced pond. This process will rely on technical guidance about the site and its future uses, hydrology, and downstream impacts as well as maintaining flexibility for the site.

- **Next steps.** The LPC recommends that should the Council approve the recommendations on uses and the pond, that staff proceed with the following (*estimates for staff completion shown in parentheses*):
  - Engage technical experts for site evaluation and identifying priority infrastructure needs: Legion Road entrance, water, sewer, etc. (*3 months, can be incorporated into work on Park Use and Affordable Housing Use*)
  - Perform an assessment of Ephesus Park to classify its streams and steep slopes. (*1 month*)
  - Develop refined recommendations on the pond. (*6 to 12 months or longer*)
  - Develop refined, actionable recommendations for uses, referring to the 2017 [American Legion Task Force](#)<sup>3</sup> work, the 2020 [Urban Designer drawings](#)<sup>4</sup>, the 2013 [Comprehensive Parks Plan](#)<sup>5</sup>, and all prior public input as a starting point. Engage the Town's Housing Advisory Board, the Parks, Greenways, and Recreation Commission, and the Cultural Arts Commission in the process.
    - **Park Use** (*approximately 2+ years*)
      - Procurement of Professional Services (*5 months*)
      - Programming & Public Engagement (*4 months*)
      - Schematic Design (*3 months*)
      - Design Development & Public Engagement (*4 months*)
      - Construction Documents & Permitting (*6 months*)
      - Procurement for Project Construction (*5 months*)
    - **Affordable Housing Use** (*approximately 2 years*)
      - Determine land available to support affordable housing (*9-12 months after final determination on the pond*)
      - Determine funding available to support affordable housing (*12 months*)
      - Select affordable housing development partner(s) (*1 month*)

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/government/departments-services/communications-and-public-affairs/current-issues/american-legion-property/american-legion-task-force>

<sup>4</sup> <https://chapelhill.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4327808&GUID=A448063A-027A-4129-8CB1-BEA6DDCA74C5&Options=&Search=>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/government/departments-services/parks-and-recreation/planning-and-development/comprehensive-parks-plan-adopted-may-29-2013#!/>

- Finalize plan for affordable housing (*5-7 months*)
  - Identify a greenway to and/or through the site in conjunction with the Complete Community framework and the overall greenways system. (*to be incorporated into work on Park Use*)
  - Prepare RFQs for needed consultant work. (*to be incorporated into work on Park Use and Affordable Housing Use*)
  - Finalize a plan for affordable housing and solicit partners for its development (*to be incorporated into work on Affordable Housing Use*)
  - Develop a plan to keep the public informed throughout the process and provide opportunity to give comment as the work progresses. (*to be incorporated into work on Park Use and Affordable Housing Use*)