



TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL

Town Council

Meeting Minutes - Draft

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

Mayor Pam Hemminger
Mayor pro tem Michael Parker
Council Member Jessica Anderson
Council Member Allen Buansi

Council Member Hongbin Gu
Council Member Tai Huynh
Council Member Amy Ryan
Council Member Karen Stegman

Wednesday, September 29, 2021 6:30 PM Virtual Meeting

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 Zoom webinar directly online or by phone.
Register for this webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/91012020000> After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar in listen-only mode. Phone: 301-715-8592, Meeting ID: 898 0166 0127

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

Roll Call

- Present:** 7 - Mayor Pam Hemminger, Mayor pro tem Michael Parker, Council Member Jessica Anderson, Council Member Allen Buansi, Council Member Hongbin Gu, Council Member Karen Stegman, and Council Member Tai Huynh
- Absent:** 1 - Council Member Amy Ryan

Other Attendees

Town Manager Maurice Jones, Deputy Town Manager Mary Jane Nirdlinger, Deputy Town Manager Loryn Clark, Town Attorney Ann Anderson, Police Chief and Executive Director for Community Safety Christopher Blue, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer Shenekia Weeks, TITLE Sarah Vinas, Assistant Police Chief Jabe Hunter, Assistant Police Chief Celisa Lehew, Down town Special Project Manager Sarah Poulton, Business Management Director, Amy Oland, Planning Director Colleen Willger, Transportation Planning Manager Bergen Watterson, Complete Streets Specialist Jordan Powell, Police Captain Donnie Rhoads, Executive Director for Technology and CIO Scott Clark, Communications and Public Affairs Director and Town Clerk Sabrina Oliver, and Deputy Town Clerk Amy Harvey.

OPENING

Mayor Hemminger opened the virtual work session at 6:30 p.m. and reviewed the agenda.

Mayor Hemminger called the roll and all Council Members replied that they were present, with the exception of Council Member Ryan, who was out of Town.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY COUNCIL MEMBERS

0.01 Proclamation: National Disability Employment Awareness Month. [\[21-0745\]](#)

Mayor pro tem Parker read a proclamation declaring October 21, 2021, to be National Disability Employment Day and calling upon all Town employers, schools and community organizations to advance the message that people with disabilities add value and talent to workplaces and communities.

Mayor Hemminger thanked the North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation for bringing the proclamation forward and for its work to support the community.

0.02 Proclamation: Diaper Need Awareness Week. [\[21-0746\]](#)

Council Member Anderson read a proclamation about the Diaper Bank of North Carolina's campaign to raise awareness regarding the importance of diapers in ensuring health and economic stability for families. The proclamation declared September 27 to October 3, 2021, to be Diaper Need Awareness Week and encouraged Town residents to donate generously to organizations that help families thrive by collecting and distributing diapers.

Mayor Hemminger thanked the Diaper Bank of North Carolina for supporting families, especially during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

0.03 Proclamation: International Walk To School Day. [\[21-0747\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger said that Oct. 6, 2021, would be National Walk to School Day. She noted the many benefits of getting exercise and encouraged residents to check with their school's PTA about Walk to School Day plans.

0.04 Mayor Hemminger Regarding Northside Street Safety Meetings. [\[21-0748\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger announced that meetings regarding street safety at Northside would be held via ZOOM on October 5, 2021, at 11:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. The goal would be to hear from people of all ages, she said.

0.05 Mayor Hemminger Regarding Upcoming Meetings. [\[21-0749\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger announced that the Council Committee on Economic Sustainability would meet virtually on October 1, 2021, from 8:00 a.m. -11:00 a.m. to receive updates on the Downtown Together partnership and to receive a risk assessment regarding Police Station property. The public was encouraged to attend, she said.

The Mayor said that Town Council and advisory boards meetings would remain virtual through October 2021. Even though COVID-19 case numbers had begun to decline, health officials and the Town's partners had agreed to wait a while longer before returning to in-person meetings, she said.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Staff Response to Recommendations from the Reimagining Community Safety Task Force. [\[21-0734\]](#)

Chapel Hill Police Department (CHPD) Chief and Executive Director of Community Safety, Chris Blue opened the staff's presentation with a PowerPoint overview of a proposed process for turning the Reimagining Community Safety Task Force (TF) recommendations into action. He noted that the Council had set \$100,000 aside to fund those recommendations.

Diversity Equity and Inclusion Officer Shenekia Weeks said that the TF's June 2021 report included 21 recommendations and 31 action items. The top five recommendations were: to increase community collaboration, expand existing policing alternatives, increase affordable housing opportunities, restructure 911, and fund a street outreach harm reduction and deflection program, she said. She noted that recommended implementation strategies related to program development, multi-stakeholder cooperation, community outreach and awareness, and policy review.

Chief Blue said that the TF had recommended finding creative ways of responding to calls for service that would not involve sending an armed police officer. In October 2021, the CHPD would begin a Virtual Response Unit pilot for community members to report crimes that do not require the presence of an officer, he said. In addition, the Town's low-level misdemeanors policy had been clarified so that all eligible offenses would be diverted away from the court system, he said.

Chief Blue pointed out that Dr. Frank Baumgartner, a professor of Political Science at UNC, would provide advice on diverting offenses. He said that the Orange County Pre-Arrest Diversion Program Advisory Board would also be involved, and he described the pivotal role that the Town's Community

Policing Advisory Committee (CPAC) would have in the process.

Ms. Weeks discussed concurrent Town processes. She discussed regional work related to a Government Alliance on Racial Equity (GARE) framework that relied on results-based accountability. She showed what that framework would look like in action and explained how the Action Plan was organized.

Ms. Weeks gave an overview of the implementation plan thus far and presented a proposed timeline through January 2022, at which time she hoped to bring an updated Action Plan to the Council. She asked for feedback from the Council on whether the plan was moving in the right direction and if the timeline met its interests.

Council Members confirmed with Chief Blue that Dr. Baumgartner was willing to do periodic audits of Town data and to continue offering his opinion, if that was desired. They verified that staff wanted Council feedback on when funding decisions would be made, and Chief Blue pointed out that funding for some initiatives was already available.

The Council asked about CPAC's role, and Chief Blue said that it was poised to begin executing the plan with partners that were already involved in the work. Council Members clarified that a proposed scorecard, which could be used for program planning and development, would be shared with them as they make decisions. They asked how the work would be tracked and maintained, and Ms. Weeks explained how she would continue working with Chief Blue, Community Development staff, and CPAC.

Ms. Weeks said that she would have a better idea of costs after the partners had been working together and had begun leveraging resources. Town Manager Maurice Jones said that the \$100,000 budget had been put in as a placeholder for the first year and that identifying needs would be an important part of the process. The greatest cost probably would occur in the second year, and staff would address that with the Council during FY 2023 budget discussions, he said.

Council Members confirmed with Mr. Jones that staff anticipated presenting an updated Action Plan in spring 2022. They emphasized their desire for CPAC to continue its involvement, and Mayor Hemminger recommended that staff advertise that CPAC had open seats and to encourage people to apply.

The Mayor and Council said they agreed with the proposed timeline. Mayor Hemminger said that the Council was pleased with the way the plan had come together and was looking forward to its integration across all Town departments. She praised the scorecard approach and said she

supported having that become an online tool.

This item was received as presented.

2. American Rescue Plan Update.

[\[21-0735\]](#)

Mr. Jones gave a PowerPoint update on the American Rescue Plan ACT (ARPA) of 2021, a \$1.9 trillion federal package intended to help communities recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. He said that the Town's allocation was a little more than \$10.6 million, half of which had been provided in May 2021. The second half would arrive in May 2022, he said. He discussed allowable uses and said that the current funding needed to be spent by December 31, 2026. All ARPA information was available on the Town's website, he said.

Director of Business Management Amy Oland gave a PowerPoint presentation on the general categories where ARPA funds could be used: to support public health; to address negative economic impacts; to replace lost revenue/premium pay for essential workers; and to invest in water, sewer and broadband infrastructure. She provided examples for each category, explained eligibility requirements, and reviewed the formula for calculating lost revenue.

Ms. Oland said that the Town's total reduction in revenue had been \$4.175 million. She would provide additional clarity regarding funding eligibility as it became available, she said. She stressed the importance of taking time to create well-developed strategic plans and pointed out that there was no time or pressure for spending ARPA money.

Downtown Special Projects Manager Sarah Poulton pointed out that federal guidance prioritized equity. She said that staff had begun crafting a public engagement plan in order to hear from residents on how to do the most good for those most affected by COVID-19. She said that the Town's approach to engagement included transparency, consistent community updates, outreach focused on those most affected, and working closely with community partners.

Mr. Jones emphasized that staff would deliberate with community partners about needs over the next month and a half and return to Council on November 17, 2021, with a detailed engagement plan. The Council could consider a process for approving projects at that time, he said.

The Council confirmed with Mr. Jones that the Town's five-year budget discussions would include ARPA money. They proposed that discussions about how to use those funds be woven into the community engagement process as well. Mayor Hemminger recommended letting the community know that the Town did not actually have a \$4 million hole, since it had done an excellent job of cutting costs and had extremely strong sales tax

revenues during the pandemic.

Mayor Hemminger proposed that staff create a place on the Town's website for the public to share ideas on things the Council should consider. She also proposed looking at whether some ARPA funding could be considered for aspects of the Town's Climate Action Plan.

Council Members clarified with staff that an individual, non-profit, or business would need to be carrying out some kind of service related to the pandemic and have a contractual relationship with the Town, in order to qualify for ARPA funds. "Operational losses" could mean actual losses or losses related to Town cuts, Ms. Oland said. She explained that the money could be used to cover shortfalls, such as in the Town's Parking Fund.

This item was received as presented.

3. Receive Update and Provide Guidance on Vision Zero.

[\[21-0736\]](#)

Transportation Planning Manager Bergen Watterson outlined a draft resolution regarding Vision Zero, a system to prioritize pedestrian safety over motor vehicle speed and efficiency in all transportation decisions. She reviewed the data regarding local car crashes and said that 19 Town streets, which accounted for only 15 percent of the total street network, were where 59 percent of crashes and 100 percent of fatalities had occurred.

Ms. Watterson said that a representative from the Highway Safety Research Center had presented Vision Zero to the Planning Commission and the Transportation and Connectivity Advisory Board in 2018, and that those two boards had then petitioned the Council to adopt a Vision Zero resolution. Later that year, the Town had begun to participate in "Road to Zero," a pedestrian safety pilot program. That had led to the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan that staff had been using as a guiding document, she said.

CHPD Captain Donnie Rhodes provided crash analysis information and showed the areas of concern on a Town map. He discussed the number of stops and warnings that the CHPD had given out during a recent crosswalk enforcement program, where the highest speed had been 64 MPH in a 35 MPH zone. Many people had been driving at speeds higher than 55 MPH, he said.

Ms. Watterson explained that a 2020 Governor's Highway Safety Program grant had enabled the Town to hire Transportation Planning Specialist Jordan Powell in 2020. She said that Mr. Powell's role was to implement the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan and to consider all aspects of road user safety in Chapel Hill.

Mr. Powell reported that he had been meeting regularly with a Road to Zero Task Force (TF) that had been reconvened to advise on implementing the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan. He and the TF had been discussing strategies regarding public engagement, equity, and technical review, he said.

In a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Powell outlined four requirements that the Town needed to meet in order to be part of the Vision Zero Coalition: 1) have a bicycle and pedestrian committee that meets regularly; 2) have a goal to eliminate traffic fatalities; 3) have a goal for when to reach zero fatalities and zero serious injuries; 4) have a Vision Zero resolution.

Mr. Powell presented a proposed resolution and pointed out that it emphasized the importance of equity and of prioritizing vulnerable users over all other road users in any conflict. He showed a list of North Carolina communities that had already adopted similar resolutions.

Council Members confirmed with Mr. Jones that Vision Zero would be part of the Town's budget discussions, and Mr. Powell said that the TF would provide cost estimates for various projects.

In response to Council comments about the possibility of insufficient traffic lights and/or bad roads in areas where the most crashes occurred, Ms. Watterson said that staff had begun walking those sites. Staff would begin upgrading Town tools for traffic modeling and analyses if there were organization-wide support and guidance for that, she said. She pointed out that traffic impact analyses had been historically car-centric.

Council Members confirmed that staff did not have much data on the drivers involved in car crashes but intended to begin looking at who was being pulled over for speeding. The Council and staff discussed the demographics of those in the communities that had been mapped. If the Council desired, it would be possible to look at each demographic independently, overlay crash and street characteristic data, and apply an equity lens to prioritize implementation of safety improvements, Mr. Powell said.

The Council and Ms. Watterson discussed using payment in lieu funds for sidewalk connectivity and gap repair. Mayor Hemminger and Mr. Powell discussed the potential effects of e-bikes. He pointed out that those would not make people safer in a crash. The Town would need to plan ahead for e-bikes by managing the speed of all vehicles, he said.

In response to a question about making streets narrower, Ms. Watterson said that certain obstacles, such as Fire Department and NC Department of Transportation regulations, prevented that. However, new GIS data

would tell the Town what it could and could not do with its streets, she said.

Mayor Hemminger and Ms. Watterson discussed the potential for reducing speed limits on main Town corridors. Ms. Watterson said that transportation planners probably would receive guidance on that in the near future but it was something that Vision Zero sought to do anyway.

Council Members expressed full support for Vision Zero and they agreed to proceed with the proposed resolution. They recommended that the resolution include an additional clause stating their resolve to prioritize pedestrian safety concerns when reviewing development projects. Ms. Watterson said that staff hoped to return on October 13, 2021, with a resolution for the Council to adopt.

This item was received as presented.

ADJOURNMENT

This meeting was adjourned at 8:47 p.m.