

09-25-2019 Town Council Meeting

Responses to Council Questions

ITEM #3: Approve the Miscellaneous Budget Ordinance Amendments to Adjust Various Fund Budgets for FY 2019-20

Council Question:

Could you remind me of the exact location and length of the planned Ephesus Church Rd sidewalk?

Staff Response:

The Ephesus Church Road sidewalk project begins at the Sharon Road/Pinehurst Drive intersection and terminates next to the round-about intersection with Pope Road. The length of the project is approximately half a mile (2,320 feet).

Council Question:

How underfunded is the Ephesus Church Rd sidewalk project and can you provide an updated timeline for the project?

Staff Response:

The original construction budget was based on the 90% estimated construction costs of \$760,000 provided by the project designer in Summer 2017. The revised construction costs provided in January 2019 were \$945,000. Other project costs were also increasing related to the market. Town staff decided to reallocate Ephesus Church Road sidewalk project construction budget to projects that were closer to construction and lower cost.

Design for this project is complete and land acquisition is nearing completion. Construction will be on hold pending identifying additional funding. Town staff will continue to assess cost estimates, priorities, and continue to seek outside funding sources to supplement Town funding for capital projects.

Council Question:

Given that there is an elementary school on Ephesus Church Rd, is this a stretch of road that is currently unsafe for kids walking to and from school because of a lack of sidewalk?

Staff Response:

Adding sidewalks does improve safety for pedestrians. Unfortunately, escalating costs have prevented us from proceeding with construction at this time. Fortunately, there are sidewalks in front of Ephesus Church Road Elementary on both sides of the road. On the north side of Ephesus Church Road (same side as the school), the sidewalk begins at the intersection with Fordham Boulevard and ends at the intersection with Sharon Road/Pinehurst Drive. On the

09-25-2019 Town Council Meeting

Responses to Council Questions

south side of Ephesus Church Road, the sidewalk begins in front of the school at the intersection with Eden Lane and ends just west of the intersection with Sharon Road/Pinehurst Drive. There are also crosswalks in the area of the school.

Council Question:

Are there other pots of funding that could potentially be drawn on for the Old Durham-Chapel Hill Rd and Fordham sidepath projects if we didn't want to further delay the Ephesus project?

Staff Response:

Funding options included the currently allocated 2015 Streets and Sidewalks bond funds. Within this funding source, the Ephesus Church sidewalk project was the best option to avoid delaying shovel-ready projects. The remaining streets bonds are tentatively scheduled to be issued in FY 2022.

Council Question:

I understand there is some concern from the residents along Hickory Drive about the current plan for the Fordham sidepath due to loss of trees that provide a sound and visual buffer from 15-501 and that there was a recent community meeting about the design of the path. Could you please provide a summary of the feedback from that meeting and what the options are for ensuring that critical path connectivity while also responding to the feedback?

Staff Response:

This project has two main elements. The first is the renovation of the existing sidepath from Cleland Drive to Ridgefield Road. We have received universal support for that section. We are not aware of any concerns.

The second portion is a proposed extension of the sidepath from Ridgefield Drive to Willow Drive. Since the start of the project, there have been concerns expressed about both safety and loss of vegetative buffer. We have held three public meetings to discuss the project. As a result of comments received in the first two meetings, we expanded the number of design options from the initial proposal to four different options. In all options, we made changes to address the safety concerns. The two sidepath options would remove a substantial amount of vegetation along Fordham Boulevard. It's important to note that if one of those options were selected, we would also replace some of the vegetation and offer fencing to each affected landowner. However, the replacement vegetation would not be as deep or dense as current conditions. The two on-street options would involve pedestrians and bicyclists being routed onto Hickory Drive. Those two options would result in no loss of vegetation along Fordham Boulevard.

09-25-2019 Town Council Meeting

Responses to Council Questions

Participants at the September 18 public meeting were asked to fill out a form to capture their concerns and recommendations. We have not yet analyzed the results from the meeting, but there appears to be feedback supporting and opposing each proposed option.

It's important to note that no decisions have been made. We are gathering additional comments through October 11. We believe that additional funding will be needed for at least 3 of the 4 possible options. If the Council accepts the additional NCDOT funding, it will be available if we need it. If the Town ultimately decides not to build the sidepath along Fordham Boulevard, NCDOT would have to approve the scope change and the funding could be jeopardized.

Council Question:

By accepting the additional \$400K from NCDOT, does that lock us into the plan to clear-cut trees between the houses and Fordham Boulevard, or can we still reroute bike/ped traffic along Ridgefield Road, as some in the community have requested? If it does lock us into that plan to clear-cut, rerouting through Ridgefield might save enough \$ that we would not need the additional \$400K.

Staff Response:

Accepting these funds would not obligate the Town to build a path along Fordham Boulevard. We believe that additional funding will be needed for at least 3 of the 4 design options. If the Council accepts the additional NCDOT funding it will be available if we need it. If the Town ultimately decides not to build the sidepath along Fordham Boulevard, NCDOT would have to approve any scope change. It is possible that funding could be jeopardized and the Town may be required to reimburse \$57,000 already received from NCDOT if the project is not completed. In addition, the Town has spent an additional \$43,000 on project design. It's important to note that no decisions have been made as to which design option to pursue.

Council Question:

Does staff know yet which stops the FY 2020 Advanced Technology Grant's coverage of real-time vehicle locators will go to?

Staff Response:

Not at this time. However, staff will develop a recommendation on stop locations to pilot the new real-time signs in Chapel Hill, Carrboro and on Campus, for the Transit Partners, based on the following factors:

- *Ridership*
- *Proximity to Town/Community facilities*
- *Number of routes served*

09-25-2019 Town Council Meeting

Responses to Council Questions

- *Title VI considerations (i.e., balance between Low-Income/Non-Low Income and Minority/Non-Minority areas)*
- *Customer requests*

Council Question:

How many parking spaces are on the 106 Mallette St. lot?

Staff Response:

The Mallette Street Lot has 70 parking spaces.