



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 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

Wednesday, November 30, 2022 6:30 PM Library Room B

Language Access Statement

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

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

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919-969-5105.

In-Person Meeting Notification

The Chapel Hill Town Council will meet in person for the meeting. Public attendance is welcome. The Town of Chapel Hill wants to know more about who participates in its programs and processes, including Town Council meetings. Please participate in a voluntary demographic survey <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/demosurvey>.

We will not live stream the event, but will provide the Post-Meeting Video <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/councilvideo/>

Parking

• Parking is available at the Library lots. The Library is served by CL Route, D Route, and GoTriangle Routes of Chapel Hill Transit.

Entry and COVID-19 Protocols

- Meeting Room B is to the right from the main entrance.
- Visitors and employees will self-screen. Do not enter if you have these symptoms: Fever, chills, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, headache, muscle pain

• Attendees are encouraged to wear masks in the building and may sit physically distanced.

ROLL CALL

All Council Members were present.

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

Town Manager Maurice Jones, Deputy Town Manager Mary Jane Nirdlinger, Deputy Town Manager Loryn Clark, Town Attorney Ann Anderson, Assistant Planning Director Judy Johnson, Business Management Director Amy Oland, Mayoral Assistant Jeanne Brown, Administrative Assistant-Planning Diedra Whittenburg-McEntyre, Transportation Planner I - Transportation Planning Josh Mayo, Transportation Planning Manager Bergen Watterson, Director of Economic Development and Parking Services Dwight Bassett, Urban Designer Brian Petersen, Communications Manager Ran Northam, and Communications and Public Affairs Director/Town Clerk Sabrina Oliver.

OPENING

Mayor Hemminger called the work session to order at 6:30 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY COUNCIL MEMBERS

0.01 Mayor Hemminger Regarding Holiday Parade. [\[22-0896\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger said that 40 different groups would be participating in the Holiday Parade, which would begin at the 140 West Plaza on December 3rd at 10:30 a.m.

0.02 Mayor Hemminger Regarding Lighting of Christmas Tree. [\[22-0897\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger said that the annual Christmas tree lighting would occur at University Baptist Church from 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. on December 4th.

0.03 Mayor Hemminger Regarding Council Committee on Economic Sustainability. [\[22-0898\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger announced that the Council Committee on Economic Sustainability would meet virtually on December 2nd 8:00 a.m. In order to discuss three items, which she listed. The public was encouraged to listen in, but the meeting would also be recorded and posted on the Town's website, she said.

0.04 Mayor Hemminger Regarding the Shaping Our Future Meeting. [\[22-0899\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger announced that a virtual public meeting on December 8th would provide an update on Town transportation initiatives.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Update on Complete Community Strategy and Pilot Project. [\[22-0883\]](#)

Consultant Jennifer Keesmaat began her presentation with a map that showed existing and proposed future Town greenways and four areas for potential pilot projects. The map could be used as a tool for beginning the conversation, but a more detailed plan would be needed in order to apply for federal funding, she said.

Ms. Keesmaat explained that the current meeting's objective was to discuss which pilot projects would be included in a December 7, 2022, Council resolution to adopt the Complete Community (CC) framework and integrate it into Town plans. She said that recent conversations regarding pilot projects had included the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC), representatives from the development community, and others.

Ms. Keesmaat characterized the Town's current design as typically suburban and car-oriented and said that the CC goal would be to bring a diversity of housing types that were designed for walking and cycling. She said that a CC allowed residents to live, learn, work and play in the same environment.

Ms. Keesmaat reviewed how having an "everywhere to everywhere" greenway system would be critical to creating CC and using Town land in a better way. It would help to unlock new forms of neighborhoods and balance housing types, she said. She discussed the goal of building greenways rather than roads, designing buildings that would be walkable and integrated with neighborhoods, and creating new models for homeownership and affordable housing. She talked about directing growth to greenways, transit corridors, large infill sites, and smaller infill sites.

Ms. Keesmaat said that the overarching Town objectives that had emerged during the assessment process included planning strategically, expanding and delivering new greenways, making the Town safe and convenient, and planning for excellent design in the public realm. She re-emphasized the importance of greenways to accommodate future growth and said that the CC plan assumed a higher density approach that left more land available for greenways.

Ms. Keesmaat said that two categories of pilot projects were being proposed: new active transportation strategies and connections and new development approaches. She reminded the Council that applying for

federal funding for an everywhere-to-everywhere greenways program would be the Town's new active transportation strategies and connections pilot project. Having connectivity across Town, with no gaps, was the foundation of the CC initiative, she said.

Council Member Searing expressed skepticism about federal funding being sufficient to build the everywhere-to-everywhere greenway system, but Ms. Keesmaat replied that there was a tremendous amount of federal interest in low-carbon, mobility plans for towns like Chapel Hill. She said that federal funding was already going to initiatives like the Town's, and she stressed the importance of being tenacious, strategic, and aligned as a Council.

Mayor Hemminger said the Town's approach of asking the development community to be part of the solution was different from how the Town had done things in the past. She agreed with the idea of not relying on federal funding alone, but pointed out that obtaining state, local and community partner funding was possible as well.

Council Member Anderson mentioned that the City of Asheville had cobbled together \$35 million from various sources, which did not include developers. She urged her fellow Council Members to support the CC plan and help figure out how to make it happen.

Council Member Ryan said that "being green" should mean protecting some areas while growing in others and Council Member Berry proposed adding "as we grow" to a statement about being green. Council Member Parker proposed weaving the notion of righting previous wrongs into a section on Social Equity, and Council Member Miller-Foushee requested that the document indicate where low-income communities were being identified. Mayor pro tem Stegman emphasized the importance of including data about the problem of commuter traffic and how the Council was striving to address that by allowing more density.

Council Member Huynh recommended that the plan specify that a certain percentage of new homes be affordable for those making a specific area median income. Ms. Keesmaat pointed out, however, that access to homeownership would not count toward an affordable housing goal because those homes would not stay affordable in perpetuity. The Town might prefer that approach to meeting a hard target that could bump up against a competing objective, she said, and Mayor Hemminger agreed that having strict targets could be detrimental. However, leaving the goal out would be equally detrimental, she said, and she raised the idea of having a goal for a certain number of affordable units per year.

The Council and Ms. Keesmaat discussed how a pilot program could provide an opportunity to see how implementation with many parties would work. Ms. Keesmaat said that development proposals would be assessed on a project-by-project basis and that staff would use a CC

checklist to score them. The Council's December 7, 2022, resolution would include a request that as much as possible be codified as standards in the Land Use Management Ordinance (LUMO), she said.

Ms. Keesmaat recommended that the Council decide which of several proposed developments would be the Town's "new development approaches" pilot project. She said that a Planning Steering Committee (PSC) had evaluated several and ranked four of them as follows: 1) North Estes Drive Extension redevelopment; 2) UNC Adjacent to Midtown Plaza and Root Cellar redevelopment; 3) North Chapel Hill redevelopment; 4) Parkline redevelopment.

Ms. Keesmaat said that the first two projects would include partnering with UNC. She provided information on each of the four ranked projects and recommended that the Council select one of the first two and one of the last two to be pilot projects. She noted that a Legion Road redevelopment project was listed as #5, but not ranked.

The Council agreed on #2 and said that either #3 or #4 would be acceptable but that they were leaning toward #4, which had willing partners and momentum. Council Member Miller-Foushee confirmed with Ms. Keesmaat that the PSC had not ranked #5 because it was a contentious project and choosing one that everyone agreed upon was the ideal.

"Contentious for whom?", asked Council Member Miller-Foushee, stating that #5 checked all the boxes and would fit well within the CC framework. She said that Legion Road was a great opportunity for affordable housing and that she wanted the Council to vote on it as well. Mayor pro tem Stegman confirmed with Ms. Keesmaat that the original concept and scope for Legion Road had become complicated by concerns about it being parallel to an internal Town process.

Council Member Huynh said that #3, #4 and #5 all seemed similar. He was in favor of #5 being a possible pilot and thought that putting resources into #3 would show a strong Town commitment to addressing redevelopment challenges in the North Chapel Hill area, he said. He proposed convening all partners for all the potential pilots and determining which had the strongest level of commitment. He proposed that a project's number of qualified adjacent census tracts be considered in order to quantify its equity impact.

Council Member Ryan expressed support for Council Member Huynh's suggestion to do at least an exploratory step regarding #3 and #4. She emphasized the importance of being clear that whichever projects the Council chose would be the first examples of what it wanted for all five areas.

Mayor Hemminger said, with regard to Legion Road's contentiousness, that residents needed to be excited about the pilot in order for the CC initiative to thrive. In addition, there was a time-consuming pond issue at Legion Road, and she wanted a pilot that could show results quickly, she said.

The Council continued to discuss the Legion Road property, which Council Member Huynh said the PSC had not given the same consideration as the other parcels, which all had constraints as well. Multiple potential partners had come forward for Legion Road, but some voices had not been elevated in the process in the way that others had, he said.

Council Member Berry commented that not ranking Legion road had directed Ms. Keesmaat to present only 4 options. If the PSC had ranked Legion road as #5, then the Council would have as much information on that as it had for the four others, she said. She said that Legion Road would not be her first choice but that killing it in committee was a trigger for those who have experienced feeling invisible.

Ms. Keesmaat praised Council Members for their candor. She said that organizations learn and grow stronger by practicing such transparency.

This item was received as presented.

2. Update on Planning System Evaluation. [\[22-0884\]](#)

Ms. Keesmaat explained that the objective of the Planning System Evaluation was to look at the Town's development review process and ensure that everything moving forward was in keeping with the CC framework. She said that there was a broad consensus that the Town's development review process was not delivering desired outcomes and was the primary disincentive to investing in Chapel Hill. However, that issue was relatively easy to fix with role clarification and a clear vision of the goals, she said.

Ms. Keesmaat discussed opportunities for eliminating duplication and making better use of staff expertise, and she gave examples of how change could take place. She discussed a list of project principles. She presented a graphic that showed how input from developers, consultants, Council, staff, boards, and commissions was connected to the public and discussed a process for providing input.

Ms. Keesmaat said that the Town's first objective should be to reestablish expectations regarding outcomes and how everyone would be treated. An application would be expected to move through the process in a clear and predictable manner, and on a timeline, she said. She reviewed additional objectives and emphasized that one of those was to assess the role of

the boards and commissions.

Ms. Keesmaat described how change would take place and noted the need for tools to help deliver culture change. She summarized the proposed approach and said that the next phase would be to assess the Town's policy framework and regulations, which would include making changes to the Land Use Management Ordinance (LUMO).

Ms. Keesmaat said that the focus over the next month would be on creating clear objectives for development review. She presented several topics for the Council to explore, which included reducing approval time for new development, delivering better outcomes, assessing what works, using boards and commissions appropriately, and determining the Council's role.

Mayor Hemminger pointed out that board chairs desired to see changes as well and had made good suggestions. Everyone knew what the problem was and wanted to change, she said.

Council Members commented on the need for a more predictable process, but their conversation was primarily focused on the role of Town boards and commissions. Council Member Berry pointed out that there was not one board chair that was a person of color and urged the Council to think about equitability. She stressed the importance of Council liaisons attending board meetings.

The Council discussed why relying less heavily on non-regulatory boards would be in the Town's best interests. They mentioned the amount of time and money being spent on preparing for and following up after board meetings. They talked about how mission creep on the part of boards had sometimes led to boards replacing staff expertise. They agreed that Town boards should be looking at whether specific areas of interest meet the Town's strategic goals, rather than "getting into the weeds".

Mayor Hemminger confirmed with Interim Planning Director Mary Jane Nirdlinger that staff was amenable to what the Council was proposing, even though the process of change would add time and effort. The Mayor said that the Council could make changes that would help them, too, avoid mission/scope creep, and Ms. Keesmaat pointed out that delegating more authority to staff would be an important part of the work.

Mayor Hemminger commented that "explore" was the correct word, however, because there would be some areas where the Council would not want to delegate authority. Council Member Anderson commented on how some projects might warrant more oversight than others, and Ms. Keesmaat said that the Town Attorney could help determine thresholds for areas that the Council could delegate.

This item was received as presented.

REQUEST FOR CLOSED SESSION TO DISCUSS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PROPERTY ACQUISITION, PERSONNEL, AND/OR LITIGATION MATTERS

A motion was made by Mayor pro tem Stegman, seconded by Council Member Anderson, that the Council entered into closed session as authorized by General Statute Section 143-318.11(a)(6) to discuss a personnel matter. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was recessed at 9:38 p.m., the Council went into a closed session and the meeting adjourned at the end of the closed session.