



TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL

Town Council

Meeting Minutes - Final

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, March 23, 2022

7:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

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.

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 Town of Chapel Hill wants to know more about who participates in its programs and processes, including Town Council business meetings and work sessions. Please participate in a voluntary demographic survey <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/demosurvey> before accessing the Zoom webinar registration. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar in listen-only mode. Phone: 301-715-8592, Meeting ID: 836 4387 9865

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OPENING

Mayor Hemminger called the virtual meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She pointed out that Item 5 had been deferred to another meeting and that the agenda had been rearranged to address Items 6 and 7 prior to Item 4.

Roll Call

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, Economic Development Manager Laura Selmer, Planning Director Colleen Willger, Police Chief Chris Blue, Public Housing Director Faith Brodie, Affordable Housing Manager Nate Broman-Fulks, Director of Affordable Housing and Community Connections Sarah Viñas, Principal Planner Anya Grahm, Assistant Planning Director Judy Johnson, TITLE Emily Holt, Senior Planner Becky McDonnell, Communications Manager Ran Northam, Communications and Public Affairs Director and Town Clerk Sabrina Oliver, and Deputy Town Clerk Amy Harvey.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY COUNCIL MEMBERS

0.01 Proclamation: Denouncement of Invasion of Ukraine.

[\[22-0252\]](#)

Mayor pro tem Stegman and Council Member Anderson read a statement denouncing Russia's February 24, 2022, invasion of Ukraine and pledging the Town's solidarity with Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity. The statement said that war was never an acceptable response to human conflict and urged national and world leaders to continue negotiations to secure an immediate cease fire and deliver humanitarian aid to those in peril. The statement encouraged all who could to support the Ukrainian people through organizations that were providing assistance.

Mayor Hemminger noted that many of the organizations that were helping Ukraine were reputable. However, some were not, and citizens should be careful, she said.

0.02 Celebrating Successes Video: Creek Week.

[\[22-0253\]](#)

The Council watched a video about Orange County Creek Week during which community members had collected 400 pounds of trash. The video featured Mayor Hemminger and others emphasizing the importance of keeping trash out of the Town's waterway system. When it ended, Mayor Hemminger thanked those who had coordinated and/or participated in the clean-up.

0.03 Mayor Hemminger Regarding April Is For The Earth.

[\[22-0254\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger announced that "For the Earth" activities would be held throughout the month of April as an expansion of the Town's annual Earth

Day celebration. An upcoming press release would provide more details, she said.

0.04 Mayor Hemminger Regarding Council Committee on Economic Sustainability.

[\[22-0255\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger said that the Council Committee on Economic Sustainability would meet on April 1st from 8:00-10:00 a.m. The Committee would address a process for soliciting ideas for how to spend American Rescue Plan Act funds and would provide an update on the Downtown Together Plan, she said.

0.05 Council Member Berry Regarding Acknowledgement of Cub Scouts Pack #283 Webelos II Den.

[\[22-0256\]](#)

Council Member Berry thanked Cub Scout Pack 283 Webelos II Den for having invited her to speak.

0.06 Council Member Parker Regarding Acknowledgement of Mayor Hemminger's and Council Member Ryan's Birthdays.

[\[22-0257\]](#)

Council Member Parker pointed out that Mayor Hemminger had celebrated her birthday on Sunday and that Council Member Ryan's birthday celebration would happen the following Thursday.

PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS NOT ON PRINTED AGENDA AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC AND COUNCIL MEMBERS

Petitions and other similar requests submitted by the public, whether written or oral, are heard at the beginning of each regular meeting. Except in the case of urgency and unanimous vote of the Council members present, petitions will not be acted upon at the time presented. After receiving a petition, the Council shall, by simple motion, dispose of it as follows: consideration at a future regular Council meeting; referral to another board or committee for study and report; referral to the Town Manager for investigation and report; receive for information. See the Status of Petitions to Council webpage to track the petition. Receiving or referring of a petition does not constitute approval, agreement, or consent.

0.07 Jennifer Daniels Regarding Public Land Use for Open Space.

[\[22-0258\]](#)

Jennifer Daniels, a Chapel Hill resident, spoke in favor of keeping the Town's open spaces reserved for that purpose.

INFORMATION

1. Receive Upcoming Public Hearing Items and Petition Status

[\[22-0243\]](#)

List.

This item was received as presented.

2. Staff Update: Real-Time Passenger Information System Contract.

[\[22-0244\]](#)

This item was received as presented.

DISCUSSION

3. Consider Authorizing a Memorandum of Understanding for the 828 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. Redevelopment Project.

[\[22-0245\]](#)

Town Manager Maurice Jones provided background information on property at 828 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (MLK) where buried coal ash and construction debris had been discovered in 2013. He described the investigations that had taken place since that time and said that a 2018 environmental risk assessment by Hart and Hickman had determined that the site could be safely remediated without removing all of the contamination.

Mr. Jones said that the Town had conducted an interim cleanup along the Bolin Creek Trail in 2020 and had held several public meetings to discuss partnering with Belmont Sayre to clean up and develop the larger site. He explained how the project aligned with several of the Town's strategic goals. He recommended that the Council consider approving a non-binding memo of understanding (MOU) with Belmont Sayre to take the next steps.

Project Manager Laura Selmer gave a PowerPoint presentation regarding how a North Carolina Brownfields Program would offer unique protections for the property. Those would include perpetual deed restrictions, additional precautions for soil disturbance, and an environmental management plan. She said that the protections would include annual inspections and reports, and re-openers, if needed.

Ms. Selmer said that a non-binding memo of understanding (MOU) between the Town and Belmont-Sayer would be the first step in a redevelopment process. It would set forth intent but would not constitute development approval or lock in any particular use types or density, she said. She said that the process would include a concept plan review, meetings with the NC Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), an Economic Development Agreement (EDA), and an entitlement process concurrent with the Brownfields agreement process. She emphasized that all of those steps would include public input.

Ms. Selmer showed a proposed site plan and reviewed the positive aspects and potential opportunities of the site and its location. She asked the Council to adopt Resolution 7, which would authorize the Town

Manager to execute the non-binding MOU with Belmont-Sayre.

Mayor pro tem Stegman and Ms. Selmer discussed a potential SECU Foundation program that might assist Town employees and others to live at the site. Ms. Selmer said that Asheville, NC had been successful using that program and she offered to investigate it further.

Council Member Ryan confirmed that the project would fall within the Opportunity Zone category but that the developer had not yet determined that it would be one. She also confirmed that the timeline was non-binding and she pointed out the importance of getting necessary information before decisions are made or things are written into the EDA.

Council Member Anderson confirmed with Ms. Selmer that staff had held multiple public information meetings, which had included environmental consultants. Mr. Jones pointed out that those meetings would continue throughout the EDA and concept plan review processes.

Council Member Searing verified that staff was not saying that there would be no risk forever. However, DEQ standards would be high and staff would take every step it could to make the site as safe as possible, Mr. Jones said.

Council Member Searing asked if staff had visited the hillside where coal ash was leaking out, and Ms. Selmer replied that environmental engineers would assess that the following day. Interim measures that had been put in that area had covered only a portion of the embankment, she pointed out.

Mayor Hemminger and the Council agreed that Town Attorney Ann Anderson should sign off on the MOU even though all Town agreements have legal review.

Penny Sparacino, a Chapel Hill resident, read a list of coal ash ingredients and expressed concern about groundwater contamination despite capping.

Deborah Ferruccio, a waste management professional, raised concerns about coal ash from the embankment going into Bolin Creek. The Council should not go forward with putting housing on the site until more had been determined about risks and the extent of the current problems, she said.

Nicholas Torrey, an attorney with the Southern Environmental Law Center, said that putting residential development on the site seemed like the riskiest and worst development option. He mentioned unpredictable structural and long-term floodplain issues and said that a site Belmont-Sayer had referenced had actually removed all of its coal ash before putting a residential building there. He urged the Council to make

a binding, written commitment to go beyond what the DEQ required.

Robert Beasley, a Chapel Hill resident, said the Town would not be able to eliminate risk unless it removed the coal ash. He believed that the public was against the proposed plan, he said.

Julie McClintock, representing Friends of Bolin Creek (FOBC), said that FOBC had petitioned the Council in 2014 to clean the site up but that doing so would be enormously expensive and difficult. She emphasized the importance of including language in the MOU that showed the Town's commitment to establishing the highest principles for protecting public health. FOBC believed that the site might be used for the Town's Multi-Service Center but worried about coal ash from the embankment washing into the creek during the next big storm, she said.

Pamela Schultz, an environmental engineer, expressed concern about coal ash dust exposure and said that the Council had received inaccurate and incomplete information at its last work session. She gave examples of that and recommended that the Town limit residential development at the site and limit construction at the northern portion.

Stephen Fleck, a Chapel Hill resident, urged the Council to read the letters and information that Ms. McClintock and Ms. Shultz had submitted. He was in favor of putting the the Multi-Service Center on the site but opposed to having residential housing there, he said. Coal ash dust was a serious problem that had been under-recognized, he said.

Mayor Hemminger emphasized that the Council's decisions would be based on science and environmental issues. Council Members were not scientists, but they had listened to experts and had worked hard to understand the risk levels, she said. She pointed out that removing coal ash would cost much more than \$10 million and would have to be trucked into somebody else's community. In addition, removing the coal ash would be more harmful to the creek because it could not be completely contained, she said.

Mayor Hemminger said that the Town regularly checked the embankment and tested the creek and groundwater. The Council was taking the issue very seriously and would learn more about potential risk during the next stage of the process, she said. She said that she was not yet certain, personally, about putting housing on the site and wanted to learn more. However, she was convinced that capping was the most environmentally sound approach because it would not disturb the land, she said.

Council Member Ryan pointed out that a section of Hart and Hickman's executive summary described its environmental management plan. Safety was of primary importance to the Council, which was committed to going

above and beyond during the Brownfields process, she said. She asked that the MOU state that the costs for a contract planner would be shared. She asked that the EDA clarify that credit to any private developer for property tax would be net of any Town services that were provided.

Council Member Anderson agreed with what other Council Members had said and emphasized that the Council was not currently making any decision that would preclude additional mitigation, if needed. All Council Members had thought about whether they would feel comfortable living with their families on the site, and the next step would help them figure out what acceptable uses would be, she said.

Mayor pro tem Stegman pointed out that the embankment remediation had always been viewed as a temporary fix. It had begun to fail because the process was taking so long, she said. She pointed out the importance of getting Police Station staff out of a deteriorating building on that site.

Council Member Searing said that he could support going forward only if the language regarding a strong preference for family housing were removed. He said that Town leaders had a special duty to make the community as safe as possible. Building offices and retail on the site would be more acceptable, but building family housing there was the worst of the Town's bad choices and no one else in the country was doing so, he said.

Council Members Parker and Berry said that leaving the site the way it is or building housing with exposed coal ash there, were false choices and that the Council was merely being asked to have the DEQ determine whether building family housing on the site would be safe or not.

A motion was made by Council Member Parker, seconded by Mayor pro tem Stegman, that R-1 be adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 8 - Mayor Hemminger, Mayor pro tem Stegman, Council Member Anderson, Council Member Berry, Council Member Miller-Foushee, Council Member Huynh, Council Member Parker, and Council Member Ryan

Nay: 1 - Council Member Searing

6. Open the Legislative Hearing: Conditional Zoning Application for 751 Trinity Court (21-086).

[\[22-0249\]](#)

Senior Planner Anya Grahn opened the legislative hearing for a Conditional Zoning District application for 751 Trinity Court and described the existing conditions and surrounding features of the 3.2-acre lot. The applicant was proposing to rezone the Residential-4 site to Residential-Special Standards- Conditional Zoning District, she said. She said that the

application had been through expedited review and she read some of the advisory boards' recommendations.

Ms. Grahn outlined the proposal to demolish two vacant apartment buildings and build 54 new apartments in their place. She discussed a list of requested modifications, which pertained to Resource Conservation District (RCD), steep slopes, recreation space, auto and bicycle parking, buffers, and driveway width. She recommended that the Council open the legislative hearing, hear public comment, and continue the hearing to April 27, 2022.

Samantha Brown, vice president of Real Estate Development with Community Housing Partners (CHP), reviewed the process of obtaining public input and submitting a Conditional Zoning application. She said that increasing the number of units from 40 to 54 would mean increasing the height to four stories.

Ms. Brown pointed out that the project had been submitted for 9 percent low income housing tax credits (LIHTC). She said that they would submit it for 5 percent if 9 percent were unsuccessful. The average income of those living on the site would be less than 60 percent of the area median income (AMI) and that the affordability period would be 30 years, she said. She pointed out that a ground lease would allow the Town to maintain control of the property's affordability for 99 years.

Developer Will Altman, of Timmons Group, described the site and presented a diagram showing the RCD buffer location and where steep slopes constrained the site. He showed a proposed site plan, which included 63 parking spaces, two dumpster/recycling locations, ADA accessibility, bike racks, outdoor storage units, and a turn-around area for emergency vehicles. He indicated a connection to Tanyard Branch Creek Trail through Town-owned property. He noted a request to widen a road to 20 feet (rather than 25) in order to minimize impact to the RCD.

Mayor pro tem Stegman confirmed with Public Housing Director Faith Brodie that the affordability aspects of the plan would be part of the agreement with CHP and subject to Council review and that the U.S. Department of Urban Development would likely administer the vouchers. She confirmed with Ms. Brown that the ground lease would be a restriction on the property.

In response to a question from Council Member Searing, Ms. Brodie said that the Parks and Recreation Department had been working with boy scouts and girl scouts to upgrade the connection to Tanyard Branch Trail.

Council Member Ryan asked why some of the units were 80 percent AMI, and Ms. Brown explained that it was an effort to have mixed income in response to historical concerns about concentrating poverty. Council Member Ryan confirmed that a bridge across the RCD would be required if

the street width modification request was approved. She asked that good design standards be followed for the wildlife corridor there.

Council Member Parker and Ms. Brown discussed how a process for buildings that need to be replaced before 99 years would be negotiated as part of the ground lease. He asked about putting an awning over outdoor bike racks, but Mr. Altman replied that doing so would block windows and detract from how community members wanted the building to look.

Yvette Mathews, a nearby resident, expressed strong support for 30 percent AMI. She and others with low incomes were not asking for a hand out, just something they could afford, she said.

Kathy Atwater, a Northside resident, said that the lack of affordable housing was a disgrace to the Chapel Hill community. She asked the developers to provide safe access and to create a project where everyone would like to live.

Jennifer Player, representing the Orange County Affordable Housing Coalition, expressed full support for both Trinity Court and Jay Street (Item 7). The Coalition believed that affordable, multi-family rental was a critical part of the housing continuum, she said. She pointed out that the two developments together would provide 100 badly-needed affordable rental units. That was a great example of what could be accomplished when elected officials take bold action, she said.

Robert Beasley commended the developer for the clear process and good project, and Pristine Onuoha, a Chapel Hill resident, commented on the proximity to schools and potential for equal opportunity.

Mayor Hemminger said that the Council was very supportive of creating more affordable housing and excited about the opportunity. She proposed that Council Members comment on what they would like to see at the next public meeting.

Council Members asked for more discussion about the applicant's request to waive the payment in lieu for recreation. They said that they wanted to see as much shade as possible for outdoor spaces. They asked for more clarity on ground lease provisions regarding affordability. The requested information on the possibility of having first right of refusal if the developer decided to sell.

A motion was made by Council Member Berry, seconded by Council Member Huynh, that this Legislative Hearing be continued to the April 27, 2022 meeting. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

7. Open the Legislative Hearing: Conditional Zoning Application

[\[22-0248\]](#)

for 110 Jay Street.

Mayor Hemminger explained that she and the Town Manager had removed a request regarding open space. There had been confusion about intent and they would decide at a later date whether or not to bring it back, she said.

Planner Becky McDonnell presented a Conditional Zoning application for Jay Street Apartments, an affordable housing building on an 8.6-acre vacant site adjacent to the Northside Neighborhood Conservation District. The property was currently zoned Residential 3, and the applicant was requesting a rezoning to Residential-Special Standards-Conditional Zoning District in order to construct 48 affordable units, she said.

Ms. McDonnell explained that the northern half of the site would be developed and the southern portion would remain Resource Conservation District (RCD). She pointed out that the plan included an additional community building, a playground/picnic area, and a connection to the Tanyard Branch Greenway. She showed where solid waste facilities and bike parking areas would be located. The developer was asking to increase the maximum number of parking spaces from 93 to 100, she said.

Ms. McDonnell said that Town boards and commissions had recommended adding a sidewalk extension along Village Drive, building a bus pad and expanding bus service, and placing a conservation easement on the southern portion. Town boards had recommended that the buildings be solar ready, that additional deciduous trees be planted in the buffer, and that the Council refuse the requested increase in parking spaces, she said. She recommended that the Council open the legislative hearing, receive comments, and continue the hearing to April 27th for action.

Developer Dustin Mills, of Taft Mills Group (TMG), explained how the Town had selected TMG and Community Home Trust to work as development partners on the project. As with Trinity Court, Jay Street was involved in the LIHTC application process, he said. He explained that conditional rezoning approval would allow TMG to submit a final LIHTC application in May 2022.

Mr. Mills described the proposed project, which would include an on-site management office, a community room, a fitness center, a community kitchen, and a business center. He said that 3.5 of the 7 acres would remain undisturbed and that TMG was willing to place a conservation easement on that land. The apartments would be for those at 80 percent or below AMI, with 25 percent for 30 percent AMI, he said. He pointed out that the Town would maintain ownership of the project.

Mr. Mills said that increasing parking to 100 spaces would allow seven spaces to be used for public access to the Tanyard Branch Trail. He discussed ADA accessibility, bicycle parking, an EV charging station, and

proposed solar-ready roof structures. Stormwater facilities would be underground, he said.

Mr. Mills indicated where changes to the plan had been made in response to Urban Designer Brian Peterson's recommendations and community feedback. Those included widening Jay Street to 27 feet, adding a sidewalk and crosswalk, and improving the bus stops. He pointed out that a traffic impact analysis had found no negative effects from the proposed development but recommended monitoring queuing at Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard/Umstead Drive.

Kimberly Sanchez, executive director at Community Home Trust (CHT), described the numerous opportunities that had been provided for public education and engagement regarding the Jay Street project. She discussed efforts to ensure accessibility and diversity. She said that Jay Street would be managed by a third party company but that CHT intended to be as involved as it was with its other properties.

Council Member Ryan stressed the importance of screening the 10-foot retaining wall from nearby neighbors. She confirmed with Mr. Mills that the tax credit program required 1.75 parking spaces per family unit, which would equate to 84. Taft Mills would need a variance from the NC Housing Finance Agency to go below 84 and there was not much precedent for that, Mr. Altman said, but Council Member Ryan asked him to see what he could do.

Council Member Searing said that characterizing the land as vacant was "a little disingenuous" when taxpayers had voted to purchase and preserve it as open space. He asked to remove a statement claiming that the project met the Comprehensive Plan by protecting open space. He verified that the proposed stormwater plan had been through three rounds of staff review and multiple design iterations.

Council Member Berry asked staff to ensure that the electric vehicle charging station would not be used as a parking space, and Mr. Mills said that his property management companies do a good job of preventing.

Yvette Mathews, a Chapel Hill resident, emphasized the need for housing for those living at 30 percent AMI and below. She agreed that land preservation was important, but said she believed that human beings should be given priority.

Trisha Lester, a Village West resident, thanked the Town and TMG for incorporating many of her neighborhood's suggestions in the plan. She proposed that the project include more units at the lower end of the AMI.

Susan Bolotin, a Chapel Hill resident, said that even though it appeared to be legal to use the land for a different purpose, doing so would send a

terrible message to those who voted for open space. She was profoundly disillusioned and believed there would be no reason to vote for future bonds if the money could be used for a different purpose, she said.

George Barrett, executive director of the Marion Cheek Jackson Center, said that homelessness had increased by 30 percent since 2017 and that nine out of ten Chapel Hill workers live outside of Town. He provided a long list of reasons why the proposed housing was needed in order to be a town where all people were able to feel safe, secure and supported.

Christine Abernathy read a letter signed by more than 120 people that welcomed and supported the Trinity Court and Jay Street developments and urged the Council to vote in favor of both. The letter noted a 39 percent increase in Orange County's homeless population between 2017 and 2021.

Delores Bailey, executive director of Empowerment Inc., said that the COVID-19 pandemic had worsened the affordable housing situation. She, too, had voted to conserve the land, but the situation had changed and it was now needed for affordable housing, she said.

Cathy Atwater, a Chapel Hill resident, agreed with others that the Town needed more affordable Housing so that those who serve the community can have an opportunity to live in it.

Jay Street residents William Holloway and Brianna Gilmore, Pine Knolls resident Ian Morse, and Robert Beasley all said that having a place where people could be safe and secure was more important than preserving land for open space. It was "beyond hypocritical" for any Town resident who pretends to support social equity to not support the project, Mr. Holloway said. Ms. Gilmore and Mr. Beasley urged the developer to include more units at the lower AMI level, and Ms. Gilmore requested lighting along Jay Street, if possible.

Penny Sparacino, a Chapel Hill resident, said that having Building A separate from the community building and playground would require children and disabled people to cross the parking lot to get from one to the other. She proposed putting the parking lot on the other side of Building A.

Ora Raia, representing Housing Options for People with Exceptionalities (HOPE), praised the Mayor and Council for addressing the need. She thanked Community Home Trust, Taft Mills Group and the residents who were supporting the project as well.

Council Member Anderson said that the Council wished the Town could use the land as intended but that housing was currently needed more than

passive open space. She thanked all who had come together to work on the project.

Mayor pro tem Stegman asked the applicant to bring back a lighting plan, and Council Member Parker said he hoped the project would be 100 percent electric.

Mayor Hemminger, Mayor pro tem Stegman and Council Member Parker asked to see alternatives to the "dark and dreary" exterior color options, and Council Member Parker pointed out that having black roofs could add to energy costs for those living on the top floor.

Mayor Hemminger expressed enthusiasm for the road widening and said that she wanted to see if Duke Energy could install a street light. She pointed out that the purchase of that land had also been called "land banking". Needs had changed and evolved since it was bought, she said. She pointed out the value of having a conservation easement on half of the acreage.

A motion was made by Council Member Parker, seconded by Council Member Ryan, that this Legislative Hearing be continued to the April 27, 2022 Meeting. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

5. Endorse the County-Wide Coordinated Manufactured Homes Action Plan. [\[22-0247\]](#)

This item was deferred to a future council meeting.

ZONING ATLAS AMENDMENTS

Zoning Atlas Amendment: The Zoning Atlas Amendment, to change the zoning designation on this property, is Legislative. The Council receives and considers public comment on the merits of the proposed rezoning, including opinions, when making Legislative decisions.

APPOINTMENTS

8. Appointments to the Justice in Action Committee. [\[22-0250\]](#)

The Council appointed Aaron Carpenter to the Justice in Action Committee.

4. Orange County Crisis Diversion Facility Update. [\[22-0246\]](#)

Police Chief Chris Blue pointed out that the Town's Re-imagining Community Safety Task Force had recommended that the Town help fund a mental health crisis diversion facility. Current options, such as jails and hospital emergency rooms, were not good for people with mental health crises, he said.

Caitlin Fenhagen, director of Orange County's Criminal Justice Resource Department, said that a significant amount of work had been done in recent years toward creating a desperately needed crisis diversion facility. An information report on progress toward that would be presented tonight and she would return in the future with more detailed information on next steps, she said.

Tony Marimpietri, chair of Orange County's Diversion Facilities Subcommittee, provided background information on an initiative that had begun when the Orange County Commissioners passed a resolution in 2015 to reduce the number of people in jails who have mental illness. Commissioners approved funds in December 2021 to begin planning and expanded that initiative to include additional services for children, outpatients, and others, he said.

Mr. Marimpietri spoke about national guidelines and best practices for crisis diversion systems and said that the Subcommittee was recommending that Orange County establish a dedicated crisis facility that would provide both clinical and criminal justice related services. It would be a brand new feature that would not duplicate or replace existing services or programs, he said.

Mr. Marimpietri said that the crisis diversion center would include clinical services, criminal justice services, community treatment, and social services networking. He explained what each would entail and outlined expected results. He noted the opportunity to reduce costs by reducing the burden on law enforcement and hospital-based services. Next steps would include finding land, developing a design, and securing funding, he said.

Council Member Anderson confirmed that the center would be holistic in nature and would include services for domestic violence and rape crisis as well. She and Ms. Fenhagen discussed national grant opportunities and how some entities such as UNC Hospitals and the NC Department of Health and Human Services might be potential donors.

Council Miller-Foushee verified that the facility would serve children as young as four, and Ms. Fenhagen said that local schools were excited about the prospect of having a place that could provide immediate assessment. A family would be able to walk into the facility 24/7 and get immediate intervention and resource information, she said.

The Council discussed potential benefits of having a place that could keep people from cycling in and out of medical facilities and jails. They discussed the potential connection to homelessness and especially to those with behavioral health issues. They confirmed that people who need a place to stay in the middle of the night could go there.

Mayor pro tem Stegman noted the importance of having law enforcement's support and thanked Chief Blue for offering that. She praised the Subcommittee for bringing best practices and evidence-based models to the effort and pointed out that a crisis intervention center was one of the Town's Re-imagining Community Safety Task Force's top recommendations.

This item was received as presented.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 p.m.