

Amy Harvey

From: Jeanette Coffin
Sent: Wednesday, September 28, 2022 10:55 AM
To: Ray Shillito
Cc: Phillip Fleischmann; Colleen Willger; Adam Searing; Amy Ryan; Camille Berry; Jeanne Brown; Jess Anderson; Karen Stegman; Michael Parker; Pam Hemminger; Paris Miller-Foushee; Tai Huynh; Amy Harvey; Ann Anderson; Carolyn Worsley; James Baker; Laura Selmer; Loryn Clark; Mary Jane Nirdlinger; Maurice Jones; Ran Northam; Ross Tompkins; Sabrina Oliver
Subject: RE: Comments to Council Regular Meeting September 28th, 2022

Thank you for your correspondence with the Town of Chapel Hill. The Mayor and Town Council are interested in what you have to say. By way of this email, I am forwarding your message to the Mayor and each of the Council Members, as well as to the appropriate staff person who may be able to assist in providing additional information or otherwise addressing your concerns.

Again, thank you for your message.

Sincerely,

Jeanette Coffin



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From: Ray Shillito <shillitorj@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 27, 2022 9:03 PM
To: Pam Hemminger <phemminger@townofchapelhill.org>; Karen Stegman <kstegman@townofchapelhill.org>; Jess Anderson <janderson@townofchapelhill.org>; Camille Berry <cberry@townofchapelhill.org>; Tai Huynh <thuynh@townofchapelhill.org>; Paris Miller-Foushee <pmiller-foushee@townofchapelhill.org>; Michael Parker <mparker@townofchapelhill.org>; Amy Ryan <aryan@townofchapelhill.org>; Adam Searing <asearing@townofchapelhill.org>
Cc: Town Council <mayorandcouncil@townofchapelhill.org>; brighton@wchl.com; akeck@wchl.com
Subject: Comments to Council Regular Meeting September 28th, 2022

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The Parks department has a goal of a community park in East Chapel Hill. The town council should agree to the Parks, Greenways, and Recreation Commission Request to Delay the October 3 agenda Item regarding the American Legion property and allow the PGRC to Review and Provide Feedback on Design Concepts.

At the meeting when this was last discussed it was obvious that the Parks and Greenways plans and the draft being proposed by certain council members were at odds. Unfortunately the public were denied the opportunity to comment. This is in spite of public comments having been requested previously by the council and then ignored in the hastily drawn ‘outline’, which does not seem to have been drawn by anyone who has actually walked the land.

Plans for this park were not mentioned during the recent election cycle – if they had the results may have been different. Then suddenly we are presented by this ‘draft’.

The Parks, Greenways, and Recreation Commission 2013 plan recommended establishing a Community park in Eastern Chapel Hill. This part of town has a clear gap when the parks are mapped in Chapel Hill, and is still waiting.

The new Comprehensive Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan includes a multi-benefit focused approach, which should include a community park for the now high density part of town that has been created by ‘Blue Zone’ development. Developing this area even further by paving over the last greenspace available will be to the detriment of both established and new residents. There are a number of issues to be considered....

Health:

Parks and recreation services are a fundamental component of overall health and wellness.

There have been hundreds of luxury apartments built in this North East area of the town, including Bell Chapel Hill, The Hartley, and Trilogy.

Where will those people exercise? Even if the whole property is made available it would not approach that available to those who have immediate access to Cedar Falls Park, Homestead Park and Carolina North Forest, or Southern Community Park. We in North Eastern Chapel Hill also need room to breathe.

That leads to the question of

Equity:

I trust that the needs of those living in the North and East areas of the town will be considered fully and equally compared to those with access to the parks listed above.

Economic Impact:

The Blue Zone is now one of if not the most densely developed part of town and continues to have explosive development. Green space has been destroyed and trees removed by these developments, which has led to diminishing the amount of green space in this area of town. As the words of the song ask “Where will the Children play?”

The Legion Park could in addition host the farmers market, thus increasing its value to the town. As University Place (Mall) is developed there is little chance of the new owners continuing to host the farmers' market there!.

Alternative Transportation

The Legion property has long been the lungs of the Ephesus Road communities – if you go you will find people walking and biking in the woods of the property with their children and dogs. The area is the only place where we can do this without getting in a car and driving. A food truck event last November was buzzing, and many people were able to walk to the event. In addition, it is easily accessed via Chapel Hill Transit, and provides the green area for a ‘walkable town’ that we hear so much about.

In addition the Eastern side of the park is being saved from invasive species, with the help of the town, and could be an excellent place for the development of a nature park – in collaboration with the town and Botanic garden, to increase our childrens’ and grandchildrens’ understanding of the importance of nature, and contribute to....

Climate Resiliency:

The Legion property is important infrastructure which protects the headwaters of Little Creek, and reduces flooding on Ferrell road, and Briarcliff and Ridgewood areas. Adding hardscape, in addition to that recently added to the Blue Zone will only intensify flooding downstream. It is one of the remaining natural forests remaining in Chapel Hill, a group of citizens and the town has removed invasive species from this area, and it has been home to a butterfly, bee and monarch garden, as well as hosting a lot of other wildlife. I regularly hear owls of an evening.

The Parks and Recreation plans call for planting 200 trees per year. Removing trees to develop the park, especially on the Eastern side of the park, would destroy many more than that – it seems ridiculous to plan to plant trees while destroying others! Leaving the trees intact instead would contribute greatly to this goal.

Public/ Affordable Housing

There is a large concentration of low income housing already on Legion road. I ask if it makes sense to place even more in this area. Does it make sense to concentrate such housing? Surely they should be distributed throughout the town. The council has failed in not making developers include such properties, as Raleigh has done. In addition, there are parks that are bigger than needed for a community park – such as Cedar falls park, that would suffer much less from taking a section for low income housing.

Our Request

At a minimum the council must hold a public forum on the future of the Legion property, as requested by Virginia Gray and Julie McClintock in agenda item 3. To do so would meet your professed goal of Collaboration and Innovation, and to not do so would destroy public trust in the transparency of the council.

As long term Chapel Hill residents, who have children and grandchildren living in this area, we urge you to plan for development of the whole legion property as a Community Park for Chapel Hill. To do so would meet several of the professed goals of the council – Vibrant and Inclusive Community, Environmental Stewardship, and a Connected Community, and would enhance the quality of life for residents of the affordable housing in the area.

Present and future residents will thank you for preserving this last piece of green space in Chapel Hill.

Ray and June Shillito
Colony Woods, Chapel Hill.