



# 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

**Monday, January 25, 2021**      **8:30 AM**      **Virtual Meeting**

### Language Access Statement

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

ဘာသာပြန်ဆိုခြင်းနှင့် စကားပြန်ခြင်းအတွက်၊ (၉၁၉) ၉၆၉-၅၁၀၅ ကိုဖုန်းခေါ်ပါ။

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

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如需口头或  
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919-969-5105.

### Virtual Meeting Notification

Town Council members and Orange County Legislators 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/webinar/register/WN\\_VOvhVMBvQsqn-Biu-SGWxQ](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_VOvhVMBvQsqn-Biu-SGWxQ) After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar in listen-only mode. Phone: 301-715-8592, Meeting ID: 833 1805 1589

### Roll Call

**Present:** 8 - Mayor Pam Hemminger, Mayor pro tem Michael Parker, Council Member Jessica Anderson, Council Member Allen Buansi, Council Member Hongbin Gu, Council Member Karen Stegman, Council Member Tai Huynh, and Council Member Amy Ryan

### Other Attendees

Town Manager Maurice Jones, Deputy Town Manager Flo Miller, Town Attorney Ann Anderson, Transit Director Brian Litchfield, Business Management Director

Amy Oland, Executive Director Technology Solutions/CIO Scott Clark, Mayoral Aide Jeanne Brown, Deputy Town Clerk Amy Harvey, Representative Graig Meyer, Representative Verla Insko, Representative Vernetta Alston, Senator Natalie Murdock, Senator Valerie Foushee, NCLM Erin Wynia, and NCLM Leo John, MetroMayors Beau Mills

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION BY MAYOR HEMMINGER

Mayor Hemminger opened the virtual legislative breakfast at 8:30 a.m. Participants included members of Town staff, NC Senators Valerie Foushee and Vernetta Alston, NC Representatives Natalie Murdoch, Verla Insko and Greg Meyer, and representatives of the NC League of Municipalities and the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition.

Mayor Hemminger said that the Town would present information related to COVID-19 but would also report on the many good things that had happened in Town despite the pandemic. She and other members of the Orange County Leadership Group had been meeting regularly and had been using data, science, and facts to collaborate on keeping people safe, she said.

### ROLL CALL

Mayor Hemminger called the roll and all Council Members replied that they were present.

### COMMENTS FROM THE LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION

Representative Insko shared that she had just learned that redistricting would occur in the fall. She also said that legislators would be focusing on a budget and policy issues during their long session. Democrats were well organized behind their new leader, Robert Reese, and she looked forward to working with the Town, she said.

Senator Foushee told the Council that the state legislature would be paying much attention to COVID relief. She hoped the federal government would send relief funding soon so that the state could begin appropriating it, she said.

### COMMENTS FROM THE MAYOR AND TOWN COUNCIL

Mayor Hemminger expressed pride over the Town's passage of non-discrimination ordinances in a coordinated effort with Orange County. There had not yet been a response from the state legislature to that, she said.

### DISCUSSION

#### A. Town Update

- 1. COVID-19 Impact, Response, and Initiatives. (no attachment)

[\[21-0057\]](#)

Town Manager Maurice Jones gave an update on the Town's COVID-19 response and commented on the excellent job that staff was doing of

providing core services despite the challenges. The Town's Emergency Operations Center was coordinating public meetings and managing overall COVID response operations and numerous Town departments. Boards and commissions had re-imagined and modified their activities to reflect the new reality, he said.

Mr. Jones said that COVID-19 was disproportionately impacting those who were most vulnerable, and he described Town efforts to help those residents. He mentioned a community-wide mask distribution effort, a weekly food bank, a rent and utility assistance effort, scholastic and childcare support, and translation services. He said that local businesses had been helped with grants, had expanded downtown sidewalks, eased parking restrictions, and with a new economic recovery plan.

Mr. Jones pointed out that the Town had been working closely with Orange County and UNC Healthcare to disseminate vaccine information. They were working through the limitations with the COVID-19 Vaccine Management System and were seeing light at the end of the tunnel, he said. He pointed out, though, that the Town would need to provide ongoing support for housing, utility assist, childcare and food services.

Representative Insko asked about stormwater issues, and Mr. Jones discussed the Town's Stormwater Management Plan and its remediation efforts. He pointed out that a Booker Creek Basin Park had recently been created in the Blue Hill district. However, a significant amount of money would be needed to address stormwater issues so some projects would have to wait for funding, he said.

Mayor Hemminger said that the Booker Creek Basin Park was a model of how to put several components together. The Town would present an update on stormwater projects the following month, she said.

Representative Insko and Mr. Jones discussed the number of UNC students who typically live off campus. Mr. Jones said that UNC had delayed bringing about 3,000 students back because of the significant rise in COVID cases in recent months.

Delegation members and Mr. Jones discussed the pandemic-related costs for the Orange Water and Sewer Authority (OWASA). Mr. Jones said that OWASA intended to work out payment plans with subscribers and the Town's goal was to help people avoid having a balloon payment at the end.

Mayor pro tem Parker said that OWASA had about 350 families who were at least two months behind on their bills. Council Member Stegman asked if any utility support could be expected from the state or federal governments, and Representative Meyer replied that the state was waiting

to learn what the federal package would contain.

## 2. Transit Needs and SMAP Funding. (no attachment)

[\[21-0058\]](#)

Transit Director Brian Litchfield pointed out that the state had removed Town funding from the State Maintenance Assistance Program (SMAP), which is for urban systems. The state had also removed funding from the Rural Operating Assistance Program (ROAP), which affects counties, he said. He noted that together that was a loss of about \$50 million in annual transit operational funding to the Town. The reason was that federal Coronavirus, Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act money was available to towns, he said.

Mr. Litchfield noted that North Carolina was one of only a few states that had eliminated all funding for that reason. He said that CARES Act money was meant to help replace, not supplant revenue, and that restoring SMAP funding was critical. He pointed out that a \$140 million Bus Rapid Transit system was under development and would depend on \$30 million from the state.

Senator Foushee confirmed with Mr. Litchfield that COVID-19 had been challenging for Transit. Employees had contracted it despite 90 percent of them wearing masks and making masks available to riders, he said. Senator Foushee confirmed with him that Chapel Hill was requesting \$35 million from the state.

## 3. Economic Development Update. (no attachment)

[\[21-0059\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger said that Launch Chapel Hill, a start-up accelerator enterprise, had been doing extremely well with more applicants than it could accommodate. It planned to move to a new downtown location in about a year she said. She pointed out that more than 600 companies had been started through that collaboration with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH).

Mr. Jones said a major new project on East Rosemary Street would include a 1,100-space parking deck and a 200,000 square-foot wet lab/office space that had a projected value of \$80 million. He said that the project would add a new green space and a pocket park that would connect Varsity Alley to Rosemary Street. When completed, the space would provide 600-800 new jobs, and the Town was hoping it would bring more people and businesses to the downtown district, he said.

Mayor Hemminger added that UNC-CH was greatly invested in the project, which was located in an Opportunity Zone. The University was bringing its Admissions Office to the area and had commissioned a group to work with the Town on economic development, she said.

**4. Reimagining Community Safety Task Force. (no attachment)**[\[21-0060\]](#)

Mr. Jones said that the Town had updated its policies and procedures after the killing of George Floyd in 2020. The Town's goal was to do all it could to ensure that its police officers were treating people with respect and interacting with them safely, he said. He explained that the Council had put together a Re-imagining Community Safety Task Force to learn about crisis management in Town and to make recommendations. He said that the Task Force would provide an update in February 2021 and that staff would be looking at Chapel Hill Police Department funding during budget deliberations.

Senator Foushee commended the Town for taking action without delay and for letting Town residents express their concerns.

**5. Joint Town–UNC Jurisdiction for Law Enforcement. (no attachment)**[\[21-0061\]](#)

Town Attorney Ann Anderson said that the Town and UNC had been working on a plan for a more robust joint law enforcement jurisdiction agreement. Determining the scope of what territory would be covered and what would be shared or divided entailed a lot of work, she said. She added that the joint group had not yet identified gaps in the Town's legislation.

Mayor Hemminger pointed out that UNC-CH and other universities were responsible to their boards of governors as well.

**6. Destruction of Surrendered Firearms. (no attachment)**[\[21-0062\]](#)

Ms. Anderson said there was a gap in the legislative authorization for local law enforcement agencies to destroy firearms that they seize or that have been surrendered to them. She thought the remedy could be drafted legislatively, she said, adding that one approach might be to add a phrase to the existing statute. The difficulty would be in getting a vote to allow statewide authorization, she said.

Senator Foushee proposed that Ms. Anderson forward information to the delegation for review. Ms. Anderson pointed out that Representative Insko had helped the Town navigate the issue in 2018, but Representative Insko replied that there had been a lot of resistance to that and the bill had not passed.

**7. Investment of Town Funds. (no attachment)**[\[21-0063\]](#)

Ms. Anderson pointed out that a number of other jurisdictions had options for investing employee benefit funds. She said that Chapel Hill needed to have that option as well.

Senator Foushee replied that she had filed a related bill twice and planned to do so again the following week.

**8. Climate Action Plan. (no attachment)**[\[21-0064\]](#)

Mr. Jones said that the Chapel Hill community had agreed on the need for a comprehensive approach to climate change and the Council had approved funding for consultants to help develop a Climate Action and Response Plan. There had been much public involvement, and staff planned to bring a revised draft of the plan to the Council for discussion the following week, he said.

Mayor Hemminger pointed out that the Town had changed all of its main artery street lights to LED. She said that 50 percent of the Town's climate action goals would be achieved if Duke Energy would move forward with renewable energy.

**B. Metro Mayors Coalition Issues.**

Beau Mills, executive director of the NC Metro Mayors Coalition (MMC), said that MMC was the only organization in North Carolina that focused specifically on urban issues. He pointed out that North Carolina was the ninth most populous in the nation but was distinctly rural despite the fact that 82 percent of its new jobs and economic growth were focused in urban areas. However, the fact that metro regions were dispersed across the state provided opportunities for urban/rural partnerships that would allow everyone to benefit, he said.

Mr. Mills said that MMC's main priorities were transportation, community and economic development, affordable housing, and local control (especially related to revenue sources). MMC proactively promoted partnerships that enhance the role metropolitan regions play in the state's social and economic health, he said. He said that MMC would set its 2021 priorities in the spring and that public transportation would be at the top of the list.

Mr. Mills said that all members of the local delegation had a large role in improving SMAP funding, especially in 2019. In addition to that, MMC's priorities would likely include increasing funding for affordable housing, improving collaboration on housing policy and tools, seeking more federal fiscal aid for COVID recovery, joining state-wide efforts for infrastructure, and providing support for NC Clean Cities for Climate Change, he said.

NCLM and Metro Mayors Presentation.

[\[21-0077\]](#)**C. League of Municipalities Advocacy Goals.**

Erin Wynia, chief legislative counsel with the NC League of Municipalities (NCLM), gave an overview of the NCLM's services and said that its Public and Government Affairs team represented cities and towns before the General

Assembly, the US Congress, and other rule-making authorities. She said that NCLM's legislative priorities in 2021 included transportation, broadband, wastewater and stormwater, jobs, housing, public safety, economic development and financing. COVID-19 was at the forefront of everyone's mind as well, she said.

Ms. Wynia explained how NCLM members set legislative agendas and said that the current board had settled on five priorities: healthy finances, resilient infrastructure, racial equity, vibrant communities/neighborhoods, and adaptive municipal operations. They had held many virtual small group meetings across the state and received more than 450 ideas, which were ultimately organized into 12 goals, she said, and she described what those goals contained.

NCLM and Metro Mayors Presentation.

[\[21-0077\]](#)

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Mayor Hemminger said that the Council would like to have the option to meet virtually, if needed, even after the COVID-19 emergency ended. She also pointed out that Wegmans was scheduled to open in Chapel Hill on February 24, 2021, and would be one of the largest sales tax producers in Orange County.

She said that the Town had several affordable housing projects in process: 2200 Homestead Road on Town-owned property; Weavers Grove, a Habitat for Humanity development; Jay Street in the Northside Neighborhood; and numerous others. The Town spends about 6 percent of its annual budget on affordable housing and had used half of its Affordable Housing Bond funds on projects, she said.

Council Member Ryan stressed the need to get everyone in Orange County vaccinated against COVID-19 and stressed the need for the state to help in moving that forward. Mayor pro tem Parker added that someone needed to talk with the governor about how vaccines were being reallocated to Mecklenburg County for large vaccination events.

Delegation members assured the Council that they had talked with Governor Cooper and Secretary Cohen about that. There was a lot of pressure to balance needs because North Carolina was at the bottom with respect to numbers of people vaccinated, they said.

The legislative breakfast ended at 10:04 a.m.