



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

Saturday, February 6, 2021 9:00 AM 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.

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 Florentine Miller, Assistant Town Manager Mary Jane Nirdlinger, Town Attorney Ann Anderson, Director of Organizational and Strategic Initiatives Rae Buckley, Director of Business Management Amy Oland, Assistant Director of Business Management Matt Brinkley, Assistant to the Town Manager for Administrative and Program Management Ross Tompkins, Mayoral Aide Jeanne Brown, Communications and Public Affairs Director/Town Clerk Sabrina Oliver, and Deputy Town Clerk Amy Harvey.

Orientation to the day [\[21-0097\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger opened the virtual Council Retreat at 9:05 a.m. and summarized the agenda.

Facilitator Maggie Chotas said that the two-part session would address the Town's current status and the Council's goals for the future.

Where are we? Updates on Town Strategic Goals and Objectives [\[21-0098\]](#)

Director of Organizational and Strategic Initiatives Rae Buckley gave a PowerPoint presentation on the progress being made toward reaching the Town's strategic goals. She reviewed initiatives that had moved forward and discussed funding strategies for others. She reported on the Climate Action and Response Plan, the Eastwood Lake and Cedar Fork Sub-watershed Study, Booker Creek Basin Park, 200 Trees for 200 Years, and the Coal Ash Interim Remediation Plan.

Ms. Buckley mentioned recent projects that would lead to new jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities. She gave an update on the Affordable Housing Plan, Connectivity goals and initiatives, the Arts and Culture Program, and the revised Future Land-Use Map. The Town had been addressing racial equity through a Criminal Justice Debt Fund and a Re-imagining Community Safety Task Force. The Council had directed staff to make environmental and economic equity primary in all considerations, she said.

Council Members confirmed with Mr. Jones that having a plan for those who were being displaced from mobile home parks was one of the staff's primary goals. They verified that the Town's poet laureate's term had been extended because the COVID-19 pandemic had limited his ability to perform. Mayor Hemminger recommended adding more frequent updates on goals and objectives to the list.

Council Member Huynh asked about affordable housing incentives, technology for permitting, a Glen Lennox office building, and an Advancing Youth initiative. Ms. Buckley replied that staff was preparing to launch the permitting software in March. She would provide updates on other Council goals in coming months, she said.

Some Council Members commented on how the staff's presentation had primarily been about successes. They confirmed with Mr. Jones that information about what had not been achieved would be included in his presentation and that the discussion about prioritization would continue over the next couple of months.

Recap of 5-year budget strategy discussions [\[21-0099\]](#)

Mr. Jones opened the discussion of the Town's five-year budget strategy and proposed the following themes: Environmental Sustainability, Capital, Human Services, Transportation, Operational Sustainability, Economic and Financial Sustainability. He provided specific information that the Council had requested on Maintenance and Operations, Employee Wages, an Employee Class and Compensation study, and other initiatives.

Mr. Jones outlined policy guidelines for the FY 2022 budget and reviewed the schedule of upcoming budget meetings. He confirmed that the Council wanted to understand the Debt Fund and the rules governing fees. He pointed out that the Council had asked that all fee and cost decisions be viewed through a racial equity lens.

Mayor Hemminger noted that Town decisions should be viewed through a climate change lens as well.

Council Member Anderson said that she was wondering about the Town's ability to address some of its goals after hearing the previous day about debt-service capacity. Some Council Members discussed the value of doing an efficiency study that would compare Chapel Hill with other towns. Council Member Ryan proposed that a tabletop exercise regarding possible reallocation might determine Council priorities faster.

Council Members noted the importance of separating practical goals from more aspirational ones. They stressed the value of classifying initiatives based on impacts and understanding trade-offs when making decisions. They said it would help to have a sense of how much discretionary money was available, and they emphasized the importance of seeing cost savings along with expenditures.

The Council asked for specific information on how a "revenue neutral" tax rate would impact residents and affect Town finances. They asked that staff present that information prior to an upcoming presentation by Orange County on its Real Estate tax revaluation.

Discuss Town Strategic Goals and Objectives

[\[21-0100\]](#)

Ms. Chotas and the Council decided on a process in which Ms. Buckley would present the strategic goals and Council Members would submit written comments and questions via Chat.

Ms. Buckley then described each goal, one by one, and outlined the Town's efforts toward achieving them. Those goals were: Environmental, including the Climate Action and Response Plan; Economic and Financial Stewardship; Affordable Housing; Connected Community; Vibrant and Inclusive Community; and Safety. Ms. Buckley pointed out that it was the beginning of the budget process and that staff had not yet reached the point where it could evaluate outcomes.

Council Members submitted many questions and comments, and Ms. Chotas read all of them aloud. She encouraged the Council to continue submitting so that she could assemble their comments and questions into theme areas and share them back with them. She hoped that the process

would also help staff to determine what information Council Members needed to set priorities, she said.

Where do we need to go? Considering how priorities interrelate and intersect

[\[21-0101\]](#)

Ms. Chotas recommended that the Council think about how to get to the next phase in priority setting.

Council Members commented on the need to focus on what the Town needed to do right away and how that would transition into a longer, multi-year commitment and plan. They commented on the challenge of trying to focus on community priorities while also having to meet their responsibilities regarding development and land-use issues.

The Council talked about collaborating more with regional partners. They emphasized the need to have a vision based on Town values behind every decision they make. They discussed figuring out a way to prioritize more and make trade-offs based on realistic boundaries. They acknowledged the need to forego some priorities in order to make the numbers work.

Council Members said they wanted more and better financial/policy analyses to help them reach decisions. Initiatives were interrelated and it would be good to know all of it, if possible, they pointed out. Several commented on how there were software tools that could be very useful.

Ms. Chotas asked the Council to post the urgent needs that concerned them in the chat. The resulting list was very long, and the concerns that came up repeatedly included: mobile home park displacement, the Community Safety Task Force, gentle density, need for a policy analyst, climate action steps, and public facilities and sidewalk maintenance, Ms. Chotas said.

Mr. Jones commented that the list would be very helpful. He would respond with a realistic discussion about what it would take to get some of those things done, he said, noting that many of the recommendations such as the financial analyst, would require resources.

Reflecting on the Session & Preparing for Session 3

[\[21-0102\]](#)

Ms. Chotas said, in summary, that Council Members were asking for boundaries because they recognized that they could not do everything. They were saying that better data, more analysis, and ongoing communication would help, she said. She then asked Council Members to comment on which goals and initiatives they wanted to keep, which ones they could let go, and which ones they wanted to expand.

Council Member Anderson stressed making an effort to stay at the policy

level and not get into the weeds. Mayor Hemminger said that the Council spent too much time reviewing development projects. In addition, Council comments needed to be more succinct and its actions more efficient, she said.

Ms. Chotas replied that such concerns would be a topic for the next session of the retreat. She asked Council Members to spend some time beforehand thinking about the things that only they could do to improve the community.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was recessed at 12:01 p.m. on Saturday, February 6, 2021, to reconvene at 6 p.m. on Monday, February 8, 2021.