



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, May 3, 2021 **7:00 PM** **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.

လူတော်ကတိကျိုးထံ မှတမာ် လူတော်ကွဲးကျိုးထံအတော်မစံးအဂီၢ် ၢ ကိးဘၣ်(၉၁၉)-၉၆၉-၅၁၀၅

如需口头或
书面翻译服
务，请拨打
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, Planning Director Colleen Willger, Assistant Planning Director Judy Johnson, Traffic Engineer Kumar Neppalli, Transportation Planning Manager Bergen Watterson, Executive Director for Technology and CIO Scott Clark, Deputy Town Clerk Amy Harvey.

AGENDA ITEM

Public Information Meeting: Traffic Analysis [\[21-0397\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger called the virtual meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She called the role and Council Members Parker, Ryan, Anderson, Buansi, Stegman, Huynh, and Gu replied that they were present. She said that the meeting would give the Council an opportunity to learn about traffic modeling software prior to a May 12, 2021, meeting regarding the Aura development project on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (MLK).

Assistant Planning Director Judy Johnson introduced Craig Scheffler, a senior technical advisor with HNTB, to lead the discussion about traffic modeling and its application to future development in the MLK/Estes Drive area.

Mr. Scheffler explained that transportation modeling could reflect current conditions, predict future conditions, and test the potential impact of changes and/or improvements to a transportation network. The models could provide information on traffic delays and generated level of service grades (A-F) based on a system's capacity, he said. He explained that a grade D level of service would be the threshold for exploring improvements to a road or intersection.

Mr. Scheffler said that HNTB's base Townwide model reflected traffic counts taken during the morning, noon, and evening peak hours at 30 to 40 locations across Chapel Hill. He said that the model could reflect what was occurring and could do multiple simulations. However, it could not predict the best type of improvements to address specific problems, he said.

Mr. Scheffler discussed some of the assumptions behind a scenario test of Estes Drive that included all of the Town's planned developments and proposed road improvements in year 2024. The Estes Drive/Somerset Drive intersection would be at a level of service F at the PM peak hour and the Franklin Street/Estes Drive intersection would go from a level C to a level D in the AM peak and from a D to an F in the PM peak hour, he said. Small improvements would not fix the high traffic volume problems at those locations, he pointed out.

In response to questions from Council, Mr. Scheffler showed simulations that included signals and/or a roundabout at Somerset Drive. Adding a traffic signal or a roundabout at Somerset Drive could help traffic flow on Estes Drive and potentially shorten delays getting out of Somerset Drive, he said. He presented a simulation that included all of the potential parcels in the Central West Area, except Aura. It showed that adding an extra turn lane and extending some lanes would reduce traffic back-up despite having more traffic in the vicinity.

Mr. Scheffler also presented a scenario that included a traffic impact analysis that had been performed for Aura. He said that the amount of traffic that Aura would generate probably would have less impact than what would be coming from other developments in the area. He showed what the network would look like if Aura were developed, and the recommended changes were made. Getting out onto Estes Drive could be an issue for those coming from Aura, but the traffic generated from Aura's two driveways would not have much effect on overall traffic patterns, he

said. He said that re-timing traffic signals to account for additional traffic coming from Aura would subtract a couple of seconds of delay.

Council Member Ryan asked if the modeling included a potential additional eastbound left-turn lane from Estes Drive Extension onto MLK, and Traffic Engineer Kumar Neppalli replied that it did not since those improvements would not happen by 2024. Council Member Ryan pointed out that other developments that were being projected, however. She proposed that staff project all of the traffic improvements that would be coming within five years.

Council Members commented on how the future traffic scenarios were being based on assumptions built upon other assumptions. They proposed including additional variables, such as the traffic generated by school buses and the nearby YMCA. Some stressed the need for further calibration, interpretation and data analysis of queue length and its effect on drivers' actual experience. In addition to service level information, they wanted to know what the worst delays would be and how it would feel to wait through two cycles, they said. Council Member Huynh left at 7:36 p.m.

Mr. Neppalli replied that staff would provide all of that information and analysis at the May 12th public hearing on the Aura development. That presentation would include a table with actual numbers for existing, no build, and build scenarios and would include all of the developments, he said. Council Member Buansi left at 8:00 p.m.

Council Member Anderson commented on some disadvantages of presenting averages, but Mr. Scheffler explained that state and federal agencies, including the NC Department of Transportation (DOT), look at the average delay for a peak hour in order to avoid overdesigning a road to accommodate a worst-case condition. However, HNTB could provide ranges and maximums if that would help the Council's decision-making process, he said.

Council Member Anderson asked about the status of NC DOT's approval of the roundabout, and Mr. Neppalli said that he would provide that information and recommendations at the May 12th hearing as well. Staff would also present the quantitative analysis that the Council would need to make a decision about Aura, he said. He spoke at length about the many planned and potential improvements in the Central West Area and said that NC DOT was amenable to discussing ways to mitigate queues at Estes and Somerset Drives and the difficulty of turning left from Somerset onto Estes. He pointed out that four studies of the area had already been completed and said that improvements clearly needed to be made.

Mayor Hemminger commented on how staff had a short window of time to

prepare for the current meeting. She said that seeing a demonstration of HNTB's modeling ability had been very helpful even though adjusting the variables would make a difference. Having the opportunity to review the traffic analysis ahead of the Aura hearing would reduce the amount of time that the Council would need to spend on it on May 12th, she said. She noted that Planning Commission members, who were scheduled to review the Aura project the following evening, had been watching the presentation online.

ADJOURNMENT

This meeting was adjourned at 8:58 p.m.