



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 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, October 25, 2023 7:00 PM RM 110 | Council Chamber

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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In-Person Meeting Notification

Changes in Meeting Material content

- We are trying something new this fall to make our Agenda packets clearer and easier to navigate. You'll notice streamlined reports and more hyperlinks to supporting documents.
- Staff presentations will be posted after the meeting, not as drafts in the packet, to allow more time to prepare high-quality presentations.
- We will also produce an "information items" packet periodically, to share items that don't require Council action, but are important to the Council and community. Those packets will be published on our website.

View the Meeting

- View and participate in the Council Chamber.
- Live stream the meeting - <https://chapelhill.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>
- Spectrum is replacing 1998 encoder that transmits programming to cable channel 18. It remains offline until complete.
- The Town of Chapel Hill wants to know more about who participates in its programs and processes, including Town Council meetings.
- Participate in a voluntary demographic survey before viewing online or in person -

<https://www.townofchapelhill.org/demosurvey>

Parking

- Parking is available at Town Hall lots and the lot at Stephens Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.
- See <http://www.parkonthehill.com> for other public lots on Rosemary Street
- Town Hall is served by NS route and T route, and GoTriangle Routes of Chapel Hill Transit.

Entry and Speakers

- Entrance on the ground floor.
- Sign up at the meeting starting at 6:30 PM with the Town Clerk to speak.
- If more than 14 people sign up for an item, Council will reduce speaking time from 3 minutes to 2 min./person.
- Please do not bring signs.

ROLL CALL

- Present:** 7 - Mayor Pam Hemminger, Council Member Jessica Anderson, Council Member Camille Berry, Council Member Paris Miller-Foushee, Council Member Michael Parker, Council Member Amy Ryan, and Council Member Adam Searing
- Absent:** 2 - Council Member Karen Stegman, and Council Member Tai Huynh

OTHER ATTENDEES

Town Manager Chris Blue, Deputy Town Manager Loryn Clark, Town Attorney Ann Anderson, Assistant Planning Director Judy Johnson, Senior Planner Tas Lagoo, Principal Planner of Historic Preservation Anya Grahn-Federneck, Planning Director Britany Waddell, Library Director and Director of Community Arts & Culture Susan Brown, Transit Director Brian Litchfield, Fire Marshal Chris Kearns, Police Officer Osborn, Deputy Town Clerk Amy Harvey, and Assistant Town Clerk Brenton Hodge.

OPENING

Mayor Hemminger called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and reviewed the agenda. Mayor pro tem Stegman and Council Member Huynh were absent due to work conflicts. Council Member Ryan arrived at 7:01 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY COUNCIL MEMBERS

0.01 Celebrating Successes Video.

[\[23-0770\]](#)

The Council watched a "Celebrating Successes" video, narrated by Chapel Hill Transit Director Brian Litchfield. The video addressed new Transit initiatives, such as providing free rides to school activities for students who would not otherwise be able to attend. It described new and

upgraded Town bus shelters as well.

Mayor Hemminger thanked Mr. Litchfield and his entire team for improving the Town's transit system and for working with community members to remove barriers.

0.02 Mayor Hemminger Regarding Azerbaijan Celebration.

[\[23-0771\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger mentioned that the Azerbaijani ambassador to the US had been at the Sancar Turkish Cultural Center in Chapel Hill earlier in the week. She said that Azerbaijan's local celebration of 100 years of Turkish government had recently taken place in Raleigh.

0.03 Mayor Hemminger Regarding NC Housing Conference.

[\[23-0772\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger told Council Members that she had attended a conference focused on how to create more affordable housing, which had included discussions of best practices and working together. She had also given opening remarks at an NC Habitats Association meeting in Chapel Hill, she said.

0.04 Mayor Hemminger Regarding 'Leave Your Leaves'.

[\[23-0773\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger said that Town-wide leaf collection had begun. She encouraged people to leave the leaves where they fall, though, since doing so nourishes trees and supports wildlife.

0.05 Mayor Hemminger Regarding Festifall Arts Market.

[\[23-0774\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger reminded everyone that Saturday would be the final day of Festifall, which would be held from 1:00-6:00 p.m. at the 140 West plaza. She urged people to come and enjoy the festivities while also supporting local artists.

0.06 Mayor Hemminger Regarding the Committee on Economic Sustainability.

[\[23-0775\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger reminded the Council that there were no Council Committee on Economic Sustainability meetings scheduled for the current month.

0.07 Mayor Hemminger Regarding Early Voting.

[\[23-0776\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger pointed out that early voting for the November 7th municipal and school board elections would begin the next day. Early voting would take place at four locations and would run through November 4, 2023, she said.

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.

1. Laurie Smith Request for a four way stop at the intersection of Crofton Springs, Ivy Brook and Cobble Ridge. [\[23-0760\]](#)

Laurie Smith thanked the Council for considering her petition regarding a dangerous intersection at the place where her home was located.

A motion was made by Council Member Parker, seconded by Council Member Anderson, that the Council received and referred to the Manager and Mayor. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

CONSENT

Items of a routine nature will be placed on the Consent Agenda to be voted on in a block. Any item may be removed from the Consent Agenda by request of the Mayor or any Council Member.

Approval of the Consent Agenda

A motion was made by Council Member Anderson, seconded by Council Member Berry, that R-1 be adopted as amended, which approved the Consent Agenda. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

2. Approve all Consent Agenda Items. [\[23-0761\]](#)

This resolution(s) and/or ordinance(s) was adopted and/or enacted.

3. Approve the Miscellaneous Budget Ordinance Amendment to Adjust Various Fund Budgets for FY 2023-24. [\[23-0762\]](#)

This resolution(s) and/or ordinance(s) was adopted and/or enacted.

4. Award a Bid and Authorize the Town Manager to Execute a Contract for the Construction of Intersection Improvements at North St. / Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd./ North Columbia St. [\[23-0763\]](#)

This resolution(s) and/or ordinance(s) was adopted and/or enacted.

This resolution(s) and/or ordinance(s) was adopted and/or enacted.

5. Approve and Authorize a Real Property Exchange Between the Town of Chapel Hill and Beechwood Obey Creek, LLC at 4511 S. Columbia Street. [\[23-0764\]](#)
- Mayor Hemminger said that this item had been pulled in order to allow Town staff time to confirm the status of an agreement to preserve 80 acres.
- This Consent item was deferred.
6. Award the Same Pay Increase Approved for all Employees to the Town Attorney. [\[23-0765\]](#)
- This resolution(s) and/or ordinance(s) was adopted and/or enacted.
7. Approve the Town Attorney's Employment Contract Extension. [\[23-0766\]](#)
- This resolution(s) and/or ordinance(s) was adopted and/or enacted.
8. Continue the Legislative Hearing and Consideration of the 157 East Rosemary Street Conditional Zoning Application to November 29, 2023. [\[23-0767\]](#)
- This resolution(s) and/or ordinance(s) was adopted and/or enacted.

DISCUSSION

9. Open the Legislative Hearing: Conditional Zoning Application for Chapel Hill Life Sciences Center at 306 West Franklin Street [\[23-0768\]](#)
- Greg Capps, a managing director with Longfellow Real Estate Partners (Longfellow), responded to questions and comments regarding the project's success potential. He discussed Longfellow's track record with other projects and expressed enthusiasm about the future of lab space. He said that Downtown Chapel Hill was an ideal location for the proposed building, due to its walkability, its proximity to the University of North Carolina (UNC), and its proximity to restaurants and retail.
- Casey Angel, a vice chair with Longfellow, described the company's North Carolina portfolio. He discussed Longfellow's Triangle area partnerships, its focus on creating a sense of community, and the range of job opportunities that the Life Sciences Center would make available. He described two successful projects in Durham. He stressed the importance of having broad community engagement and mentioned the Northside Neighborhood in particular. He said that Longfellow had an internal Diversity Equity and Inclusion Office.
- Michael Stevenson, a principal with Perkins Eastman Architects, said that he had referred to Town plans, such as the West Rosemary Development Guide, when designing the 1.99-acre site. He showed early sketches for

an L-shaped, eight-story building with underground parking for about 100 cars. He described a walkable, green area that would include two public spaces -- one facing Franklin Street and the other facing Rosemary Street. Both areas would have retail on their frontages and there would be a through-block pedestrian connection between them, he said.

Mr. Stevenson pointed out that a loading dock/trash collection element had been moved to an internal location that would not be visible from the street. He described proposed landscaping and discussed ADA facilities, outdoor shade structures, courtyards, and pathways. He presented a composite sketch of downtown buildings and said that the Life Sciences Center, which would be located at the lowest part of the street, would generally follow the height of other newer buildings in the Downtown area.

Nathan Zeidler, a senior project manager, explained that Longfellow had been working toward the Town's goal of reducing parking and increasing the use of multi-modal transit options. The Life Sciences project would target Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) gold certification, he pointed out. He said that Longfellow was pursuing on-site carbon reduction and that it used a US Resiliency Council system to measure building resiliency. In summary, major project changes included a lower building height, a greatly expanded green space, additional greenspace along Rosemary Street, subterranean parking, and a relocated service area, he said.

Assistant Planning Director Tas Lagoo gave a brief PowerPoint presentation on how the project met the Town's Complete Community goals for strategic planning, expanding and delivering new greenways, providing housing, and planning holistically. He spoke favorably about the recent additions that the applicant had described.

Mr. Lagoo proposed two issues for Council discussion. First, a relatively low level of on-site parking was being proposed, he said, but he pointed out that the applicant would need to show how they intend to meet their transportation needs before applying for a conditional zoning permit. The second issue was that staff had not yet seen a finalized building design, said Mr. Lagoo. However, the ordinance accounted for that by requiring the applicant to work with Town staff and the Community Design Commission on design principles, he said.

Mr. Lagoo said that Planning Commission members had recommended approval, with comments, which he summarized. He proposed that the Council open the legislative hearing, receive and provide comments, and continue the hearing to November 29, 2023.

Council Member Parker emphasized the importance of the applicant making people in the community aware of training opportunities. Mr. Angel replied that they would do so, and he described how they had done that in other locations.

Council Member Ryan ascertained that the applicant would not likely present a massing plan before the Council's vote. She confirmed that a modification request regarding step-backs had been in response to a request from the Town fire marshal. She asked about active spaces other than retail, and Mr. Angel described the kinds of activities that the community spaces would enable.

Council Member Miller-Foushee confirmed with Mr. Angel that Longfellow partnered with local retailers and made sure that its buildings represented the communities where they are located. He told her that Longfellow was willing to explore affordable rentals in the approximate 9,000 square feet of available retail space. Longfellow had met with EmPOWERment, Inc. and several small businesses and planned to meet with the Jackson Center as well, Mr. Angel said.

Council Member Ryan expressed interest in having something stronger than design guidelines, such as Townwide standards, for projects, and Mr. Lagoo replied that there would be an opportunity to work on that during the Land Use Management Ordinance (LUMO) rewriting process.

Council Member Anderson confirmed that the LUMO required applicants to submit design principles and certify that they have met those. She requested that the Town's urban designer come and talk with the Council about guidelines that could be written into the general process as stipulations. She confirmed with Mr. Lagoo that staff was relying on the major/minor modification rules in the current LUMO to determine which projects would need to come back to the Council for review. Staff had not seen any reason to modify those rules for the Life Sciences project, Mr. Lagoo said.

Council Member Searing confirmed that the current zoning would allow a 90-foot building at the location and that the applicant was requesting 165 feet. He asked about recent business journal articles that had reported a cooling down in the Life Sciences sector, and Mr. Angel explained that there had been a spike during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the forecast for 2024 was above everything before 2021, he said.

In response to a question from Council Member Berry about the Bicycle Chain access, Mr. Stevenson showed a 20-foot-wide access easement that would be maintained. There would be no change in the vehicular access or to the parking spaces, he said. Council Member Berry also requested information on the number of minority-owned businesses that Longfellow worked with and how many executives of color they employed.

Council Members asked how construction would be coordinated, and Mr. Zeidler said that the Town required them to submit a detailed Construction Management Plan and prohibited them from simultaneously closing both roads. Council Member Parker and the applicant discussed

the importance of grading to avoid flood elevation.

Mayor Hemminger confirmed with Mr. Stevenson that some of the building's upper levels could have walk-out terraces. She verified that the line of site through the project would be clear, well lit, and ADA compliant. She confirmed with staff that the 140 West and Greenbridge buildings were about 140 and 137 feet tall, respectively.

James Rumpfelt, owner of the Bicycle Chain property, requested that the applicant provide more specific details about ingress and egress to his property and his parking area. He asked to confirm that a perpetual easement across the two properties would maintain the same general pattern and continue to allow him the same general access, he said.

Aaron Nelson, president of the Chamber for a Greater Chapel Hill and Carrboro, expressed support for the project. Chamber members had met with the applicant team and had been satisfied with their answers to tough questions, he said. He spoke about the benefits of bringing workers to Town who would support Downtown businesses. Having a taller building enabled the applicant to provide the kinds of ground level amenities that the community wanted, he said.

Some Council members characterized the project as transformational for the Downtown area. Council Member Parker characterized it as low risk due to the importance of Life Sciences to the overall economy. He said that the project would support local businesses and give the west end of Downtown the spark it needed.

Council members praised the plan to have two, outward-facing green spaces with a pedestrian through-way between them. They expressed appreciation for the service area relocation. Some commented on how attention was being given to both the Rosemary Street and Franklin Street sides of the building. They said that they liked the opportunity for affordable commercial rentals. They asked the applicant to work closely with local artists and grassroots organizations regarding community benefits.

The Council emphasized its goal of having an activated public space that would invite people to stop and visit. Several commented on the Town's desire to include work by local artists. Council Member Miller-Foushee talked about Chapel Hill's history of exclusion and pointed out that the building would be located adjacent to a historic Black neighborhood. She wanted community spaces to bring those stories in, she said.

Council Member Berry stressed the importance of engaging with the Northside community as well. She asked for more information on how Longfellow's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion focus translated into how it

did business. She also asked for more details about the Bicycle Chain's ingress and egress route.

Council Member Ryan expressed some concern about the level of detail that was being presented and pointed out that the Council could not delegate parts of its discretionary authority to Town staff. She wanted to see massing models that would give a sense of how the building would feel from the street, she said. She also asked to see more choices, such as those that Mr. Stevenson had once provided in relation to a nearby parking deck.

Council Member Ryan proposed adding a little more street activation. Since much of the "plaza" would be a driveway with some green space in it, she wanted a stipulation that would lock down what and where the public spaces would be, she said. She requested that staff provide an update on a Council request to form a biotechnology committee.

Council Member Searing pointed out that the applicant was requesting to build a structure that would be nearly twice the height that the current zoning allowed. It would dramatically transform the look and feel of Downtown, and he was skeptical about moving forward without a better idea of what that would be, he said. He asked for a more detailed response from staff about how the Town would compete with similar new spaces in other communities. He also requested information about the future of new wet lab space at UNC.

Mayor Hemminger explained that the Council had spent much time trying to figure out what Chapel Hill's niche should be. They had decided on Life Sciences because of the Downtown's compact size and the amount of innovation and entrepreneurship that was happening in Town, both on and off campus, she said. She predicted that the project would change the Downtown in a positive way and be an opportunity to get something life-changing for the entire community.

Mayor Hemminger said that the applicant had listened to Town needs and had worked hard to help existing tenants transition to other locations. The project needed a little more nuancing, and she looked forward to seeing the applicant's next presentation in November, she said.

A motion was made by Council Member Parker, seconded by Council Member Anderson, that the Council continued the Legislative Hearing to November 29, 2023. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:53 p.m.