

Petition Requesting the Development and Implementation of a Plan for the Use of the Town's American Legion Property

On December 5, 2016, the Council voted to authorize the Town Manager to carry out the purchase of the approximately 35-acre American Legion property. Based on discussions held by the Council leading up to this authorization, the resolution called for the property to accommodate multiple uses, including commercial, and for part of the acquisition costs to be covered by selling, leasing, or otherwise using a portion of the property to generate revenues. Thus, the resolution authorizing this purchase included the following provisions:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Town of Chapel Hill that the Council authorizes the Town Manager to execute an offer to purchase and contract to purchase the 35-acre American Legion property and lease of the buildings substantially in the form and under the terms presented to the Council on December 5, 2016, and to complete all necessary steps to finalize the transactions described therein and as presented to the Council.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council affirms its intent that the American Legion property be used for a mix of purposes, both public and private, consistent with the guiding principles approved by the Council in June 2016 and that Council expects the Town will recoup a portion of the purchase price by making some portions of the American Legion property available for private development.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council directs the Town Manager to initiate the steps, as outlined in the report to the Council, as soon as practicable to begin a planning process to consider potential future uses of the American Legion property.

The purchase price was negotiated to be \$7.9 million to be paid in three installments:

- \$3.6 million at closing
- \$2.15 million one year following closing
- \$2.15 million two years following closing

The sources for these funds were as follows:

- The initial payment came from the previous fiscal year's excess fund balance
- The remaining two payments were drawn from bond funds that had originally been authorized as follows: \$3.4 million for construction of Community Programming Space and \$0.9 million Parks & Recreation Administrative Space.

Following the acquisition, a task force composed of community members, with a Council liaison, and assisted in their work by Town staff and an outside consultant (Dan Jewell of Coulter, Jewell, Thames) worked for some months on developing a master plan for the site. Although a number of laudable ideas were generated, no final plan was delivered to nor ratified by the Council.

Given that it has been over five years since the acquisition and no plan for this valuable site's use has been developed, the undersigned request that the Town Manager begin a process of developing an implementable plan based on the 2016 resolution that would use the following as a framework:

1. Work with an outside party through a sale, lease, or other remunerative arrangement to develop a reasonable portion of the front of the site, i.e., that portion closest to Legion Road, for missing middle/middle income housing or retail/office space. Annual tax revenues resulting from such development would be used to fund, at least in part, the ongoing upkeep of the park.
2. Explore using a portion of the site, possibly that portion currently (or formerly) occupied by the dance studio for affordable housing, possibly for those with developmental or other disabilities.
3. Use the funds from No. 1 above to invest in making the remainder of the land into a first-class park, including active and passive recreational opportunities, consistent with the 2013 Parks Master Plan.

It is further requested that the Town Manager bring forth a preliminary version of such a plan in the fall of this year so that a public engagement process can be initiated to ensure that the plan developed meets the needs and wishes of Town residents. Following this public engagement, it is expected that the plan could be fully developed and brought to Council for final action by early in the first quarter of 2023. Implementation of the plan would take place promptly following approval according to the timelines to be included in the plan.

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