

11-16-2022 Town Council Meeting

Responses to Council Questions

ITEM #15: Consider Approving American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for Downtown Projects

Council Question:

Clean and Green: Assuming the two-year pilot is successful, what plans, if any, does the Downtown Partnership have for long-term funding?

Downtown Partnership Response:

The town has previously expressed a desire to shift most Municipal Service District (MSD) Funds back to the Downtown Partnership and has already moved \$100,000 this past year, but a little over \$100,000 remains. Additionally, the town reduced the MSD Tax Rate in FY2021-2022 from \$.07 to \$.064 (\$.071 in FY16-17).

1. **Assuming No MSD Funding Increase to CHDP:** *if the board deemed the increased cleanliness more important than our increased spending on marketing and programming, we could change our budget to prioritize clean and green.*
2. **Assuming the rest of the MSD Funding transfers to CHDP** (Approx \$100,000) *we could shift some funding from marketing/programming to make up the difference and maintain Clean & Green*
3. **Assuming:**
 - *A portion of the remaining \$100,000 of MSD revenue transfers to CHDP*
 - *Increased property tax revenue from new properties coming online (in 2 years the 136 E. Rosemary, Element Hotel, the Edition Apartments on W. Rosemary, and potentially the Link Apartments) The County will also be revaluing with new values out for January 2025 if they continue to revalue every 4 years*
 - *MSD Tax Rate being held level or a small increase back to FY2020-FY2021 rate of \$.07 from \$.064)*
 - *Assuming event sponsorships continue to increase*

Then we could maintain clean and green with a small transfer from marketing/programming to make up the difference.

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Council Question:

Mobility Study: What are the key questions/objectives of the study?

Staff Response:

To better understand how to balance the needs of bicycles, pedestrians, vehicles, and public transit in our Downtown, and then to create the best use of our right-of-way to balance those needs while creating better place.

Council Question:

Mobility Study: Who will draft the RFP?

Staff Response:

The staff team oversees the work, led by Laura Selmer. The staff team will seek a transportation consultant to guide the mobility study and once that work is complete, seek a solid urban design firm to lead the streetscape work. Since there are two phases to this work, overseen by staff and partners, the path for hiring these firms has not been determined. We will begin with a scope of work and expectations for the mobility work. We will be seeking the best in each field to complete the associated task.

Council Question:

Mobility Study: Do we have a timeframe for commencement and completion?

Staff Response:

We desire to complete both portions in no more than 12 months. We would initiate the Mobility study first so that the findings of that work can inform the streetscape enhancement study.

Council Question:

Mobility Study: Upon what is the estimate of \$500,000 for the study based?

Staff Response:

Based on an estimate of \$100,000 for the mobility portion and the balance for the streetscape enhancement planning.

Council Question:

Mobility Study: Is it likely that a single consultant could handle both the mobility aspects and streetscape aspects?

Staff Response:

We are contemplating two separate firms/persons to complete the work.

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Council Question:

Mobility Study: Do we have examples of similar studies carried out elsewhere?

Staff Response:

Not in specific, but there are many examples of urban mobility plans, as well as streetscape plans. The streetscape enhancement portion is much more nuanced in that we are not anticipating beginning from scratch, but keeping some existing elements of our streetscape and making improvement.

Council Question:

Mobility Study: Can the study explore bicycle connections east of Columbia Street?

Staff Response:

The mobility study will look at all modes within the boundaries of downtown Chapel Hill.

Council Question:

While I know we have discussed these previously. I am confused as to where these requests are originating - the presentation says they are from Downtown Together. Aside from the Green Team, who would be managing the funds? Who would be managing the projects?

Staff Response:

The request is from Economic Development and the Downtown Partnership in conjunction with the Downtown Together leadership team. Much of this request follow the implementation goals of the Downtown Together plan. It is also to help Council better understand the future of Franklin Street's needs as a continuing effort to revitalize Downtown.

Council Question:

How are these considered the final priorities for this funding? I don't see any information related to questions and concerns brought up by Council in the last discussion on this topic, including concerns about the sizable amount for the mobility study. Also, several Council members showed a strong interest in committing some funds to providing 24/7 bathroom access downtown. Where did that go?

Staff Response:

These priorities' origination is answered above. The intent of the Streetscape Enhancement and Mobility study will be designed to respond to previous Council interests and concerns in Downtown.

We have information to present to Council on the Bathroom questions. There are two options:

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1. *Keep the restrooms at Wallace Deck open until 12:00pm and reopen at 7:00am, and provide a Porta-potty in closed hours. (\$12,000 annually)*
2. *Keep the Wallace Deck restrooms open 24 hours per day, provide extra security at Wallace Deck, and clean the restrooms more often. (\$75,600 annually). We can reevaluate after the new East Rosemary Parking Deck opens with new restrooms.*

Council Question:

Is there a set of objectives, budget and metrics associated with the \$500,000 request? We asked others requesting far less ARPA funds to provide detailed proposals - why are we being asked to approve this without a similar level of detail?

Staff Response:

We are budgeting \$100,000 for the downtown mobility study and \$400,000 for the downtown streetscape enhancement design. The intent is to better understand issues and interests around the Franklin Street Town takeover option. We want to maximize the usefulness of the street, while enhancing the beauty of walking, biking, or driving along Franklin Street. The design work would meet with a range of groups to clarify those interests and then works toward improvements that can meet those interests and make Franklin Street a better place for all. This also covers the "Sparkle " for downtown topic from the Downtown Together plan implementation.