



TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL

Town Hall
405 Martin Luther King Jr.
Boulevard
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Town Council

Meeting Minutes - Draft

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 Rachel Schaevitz
Council Member Karen Stegman

Wednesday, February 12, 2020

6:30 PM

Library Room B

Roll Call

Present: 8 - Mayor Pam Hemminger, Mayor pro tem Michael Parker, Council Member Allen Buansi, Council Member Hongbin Gu, Council Member Rachel Schaevitz, Council Member Karen Stegman, Council Member Tai Huynh, and Council Member Amy Ryan

Absent: 1 - Council Member Jessica Anderson

Other Attendees

Town Manager Maurice Jones, Deputy Town Manager Florentine Miller, Town Attorney Ralph Karpinos, Assistant to the Town Manager Ross Tompkins, Executive Director for Community Arts & Culture Susan Brown, Library Assistant Director Meeghan Rosen, Special Events Coordinator at Community Arts and Culture Erin Jobe, Transportation Planning Manager Bergen Watterson, Economic Development Officer Dwight Bassett, Public Works Director Lance Norris, Business Management Director Amy Oland, Manager of Engineering and Infrastructure Chris Roberts, Public Art Coordinator Steve Wright, Parks and Recreation Director Phil Fleischmann, Parks and Recreation Assistant Director Linda Smith, Communications Manager Catherine Lazorko, Fire Inspector Chris Wells, and Communications and Public Affairs Director and Town Clerk Sabrina Oliver.

AGENDA ITEMS

0.01 Mayor Hemminger Regarding Mayors, Managers, and Chairs Meeting Regarding Greene Tract.

[\[20-0115\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger opened the meeting at 6:31 p.m. and noted that a closed session would follow. She said that the Mayor, Managers and Chairs would meet on Friday to discuss next steps regarding the Greene Tract.

Council Member Anderson was absent. She was attending to a family

matter, Mayor Hemminger said.

0.02 Mayor Hemminger Regarding Chapel Hill Nine Marker Dedication Ceremony.

[\[20-0116\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger announced that a dedication ceremony for the Chapel Hill Nine street marker would be held at 450 West Franklin Street on February 28th at 4:00 p.m.

0.03 Recognition of Council Member Rachel Schaevitz.

[\[20-0117\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger gave special recognition to Council Member Schaevitz, who would soon be moving to New Zealand for two years. She thanked Council Member Schaevitz for her positive energy, hard work and commitment since joining the Council in December 2017. She read a "Rachel resolution" that noted Council Member Schaevitz's special interest in supporting and expanding the Arts, increasing and preserving affordable housing, connecting UNC students with community efforts, building stronger outreach strategies, and more.

Council Member Schaevitz said that it had been the honor and privilege of her life to serve on the Town Council. She expressed gratitude to her colleagues on the Council and said she planned to return to Chapel Hill.

Mayor Hemminger pointed out that Council Member Schaevitz had been chair of the American Legion Property Task Force. Even though it was very early in that process, the item had been put on the evening's agenda in order to obtain her perspective, Mayor Hemminger said.

1. Discuss the Future Use of the American Legion Property, 1714 Legion Road.

[\[20-0110\]](#)

Assistant to the Town Manager Ross Tompkins gave a PowerPoint presentation regarding property on Legion Road that the Town had purchased for \$7.9 million in 2017-2019. The 36.2-acre tract was zoned Residential 6 and included two buildings, a stream with Resource Conversation District (RCD) buffer, and a pond, he said.

Mr. Tompkins explained that the Council had charged the American Legion Property Task Force (TF) in 2017 to obtain future land use recommendations from the public. The TF had worked with a consultant to develop a public engagement process that had led to a list of development principles, he said. The TF had then been given an additional charge to develop a list of six criteria for development and to rank potential uses, he explained.

Mr. Tompkins said that the TF had received 1,000 responses to a survey it conducted, and that most of those had selected athletic and causal

activity; however, 100 respondents had written in "affordable housing", he pointed out. He said that the TF had expressed interested in advising during a master planning process for the site.

Mr. Tompkins said that an appraisal would give an idea of the property's value, and he noted that there had been some discussion about selling a portion of the site. He recounted how the Council had set aside a potential grant through North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust fund in 2018. He displayed a map showing where potential uses might connect with each other. Current topics for Council consideration included future uses for the land and whether or not to sell a portion of it for private development, he said.

Mayor Hemminger emphasized that the Council was merely engaging in early thinking and that the public would be more engaged later on.

Council Member Schaevitz, TF chair, thanked TF members for having worked so hard to develop principles. She pointed out that the Town's summer camps and after-school programs were currently over stressed. Indoor space did not only mean basketball courts, she said.

Mayor Hemminger agreed that the Town had a long waiting list and had been trying to find space for its summer camps and other programs. She noted that indoor space could include meeting and art rooms as well.

Council Members confirmed with Mr. Tompkins that an appraisal of \$160,000 per acre had been for space similar to the front part of the property and that there would be close to 28 buildable acres if the pond were removed. They proposed obtaining recommendations from the Town's Parks and Recreation Department and more input regarding current use of Town facilities.

Council Members verified that staff had a meeting scheduled with the owners of a business that continued to operate on the property. They raised questions about overall visibility and long-term maintenance of the site. They stressed the importance of planning well and having resources to support those plans.

Council Member Schaevitz pointed out that the TF's report included information on possible shared parking strategies. She said that neighbors were not interested in having parking facilities at the site and that the TF had emphasized that there be no access from the adjacent neighborhood.

Mayor Hemminger pointed out that a portion of the property included an embankment/bridge/dam area that was in poor condition. She said that the cost of crossing that RCD would be high. She pointed out that Ephesus Elementary School had expressed interested in connecting to the Town's parcel but was concerned about the Town trying to make an

entrance through its property. She said that the Chapel Hill-Carrboro School System, in general, was interested in any Town effort to accommodate more children. The Council could ask staff for a possible phasing plan, as well as building and maintenance costs, Mayor Hemminger said.

The Council discussed the need to begin determining potential partners and the importance of being able to state the cost of infrastructure and amenities. They confirmed that an environmental analysis had found that the pond could be safely removed but that it would take a while to determine if a stream would then appear. Council Member Schaevitz said that the TF had determined that costs for removing the pond area would be about the same as preserving it.

Council Members expressed support for beginning a public engagement process and evaluating the feasibility and cost of different possibilities, including affordable housing. Some asked for more information about selling the front parcel and some wanted to know more about the potential for a park/open space. Council Members suggested exploring a partnership with an affordable housing provider and some spoke in favor of recreational facilities.

Council Member Buansi asked staff to bring back an inventory of summer camp sites. He also recommended that Town boards and commissions review the TF's work.

Jen Johnson, a Chapel Hill resident, spoke in favor of having a pickle ball facility in the park. She said that pickle ball was good for health, relatively inexpensive, and included a diversity of participants. Pickle ball had the largest number (850) of participants of any sport in Town and had outgrown its courts, she said. Ms. Johnson said that 24 additional courts would be needed to meet projected demand over the next five years. She noted that hosting large tournaments in Town would bring in revenue.

Evette Matthews, representing Community Empowerment Fund (CEF), stressed the need for more affordable housing in Town. She sees people every day who have been transitioned out of shelters and are living in their cars despite working two to three jobs, she said. Ms. Matthews pointed out that CEF had asked early on that affordable housing be built at the Legion Road property. Human life was more important than any of the other interests being considered, she said.

Laurie Paolicelli, representing the Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau, said that she received calls every week from athletic associations and groups across the state that wish Chapel Hill still hosted events. She said that recreation was so important that the Visitors Bureau had allocated more than \$50,000 for a company to study what types of sports and fields would be best in Town. Ms. Paolicelli read a summary of a study about how an indoor sports facility would benefit the Town.

Joan Guilkey, a TF member and former member of the Parks and Recreation Commission, recalled how the Parks and Recreation Master Plan had requested that Town buy the Legion Road property for a much-needed community park. She reviewed the history of various Town discussions and implored the Council to follow the Master Plan's recommendation. She and others would continue to work for affordable housing, but there was no other place to put a community park, Ms. Guilkey said.

Mayor Hemminger stressed that the process was in the very early stages. She proposed that the Town's urban designer and staff map out some possibilities. There would be more opportunities to share comments in the future, she said, noting that members of the public were welcome to email Council Members in the meantime.

2. Update on Festivals and Special Events - Process, Policy, Strategy.

[\[20-0111\]](#)

Susan Brown, executive director at Community Arts and Culture, outlined the benefits of festivals and special events and said that those held by the Town included signature festivals, community partner events, and special events.

Erin Jobe, special events coordinator at Community Arts and Culture, described how Festifall, one of the Town's signature events, had been made more local, accessible, and focused on the arts. She described other Town-sponsored events as well and explained how such initiatives were intended to make Downtown more of a destination.

Ms. Brown mentioned a New Spaces/New Partners Program. She described how Community Arts and Culture had made specific changes, such as moving the Town's Fourth of July celebration from Kenan Stadium to Southern Community Park and Southern Village and moving the Food Truck Rodeo from Rosemary Street to Parking Lot 2. She gave examples of a renewed Town focus on decreasing waste and promoting environmental stewardship.

Ms. Jobe described new efforts and tools for streamlining the outdoor event permitting process. These included online applications for third parties wanting to hold events in Town, she said.

Meegan Rosen, assistant director at Community Arts and Culture, reviewed a draft marketing partnership policy that would guide staff when engaging with marketing partners. These partnerships must advance the Town's mission, align with Town values, benefit the Town, and be governed by written agreements that define roles and responsibilities, she said.

Several Council Members inquired about the proposed statement regarding Community Arts and Culture not entering into a marketing partnership with an agency whose primary function was to promote a particular religion. Ms. Brown explained that an interdepartmental marketing review team would participate in such decisions and that final authority would rest with the Town Manager. Council Members agreed that more discussion regarding that aspect was needed, and Council Member Ryan encouraged Community Arts and Culture to work with the Town Manager's office on a policy with which all would be comfortable.

Ms. Rosen said that the policy would also prohibit the Town from entering into a marketing partnership with an agency whose business was primarily derived from alcoholic beverages, if the event's audience were primarily children.

Mayor Hemminger recommended adding guns to the list of things that could not be marketed. Council Member Schaevitz urged Community Arts and Culture to reduce plastic, to not permit cars at events, and to reconfigure the parade in a greener way.

Town Manager Maurice Jones replied that there were opportunities to see what other communities were doing to make their parades more environmentally friendly.

Mayor Hemminger praised the effort to make the process more streamlined and understandable. She emphasized the importance of maintaining a focus on bringing diverse cultures together and expressed that inclusivity was one of the Town's goals. She stressed the need to reach out and find ways of getting people to events who might not otherwise be able to attend. Mayor Hemminger asked that the positive changes in advertising strategy and the environmental initiatives be coupled with efforts to reach the entire community.

3. Receive Update on Elliott Road Extension Design and Construction.

[\[20-0112\]](#)

Transportation Planning Manager Bergen Watterson gave an update on the Elliott Road Extension project design, construction and funding. She said that the project was one of several transportation improvements associated with the 2011 Ephesus/Fordham Small Area Plan (SAP) and that Phase I had been completed in 2016-2017. The Elliott Road Extension (Phase II) would distribute trips more evenly and take traffic off Ephesus Church Road and the Ephesus Church/Fordham Intersection, she said.

In a PowerPoint presentation, Ms. Watterson showed the location of planned improvements. She said that the Council had seen 25 percent

plans in April 2018, and had discussed changes that the Park Apartments developers had requested. At that time, the Council had approved a resolution that included desired design elements. The Council had also authorized the Town Manager to proceed with 100 percent design plans, which should be completed soon, she said.

Ms. Watterson explained that costs had increased since the Council approved a borrowing plan in 2014. Staff had received new numbers the previous day, but they needed to negotiate with the developer before presenting those to the Council, she said.

Director of Business Management Amy Oland presented information regarding financing changes that the Town had made since the Phase II budget was originally projected. Those changes included having to use some of the projected funds for the Greenfield Commons project and the Hamilton Road Fire Station, she said. As a result, the Town currently had about \$1 million less than it had originally planned for the Phase II project, she said.

Ms. Watterson stressed the importance of the Elliott Road Extension project. She said that transportation plans for the area would not operate at full capacity unless all of the improvements were made.

Ms. Oland proposed a couple of possible options: 1) delay the timing of debt issuance for the Town's Municipal Services Center by at least a year; 2) look at the timing of debt issuances on other capital projects in relation to the Town's five-year funding plan. She also pointed out that large projects would be coming on line next year and that those could help fund the gap. She would return to the Council in a couple of weeks with more concrete information, Ms. Oland said.

Council Members discussed what information they would like to see in Ms. Oland's future presentation on the funding gap. They noted that the NC Department of Transportation (DOT) would help by providing funds, since the project had not scored well with them. The Council confirmed with Ms. Oland that using tax increment financing was not an option because of the project's timing. They verified that a roundabout was part of the Elliott Road Extension project.

Council Member Huynh announced an Art for Therapy Institute event at Top of the Hill on Sunday, February 9th.

REQUEST FOR CLOSED SESSION TO DISCUSS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PROPERTY ACQUISITION, PERSONNEL, AND/OR LITIGATION MATTERS

A motion was made by Mayor pro tem Parker, seconded by Council Member Stegman, that the Council enter into closed session as authorized by General

Statute Section 143-318.11(a)(4) to discuss an economic development matter. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was recessed at 9:07 p.m., the Council went into closed session and the meeting adjourned at the end of the closed session at 9:54 p.m.