



TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL

Town Council

Meeting Minutes - Final

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

Mayor Pam Hemminger
Mayor pro tem Jessica Anderson
Council Member Donna Bell
Council Member Allen Buansi
Council Member Hongbin Gu

Council Member Nancy Oates
Council Member Michael Parker
Council Member Rachel Schaevitz
Council Member Karen Stegman

Monday, July 15, 2019

5:30 PM

RM 110 | Council Chamber

Roll Call

Present: 9 - Mayor Pam Hemminger, Mayor pro tem Jessica Anderson, Council Member Donna Bell, Council Member Allen Buansi, Council Member Hongbin Gu, Council Member Nancy Oates, Council Member Michael Parker, Council Member Karen Stegman, and Council Member Rachel Schaevitz

Other Attendees

Town Manager Maurice Jones, Deputy Town Manager Florentine Miller, Town Attorney Ralph Karpinos, Police Officer Rick Fahrer, Communications Specialist Catherine Lazorko, Transit Director Brian Litchfield, Transit Development Manager Matthew Cecil, and Communications and Public Affairs Director and Town Clerk Sabrina Oliver.

OPENING

Mayor Hemminger opened the meeting at 5:30 p.m., and noted that several Council Members were still en route. She said that a series of meetings over the weekend had solicited much community feedback regarding station area design for a North-South Bus Rapid Transit (N-S BRT) route from Eubanks Park & Ride in the north to the Southern Village Park & Ride in the southern part of Town. The Council was eager to hear that feedback, she said.

Council Members Schaevitz, Buansi, Anderson and Stegman arrived at 5:35, 5:37, 5:42, and 6:06 p.m., respectively.

SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA ITEM

1. North South Bus Rapid Transit Station Design and Land Use Development Community Engagement Event - July 12 - 15, 2019. (no attachment)

[\[19-0665\]](#)

Transit Director Brian Litchfield gave a PowerPoint overview of what had transpired at the weekend workshops. He said that planners had received community input that would inform of planning principles as well as

development around station areas. Mr. Litchfield described the proposed BRT system and pointed out that plans included bike and pedestrian facilities as well.

Amy Groves, a principal with Dover, Kohl and Partners, gave a recap of the weekend workshops. She said that the purpose had been to work toward a future vision for the Town's BRT. The two main focus areas had been the Downtown area at Franklin and Columbia Streets and the northern area around Weaver Dairy Road, she said.

Ms. Groves reported that the community had raised questions regarding public spaces, ease of walking/cycling, public features that should remain, missing uses, and where better connections were needed near stations. Focus groups had included business and institution leaders, senior citizens, developers, cyclists, and others, she said.

Ms. Groves provided extensive feedback on participants' preferences and displayed pictures of their top three urban design choices. Most participants wanted the BRT to include a variety of station areas and have trees between stations, she said. Participants wanted the corridor to provide a pleasant, safe, and inviting walking and biking experience, and connectivity to community and neighborhood facilities had been a priority, said Ms. Groves.

Urban Designer Victor Dover, of Dover, Kohl and Partners, showed draft sketches of possible Downtown and Weaver Dairy Road station areas. He said that workshop participants had stressed the importance of creating a welcoming environment that would be more than just a canopy and platform. He discussed driving and biking patterns in Town and explained how converting those trips to BRT along the corridor would require making connections that do not currently exist.

Mr. Dover said that including green areas was crucial to workshop participants. Trees and orderly planting would visually unite the corridor and make it a great address, he said. He showed examples of how the northern area might become more of an urban village over time. Mr. Dover explained how station area designs could address amenities, accessibility, and safety.

Augy Wong, owner of CMW Design Strategies, said that station items and amenities that participants had discussed included benches, solar panels, public art, comfort, accessibility and safety. He discussed various components, such as lighting, public art, railings, emergency call buttons, ramps, cameras, and drinking fountains and said that all of those could be included in the design.

Mr. Wong discussed a type of paving that would enhance the experience.

He described speakers with an audible countdown and easily accessible bus doors. He presented a typical plan, which showed activities within the station and the interaction between a multi-use path and a station. Mr. Wong explained how bike and pedestrian pathways might be separated without sacrificing an eight-foot boulevard along the corridor.

The Council confirmed with Mr. Litchfield that approximately 100 people had attended the workshop sessions and/or focus groups over the weekend. Staff had received feedback via email and an online survey as well, he said. Over the next several months, staff would engage with those who might not have been represented, Mr. Litchfield explained. He confirmed that maximum ridership was expected to be between 14,000 and 15,000.

Council Member Schaevitz asked how prior discussions regarding a super-street intersection at Perkins Drive would fit into current plans for the northern end of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

Mr. Litchfield replied that the answer to such questions depended on what the NC Department of Transportation (NC DOT) would accept. He should be able to answer that in the fall, he said.

Council Member Parker recommended including bike facilities, such as racks and lockers in the sketches. He asked staff to provide information on whether every station would be aligned with a traffic light, and he confirmed with Mr. Dover that it would be logical to make intersections smaller and more pedestrian friendly.

Council Member Oates spoke in favor of converting rather than constructing the BRT. She said that no driver wanted to be stuck behind a bus, particularly at rush hour. She verified that not all local stops would be removed with BRT and that both Mr. Litchfield and Mr. Dover preferred traditional pitched roofs for shelters.

In response to Council questions, Ms. Groves said that some participants had described having difficulty getting to nearby services in the Weaver Dairy Road area. Mr. Dover added that there had been different opinions regarding the convenience of a multi-modal environment and about whether converting a lane would create problems by reducing its availability to the average driver.

Mayor pro tem Anderson asked about the justification for re-purposing lanes, and Mr. Litchfield explained that roads being considered for conversion were currently operating as de facto bus lanes. Having a dedicated lane would eliminate many bus traffic issues and make it less confusing than it currently was, he said.

Council Member Gu confirmed with the consultants that the multi-use path would be separated or protected with a landscaped buffer in the northern corridor and that having a 10-foot multi-use trail on each side of the road was being studied.

Joe Milazzo, executive director at Regional Transportation Alliance (RTA), praised the Council for considering different community values and perspectives. He said that he would continue to be engaged and supportive of the process and would bring in speakers whom he had heard during a recent Virginia tour. RTA was ready to support the Town in any way it could, he said.

Wayne Pein, a cyclist and former researcher at UNC Highway Safety Research Center, said that the multi-use path was a bad idea because bicyclists would be able to attain high speeds going down that hilly corridor. He described how a collision could happen with the bike path crossing numerous driveways along that route.

Randy Barrow, a Chapel Hill resident, spoke in favor of construction rather than conversion of the corridor section between Estes Drive and Franklin Street. He described already having difficulty with current traffic and predicted long caravans and traffic jams all the way to Southern Village with a one-lane plan. Mr. Barrow also recommended considering a contingency plan for bad weather.

Mayor Hemminger thanked the consultants for listening and providing the Council with good visuals. She confirmed with Mr. Litchfield that staff would check in with the Council again in the fall after having several more community input sessions.

Mr. Litchfield said that next steps included finalizing the traffic impact analysis (TIA) and preparing market and transit-supported development studies. He said that environmental work would be completed in late spring 2020.

ADJOURNMENT

This meeting was adjourned at 6:57 p.m.