



301 W. Main St.
Town Hall
Carrboro, NC 27510

**Town of Carrboro
Meeting Minutes – Work Session
Town Council**

June 15, 2023

7:00 PM

Council Chambers - Room 110

Present: Mayor Damon Seils, Council Member Susan Romaine, Council Member Barbara Foushee, Council Member Randee Haven-O'Donnell (Virtual), Council Member Eliazar Posada, Council Member Danny Nowell, Council Member Sammy Slade

Also Present: Richard White, Town Manager; Wesley Barker, Town Clerk; Brady Herman, Town Attorney

WESTWOOD CEMETERY WORK SESSION

The purpose of this Work Session is to provide an opportunity for the Town Council to discuss the use of the unused portion of the Westwood Cemetery property.

Trish McGuire, Town Planning Director, gave a presentation to the Council around cemetery history, plot history and costs pertaining to cemeteries.

Ben Schmadeke, Capital Projects Manager, gave a presentation to the Council on the cemetery land and the consultant design of the cemetery including cemetery focuses pieces and key features of cemetery design which would be completed in phases. Ben also discussed costs.

Council Member Foushee asked questions about the scattering plots, column burials, and fencing.

Ben Schmadeke, Capital Projects Manager, the scattering plot is essentially a garden with a memorial wall. There could be plaques on the wall for the remains that are scattered.

Council Member Foushee is interested to continue with the inground and the green burial, plus something for the cremains, but nothing too big.

Council Member Slade talked about for this area of town, the comprehensive plan speaks for parks, would like to hear more from staff on info about parks as it relates to comp plan.

44
45 Trish McGuire, Town Planning Director, referenced Chapter 8 from Comp Plan, Rec & Parks
46 chapter, Strategy 2.1. Also spoke on areas and maps outlined in the comp plan identifying park
47 needs within the Town. Land Use Chapter of the Comp Plan (ch. 9) also speaks to land use for
48 recreation areas.

49
50 Council Member Slade said he would not want to close the door of this area potentially being a
51 park based on the 10-min walk to parks by residents. Would be in support of a smaller portion of
52 cemetery to allow for a park area within 10-min. Spoke on purchasing land outside of town.

53
54 Council Member Romaine wants to respect the cemetery as a cemetery. Spoke on the Town
55 commons area and if that would be designated as a Town Park, which is a short walk from this
56 area. Question on space for the in-ground burials. Asked a question on the buffer area near the
57 residential area.

58
59 Ben Schmadeke, Capital Projects Manager gave further information on the depth and capacity of
60 burial plots. Town hasn't explored removing the buffer area because of the trees and unsure of
61 setbacks.

62
63 Council Member Romaine asked is the Chapel Hill columbarium open to Carrboro residents?

64
65 Ben Schmadeke, Capital Projects Manager, yes, it is open to non-residents. They ran out of land
66 a couple years ago and started columbarium.

67
68 Council Member Romaine wanted to note that as Chapel Hill ran out of plots, residents from
69 there purchased plots in Westwood. Stated she is also in favor of fencing.

70
71 Council Member Haven-O'Donnell referred to the consultant's report because they are in the
72 cemetery business. This was a development plan that the Council was presented.
73 States Community is asking for burial plots. States scattering ashes is not consistent with Town's
74 Climate Goals and adjacent neighbors.

75
76 Council Member Haven-O'Donnell restated that community interest in the preservation of
77 traditional/conventional internments, inclusion of green burial sites, that fencing inclusion is
78 important. Suggestion of wrought iron fence with gate. Also, inclusion of a sound wall behind a
79 fence which would create a sound barrier to ensure dignity and a sense of rest within the
80 cemetery. Essential question of does Carrboro intend to remain in the cemetery business. If
81 expanded, this may be last for 10 years and could be passed down to another council. Stated that
82 none of the neighboring jurisdictions were interested in partnering with cemetery spaces, so the
83 question is if Carrboro is going to be the county cemetery? Agrees that if we have open space
84 there should be perpetuity.

85
86 Council Member Posada sees Westwood as a cemetery and not as a park. He had a question for
87 attorney; can the town delegate this for perpetuity?
88

89 Town Attorney Nick Herman said yes, but nothing would prohibit a future Council from
90 changing their minds on this. Over the passage of time, citizens begin to rely on the decisions
91 made. Over time people's decisions can change as well.

92
93 Council Member Posada is in support of the plan as it stands now. Asked for explanation on the
94 phases of the concept plan.

95
96 Ben Schmadeke, Capital Projects Manager, yes this would be done in phases and because of
97 capital costs.

98
99 Council Member Posada asked the Town Manager about budget-

100
101 Town Manager White said this would not be included in FY 24 budget due to the costs of this,
102 the earliest would be in FY 25 to get funds aligned.

103
104 Council Member Posada asked if there where funds for fencing the cemetery?

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106 Town Manager White said currently not budgeted or quoted for this.

107
108 Council Member Posada is interested in some sort of barrier that would cement the sacred of this
109 space. Would be interested to explore some kind of fencing or barrier that could be implemented
110 while this process is going on. Would want to ensure that the council is making this clear of what
111 is not acceptable to be done at a cemetery based on the Town ordinance, and one other step to
112 maintain sacred space. Currently not in favor of looking at space outside of Carrboro to buy for
113 cemetery use.

114
115 Council Member Nowell spoke on the current green space is for use as a cemetery. In favor of a
116 fence. Spoke on the replacement of the Bradford pears, which is not in budget currently. Would
117 like to proceed with the fencing quickly. In the open space, would like to plant some trees to
118 provide some shade. Good with open space in perpetuity.

119
120 Mayor Seils summarized Council's remarks and agrees with separating and buffering between
121 the cemetery and the green space but doesn't need to be figured out now. Does not agree with a
122 park but is in favor of keeping the green space as a cemetery. Would like to give the Town
123 Manager the concept plan and understands it will be a phased build out. Would like to expand
124 the opportunity for burials in the cemetery while also retaining green space in perpetuity while
125 buffering between the two to maintain space for each.

126
127 Council Member Slade transparent to community about if town remained in the cemetery
128 business, be accountable and transparent to the residents that other towns are not in favor of
129 partnering, so plots at Westwood would be sold to non-residents as well as residents.

130
131 Council Member Foushee spoke on the burden of staff, stated a future council could determine if
132 Carrboro should stay in the cemetery business. Spoke on the cost of the columbarium's being
133 high and would consider alternatives on this.

135 Council Member Nowell asked if Council approved, could the plots be opened up?
136
137 Ben Schmadeke, Capital Projects Manager, said if approved, the consultant could set up the
138 design to determine the plot space.
139
140 Mayor Seils spoke about the design, specifically the loop road and space allotted would be
141 reduced.
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143 Ben Schmadeke, Capital Projects Manager, the design could be altered as needed.
144
145 Council Member Romaine asked about a way to screen cemetery applications such as are you a
146 Carrboro resident, a relative of someone buried in the cemetery, or a relative to a Carrboro
147 resident. Agree about getting rid of the columbarium and the cost associated with them. Agree
148 with the fence and signage as you enter the cemetery to make people aware of the space. Would
149 like a Truth Plaque Task Force to look into plaque at the cemetery at a future date to tell the
150 history of the cemetery.
151
152 Council Member Haven-O'Donnell agreed on a plaque at the open space which explains why it
153 is such an important space. Would be in favor of a wrought iron fence and the expense of it to
154 make Westwood look stately. Spoke on the area of the columbarium as proposed which feels
155 could be tweaked.
156
157 Council Member Posada spoke on taking out the columbarium area on the concept plan. Asked if
158 there is money in the budget for a professional to take this concept plan and be in place to move
159 forward.
160
161 Town Manager White asked Council to give direction of the columbarium, such as a redesign of
162 these, and yes money could be set aside to secure this.
163
164 Council Member Posada would like to find ways to have as many traditional plots as possible
165 and a barrier around the cemetery.
166
167 Council Member Slade is supportive of seeing designs with a couple of options and fencing to
168 create dignity around the cemetery space. Maybe have a consensus from Council on what kind of
169 fencing. Spoke on green burials.
170
171 Council Member Romaine clarified that open space stays open space for generations to come.
172
173 Mayor Seils gave a summary: Separation / buffer between open space and burial areas, looking
174 to staff to see what that looks like; priorities on inground and green burial spaces; interest in
175 smaller footprint by not building out the full central option, but possibly moving that down such
176 as the columbarium area and not building road all the way out to give more space; finding a way
177 to designate that open space as an open green space for the future use.
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179 Town Manager White stated they need to look for ways to finance the design and can revisit the
180 conceptual plan and have it for the budget discussion on 6/20/2023.

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ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Council Member Nowell, seconded by Council Member Foushee to adjourn the meeting.

The motion carried unanimously.
