



Town of Carrboro

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

Meeting Minutes Board of Aldermen

Tuesday, January 9, 2018

7:30 PM

Board Chambers - Room 110

Present: Mayor Lydia Lavelle, Alderman Damon Seils, Alderman Sammy Slade, Alderman Bethany Chaney, Alderman Barbara Foushee, Alderman Jacquelyn Gist, Alderman Randee Haven-O'Donnell

Also Present: David Andrews, Town Manager, Rebecca Buzzard, Deputy Town Clerk, Kevin Hornik, Town Attorney

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TOWN EMPLOYEES' WORK DURING EMERGENCY EVENTS

Mayor Lavelle complimented the Public Works Department for their rapid and thorough response during the snow storm. She also commented on the great way many localities came together to respond to a local fire.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF UPCOMING MEETINGS

Deputy Town Clerk, Rebecca Buzzard, announced the upcoming public meetings.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 28, 2017 AND DECEMBER 5, 2017

MOTION WAS MADE BY ALDERMAN SLADE SECONDED BY ALDERMAN HAVEN-O'DONNELL TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 28, 2017 AND DECEMBER 5, 2017 AS AMENDED. VOTE: AFFIRMATIVE ALL

CONSIDERATION OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE TOWN OF CARRBORO

The purpose of this item was to provide the Board of Aldermen with an opportunity to consider whether to undertake development of a comprehensive plan.

Patricia McGuire, Planning Director, gave the staff presentation on the comprehensive plan. She talked about the realm of comprehensive planning in terms of Carrboro. The town already has many plans and policy documents in place, and experience in the realm of comprehensive planning, but not on this specific approach. It would involve assessing the statistics of the Town and taking stock of the community's needs and values to create a shared vision for how the Town should move forward.

Alderman Gist stressed that she did not want Carrboro to have form based zoning and development, like Chapel Hill, with less citizen input. It is important to her that a comprehensive plan would not take away from the planning/permission process. She asked if there would be less citizen input and less decision making for the Board if a Comprehensive Plan was in place. Patricia McGuire stated that the comprehensive plan informs planning and zoning, it does not set the specific requirements for zoning or permitting. The concept of the comprehensive plan is representative of an effort that supports the zoning and land use maps.

Town Manager Andrews said that it is not a legally binding document. The underlying zoning remains. It states the preference from the board so that developers have a better idea of what the Town wants to look like. Patricia McGuire said that it is not the same thing as zoning, you want them to be consistent, but it's not binding.

Alderman Gist asked about the cost estimate. Planning Director McGuire said that \$200,000 was an estimate of cost, but certainly there are other options.

Alderman Gist mentioned that she has been through processes like this with the Town before and warned that if the Town goes forward with this project, to be sure to hire an organization that did not benefit from the results of the plan, or have preconceived notions of what Carrboro should look like, and that it should be truly community based.

In response to a question by Alderman Haven-O'Donnell about an upcoming Land Use Ordinance amendment, Planning Director McGuire explained that the issue of consistency to a planning framework is being strengthened at the state level. What the Town has been doing for over 10 years is looking to guiding principles, which in Carrboro's case has been the Vision 2020 plan, because the Town does not have a Land Use Plan for the Town as a whole. The biggest change is that if you want to adopt an amendment that is not consistent with a policy than the statutes require that the policy be amended to prevent inconsistencies.

Alderman Haven-O'Donnell asked about legal challenges when decisions are not consistent with the plan. Patricia McGuire explained that, for example, when a permit is being issued (special and conditional use for finding of fact) one has to find that there is not an inconsistency. If you act otherwise, there can be a legal challenge. Therefore the plan needs to be clear and updated frequently.

Alderman Haven-O'Donnell asked about having a consultant and how the Town can best assure that they do not experience pitfalls associated with consultants looking at planning from very progressive large city lenses. She would like a potential consultant to really look at who Carrboro is.

The Planning Director explained that with the 20/20 plan, it was mostly Town driven, and was really a community event. The Board and staff will articulate their values and interests before hiring someone and can use multiple consultants. This process will make sure the comprehensive plan is responsive to the interests here.

Alderman Slade commented that the best consultant will facilitate the process. If it is a successful process it will be reflective of the community. Also, look at how to include existing plans and perhaps make them more consistent and accessible.

Alderman Chaney asked Attorney Hornik about the limitations and opportunities of a comprehensive plan. Attorney Hornik said zoning always has to be consistent with a comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan reflects general policy of what the Town should look like. Recent amendments to the General Statutes specifically state that one has to adopt a statement indicating how a particular amendment is consistent with the comprehensive plan. The legal benefit of one document is that it provides consistency. With smaller plans you're more likely to run into inconsistencies.

Alderman Chaney asked about the difference between a visioning document and a comprehensive plan. Attorney Hornik said that there is not a significant legal difference. But, from a practical perspective, a comprehensive plan would be much more detailed than a visioning document. Vision projects the future, while the comprehensive plan shows how to get there.

Alderman Foushee asked if a comprehensive plan goes more in the line of a policy based document. Attorney Hornik replied that there is not necessarily a real legal difference between the two. Both project what we would like to see happen in the town.

Alderman Seils said that he sees the vision as a component of a comprehensive plan, really the starting point. The comprehensive plan then includes how you get there, and gives the framework for how to achieve your vision and implement it.

The following notes were taken as comments from the board:

Question 1: Are there opportunities that you see arising through a comprehensive planning process?

- As a foundation for land use that reflects community conditions and values.
- Opportunity to engage the community – hear about goals, hopes, and dreams.
- Chance to identify vision that reflects the community.
- Opportunity to establish some alignment and coordination - with regional plans and other plans and policies.
- Make sure that existing plans mesh and that all work together.
- Opportunity to establish a framework for regular check-ins (example from Chapel Hill's annual feedback and updating – concept of plan as a 'living document.')
- See this as a way to orchestrate plans and policies, incorporating work already done so that the wheel does not have to be reinvented.
- With a consultant's involvement, could seek to have much broader outreach.

- Way to touch base to see if plan/vision is still reflective of community, also to capture other ideas.
- Consultant could engage broader community in updating the plan – especially affordable housing and climate action efforts that used task forces for development.
- Opportunity to make it all more accessible, to upgrade the appearance.
- Make land use and regulations match community desires.
- Way to reframe/reuse and how we plan for that, especially in relation to overall affordability
- Opportunity to think about who will live here in the future and how they'll live.
- Engage youth, especially because the current decision makers will all be gone.
- Engage people and make it fun - celebrate the engagement.
- Involve the natural creativity of people in Carrboro.
- Opportunity to think about how to design a process that is engaging – brings out stories.
- Create a document that is usable and readable.
- Not highlighting 'fun' to gloss over details or complexity – but to provide a way to discuss and make visual the places where there is not agreement.
- A way for people to learn more about their community.

Guidance/Considerations

- Allow only Carrboro participants.
- Not a preconceived notion of what is of interest
- Apprehension about the process
- Need for planning process to develop a detailed RFP, attract the right team – get what we pay for.

Question 2: Are there limitations or concerns associated with undertaking a comprehensive planning process?

- How do we ensure community engagement? The town has 20,000 people with very diverse backgrounds. How do we engage everyone?
- How do we incorporate all the other plans that have been done? How do we make sure they're adequately represented in this plan, in a way that does them justice (they have many common themes).
- How do you prioritize one plan over another and make sure they reflect our current community?
- How to you represent competing interests?
- A comprehensive plan can strive to be too much and it is important to make the objectives clear so that too much is not undertaken. Some of the plans we have in place work and do not need to be redone.
- Are we looking to update an outdated planning process?
- Building on new land is not the issue, but re-use is!
- Is the cost, of an estimated \$200,000 over two years palatable to the general public? What are we getting out of it?
- Concerned about the process being manipulated by a small group of people. The process needs has to have integrity.
- Don't let us turn into Chapel Hill. No dogmatic development ideas that will make Carrboro less inclusive.
- Slant of consultant. The Town should guide the person hired. We tell them what we want, they help us get there.

- Be clear in the Request for Proposals. Visioning is great but we need to take it further. Involve the community.
- If we decide to do it, commit to use it.
- Does the community want it? Are we doing this for the right reason? We need to reflect what the community wants. Do it right so that only a small group isn't being represented.
- Concern of creating a rigid document – make sure it's a living document. Not having a way to have it updated as the community values change.
- Make sure all the major topics are harmonious, like economic development, climate change, environment, social equity.
- Plan for the plan. Would you be comfortable with a plan that didn't have implementation? If it's in the plan, there is a way to do it.
- How can updating the plan and a community involvement piece be incorporated regularly?

Question 3: Is comprehensive planning a high priority for you? Why or why not?

- Thinking about Vision 2020 discussion from Planning Board a year or so ago, which ended without clear direction on what to do next. Vision 2020 expresses community values but doesn't do much beyond that. Comprehensive plan would have more teeth and express values over a 40 to 50 year timeframe and would explain how to get there.
- Yes on it being a high priority as a way to create a fuller framework for reaching goals and focusing on values.
- Apprehensive about the process, but not the idea of a plan. The matter of process regarding how a consultant is chosen and how the process is conducted from there should be given high priority to ensure a fair process that includes all appropriate parties and be focused on what Carrboro residents want.
- Focus on matters like middle class affordability and commercial affordability should be given a high priority as well. Plan can create a framework for addressing lots of issues, these included.
- Comprehensive plan would offer a good opportunity to orchestrate lots of existing plans into one. And would help Board do their work by providing a clear framework and bird's eye view of all adopted policies.
- Comprehensive plan would help map out a schedule and goals in a way that Vision 2020 doesn't quite do. Vision document doesn't offer a rubric. Plan could help minimize picking and choosing policies from among the various plans. Very high priority. Does not like the current situation wherein developers and citizens do not feel like they know what is wanted. Having the underlying zoning act as a plan is not a good place to be. If certain types of growth are needed in order to make goals realistically happen, plan could help bring this to light. Currently making policy without good data to back it up.
- Would be good to provide a regularly scheduled update of the priorities and goals, like the annual review done in Chapel Hill now. Should help citizens feel that the town is working, listening, and more regularly staying on top of changing needs and wants.
- Comprehensive plan also could augment existing plans related to affordable housing goals and values.
- Regular updates could test the goals and policies included within the plan and help the Town remain accountable.
- Comprehensive plan would create better resiliency for the town. And provide a good framework for redevelopments in general and, more specifically, following any potential natural disasters that may occur in the future.

- High priority as related to racial and social equity. Plan would be a good vehicle to address these important issues. Certain firms specialize in this area and we should seek them out.
- Comprehensive plan would inform all decisions made at the Board level. Vetted discussions and goal setting would be set in place within one document. Yes on being a high priority.
- High priority to make sure every party in town is reached and offered an opportunity to provide input.
- Creation of plan should take as long as it takes, even if that means the process goes longer than two years.
- A significant amount of work should be done ahead of time to ensure that everyone in town feels comfortable with the idea of creating a plan and confident that no predetermined outcome exists.
- Yes, definitely interested in creating a plan. Concerned about the amount of money. Okay with it taking a long time if needed.
- Creation of plan could be broken up in a way that allows multiple consultants to handle different elements. Be careful and methodical. Retain enough leeway and flexibility to change if needed along the way during creation of the plan.
- High priority so that everyone, developers, citizens, etc., know with predictability what is wanted and expected in certain parts of town.

Alderman Haven-O'Donnell asked if there is an answer to the question of does the community want this. She wondered if the Board should move forward without first knowing this information by getting input from the community. Alderman Slade asked if the Town should we have a public hearing on the topic. Mayor Lavelle agreed and suggested that the Town can do outreach to see if the community wants this. Town Manager Andrews suggested checking with boards and commissions. Alderman Haven-O'Donnell said that she want to reach communities and individuals outside of those that usually participate Mayor Lavelle said that the new Communications Manager could help inform the Town on how to have the community engaged in this process.

TRANSPORTATION TOPICS: BICYCLE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY APPLICATION, BIKE PLAN AND RELATED INFRASTRUCTURE

The purpose of this agenda item was to provide the Board with an opportunity to discuss progress towards an application for upgrading the Town's Bicycle Friendly Community status, including the bike plan update and possible infrastructure improvements, and associated cost implications.

Tina Moon, Planning Administrator, gave the staff presentation. Carrboro has the Bicycle Friendly Community silver status, and is working toward gold. To increase the grades on the Bicycle Friendly Community report card, the Town can engage in more activities and education, as well as the bike plan for policy, and infrastructure updates. The bike plan was adopted in 2009 and it is time for an update to look at our priorities and new technologies. Design recommendations have changed a lot recently, for example with the location of crossings and making them more driver friendly. Long term planning can work well with the comprehensive plan. Instead of a lot of new infrastructure they are looking at better ways to do things. The Metropolitan Planning Organization presented on the long term Comprehensive Plan, which raised the issue of extending bike lanes from Rosemary St. to E. Main St.. This is a

Department of Transportation road and the Town could take advantage of their repaving timeline to develop these bike friendly improvements.

Alderman Slade asked how E. Main St. compares to Rosemary St. in terms of right of way width. Tina explained that Rosemary St. had two parallel roads which allowed for two areas for vehicular traffic, whereas E. Main only has one street, and some serious analysis will have to take place to determine the viability of this project. The analysis will show if this the best way to do this, or if the Town is better off re-routing bicycles through the neighborhoods. It is important to look at this as a larger project.

Alderman Gist asked if this plan would this decrease auto traffic by one lane. She stated this is a very crowded area, this could create more congestion, and there could be pushback about that.

Alderman Seils said that the analysis would show this information. The Town has data on the capacity of the roadway regarding vehicular travel. Some of the congestion could be mitigated by implementing the center left turn lane.

Tina Moon said that the timing of this interest is good because the discussion is going on about the Merritt Mill area as well, and that data can inform this decision.

Alderman Gist asked if they looked at how many people will be impacted – bikers, pedestrians, vehicles. Tina responded that the Town is asking these questions.

Mayor Lavelle asked if these plans ever help traffic. Tina replied that it depends on the situation.

Alderman Haven-O'Donnell said that the Town does not yet know about the hotel in this area and other redevelopment that may take place in the 300 East area, as well as the proposed library. She stated that it is great to vision this, but asked if it is a premature conversation considering the decisions that will impact this.

Alderman Slade stated that the analysis would include upcoming developments. The hotel would be accounted for. Tina explained that the Town would have to pay for the analysis and would supply the consultant with that information.

Alderman Foushee stated that according to the current Highway Transportation Plan the current cross section is adequate for the 2040 capacity.

Alderman Seils strongly supported moving forward with the analysis. Road resurfacing will happen in 2019 and the Town has a great opportunity improve the network, and complete a modification already incorporated in the Town's Bike Plan and Comprehensive Transportation Plan. There is a beautiful infrastructure coming in from the East that ends when one enters Carrboro, the silver level bicycle friendly community.

Alderman Gist stated that if one is in a position where life allows them to bike or walk, they are very fortunate. Not everyone has that privilege. We need to look at the number of bikes and cars on the streets. The vast majority of people will be very inconvenienced for a small group of people. To reduce the travel lanes for cars, which is how most people have to get to work, shop, get kids to activities, is not supported by the majority of the public. To cut in half the car travel lanes will produce a lot of unhappy people.

Alderman Chaney stated that the question is whether the Town wants to move forward with analysis and questioned the cost of the project. Tina said from the information gathered thus far, the estimate was \$16-24,000 for the W. Main St. project, so it should be in the window of \$20,000.

Alderman Chaney stated that the analysis should give the Town enough information about whether the plan would work. But, if it does not work, she asked if the analysis would provide an alternative solution. Tina Moon replied that the Town can still request that the Department of Transportation improve the lanes, such as by adding sharrows.

Alderman Slade stated that information is a point of departure for making a decision, and is important before one makes assumptions. This analysis will help the Town better communicate with the community about the issue. He is supportive of going forward with getting information and taking the next steps, especially with the opportunity to take advantage of the upcoming re-paving.

Mayor Lavelle said that she is also in favor of the analysis.

Alderman Foushee asked if the on-call consultant services could be used for this project and if there could be a reduced cost. Tina said they are in the process researching about how to best get someone on board. There may also be data already available.

Alderman Seils said that the Aldermen do not know what the analysis will say. Maybe bike lanes or sharrows could be added without impacting traffic.

Alderman Haven-O'Donnell was in favor of the analysis, but wants to be careful that the analysis is taken back to the community. She said that the Town should not be wedded to the numbers and disregard the people, including the business community.

Town Manager Andrews asked if there was consensus to move forward. Alderman Gist said that there was not consensus but enough support amongst the Board to move forward.

Mayor Lavelle stated that direction was given.

Alderman Slade asked about the scope of the timeframe and steps needed to be taken towards gold status. He also suggested looking at the steps to achieve platinum level and suggested the Town look at a longer vision. Looking at the report card it is clear the Town is close to, or meeting, most items. But, he was surprised by the category scores where the Town is under average.

Mayor Lavelle said that any public education and outreach to the community could be coordinated by the new Communications Manager to help get the word out.

CLOSED SESSION PURSUANT TO NCGS 143-318.11 (A)(6) AND (3)

MOTION WAS MADE BY ALDERMAN CHANEY, SECONDED BY ALDERMAN SEILS TO ENTER INTO CLOSED SESSION PURSUANT TO N.C.G.S 143-318.11(6)(3). VOTE: AFFIRMATIVE ALL

OPEN SESSION

MOTION WAS MADE BY ALDERMAN GIST, SECONDED BY ALDERMAN SEILS TO ENTER INTO OPEN SESSION. VOTE: AFFIRMATIVE ALL

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION WAS MADE BY ALDERMAN GIST, SECONDED BY ALDERMAN CHANEY TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. VOTE: AFFIRMATIVE ALL