



Chatham County Comprehensive Plan Steering Meeting

Meeting Notes

June 16, 2016

Attendees:

Andy Bailey, Board of Commissioner (BOC) At-large, Acting Chair
Esta Cohen, Ag Advisory Alternate
James Fogleman, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
Sharon Garbutt, BOC At-large
Kaylan Ghosh, Council on Aging Board
Amanda Robertson, Climate Change Advisory Committee
Jaime Vaughn, EDC Representative in lieu of Linda Harris
George Lucier, Planning Board Alternate
Linda Harris, Chatham Economic Development Corporation
George Pauly, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
Terry Schmidt, Environmental Review Advisory Committee
Caroline Siverson, Planning Board
Sherri Steuwer, Environmental Review Advisory Committee

Staff:

Hillary Pace, Planning Department
Dylan Paul, Planning Department
Jake Petrosky, LandDesign
Emma Littlejohn, Littlejohn Group
Greg Payne, Economic Leadership
Don Bryson, VHB

Introductions at 6:03 pm.

Chairman of the Climate Change Advisory Committee, John Graybeal appeared on behalf of the Climate Change Committee and presented a memorandum. He said that there are many ways in which the Comprehensive Plan can contribute to the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. A very important one would be a recommendation that additional residential and commercial activity be located in the towns or near similar existing developments. He also mentioned the importance of building efficiency (including building orientation so as to provide for passive solar heating); the expansion of woodland and forest development and reforestation; the reduction of vehicle miles traveled in the County and the promotion of other means of transportation, including bike trails, public transit, car pooling and vehicle charging stations for electric vehicles. (Memorandum provided to the Hillary Pace and Jake Petrosky for distribution to the committee.)

Andy Bailey (acting Chair) opens floor for discussion about issues with where the Comprehensive Plan is thus far. John spoke about how the mindset of the Plan needs to change to better prepare for climate change. Jake Petrosky agreed that climate change is important and also that there are many other stakeholder concerns that need to go into the plan. Amanda Robertson said that climate change needs to be a driving factor in the plan and expressed grave concerns that it isn't even mentioned. It is not just a stakeholder group but a global crisis that impacts all of us.

George Pauly raised concern about ecological stability and long range planning. Chair Bailey spoke to the rapidly developing 15/501 transportation corridor and achieving more affordable housing. Terry Schmidt raised the comments about uniting the east and west and the need to engage more thoroughly with the Western half of the County. George Lucier added that better outreach and education is needed in our local community college. Esta Cohen mentioned the need for slower growth with subdivisions and asked if we can "slow it down", she mentioned alternatives for stalling subdivision development such as a Moratorium on development while the Plan develops. The Committee spoke to the various subdivisions with vested rights and consideration of the permit extension act.

Jake Petrosky discussed aspects of the plan going forward. He also discussed Public Engagement efforts and edits to the survey. Esta Cohen spoke to how she had difficulty doing the survey on her computer. The group discussed the issue and determined it was likely a computer browser issue.

Goals Exercise: Jake Petrosky spoke to the Steering Committee about goals. Small groups were formed for further discussion.

Overview of Goals Exercise

Steering Committee members made these comments:

- Sharon Garbutt: Integration of all the components of the Comp Plan will be a challenge.
- Amanda Robertson: The entire approach to the comprehensive plan needs to take into account climate change. It needs to be a driving factor in the plan yet it isn't even mentioned. Climate Change isn't just a stakeholder group to be considered but is a global crisis that impacts all of us. For example, the health of the community and the environment is tied together. Transportation impacts climate so we need to consider how it is approached. Preservation of natural capital is important to our economy and will impact many areas of the plan. Jobs in the county are important because they help our economy but also lower VMT. We should not just manage emissions, but include a goal to lower emissions. It touches almost everything in the plan.
- George Lucier: Mentioned planetary ecological degradation, and the need for a system of parks, conservation areas and greenways throughout the county.
- Kaylan Ghosh: Educational infrastructure needs to be a focus and improving the community college and K-12 education is key. This fits with economic development desires.
- Andy Bailey: Most of the county is cut off from city centers. He has a concern for 15/501 as it is our main artery and he does not want it to become Capital Blvd. Access management is needed. Infrastructure needs for the entire county need to be taken into account. For instance, the current water system is extended in haphazard ways which results in wasted water. Housing in Chatham is not affordable. The county needs jobs to reduce commutes.
- Terry Schmidt: We need to be careful about addressing concerns in different parts of the

county. I.e. the word “mandate” will not fly. We need to be inclusive and get buy-in.

- George Lucier: The tough part is to integrate conflicting issues (i.e. schools). We need to keep up with growth, and we need a land banking committee appointed by the school board. The land banking committee needs to have commissioners, parks and rec representatives and developers. The community college is an economic engine that needs to be supported. The new Health Science Center is an example. We need to integrate with the Strategic Plan. The county east/west divide needs to be recognized. The county has an agricultural history and bringing forth ideas from the Farmland Preservation Plan is important.
- James Fogleman: We need more manufacturing jobs here, especially in the western part of the county.
- Esta Cohen: There are a lot of subdivisions being approved while we do this plan. Is there anything that can be done to stop this? Should a moratorium be considered? Plan recommendations should consider this sprawl and set expectations regarding wells and septic tanks—for instance if your neighborhood is on a well and who is responsible if it goes dry?
- Esta Cohen included goals that the Agriculture Advisory Board discussed:
 - Update subdivision regulations and Zoning to meet the needs of agriculture and the community.
 - Explore means to ensure that agriculture has long-term access to water supplies.
 - Maintain the viability of agriculture through a market system that expands opportunities for direct and wholesale market trade.

Draft public meeting materials were reviewed and commented on. A small group exercise on goals was done. The results of these two activities are included below.

Notes on draft public meeting boards:

- What does it take to position Chatham for continued success?
 - Growth will require planning for education, transportation and infrastructure, supply of clean water and an affordable sewer system
 - Good high quality education system
 - Engaged citizenry
- Utilities
 - Need to develop public sewer treatment facilities.
 - Sewer provision encourages dense growth, limit growth by limiting sewer availability
 - Reclaimed water lines for irrigation in larger developments with high use of H₂O for landscaping, etc.
- Economic Development
 - Entice and encourage service industries, professional services, and low-pollution manufacturing.
- Land Use
 - Increase and conserve additional conservation habitats
- Transportation
 - Special lanes for bikes either on main road or on entirely separate bike lanes
 - Increase public transit.
 - Widen heavily traveled roads.
- Parks and Recreation
 - Should plan for trails by type: difficult, easy, bike, equestrian, running/jogging, etc.
 - Land Banking is needed.
 - Follow and interconnect river basins with greenway corridors.

- Current bike plan is not realistic. Ideally bike path should be separate from roadways
- No bike trails (lanes on roads) without a widened road & real bike lane. We're going to kill someone!
- Distance to trailhead is important metric (except for properties adjacent to trail)
- Natural Resources
 - Does the proposed zoning overlay impact biodiversity and wildlife habitat areas
 - How does Chatham get a fair share of Jordan Lake water?
 - What are the contingencies for drought on water supply & quality.
 - What are the factors affecting water supply, both groundwater and surface water.
 - Sources of pollution affecting water quality: sludge application on farmland, upstream dumping, coal ash, potential fracking.
 - Land banking is needed.
 - Consideration of natural environment around industrial development within Moncure area.
 - Reform conservation tax deferral program so more properties can participate.

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee was asked to review goals in existing plans and vote for their priority goals. The following is a summary of the four group's discussions.

- Group #1
 - Jobs to the county
 - Pro-active school system-provide facilities, highly trained citizens. Community college as economic driver (incentive for employers)
 - Define where water and sewer will be. Key to Economic Development and Agriculture.
 - Environmental protection. Water quality focus, rivers and Jordan Lake.
 - Themes: Economic Development, Environment, Infrastructure.
- Group #2
 - Preservation, Environment and Education.
 - Conserve and enhance environment to reduce carbon footprint to 0 by 2050.
 - Remove all manmade pollutants from water resources and add a county reservoir.
 - Expand and enhance the river and greenway system to a countywide recreation system.
 - Support enforcement of local policies.
- Group #3
 - Outreach to all groups needed (i.e. minority population)
 - Keep Kids here! Need opportunities for entertainment, etc. Cultural and Recreation also important.
 - More manufacturing jobs / good jobs
 - Land use pattern that supports transportation goals (i.e. transit, reduced traffic, etc.)
 - Broadband to support businesses & telecommuting
- Group #4
 - Emphasis on aging population (human service, housing, etc.)
 - What draws people here? Protect the Environment.
 - Bridge the east / west divide
 - Bus system that serves all needs (tied to aging)
 - Jobs in county, tax base, service industries, low polluting manufacturing
 - Educational infrastructure
 - Broadband access (for distance learning, opportunity, businesses)
 - Environmental Regulations need to have concurrency with municipalities, communication and strategy
 - Preservation and rural character

- Age friendly community (i.e. for dementia)
- Need to find common ground

Ideas for New Goals / Other Comments:

- Conserve & enhance our environment through lowering carbon footprint to 0 by 2050.
- Remove and maintain manmade pollutants from all water resources and add a county reservoir.
- Expand & enhance the river and greenway system to a countywide recreational attraction (biking, walking, equestrian, fishing & other).
- Challenge the state on constitutional right for natural resource protection.
- Encourage local political leaders to uphold county goals within the plan as county decisions are made.
- We need to have a goal to challenge state restrictions. Chatham is forward thinking.
- Preserve & enhance our environment through lowering our carbon footprint.
- Maintain natural environment, both conservation & in built environment to support mental, emotional & physical health of community
- Educate farming community on climate change & agriculture on sustainable farming practices, and organic farming strategies.
- Consider a Habitat tax reduction program.
- A transportation goal that plans for lowering Chatham emissions while supporting population growth (or limiting population growth)
- A plan for developments that requires leveraging existing forested lands for stormwater management.
- A plan for development that requires preservation of the majority (significant) amount of existing habitat while clustering.
- Leveraging forests & habitat for human health.
- Eliminate the manmade pollutants in our waterways (Haw and Jordan) & leverage existing woodlands for natural purification, reduce need for chemical sanitation of drinking water & providing greater safety in recreation waters.
- Lower the carbon footprint in county by 100% by 2050.
- Water quality, soil quality, air quality must be addressed.
- Establishment of a county Greenway, park and trail network.
- Establish conservation, recreation and greenway systems.
- Extend property tax incentives for conservation initiatives.
- Need to fulfill needs of an aging community (i.e. healthcare and senior housing).
- East and West parts of county have separate needs and aspirations.
- Transportation needs include a rural transit system / bus system for an aging population. Need to get people to Pittsboro and Siler City.
- Job growth in county, tax base. Balance. Service industries, low polluting manufacturing jobs. Need incentives.
- Need educational infrastructure. STEM classes, advanced courses.
- Broadband to support education /distance learning.
- Clean water, environment protections for water supply.
- Need additional Waste Water Treatment Plants.
- Affordable housing should be addressed.
- Balanced growth, sustainability, and rural character are all important for Chatham's future.