



Chatham County Comprehensive Plan Steering Meeting

Meeting Notes

August 16, 2016

Attendees:

Jim Elza, Chair
Andy Bailey, Vice Chair
Del Turner, BOC At-large
Esta Cohen, Ag Advisory Alternate
James Fogleman, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
Sharon Garbutt, BOC At-large
Amanda Robertson, Climate Change Advisory Committee
George Lucier, Planning Board Alternate
Linda Harris, Chatham Economic Development Corporation
Tandy Jones, Ag Advisory Board
George Pauly, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
Terry Schmidt, Environmental Review Advisory Committee
Caroline Siverson, Planning Board
Sherri Steuwer, Environmental Review Advisory Committee
Diana Hales (Affordable Housing substitute)
John Kessler (Board of Health substitute)

Staff:

Jason Sullivan, Planning Department
Dylan Paul, Planning Department
Cara Coppola, Planning Department
Jake Petrosky, LandDesign
Greg Payne, Economic Leadership
Meg Nealon, LandDesign

Introductions at 6:03 pm.

Attendance: 17 SC members + 1 member of the public (from Cary) + 3 consultants + 3 county staff

Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Jim Elza opened the meeting at 6pm. Jim Elza stated that the minutes from the last meeting had been pulled because of needed revisions. Esta Cohen commented that existing minutes were partial phrasing that could be misconstrued out of context. Staff posted the Draft minutes and audio from the meeting to the ftp website for transparency and will continue to collect comments so that they can be revised and approved at the next steering committee meeting.

Review of Schedule/Accomplishments to Date

Jake Petrosky explained that LandDesign completed the initial assessment and were currently assessing at the plan's draft goals. He stated that there is no need to finalize them during the August meeting, but would like to gather consensus from the group and have a discussion about meaning and measures.

The steering committee will be looking at the initial concepts from feedback about goals and recommendations. Moving forward into the Next Phase of the plan is data analysis and building understanding of the county. The plan still needs more public involvement. Jake Petrosky stated that the bulk of work is coming early next spring.

Chairman Jim Elza stated the next meeting is scheduled for September 22nd. The group concurred on the next committee meeting date.

Jake stated that the October/November public input meetings will ask for input on the 40% "framework plan" that will allow input on the general direction of the plan. Jake also indicated that the Agricultural Focus Group will convene in August/September.

Ongoing parallel efforts:

1. Environment and open space: Randall Ardent, a conservation planning expert will provide a memo describing room for improvement within the current Subdivision Regulations and will with the intent to preserve large tracks of land in the County. It will evaluate current policy and regulation to bring forward into the Comprehensive Plan.
2. A Natural Gas Impacts study will be conducted by University of West Virginia Professor Charlie Yuill, an expert in the field. This study, which stems from the Natural Gas and Oil Exploration (Fracking) Moratorium. The study will be completed in time to be incorporated into the comprehensive plan's recommendations.
3. Esta Cohen asked about the community outreach list and asked if any groups had been contacted yet. She mentioned specifically the Young Farmers Association and the county's Ruritan groups as it will be really important for outreach coming out of the County's Zoning Initiative. Jake indicated the list is currently under development and will be contacted in the coming outreach efforts. The level of engagement will continue to increase from the community. Jake also stated that the steering committee has materials such as the Ambassador's slides and that can generate questions. If any committee members do hold meetings just let the staff know where the meeting was held and with whom so that they can keep a running tab of how many residents have been reached, and which ones to further pursue for input.

Plan Input

June meetings: 1st meeting in Pittsboro and 2nd in Briar Chapel and 3rd in Goldston. Documentation of feedback broken out by meeting, themes in geographical areas and there is a general consensus that the county needs a plan. Jake explained that some other themes that seemed strong were Protection of Rural and Natural Resources, Recreational Resources, Flexibility for regulation in rural areas, and Property rights protected for landowners.

Jake continued to relay survey results and stated that survey results showed a strong response from 50 year old females. Younger folks were not as involved and in the future will be looking to reach this population moving forward.

The survey results also revealed a strong representation from the north, east, central and the west. Another indication from the survey was that many folks live in the county but work outside of the county. Jake restated the importance of place and orientation within the county. Respondents to the survey were a lot of two person households. More outreach to the entire community is needed for balance within the

plan. Good balance between long time and new residents. Top three reasons to live in Chatham rural was the biggest response. Farming availability ties to the land and is an important issue to address.

George Lucier stated his concerns about schools. He noted that there is a perspective from families that differs from households who do not have children. Schools did rank as a higher priority in the survey.

For the “What do you like best about Chatham?” and “What would you change about Chatham County?” write in questions, the answers were categorized into major themes. In general a lot of Youth and school concerns, public transportation, and public amenities were priorities. Jake stated that if the plan is successful, it will tailor to different geographies concerns. Growth and development priorities – more parks open space ranked number one in the survey. The plan will break out parks and recreation levels of service by break out by area and type. Considerations for all age groups such as programs for elderly or and youth like such as soccer programs.

Parks and Natural Resource Priorities

Forest and wildlife number ranked as number one within the survey, but a close second is limits to development and concerns for water quality. Natural resources and hiking trails are also a major topic from the survey. Next month’s meeting will address a geography inventory and age difference within the county.

Affordable housing priorities

Del Turner stated that a definition of the types of affordable housing is important. Workforce or low income distinction should come out of the plan. Jake stated that the plan will address the questions “what are the needs and product?” Jake indicated that with a number and type the plan could look to including recommendations for incentives such as density bonuses.

Presentation from Climate Change Committee

Amanda Robertson presented the following information from a PowerPoint regarding Natural Capital. Below is a summary of the presentation from Amada Robertson:

Slides Summary (Numbers indicate slide number)

1. "The earth is full. In fact our human society and economy is now so large we have passed the limits of our planet’s capacity to support us and it is overflowing. Our current model of economic growth is driving this system, the one we rely upon for our present and future prosperity, over the cliff. This in itself presents a major problem. It becomes a much larger challenge when we consider that billions of people are living desperate lives in appalling poverty and need their personal “economy” to rapidly grow to alleviate their suffering. But there is no room left. This means things are going to change. Not because we will choose change out of philosophical or political preference, but because if we don’t transform our society and economy, we risk social and economic collapse and the descent into chaos. The science on this is now clear and accepted by any rational observer. Things do not look good. These challenges and the facts behind them are well-known by experts and leaders around the world and have been for decades. But despite this understanding, that we would at some point pass the limits to growth, it has been continually filed away to the back of our mind and the back of our drawers, with the label “Interesting—For Consideration Later.” Well, later has arrived.” – Paul Gilding, *The Great Disruption: Why the Climate Crisis Will Bring On the End of Shopping and the Birth of a New World*

2. We depend upon "ecosystem services" – also known as Natural Capital – provided by nature for free. Services like fresh water, fertile soil, clean air, game, fish, etc. But population growth, urbanization and many other factors are damaging ecosystems and causing a massive decline in biodiversity. This loss has an impact on us all. It affects our health, wellbeing and our livelihood. Setting a price on nature may seem wrong - even unethical. But if we do not stop to consider the value of nature and our own role as part of nature’s systems, we will continue down the path of plunder and destruction until there is nothing

left of it. And this includes us. And it is because nature and its services are ignored or undetected by markets that we haven't stopped to consider the impacts of this plundering on our very economy. But if we can demonstrate the value of nature in economic terms, it can help everyone make decisions that consider the full costs and benefits of a proposed use of an ecosystem, rather than just the monetary results of nature's products that enter our markets.

3. The System of National Accounts, or the SNA, is the internationally agreed standard of recommendations on how to compile measures of economic activity. Recent research from the SNA acknowledges that for the link between changes in wealth and sustainability to hold, the definition of wealth must be truly comprehensive and include all types of income-generating assets. Including those from nature. This includes non-marketed goods, such as those previously mentioned, but also services such as watershed protection by forest filtration. And the inclusion of our consumption of these goods and services into our calculations of benefits and risks, and must also include expenditures to protect the environment from harms.

4. Nature is a closed system and a fragile system. It is a perfect system to provide for the diversity of life forms on this planet. Perfect for us. And nature provides everything. From the gasoline in our cars, the metals used to make our cars, to the soil for farming and the timber and stone for building. Our clothing, our televisions, furniture, and appliances. It even provides for the air that we breathe, the water that we drink and the food that we eat. We take and have been taking from nature to such an extent that the balance nature provides that sustains us, and all the life around us, is no longer in balance. Nature is so depleted it cannot compensate for all the pollutants the many billions of us have been expending into the air, water and land of this planet. And it is dying. Think about it. We had a population of 1.8 billion people a century ago. Today we have over 7 billion. For all of these people to participate in our current methods of economic growth - taking from nature's resources for personal material gain with no consideration of the impacts - nature of course will run dry. And it has.

5. So why is Natural Capital so important to Chatham County?

6. Because right now we still have a good deal of natural capital. And we still have time to change our ways of valuing it. The Climate Change Advisory Committee has several recommendations for this committee that support an approach that includes Ecosystem Services in our planning process, along with numerous recommendations we hope will be considered and included in the ultimate plan. You should have received our recommendations by email, and I've included many of these in the following slides. But as a starting point, we believe the Comprehensive Plan should include measures to preserve Chatham County's significant carbon storage in the landscape. This can be done with policies that protect tree cover, encourage forests to remain in management as forests, discourage conversion of woodlands to agricultural lands (or developed uses), and to incentivize reforestation and afforestation.

7. skip

8. So what are the impacts of not considering natural capital in our economic equation? They are enormous and affect us all in many tangible ways.

9. skip

10. According to the World Medical Association, our health can be negatively influenced by the built environment through sensory inputs, both auditory and visual. Things like traffic and noise from businesses, for example. Research shows that nature has positive benefits for our cognitive, psychological and even our physical health. So, including nature in our "built environment" can have a big impact on our economy in areas of health. The Comprehensive Plan should include a smart-growth approach that involves the clustering of housing units in residential developments, promotes infill development, redevelopment of existing neighborhoods, and adaptive reuse of buildings within currently developed areas. This approach lowers Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and preserves open land and woodlands as

carbon sinks, all very important in today's warming climate. The Plan should include the highest standards in sustainable landscaping practices, to include parking lot landscaping, use of native plant species, perimeter site buffering, and tree canopy requirements, for both new commercial and public development projects, as well as for remedying deficiencies in existing developments through incentives and other measures. The Comprehensive Plan should encourage green building standards and proactively support and make visible local, private, state and federal incentives available for builders and homeowners.

11. We all know that trees and plants both provide the oxygen we breathe but they also clean our air. The cost of Asthma alone costs North Carolina nearly 1 billion dollars a year. So, again, it only makes economic sense to include natural capital in our decision making as these decisions can have a big impact on our bottom line.

12. skip

13. Skip

14. Skip

15. skip

16. skip

17. Water is a natural commodity - greater than coffee, cotton and oil combined. Yet we don't put a value on it. We don't protect it as a material value or as a limited resource. We need to be doing all we can to protect our water supplies. To value water as the natural resource it is – essential to all life on this planet. Nature's systems do the best job of cleaning water. So identifying where and how we can let nature do its job rather than people building substitutes will go a long way to insure clean water for our future. The Comprehensive Plan should include Habitat Protections and Corridor Connectors, and identify natural resource and environmentally sensitive areas that should be protected from residential or commercial development, and be preserved as carbon sinks. It should identify a path toward a green infrastructure, an interconnected network of open spaces and natural areas, such as greenways, wetlands, parks, conservation and preservation areas and floodprone areas.

18. skip

19. skip

20. The Comprehensive Plan should seek to describe areas of the County that are primarily desirable for farming and agricultural activities. Such areas would be supported by the agricultural community and could serve as a prime carbon sink. Agricultural and forestry practices can assist with climate change mitigation through carbon sequestration. Properly managed, farmland has a high potential for carbon sequestration. Many sustainable agricultural practices significantly increase the amount of carbon that can be sequestered in soils. Additionally, the Comprehensive Plan should include providing education opportunities and assistance for our farming community and incentives for sustainable farming practices. Such areas would also be a source of "local food" production, an important goal given its usefulness in reducing VMT involved in bringing food supplies to consumers. The US organic industry posted new records in 2015 with total organic product sales hitting a new benchmark of \$43.3 billion. This is up 11% from the previous year and significantly surpasses the overall food market's growth rate of 3%. This is an opportunity for our community we can continue to pursue.

21. skip

22. skip

23. We need a Plan that supports farming practices that eliminate manmade chemical fertilizers and pesticides. A plan that supports our farming community in learning sustainable farming practices, which decrease the instance of pests through diversifying plants in and around the crops. We already have a strong base of sustainable and organic farmers and a community college renowned in this field that we can lean on to support countywide education in this area. Also, we should develop a Plan that identifies forests as natural capital, establishing an economic value for our forests as they sit – a value other than as just "cut timber." But adopt modern, sustainable practices of timber management, including guidelines, recommendations and resources for citizens. Such a plan would allow us to better maintain the natural carbon sink forests provide (in both trees and soil), and help us maintain and increase the capital Chatham

County currently has invested in forested lands. As with our organic farmers, we have a strong base of experienced timber management experts in our community who can help us work on these efforts.

24. skip

25. Transportation is the single greatest contributor to the rise in greenhouse gasses and the quality of the air we breathe. With this increase, coupled with the massive deforestation going on around the globe we need to address this challenge in both areas. First, in placing an economic value on forests as the largest natural sequester of CO₂. But secondly, in designing better transportation systems that include bike lanes and sidewalks, and by making better choices ourselves on the cars we drive and how often we drive. Combining trips when we can. The Comprehensive Plan should include a plan for land use that is closely integrated with all forms of transportation planning so that citizens will have greater transportation options, including walking and biking, and be better able to reduce transportation needs. The Plan should include potential transit location sites even if public transportation doesn't presently serve those areas. The Comprehensive Plan should try wherever possible to encourage incentives and promote the use of plug-in pure or hybrid electric vehicles. Charging stations should be located in or near public facilities and housing regulations should attempt to locate multiple charging stations in residential developments and promote their use in individual homes.

26. skip

27. recommendations

George Pauly stated that this idea of Natural Capital seems to fit in with survey and feedback. Del Turner asked Amanda Robertson in thinking about the big picture, what can you do to tell to citizens how to impact climate change now? Amanda stated that The Climate Change Committee is working on education outreach for individuals. Students from UNC will also be conducting an inventory of emissions and recommendations.

Intermediate Findings

Jake proceeded to go through Intermediate Findings on the Plan elements thus far.

Ecosystem Services addresses health, recreational, and agricultural benefits. Chatham is located in the Green heart of NC directly south of major urban centers. The county has potential to be a major recreational part of the triangle. What is the monetary value 2,200 acres of land lost? Looking forward: implications what will the number grow to? UNC students will calculate this in emissions inventory.

Land Use: Will look at Land supply and the implications of what the model shows for the county developing according to by-right use and capacity. Then looking at what to model will calculate according to suitability. This includes specifying where commercial and conservation should be located, this will start a future development plan. Jake asked the committee to think about places that you've been, that you can learn from; in general or in the county. This model will look at worst case scenario so that the county can then help identify what areas to address.

Martha stated that it's interesting to call it land use when there is land that is simply not used and may best be just not used. She asked should we be planning that all land must be used? She suggested that maybe it would be more appropriate to call it a land use and conservation. Sherri mentioned clusters of development around Pittsboro and Siler city ETJ's.

Community profile and the 15/501 Market Analysis Study

Greg Payne indicated the draft will be completed September 22. Greg spoke about the findings: Chatham is the green heart between the 2 of the highest metropolitan populations in the state. Generally, the population is older more educated and affluent in the Eastern half of the county. Disparity is displayed across the county: low-ratio of jobs to residents. There is limited infrastructure: sewer and internet. There is a lack of attractions with in towns. Del Turner stated the western most beautiful part of the county. The Community Profile addresses small business, agriculture, tourism and the arts. The CCCC Small Business

Center is highly valued. The Cooperative Extension funding is an example of the partnership and support of this community.

Greg continued to address new development and employment near the municipal ETJ's. Looking at the 9 mile area Haw River to county line covers 55 square miles study area with approximately 20,000 people. Major reason is access to jobs and amenities in Durham and Orange. There is a 3% increase in this decade alone. All developments in the county are not served by public sewer, as they are all on private systems. Greg explained commercial real estate has low vacancy. He also explained that there is a modest amount of new demand; density not there yet for retail. He indicated that residents are major users of financial, transit and medical uses. Chatham County has very little industrial or warehouse users. Some barriers also include the cost of land and impervious surface requirements. He also explained the impact expected from Chapel Hill's Obey Creek development and Pittsboro's Chatham Park development. Greg said that by bringing in more residents and large allocations of office, commercial, retail may soak up market completely.

The Committee also discussed upcoming studies such as the Existing Issues Transportation Memo and the second transportation memo for future issues.

Draft Goals Discussion

Preserve lifestyle: form & function. Euclidean v Performance Based Zoning was discussed among the committee. Terry Schmidt asked what is the definition of rural character and lifestyle. Jake stated the plan can address this question with an objective. Terry noted that there would be two different answers from north east and west. Esta Cohen brought up the fact that it could be interpreted as a rural backdrop to someone else's life, scenery. While another could interpret it for what it is, a lifestyle. The group discussed whether there is a mechanism to a balance these 2 very different opinions? Jim Elza suggested defining it with plan objectives. Esta suggested including this as a question for future surveys. Meg noted that the consultants would look into that distinction. Jake asked whether is it too hard to define or would 3 more specific goals be more measureable. Sherri stated that future surveys need to be more specific. Esta Cohen stated it should be more specific to farming rather than rural character to set a clear line of priority for planning department to enforce. George Lucier stated that they shouldn't jettison the term because it is an important characteristics of Chatham County and potential Large acreage.

Preserve protect agriculture was mentioned with the intention for agriculture producers should be able to provide locally. The provision of utility structure is important for development considerations. The question of where and where not are important.

Jim Elza asked how does the county encourage Siler city and Pittsboro to plan on the other end. Other important concepts were discussed for Chatham such as diversifying the tax base, in county jobs, reduce property taxes, and reduce out commuting. These could all lead to economic opportunity. Other important issues rose included: Maintain and restore quality of environment, identify and conserve connect habitats and green infrastructure. Other suggestions for plan considerations include, becoming more resilient to emerging threats such as energy costs, food waste, mitigation and adaptation. The committee asked whether the county is carbon neutral?

Public Meetings and Survey Results

Transportation: The County should to address all modes and age friendly. This includes short term and long term plans, bike and pedestrian improvements and context-appropriate improvements. The committee asked how the county actually gets the projects on the ground.

Goal for education- Leverage assets to encourage entrepreneurs and craftsmen. The Committtee also mentioned the importance of Tourism and critical mass. The group also touched on the Healthy Community through built environments. It assists with mental wellbeing active living.

Draft Goals Work Session Discussion

Jake asked how we measure success. Answer these questions:

1. What do you like the most?
2. How do we measure success for that goal?
3. What is missing? What edits would you make?

Andy Bailey – transportation and coordination with utilities.

James Fogleman – Asked how do we recruit jobs to the area? He suggested manufacturing. He provided Cabarrus County as an example. Mentioned the Aerospace industry as an example as well.

George Lucier- Mentioned tax refund incentive to get up to 90% back. Blue collar employment will drive the economic development to support it. Worker training program for local citizens available at CCCC.

Greg –Successful measures are not about recruiting businesses because most counties lack the budget. It is important to set the table to be attractive for a company in many ways. (Interstate highways, airport, public sewer, employers lack of amenities can be a deterrent.)

Del- Education not a piece. It should be a goal. Teacher's villages affordable to attract high caliber teachers for more advanced schools. Chatham center for innovation science and engineers is a possibility. Teachers have low pay – could the county incentivize the profession?

Terry Schmidt– Asked about how to pay for these ideas. He suggested discussion with Departmental Directors. Manufacturing develops a tax base. He stated the goals are realistic and measurable. Representative of how the county should develop.

Amanda- Suggested diversifying the experts.

John Kessler – Asked the Committee to wrap their head around goals in terms of health care. Where is it for an aging community?

George Lucier– Mentioned the healthy Chatham document. Jake and Meg added that they have reviewed the Community Health Assessment.

Linda- Mentioned that the plan must address what Chatham has to offer from an economic perspective.

Tandy- Acknowledged that he is representing the Agricultural Advisory Board and that most of his professional work is land-related. He stated that his view of the Plan is that it is an aspirational plan for the future of the County but it appears that the public survey has shifted the focus to land use. Although there are different views, most of the respondents seem to want the County land use to stay the same (preservation of rural character), which, of course, is in direct conflict with traditional growth patterns. At the same time respondents would like improvements in education, social services, affordable housing, and parks and recreation, among others. To achieve these goals together the County would need to generate revenue without increasing the population. This planning process may find a way to do that. However, if we want to keep the "rural character," we need to avoid generating the needed revenue by increasing property taxes on land in agriculture and forestry. Maintaining the present-use value tax deferral is essential but not sufficient for maintaining rural character.

Amanda – natural capital new way of economic growth. Shift in a way of thinking.

Caroline – The goal is a land use plan to work with and must include buy in from public and when you get

down on the ground it can fall apart. Findings of consistency with the plan make it work.

Sharon – Stated the measureable difference between encouraging businesses versus environmental preservation. How does the plan address the monetary impact of both?

George Pauly – Parks and Recreation is key for future growth and the priority is recreation. There is not an explicit part that addresses it to a goal. George mentioned the 170 acres Moncure, north central land owned by county. Asked about parks purpose in the future?

Other Business

Meetings in a box- the outreach community meeting program was discussed.

Mr. Fogelman mentioned the Ruritans for community outreach.

The committee was provided homework to help further define the plan's goals.

Adjourn.