

Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

Minutes of Regular Meeting

March 16, 2017

Holmes Meeting Room, 6pm

Chatham Community Library, 197 NC Hwy 87 N, Pittsboro NC



Committee Members Present Staff Present

Jim Elza

Terry Schmidt

Roy Girolami

Sharron Garbutt

Del Turner

George Pauly

John Fogelman

Tandy Jones

Esta Cohen

Caroline Siverson

Andy Bailey

Linda Harris

George Lucier

Marcia Herman-Giddens

George Pauly

James Fogelman

Dylan Paul

Angela Birchett

Cara Coppola

Jason Sullivan

1. Welcome and Introductions (5 min)

a. Chairman Jim Elza opened the meeting at 6:01 pm.

- Comments from the Chair

i. None

- Approval of Minutes

i. Approved unanimously, with one correction: Linda Harris did attend the February 9th meeting.

2. Reflections on Public Meetings (10 min)

- Member comments

i. Every member commented that while they were disappointed in the attendance at the Silk Hope and Chatham Central meetings, members commented that they were encouraged by the Pittsboro meeting attendance. They also noted that the presentations were excellent and that Planning Staff and the consultants did a good job at organizing and hosting these meetings.

3. SC Comments by Topic Exercise Part I (50 min)

- Transportation

i. Presentation by Jeannie Ambrose via PowerPoint. The presentation concerned the growth of Chatham County. The first slide showed the change of the compact community area on the draft land use map. Jeannie wants to know why the change happened and who made these maps? She asked to whom she should ask about having the map changed. Jim Elza said that she is speaking to the people in charge of communicating with the consultants. George Lucier noted that the Compact Community Ordinance shows the boundaries that are shown on the Draft Land Use Map, though it did change in a later version of the draft. Jim Elza said he would look into why the “rural” part had changed.

Jeannie continued with the presentation and asked why certain roads along 15-501 were shown on the draft transportation map, who makes the decisions, etc? Andy Bailey stated that these roads were not needed to accommodate regional traffic. Jeannie said that a “generic model” should be used for this comp plan and that any changes should be “made official” and explained. Jeannie also asked that the Steering Committee make the changes and inform the public about the changes.

ii. Roy Girolami noted that in a meeting of the TAC, Lichen Trail would be changed, much like how Jeannie noted. Roy Girolami said the TAC wanted more bicycle access. Andy Bailey said that DOT could help with that, if the bike lanes/paths were shown on an adopted plan. George Lucier noted there could be jurisdictional issues with funding for bike lanes (MPO vs. TARPO vs. MCHC). George Pauly noted that there is a greenway on the draft parks map. Jim Elza stated that there must be a high priority of trails in the plan. Roy said transit should be a higher priority. It should be expanded to Briar Chapel and Chatham Park. Del Turner asked why there aren’t more trails and paths to Siler City? She noted that Siler City has “the space” to accommodate more growth, and therefore, should more paths and trails. Andy said that there are 2 funded DOT projects there. Del Turner asked where are the projects in the rural parts of Siler City? Andy responded “One step at a time.”

iii. George Lucier asked if we should have a statement that any connector roads on the draft map should be listed as strictly as a possible idea, not a definitive statement. The Committee ultimately decided to remove all references to “connector roads” from the draft map and draft comp plan. However, inter-subdivision connectivity should remain part of subdivision regulations (i.e. avoid dead end roads). There was overwhelming consensus that connector roads along 15-501 should be removed from the draft map and plan.

iv. Water access was also noted as a concern for transportation (water trails, in particular).

v. George Lucier asked Roy Girolami about if we should have something in plan about working with the towns about linking transit. Roy agreed that was a good idea. Interlocal agreement was needed, said Jim Elza.

vi. Sharon Garbutt asked about separate bike trails from roads. Can we have that in Chatham County? Andy Bailey stated that its cost prohibitive on rural routes. George Pauly noted that 1) it’s tough to bike as a commuter in Chatham County, numbers are low. More bike lanes would help improve

numbers. 2) Greenway interconnection with bike paths are important to increase bike numbers and make bike paths viable. Del Turner asked if bike lanes could accommodate “scooters” (motorized). Andy says NCDOT tries to build “complete streets”.

vii. Esta Cohen asked are we still prioritizing the UNC-Chatham County bus routes / transits? Andy Bailey said that Chatham Transit says it can support rural parts of Chatham. Greater education and marketing can help improve access to transit from handicap and senior citizens. Andy Bailey wants expanded bus service to and from Chapel Hill, Siler City, etc. George emphasized working with other towns to coordinate transit service. Andy concurred.

- Natural Resources

- i. General discussion about conservation subdivision. George Lucier noted that conservation subdivisions would allow more houses than what R-5 allows. Caroline noted that conservation subdivisions are difficult without sewer access (private wastewater treatment plant), i.e. not viable for the developer. George Pauly wondered if the county could provide incentive to conserve land. Soil erosion is a concern with conservation subdivision, depending on geography and sewer access. George noted R-5 would better protect Haw River than the current layout of The Retreat at Haw River. Sharon noted that there could be an impact of sewer lines through conservation areas or wooded areas. Jason noted that such gravity systems run through some neighbors with little impact (no smell or danger to human health). There was more general debate of “requiring conservation subdivisions vs. R-5 lots). Del Turner asked about “buffers”. Jim Elza said that’s automatic with a conservation subdivision. Del Turner said we should be more direct with developers with regards to buffers. Marcia Herman-Giddens talked about ticks: more fragmentations = more deer = more ticks. Tandy Jones asked about “conservation design vs. conservation subdivision ordinance”. More flexibility for conservation subdivision ordinance would be helpful for county and developers. Jason Sullivan says more input from Steering Committee is needed. Tandy says if we require conservation subdivisions, then the definition should change.
- ii. George Pauly talked about Parks Dept. plan to extend conservation lands along NC 87 on the draft land use map (“The Ring”). The “Bynum to Gum Springs” conservation areas. Esta Cohen asked if agricultural could still happen in the conservation areas. Jim Elza said yes, of course.
- iii. Esta Cohen brought up the utilities issue. Expanding utilities will have an impact on agriculture, but so will well-and-septic subdivisions. Does the focus need to change? We should have a “decision tree” with regards to expanding utilities to rural areas.

- Agriculture

- i. Tandy Jones talked about the Ag Board meeting. He reported that the agricultural survey is the best piece of evidence as to the opinions of the agricultural community. Priorities of the survey results = the priorities of the comp plan goals. Jim Elza getting county water to farmers is essential. Tandy Jones said farmers want option to sell land (“cash out”), making consensus difficult for agricultural community. Esta Cohen asked about selling price of conventional subdivisions vs. conservation subdivisions. Which is higher? There was more general discussions about how agricultural can continue through the “transition zone”.

George Pauly asked about the county buying agricultural easements. Tandy Jones said funding is difficult. George Pauly once again said Chatham County should be more like Manatee County, FL: purchasing 1000's of acres of land by the county for conservation. Tandy Jones said that the County should hire staff for conservation purposes. There was more general conversation about land conservation.

- Land Use
 - i. George Lucier said that Jordan Lake should not be R-5, it should be conserved; a new designation in the ordinance is needed. General consensus on this topic.
 - ii. Jim Elza wants Bells Chapel taken off of the Draft Land Use Map and show Chatham Park on the draft land use map. General consensus on these topics.
 - iii. Sharon Garbutt said the county should properly define the phrase "open space". The definition is clearly defined in the Compact Communities Ordinance, but may need to be revised, as per Jason Sullivan.
 - iv. George Lucier said that I-H parts of 3M and Megasites should be shown on the map. Terry Schmidt said we should be Draft Land Use Map on GIS. General consensus is no, because the intent of the draft map is for future, not current development. General discussion about how to deal with formerly unzoned businesses. How should these businesses show up (or not) on the draft map?
- Parks & Recreation (*not covered at this meeting. Moved to next meeting*)
- Transportation (*not covered at this meeting. Moved to next meeting*)

Big Questions:

- What do you want to see changed or clarified?
 - o Agricultural Area recommendations
 - o Employment Centers (Do we add 3M or other industrial properties as an EC?)
- What recommendations need more detail?
- What are some action items / implementation steps that need to be outlined in the plan?

4. SC Comments by Topic Exercise Part II (*not covered at this meeting. Moved to next meeting*)

- Health
- Housing
- Utilities
- Economic Development
- Resiliency

Big Questions:

- What do you want to see changed or clarified?
- What recommendations need more detail?
- What are some action items / implementation steps that need to be outlined in the plan?

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:25 PM

Next Meeting: April 6th, 2017, 6:00 p.m. Location: Holmes Meeting Room at Chatham Community Library.