



Town of Chapel Hill
AMERICAN LEGION TASK FORCE
Tuesday, April 25, 2017, at 02:00 p.m.
Chapel Hill Public Library, Meeting Room C
100 Library Dr., Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Draft Minutes

Members: Mayor Pam Hemminger, Council Member Donna Bell, Council Member Nancy Oates, Michael Andrews, Neal Bench, Dan Cefalo, Joan Guilkey, Pat Heinrich, Ryun Miller, Laurie Paolicelli, Scott Radway, Rachel Schaevitz, Lew Brown (Alternate), Wesley McMahon (Alternate)

Staff Liaison: Corey Liles

- **Opening**

Meeting was called to order at 2:05pm by Mayor Pam Hemminger

- a. **Roll Call**

Members Present: Mayor Pam Hemminger, Council Member Nancy Oates, Michael Andrews, Neal Bench (by phone), Dan Cefalo, Joan Guilkey, Pat Heinrich, Ryun Miller, Laurie Paolicelli, Scott Radway, Rachel Schaevitz, Lew Brown (Alternate), Wesley McMahon (Alternate)

Members Absent: Council Member Donna Bell

Town Staff Present: Corey Liles, Kayla Seibel

Consultant Staff Present: Dan Jewell, Elizabeth Wilcox

- b. **Approval of Agenda**

- Action Taken: Mayor's Update added to Business section of Agenda

- **Welcome and Introductions**

Members of the task force briefly introduced themselves. Mayor Hemminger noted that the Council anticipates a presentation on their work by the end of June. The Town has closed on the property, though the Legion continue to occupy their facility for the next 3 years. There is time available for Council to decide on the best use for this property and the approach to commercial development.

- **Public Comment**

Lynne Kane noted that there had been debate over how much land could be sold to Liberty Healthcare; her stance is that this or other healthcare uses would be a welcome addition to the area. She voiced support for the sale of land for private development, given the financial resources needed to maintain public lands.

- **Business**

- a. **Task Force Charter and Charge from Town Council**

Background: The Town Council approved the charge of the American Legion Task Force at its meeting on March 13, 2017, and subsequently appointed the members of the task force at its meeting on April 5, 2017. The work of the task force is to participate in the public engagement process for the American Legion property and work with the project consultant to develop future land use recommendations for the property. The Town Council anticipates a community report-out in May 2017 and recommendations to the Council for review in late May 2017, prepared by the project consultant based on guidance from the task force.

Action Item: Review and discuss the charter and charge from the Town Council, goals and objectives, deliverables, background on the American Legion property, and a proposed work plan.

- Action Taken: The charter was discussed with a few clarifying questions and minor suggested edits from Task Force members. No action was taken.

Reports to the community and to Council are included as deliverables in the consultant's scope of work, and it was agreed that determining the form and method of dissemination would be one of the charges of the task force. There was general agreement that the May 2017 timeframe could be extended to June. A suggestion was made that 'wants of the community' be added to Factors for Consideration.

- b. **Election of Task Force Chair**

Background: The task force charter calls for a Chair to lead the task force, represent and liaise with the Town of Chapel Hill Council; facilitate discussion and decision-making, while endeavoring to maintain equal opportunity for all members to participate in discussion; and coordinate Town staff support to the task force.

Action Item: Elect a Task Force Chair

- Action Taken: The Task Force determined that a Vice-Chair was also needed. After reviewing the duties of the Chair and the qualifications of the candidates, the Task Force elected Rachael Shaevitz to serve as Chair and Neal Bench to serve as Vice-Chair.

- c. **Mayor's Update**

- Action Taken: The Mayor reported on various considerations including nearby development, surrounding properties, and the work plan for the

Parks & Recreation Department that could have bearing on the Task Force's discussions. No action was taken.

Topics mentioned during the Update include:

- The opportunity for the Town to purchase the adjacent 3.5 acre Lindquist property.
- Development activity across Legion Rd including the Hillstone multifamily project, currently under review, and potential redevelopment of Quality Inn.
- The land held by Orange County for a park with outdoor athletic facilities off of Millhouse and Eubanks Rd, and the Mayors interest in moving that project forward.
- The work of the Town Properties Task Force and the potential for coordination between the two task forces (uses identified for American Legion could be considered for other Town-owned properties)
- The Visitors Bureau's ongoing study on local tourism
- Status of funds allocation from the recent Parks & Recreation Bond
- The footprint needed for typical commercial projects: 1 acre of land can accommodate around 10,000 sq ft of built space, including room for associated parking.
- Clarification that program registration for the Parks & Recreation Department would not take place at the Chapel Hill Police Department site, if the offices are moved there.
- Background on the pond and dam – this is a farm pond which does not serve a stormwater function. Relocating or resizing the pond is possible. The dam would require significant repair, and there is still the question of whether or not it is spring-fed.
- The ballfield located just south of American Legion is on the Elementary School property, while the tennis courts and associated parking lot are located on Town property.
- In regards to selling a portion of the property, this would put land back on the commercial tax rolls, but it is not the only method for raising revenue to pay the \$4 million owed on the American Legion property. Other options could be the staggering of bond projects, additional borrowing, or sale of other Town properties. A combination of measures could be used to extend the timeline for selling land.
- Liberty Healthcare has flexibility on the amount of land they are interested for an expansion.
- There has not been an appraisal done by the Town for the American Legion property, but that could be a recommendation of the task force.
- It is outside the task force's scope to address traffic generated by other developments along Legion Rd.

d. Presentation on Public Input and Concept Sketches

Background: Coulter Jewell Thames is serving as the Town's consultant for the public engagement process. Members of the consulting team will share refined sketches of the land use concepts that were developed during the April 8 charrette, along with a summary of public feedback received.

Action Item: Receive information. Provide feedback to consulting team on concept sketches and information to include in the reports to the community and to Council.

- Action Taken: The Task Force received a presentation from Coulter Jewell Thames staff. Members offered feedback, asked various clarifying questions, and discussed other information of interest. No action was taken.

Dan Jewell of Coulter Jewell Thames clarified that their charge to facilitate public discussion, not design or recommend uses. He gave a presentation on the design charrette which included the following takeaways:

- Around 120 participants attended throughout the day.
- A post-it note exercise asked participants to describe their vision for the property and then look at notes from others. This identified community desires, not necessarily needs.
- Common themes of the charrette public input included an interest in sound environmental practices, multimodal neighborhood connections, and recreation uses with a particular emphasis on passive recreation.
- Task force members who attended the charrette generally felt that participants' input was incorporated into the sketches well or somewhat well.
- Common elements of the 7 concept sketches included preservation of the stream corridor, some development along Legion Rd for commercial uses and community programs, creating a park entry experience on Legion Rd, networks of trails crossing the site and tying into neighborhood street stubs, a space for the Farmers Market, new athletic fields, indoor recreation space for various programs, smaller outdoor recreation uses, coordination with the elementary school, and in some cases low density and/or affordable housing.
- The sketches offer a mixture of recommendations for the pond – removing it, reducing its size, or keeping it as-is. Costs of either repairing the dam or removing the pond are significant; draining the pond would be required to determine if there is a spring.
- The sketches offer various approaches to parking

a. Other Task Force Discussion

The task force members and shared reactions to the consultant's presentation and brought up various topics of interest for discussion:

- A Legion member has stated that before the pond was built, there was a spring and a bog in that location. A certain answer will require US Army Corps determination which could take up to 18 months. Pursuing a determination could be a task force recommendation.
- Interest in seeing Ephesus Park facilities and other surrounding context on the sketches.
- Interested in innovative stormwater practices and green development for the site.
- Clarification that most sketched do not include site lighting, but that noise spillover was more of a concern to charrette participants than light pollution.
- Divided public feedback on a swimming pool for the site. Town pools are at capacity. If the YMCA replaced their current Chapel Hill-Carrboro facility at the Legion site and built a pool, it would only be available to members, but also not be a maintenance responsibility for the Town.
- Town Council is not interested in pursuing an expansion of Memorial Cemetery on this property.

- Many sketches include commercial development because charrette participants were given the impression that the Town had to sell off some land. Some portion of the Legion Rd frontage should be reserved to give street presence to the park/community facilities.
- The elementary school has a waiting list for after-school care and would be happy to “outsource” it to a quality program nearby run by others. They would also like safe connections that would allow neighborhoods to the north to be added to the school’s walk zone. The school will need a new ballfield location based on plans for expansion.
- The Cultural Arts Commission would like to see a public arts facility with classroom space. The town has lots of demand for arts classes and they do not require a lot of space. Arts programming lends itself well to partnerships with the school system, dance organizations, Kidzu, and the Arts Center. Any performance space should be small an ancillary, based on the site location. Forest Theater may have capacity for extra use.
- Tourism attracts 2.5 million visitors and generates \$184M annually for Orange County. This can be supported by recreation and green space with an economic development component that generates occupancy and revenue. Pickleball is increasingly becoming a tourism generator. Chapel Hill should examine surrounding communities and figure out what ‘niche’ it can serve from a tourism perspective.
- A community center appears on many of the sketches, but each group had their own ideas of what services it might provide. The space requirements of various programs should be more fully considered.
- There has also been interest expressed in space for small weddings.
- The Parks, Greenways & Recreation Commission should be looked to as a resource on community needs
- Next steps for the consulting team could include adding more contextual information to the concept sketches, and preparing some sample facility sizes to share. The task force could then develop a priority list of uses and select a few concept plans to send to Council.
- There was general agreement that a portion of the next meeting be used to develop guiding principles which would then be used to evaluate ideas.

a. Establish Future Meeting Dates

Background: The current timeline calls for a community report-out in May 2017 and recommendations to the Council for review in late May 2017, prepared by the project consultant based on guidance from the task force.

Action Item: Determine the number of additional meetings needed for the task force to complete its work, and set a meeting schedule through at least May 2017.

➤ Action Taken: The Task Force expressed a desire to have two meetings in May and determined that Tuesday afternoons tend to work well for members. A preference was expressed by several members for meeting on May 9. A Doodle poll will be used to confirm meeting dates. Prior to the next meeting, Task Force members will submit ideas for a working list of development principles which will be discussed at the next meeting. No action was taken.

- **Public Comment**

Lynne Kane stated that discussion of the arts was encouraging, and that it was good context to hear about athletic facilities being considered for Millhouse Rd.

- **Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned at 4:03pm

Meeting Materials

- [Task Force Charter](#)
- [Memo on Task Force Communications](#)
- [American Legion Design Charrette Report to the Task Force](#)
- [Design Charrette Appendix](#)
- [Stakeholder Group Submissions](#)

Opportunity Statement: The Town purchased the 36-acre American Legion Post 6 property in March of 2017. A consultant engaged by the Town will be leading a public engagement process to produce conceptual options for future use of the property that reflect the community's interests. The Task Force is a body representative of the community that can offer feedback on the design work done by the consultant and assist with finalizing the report for Council consideration. The Task Force can also advise on next steps in the overall planning process. This contribution is needed to help the Town achieve Council Goals and determine the most fitting and appropriate uses of the American Legion Property.

Goal: The American Legion Task Force will participate in the public engagement process and work with the project consultant to develop future land use recommendations for the American Legion property, along with next steps in the planning process, that uphold the Council's Guiding Principles for development of the property.

Resources:

- Project Web Page: <http://www.townofchapelhill.org/americanlegion>
- Board Web Page: <http://www.townofchapelhill.org/town-hall/government/boards-commissions>
(Scroll to American Legion Task Force)

Unless otherwise noted, please contact [Corey Liles](#) in the Office of Planning & Sustainability for more information.