

Council Committee on Economic Sustainability Meeting Notes
October 6, 2017
Orange County Solid Waste Facility Conference Room

Attendees: Mayor Pam Hemminger, Council Member Nancy Oates, Council Member George Cianciolo (Chair), Council Member Michael Parker, Council Member Maria Palmer, Council Member Ed Harrison, Council Member Jessica Anderson, Gordon Merklein, Steve Brantley, Roger Stancil, Flo Miller, Mary Jane Nirdlinger, Laura Selmer, Meg McGurk, Loryn Clark, Ross Tomkins, Ben Hitchings, Jeff Denny, Aaron Nelson, Dina Rousset, Jeanne Brown, and Beth Vazquez.

Chair George Cianciolo opened the meeting at 8:05 a.m.

Agenda approved.

Updates

(Please see slides linked throughout for additional information.)

[Economic Development](#)¹

Economic Development Officer Dwight Bassett highlighted an upcoming business retention and learning event November 14, 2017 to be co-sponsored with Orange County. He reported on three business inquiries in the past 30 days, including a food processing company searching for flex space, a company currently located downtown looking to double their space to 4,000 square feet, and a grocery store seeking 55,000+ square feet. Mr. Bassett also provided an update that an insurance company who made a recent inquiry has now signed a Letter of Intent on a 6,500 square foot space downtown.

[Planning and Zoning](#)²

Planning and Development Services Director Ben Hitchings reviewed two new concept plans: Coley Hall Self-Storage at Vilcom and a SECU Charterwood Branch.

Mr. Hitchings provided an update on Special Use Permits, highlighting a new application for the Greystar Retirement Apartments, a proposal for 190 senior living apartments on a 16-acre site on Homestead Road at Weaver Dairy Extension. The public information meeting will be held October 25th.

Mr. Hitchings briefly reviewed active projects in the Blue Hill District (Ephesus-Fordham). He said the Greenfield Place and Hillstone Chapel Hill projects have been reviewed by the Town Manager and are about to receive approval on Form District Permits.

Mr. Hitchings featured the Wireless Telecommunications Initiative, for which a public meeting was held on September 21st. He said the telecom industry is rolling out plans to expand bandwidth and service to meet the data demand from smartphones. Mr. Hitchings described that the goal of this project is to facilitate the deployment of this essential infrastructure while mitigating any negative impacts on the community. He said this creates an opportunity to develop a Telecom Master Plan and an updated Telecom Ordinance. Mr. Hitchings highlighted an online poll open until October 12th that surveys the

¹ <http://www.townofchapelhill.org/home/showdocument?id=37394>

² <http://www.townofchapelhill.org/home/showdocument?id=37396>

community on their wireless usage as well as their preferences for the appearance of different kinds of telecom facilities.

Town Manager Roger Stancil added that the Town just got permission from the railroad company for the sidewalk along Homestead Road to cross the railroad tracks.

Business

[Update on Market Research and Telling Our Story](#)³

Dwight Bassett introduced Jeff Denny, Principal with Liaison Design Group. Mr. Denny shared key insights from the recent listening sessions with post-docs and millennials. The Committee's discussion focused on whether post-docs and millennials can find the type of housing in Chapel Hill they want to live in at a price point they can afford, as well as the activities, places, and culture that are of interest to this demographic. Mr. Denny suggested that the Blue Hill District presents a great opportunity to be that place in Chapel Hill for young professionals.

Mr. Denny highlighted two stories that need to be told. The first is that Chapel Hill is a pioneer in education, research, and innovation, which leads to the generation and growth of new companies. The second message celebrates that Chapel Hill is nurturing business growth. Mr. Denny agreed with comments from the Committee that we need to tell the story that Chapel Hill is an open and welcoming community for all people, as well as a vibrant and active community.

The Committee discussed coordination between the Town and the University in order to drive messages forward around higher education, innovation, and culture. Mayor Pam Hemminger said that branding the Town as a great place to live supports the University's efforts to attract talent; it's a win-win.

Mr. Denny said once we craft the message, we have to look at how we tell the story and to whom we tell it. The traditional approach, he said, is to get the message to corporate real estate developers and the business community at large. But he said you also have to reach talent, which serves to attract business.

Mr. Denny talked about the importance of leveraging the national press that's already out there, like the recent story in The Guardian that featured Chapel Hill as one of the best towns and small cities in the U.S. He also said that consistent, relentless efforts to tell Chapel Hill's innovation and business stories will pay off.

Mr. Denny suggested that one of the next steps may be to consider hiring a public relations firm to promote stories and efforts occurring in our market. Staff will work with Mr. Denny to bring back a recommendation at the next report.

[Discussion of Infrastructure for Glen Lennox Redevelopment](#)⁴

Dwight Bassett presented an option for how the Town might assist to advance office development by supporting infrastructure costs needed for the Glen Lennox redevelopment. Mr. Bassett will bring a

³ <http://www.townofchapelhill.org/home/showdocument?id=37398>

⁴ <http://www.townofchapelhill.org/home/showdocument?id=37400>

proposal to the Council Committee in November for incentivizing the development of commercial space at Glen Lennox.

Motion to adjourn at 10:00 a.m.