



232 Matthews Station Street
Matthews, NC 28105
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MINUTES
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS SPECIAL MEETING
2016 PLANNING CONFERENCE
FEBRUARY 25 – 28, 2016

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 25, 2016 – MATTHEWS TOWN HALL

PRESENT: Mayor Jim Taylor; Mayor Pro Tem John Higdon; Commissioners Chris Melton, Jeff Miller, John Ross, John Urban and Larry Whitley

ALSO PRESENT: Town Manager Hazen Blodgett; Assistant Town Manager Becky Hawke; Communications Director Jen Thompson; Town Clerk Lori Canapinno; Fire & EMS Chief Dennis Green; Police Chief Rob Hunter; Planning and Development Director Kathi Ingrish; Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Director Corey King; Public Works Director CJ O’Neill; Finance Director Chris Tucker; Police Captain David Dufresne

The special meeting of the Board of Commissioners was called into order at 8:00 am and a quorum was declared. The Board met with Department Heads and staff at the Town Hall to discuss various issues. All related documents can be found in the complete agenda packet.

Breakfast & Ground Rules for Planning Conference. The Board and staff discussed ground rules for the conference.

Approve Amended Resolution Confirming Assessment Roll and Levying Assessments for Oscar Drive by the Town Board of Commissioners. Motion by Mr. Melton to approve the amended resolution. The motion was seconded by Mr. Miller and unanimously approved.

Financial Management Plan. Finance Director Chris Tucker reviewed the financial management plan. The Local Government Commission requires a minimum fund balance of 8%; the Town is currently at 30.48%. An existing Town policy requires a 34% fund balance but that is a Board-imposed, relatively arbitrary number and can be changed if desired. Mr. Tucker said the Board will need to think about the priority of fund balance growth vs. annual expenditure pressures vs. funding of long term capital needs.

There was discussion of the designation and commitment of funds to future projects, with Town Manager Hazen Blodgett noting that the Town has a five year financial plan but the Board approves the budget only one year at a time. The Board chooses what to fund or not and the five year plan is subject to change depending on other project priorities and the availability of funds. Mayor Taylor noted that the Board can’t lock a future Board into commitments unless a contractual

obligation exists. Mr. Ross suggested the use of a capital reserve fund to allow for long term strategic planning.

Capital Improvement Plan Discussion with Department Heads. Mr. Tucker reviewed debt obligations. Mayor Taylor questioned some aspects of funding for South Trade Street project, noting that it was the Board's intention for the Town to repay itself for the approximate million dollars paid out for engineering and other early aspects of the project, with reimbursement coming from the proceeds of the bond sale. Mr. Blodgett explained that those funds were not reimbursed because the project totaled well over \$5.5 million and there were not extra funds available to reimburse back to the Town. The estimated costs - and therefore the bond total - totaling \$5.5 million were from 2004 but the project didn't start until 2014. The actual costs were much higher than what was estimated a decade previously.

The Board discussed maintenance costs relating to the Town Hall/library building. The Town Attorney has stated that the library is responsible for their portion (41%) of future maintenance fees but the lease doesn't clearly state that. The lease agreement is 15 years old. Mr. Blodgett will be working with the library director to clarify these details. Staff's expectation is that the library will pay their fair share of the costs.

Department heads discussed Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) items. Fire & EMS Chief Dennis Green discussed his department's ongoing efforts to secure grants for fire vehicles and other equipment. The Town has received SAFER grants for incentives but has so far been unsuccessful regarding vehicle grants. Discussion ensued regarding fire vehicles and replacement options. The Board also discussed the request for a fire training facility.

Police Chief Rob Hunter discussed his desire to return to the vehicle replacement policy, citing the need to catch up due on replacement vehicles after the recession forced the Town to fall away from that regular schedule. He also discussed the second floor upfit to the Police Department building, which would add much-needed room for offices, storage and training rooms. The project hasn't gone out for bid since the initial entry into the CIP two years ago but he is comfortable with the staff-estimated cost of \$200,000.

Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Director Corey King discussed pocket parks, noting Country Place as the only feasible site in mind at this time. He reviewed other possible projects such as the Crestdale community trail, Highway 51 park and Butler greenway. The Rice Road Park calls for \$50,000 for planning documents. The Sam Newell multiuse path has an estimated cost of \$1.3 million and the Town would have to supply 20% of that, or \$260,000. \$400,000 is in the CIP now and staff recommends keeping it there in hopes of getting STPA funding.

Public Works Director CJ O'Neill discussed his department's need for a new backhoe. Mr. Ross suggested looking into leasing options as a way to save on costs. Mr. O'Neill reviewed issues relating to the South Trade Street greenway tunnel. The state will widen the tunnel. The Town suggested they widen it to a 14 foot culvert for greenway use instead of the standard 5 foot culvert but the state can't help with that funding. It would cost \$675,000. The county is pursuing getting funding for that through SDTPA funds - in preliminary discussions it seems like it's possible to get some funding. The Town would have to match 10%, or \$67,500. The state wants to get the project underway by December 2016 with completion in spring 2017.

Road Infrastructure Discussion. Mr. O'Neill reviewed transportation projects. The 2015 resurfacing program has been completed with 2.5 miles done at a cost of \$800,000. Buckley Way is complete at a cost of \$450,000. The Sportsplex has five fields built with four additional fields and a stadium under construction now in phase two. The estimated completion is fall 2016. The Matthews-Mint Hill Road superstreet was supposed to be completed on October but will likely be done in another one to two months. The Town had wanted to add a multiuse path but Duke Energy would have charged about \$100,000 to move the poles so it was not able to be done. The concept should be noted going forward - when vacant land develops part of the conditions should be to add a ten foot wide multiuse path. The Monroe Road Expressway is not a Town project but is currently under construction and could relieve some congestion in Matthews.

The Idlewild Road and Highway 51 roundabout will be built this summer while school is out but that intersection will have to be closed down while it's under construction. There are some new issues that may drive up the cost of land - the

current estimate for the Town's portion of the project is \$81,250 but that could change depending on right of way costs. The McKee Road extension is broken into segments: segment A includes Pleasant Plains Road to John Street and segment B includes John Street to Campus Ridge Road. Segments C, D and E will extend McKee Road to Independence Boulevard. Segments B and E are funded and underway. Discussion ensued regarding segment A and the possibility of the Town funding some portion at a future date. Mr. Miller suggested using funds which will be coming in from the Erickson project. Mr. Blodgett clarified that those funds are for roads in the general area and are not tied to any specific project. Mr. O'Neill suggested holding off and seeing how the next round of ranking goes to see if DOT will fund the project. Mr. Blodgett suggested that the ranking might improve if the Town offered a million dollars or so. Mr. O'Neill will investigate that possibility.

There was some discussion on bike lanes versus multiuse paths in the Weddington/McKee Road area. By consensus the Board agreed to change the project from bike lane to multiuse path in the Composite Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. The Board then discussed the Independence Boulevard widening with construction planned around 2022-2025. Connector roads will be very important for business access. Planning staff has required alternate access and worked on parallel roads for years but DOT feels that connector roads are a lower priority. There is the potential for DOT to run out of funds before adding the necessary connector roads, so it will be incumbent upon the Town to stay vigilant on this. There was some discussion of the need for greater communication from DOT to the Board as well as property owners and the business community regarding future access.

Mr. O'Neill discussed the John Street/Old Monroe Road widening project, estimated to begin construction in 2022-2024. This will be a four lane superstreet with a multiuse path along the majority of it. It's still in the planning stages. Discussion ensued on possible outcomes. The Town needs to ensure good access across the road and be vigilant about pedestrian scale. The concept DOT is looking at now is the boulevard concept with two lanes on each side, median in the middle and multiuse path along one side. It will be much wider than what currently exists. The Board is very concerned about the potential impacts to the Town.

Mr. Blodgett discussed the estimated cost to widen North Ames Street as \$260,000. No funds have been appropriated at this time.

Mr. O'Neill discussed the issue of a traffic light at Talbot Court. This is a request from Hampton Green residents. The South Trade Street project puts a median in front of their development. Because of that, the Town required ACTS to install the Talbot Court Extension so residents can access Fullwood Lane. Engineers from Kimley Horn gave advised that adding that requested traffic signal would gridlock that corridor and undo all the effects of the money just spent by the Town in that area. Mr. O'Neill recommends against installing the requested signal. Extensive discussion ensued regarding safety concerns, delayed signals and traffic counts.

The Board discussed the possibility of a signal adding more problems to the area. Mayor Taylor noted that professionals have given their opinion that a signal would not improve the situation and would in fact worsen it, but that the Town could put a signal in at any time the Board chose. Mr. Higdon said the Hampton Green residents asked for the light for safety reasons and suggested it wouldn't be triggered unless several cars were queued rather than just one. Mr. Miller discussed ways the residents could make their turns safely without requiring potentially dangerous movements through traffic gaps. Mr. Whitley suggested installing a signal with a timer but Mr. O'Neill explained that that setup is what the traffic engineers said would cause the additional traffic backup. Mr. Higdon suggested revisiting the issue after the road is built and check on accident numbers and possibly perform another traffic study. He said he'd be willing to bow to the experts after time has gone by and the situation have been revisited again to see what it's actually like after the road is constructed. He would like the Town to officially respond to the Hampton Green neighborhood with whatever decision is made. Mr. Urban said he was against the Talbot Court extension to begin with because he knew the residents would want a traffic signal, but the dynamics have changed a lot. He would like the Town to monitor what happens over time. Discussion regarding potential safety issues continued.

The Board will continue discussion on this issue.

Chief Hunter discussed the traffic flow at Matthews Elementary School. The issue is caused by the stacking of parents' cars as they wait to pick up their children. The parent pickup area on the Fullwood side of the building holds about 50 vehicles, and when that's full drivers will simply wait in the travel lane with their hazards on. One solution is to add approximately 15 feet of right of way which would shift northbound traffic, provide for a left turn lane into the school and would also allow for emergency traffic lane for fire/emergency vehicles. The cost is estimated at \$120,000 but that assumes total donation of the needed right of way. The school principal is in favor of this but the Chief Hunter has not yet raised the issue with any other CMS representatives.

Mr. O'Neill discussed road resurfacing, explaining the different types of distress and methods for fixing them. The best and most cost-effective way to handle resurfacing in general is by prevention. A road that's not driven on much deteriorates faster than a well-traveled road. Staff would like to bring a report to the Board in a few months regarding keeping roads above the preventative trigger with preventative maintenance. By consensus the Board agreed to that. Mr. O'Neill noted that the state's General Assembly passed legislation last year stating that Powell Bill funds shall be used primarily for *resurfacing* streets. It wasn't any more specific than that. Staff suggests using 51% of the Powell Bill funds for resurfacing and the remaining 49% Powell Bill funds plus the revenue from the tag fee for the other methods.

Park & Recreation Master Plan. Mr. King discussed the Park and Recreation Master Plan, which shows the needs of the community and has a ten year lifespan. It focuses on facilities rather than programming. Community input shows the desire for amenities such as walking tracks, running trails, water features and a dog park. Missing from the plan is data from homeowner associations on the amenities offered by those organizations. Staff is working on gathering that information now. The Board discussed the appeal of various amenities and national standards versus Matthews-specific standards. The Board discussed its desire to informally update the master plan, perhaps with just a new list of goals and updated inventory. The Board also discussed areas within the town that are still underserved.

Appearance. Communications Director Jen Thompson reviewed options for gateway signs. These were presented to the Board several years ago as part of the overall wayfinding program but had not been implemented due to their cost. The Board discussed options and decided to continue to explore possible design elements. By consensus the Board determined that a fountain or splash park in front of Town Hall is not appropriate but could be placed elsewhere – perhaps in Stumptown Park. The Board also agreed not to pursue the concept of an archway at the McDowell Arts Center to signify the Arts District. The Board would like to pursue options for monument signs and will meet with designer Buzz Bizzell at a future date to review possible designs.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26 – Matthews Town Hall; 232 Matthews Station Street, Matthews NC

PRESENT: Mayor Jim Taylor; Mayor Pro Tem John Higdon; Commissioners Chris Melton, Jeff Miller, John Ross, John Urban and Larry Whitley; Town Attorney Charles Buckley

ALSO PRESENT: Town Manager Hazen Blodgett; Assistant Town Manager Becky Hawke; Communications Director Jen Thompson; Town Clerk Lori Canapinno; Fire & EMS Chief Dennis Green; Police Chief Rob Hunter; Planning and Development Director Kathi Ingrish; Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Director Corey King; Public Works Director CJ O'Neill; Finance Director Chris Tucker; Police Captain David Dufresne; Senior Planner Jay Camp; Zoning Administrator Mary Jo Gollnitz; Town Arborist Ralph Ramsaur; Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission Consulting Director Dr. Dan Morrill

Breakfast with Chamber. The Board met with members of the Matthews Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors to discuss Chamber-related issues

Brief High-level Overview of Adopted Plans, Goals, and Approved Conditions. Planning and Development Director Kathi Ingrish reviewed several of the town's existing development-related plans. She noted that sometimes good adopted policies conflict with other good adopted policies: new development can create new demand on schools, eliminate some existing trees or increase traffic, but it also serves to grow and improve the town and its tax base. She encouraged the Board to look at new development in Matthews and other areas to see what they do and don't like.

Downtown and its future. Senior Planner Jay Camp discussed the Downtown Plan and general downtown development practices. There is great opportunity for higher-density residential development in downtown. Infill development is very important and retail and other development is predicated in having a sufficient residential base to support it. Parking is always an issue of concern and one recommendation from the downtown plan is to partner with private developers to create shared-use parking decks. Discussion ensued regarding hourly rates and aesthetics of parking structures.

Mr. Camp discussed future plans for Stumptown Park redevelopment to expand its boundaries. He also discussed possible transportation improvements including the Andrew Caroline Drive connection and the widening of Ames Street and Charles Street. The estimate to widen Charles Street is approximately \$680,000. Mr. Camp urged the Board to think about laying the groundwork for these transformative projects. Items to consider include the need to purchase property, make road improvements, implement the streetscape plan, etc.

Mr. Camp discussed the Downtown Streetscape Plan. Discussion ensued regarding the amount of required versus suggested items. Mr. Camp explained that some of the language talks about general design standards while the street cross sections are mandatory. The Board discussed the implementation of guidelines and requested that further review be given to this issue. There is concern that the document is overly restrictive.

Mr. Camp discussed the possibility of pilot improvement projects, including improvements to the railroad parking lot and a parklet concept with a bench on the bumpout in front of Renfrow Hardware. Another good spot would be right in front of Dilworth Coffee at the very first parking spot.

Dr. Dan Morrill of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission (CMHLC) discussed the possibility of instituting a local historic district in the West John Street area as a way to help save the built environment and institute design review over infill development within a specified boundary. This is being suggested as a possibility to help retain the historic properties in that area. If the Town is interested the CMHLC could provide input on the process. It is something the Board will have to carefully consider.

Dr. Morrill also provided an update on the Outen Pottery property. The CMHLC is still working to get the deed restrictions set aside so it can possibly become a useful pottery area and sell pots, even if off site. The intent is for the CMHLC to work with the Town so the Town can purchase the property as intended once the deed restriction is dealt with. If the town didn't purchase the property then the CMHLC would sell it. The Board discussed possible uses for the site and potential associated infrastructure improvements. Matthews Historical Foundation Chair Paula Lester explained that the taskforce has considered looking at this as a possible public park with a cultural arts aspect. The existing kiln could be an artifact and not actually used. An electric kiln could be brought in and wares could be sold at another location so as not to drive too much traffic to the site. They see it as a low-impact use.

Infill opportunities for downtown. Mr. Camp reviewed possible infill opportunities in the downtown area.

Multi-Family Housing. Ms. Ingrish discussed the benefits of including higher density residential development in certain zoning districts identified in the Land Use Plan. Mr. Higdon noted that infrastructure issues must be considered. Traffic is the top citizen complain so he hesitates to advocate for higher density housing. It is appropriate in some areas but not everywhere in town. Many of the Board's constituents are not in favor either. Discussion ensued regarding the number of apartment units in town versus demand. Ms. Ingrish commented on the growing demand with millennials and older citizens who don't wish to deal with the requirements of home ownership. Demand is expected to continue. There are three key

areas that could be targeted: in downtown, at the Family Entertainment Area and around transit corridors. Mr. Urban commented on the need to get more residents downtown, suggesting 10% of the population as a good starting point. There's a preponderance of people who want to embrace that lifestyle but the Town doesn't currently offer that type of housing stock. He believes there isn't enough variety of housing in town. Mayor Taylor cautioned against the old-style developments with sprawling structures. Ms. Ingrish noted the various types of higher density housing, including townhomes and condominiums as well as apartments, and explained that sprawling style is indicative of the older design and isn't common now. Several Board members spoke on the need for careful consideration and placement of higher density development.

Tree Protection. Zoning Administrator Mary Jo Gollnitz and Town Arborist Ralph Ramsaur discussed tree protection and tree save areas versus tree removals in relation to development projects. There was a great deal of discussion on potential changes to the Town's tree save requirements. Town Attorney Charles Buckley noted that the Town can't institute a tree save area so high as to be deemed too restrictive because that would become a constitutional rights issue. The Board suggested increasing the minimum percentage and discussed institution specimen and location requirements. It's often the case that trees around the perimeter of a development site are saved while the interior of the site is razed. In addition, it would be beneficial for the Town to require certain types of trees to be saved since common pines are not very useful in terms of buffers and aesthetic appeal. Mr. Blodgett noted that the perception of the tree removal issue was likely made worse since there are several development projects occurring at once. People are going to complain no matter how many trees are removed and how many young trees are replanted in their place.

The Board requested more information on the tree save calculations for the Fullwood Station site and suggested having staff work with the Tree and Appearance Board on possible revisions to the ordinance.

Miscellaneous. Mr. Melton thanked the few advisory board and committee members in the audience for their attendance. He noted that the Board is often criticized for holding the Planning Conference out of town but no members of the general public have attended any session yesterday or today, so it seems that the arguments against going out of town are invalid.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27 - 50 E. 1st Street, Ocean Isle Beach, NC

PRESENT: Mayor Jim Taylor; Mayor Pro Tem John Higdon; Commissioners Chris Melton, Jeff Miller, John Ross, John Urban and Larry Whitley; Town Attorney Charles Buckley

ALSO PRESENT: Town Manager Hazen Blodgett; Assistant Town Manager Becky Hawke; Communications Director Jen Thompson; Town Clerk Lori Canapinno

Board Discussion. The Board met to discuss various issues.

Discussion of Revision of the Town's Strategic Plan. Mr. Blodgett reviewed the Strategic Plan. The Board discussed the current goals, noting that they're still very valid but are aging and should be revisited. By consensus the Board decided that a new plan should be implemented through the community input process. It should be more visionary rather than the "look back" structure of the existing plan. Staff will investigate options to determine if this should be a staff- or facilitator-driven process. The vision statements will be reworked through the community input process and then the Board and staff will work on the goals and strategies.

Review and Consider Items Remaining from the 2015 Planning Conference. Mr. Blodgett reviewed last year's Planning Conference to do list. Staff will continue to review options for technology upgrades in the Hood Room.

Regarding the legislative agenda, the bill on campaign signs was introduced on behalf of the Town but didn't pass. By consensus the Board determined that it was not to be further pursued at this time.

Mr. Blodgett noted that the Matthews Station Street lot proposal is in progress and the Town will get funds from the sale. He proposed earmarking those funds - approximately \$185,000 - for specific future projects.

The Board discussed marketing opportunities at the Sportsplex. By consensus the Board agreed to have staff work with the county to make the opportunity available and then hand it off to the organization(s), such as the Chamber, that can handle the process from there. The Board decided against putting any Town funds towards the project but would suggest to the Chamber that it would be a good opportunity for the Chamber to pursue.

The Board discussed road paving options, including the possibility of partnering with The Quad member towns for paving contracts, exploring Town-production of asphalt and discussing the need to preserve higher quality roads to prevent worse problems. Staff will calculate numbers and discuss how to get back to a regular road paving program.

Diversity and Equity for All, Making Martin Luther, King, Jr. Day a Town Holiday. Mr. Whitley would like the Town to honor Martin Luther King, Jr. Day as a Town holiday and continue to work towards greater diversity on staff. By consensus the Board agreed that honoring Martin Luther King was important. Official action will be taken at a future meeting.

Discuss Legislative Update. The Board discussed the 2016 legislative priorities.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28 - 50 E. 1st Street, Ocean Isle Beach, NC

PRESENT: Mayor Jim Taylor; Mayor Pro Tem John Higdon; Commissioners Chris Melton, Jeff Miller, John Ross, John Urban and Larry Whitley; Town Attorney Charles Buckley

ALSO PRESENT: Town Manager Hazen Blodgett; Assistant Town Manager Becky Hawke; Communications Director Jen Thompson; Town Clerk Lori Canapinno

Board Meets with Manager. The Board met with Mr. Blodgett to discuss various issues.

Adjourn. Motion by Mr. Miller to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Melton and unanimously approved. The Planning Conference adjourned at 1:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno
Town Clerk