

**MINUTES
PLANNING BOARD
TUESDAY, JUNE 24, 2014
7:00 PM
HOOD ROOM, MATTHEWS TOWN HALL**

PRESENT: Vice Chair Rob Markiewitz; Members Gary Turner, Steve Lee, David Pratt, and Eric Johnson; Alternate members Barbara Dement and Michael Ham; Town Attorneys Charles Buckley, and Craig Buie; Planning Director Kathi Ingrish, and Zoning Technician/Deputy Town Clerk Mary Jo Gollnitz.

ABSENT: Chairman Tom Lawing and Member Eric Welsh; Youth Voice Brian Lee.

CALL TO ORDER

Rob Markiewitz called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Rob Markiewitz moved and Eric Johnson seconded to bring Barbara Dement and Michael Ham as voting members for this evening's meeting. The vote carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Barbara Dement moved to approve the minutes of the June 3, 2014 meeting. David Pratt seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

MOTION 2014-6 – Update to Downtown Mater Plan Design Guidelines

Planning Director Kathi Ingrish informed the Board that Motion 2014-6 is a text amendment to the Design Guidelines for the downtown area. The guidelines are in the process of being updated and there is interest for potential development in the downtown, and staff does not want to stall any development. There are three conditional categories that could be located in the downtown; R-VS, SRN or CMF; the density limitations would not apply.

Ms. Ingrish continued stating that any development with these classifications would have to go through a rezoning. The text change is removing the limitation that was not intended to be there. Vice Chair Markiewitz asked for additional information regarding the downtown guidelines. Ms. Ingrish explained that when the guidelines were completed in 1997, the Town was not thinking about all types of development that could be beneficial for the downtown. The Downtown Master Plan did state that there should be a fourfold increase in the number of dwelling units. She continued explaining examples of high density within Matthews and how zoning affects what can be developed.

Mr. Markiewitz asked if the text change requires any development coming before the Town for a rezoning. Ms. Ingrish answered yes. Mr. Turner asked for clarification of the Board's action for this item. Ms. Ingrish stated that this is a recommendation for a text change.

Mr. Markiewitz asked if the three precincts are still allowed to operate in the new zoning ordinance. Ms. Ingrish said that the precincts have no bearing on the UDO. Precincts are how it is referenced in the design guidelines.

Rob Markiewitz recommended approval of Motion # 2014-6 as presented, it is consistent with the policies for development as outlined by the Matthews Land Use Plan, and Town's long-range Vision Statements, and adopted policies. Gary Turner seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

STREET WIDENING CONCEPTS FOR E. JOHN STREET

Planning Director Kathi Ingrish showed the Board several conceptual plans of widening of E. John Street. She explained the proposed new interchange at I-485. There would be signals at both sides with no left turning movements from John Street. It would reduce wait time at the intersections. Additionally, there would not be a

need to widen the over pass the bridge which would be costly. She described the area surrounding the intersection and potential impact to that area.

Steve Lee asked what the schedule of the widening along I-485 from Providence Road to this intersection is. Ms. Ingrish said she is not sure. She did note that NCDOT has not determined if this improvement will be part of Section A or B of the John Street widening project. Section B goes towards Union County and is scheduled for construction first. Section A is from I-485 to downtown Matthews and has not been scheduled for construction yet. She noted that Section B is scheduled for construction in 2018.

Mr. Turner asked if this ranked ahead of the Weddington Road and I 485 interchange. Ms. Ingrish said that NCDOT is doing an environmental assessment of the entire corridor. Mr. Turner stated that he is opposed to the entire project. He feels it is an Independence Blvd. bypass and that it will bisect Matthews' downtown. Ms. Ingrish said that the environmental assessment is a federal mandate. NCDOT is providing design work ahead of time. The consultants were asked to look at several options for the road. She continued noting that some options have been removed and that four lane options are still being reviewed. Staff has provided comments to the consultants regarding the width of the street in the downtown area. These are initial concepts. Mr. Turner said that the interchange at I-485 is not a real problem.

Mr. Lee said that this may be a help with the traffic. When he comes into downtown in the morning there is a traffic back up. Widening Section B with combination of the new ramps, it probably would make easier travel from the south and may make downtown traffic flow better. Ms. Ingrish said that there needs to be an alternative street going into Matthews' downtown. Independence Pointe Parkway ideally would cross over or under I-485, which is costly. In the meantime a road through Lat Purser's development across railroad tracks will help with local traffic.

Steve Lee asked if NCDOT charts where the traffic is going during peak times. Town Attorney Charlie Buckley said that 45 years ago they did find out where traffic was coming from and where they were going. He does not believe they do this anymore.

Ms. Dement asked what the status of Buckley Way construction is. Ms. Ingrish said that hopefully this summer it will be constructed. Ms. Ingrish explained where the location of Buckley Way will be located. Ms. Dement asked if eliminating left turns on John Street would help with the traffic. Ms. Ingrish showed NCDOT's proposal for the super street alternatives, traffic patterns, and the impact on the properties along John Street. Staff has already told NCDOT that the proposed center median width needs to be reduced.

Eric Johnson said that he feels that widening John Street would kill Matthews. He feels that there should be an economic impact assessment completed for the downtown. Ms. Ingrish said that it is not part of the environmental assessment. Mr. Johnson continued noting that when traffic engineers get involved that they should not be the ones determining the destiny of the community. Mr. Ham said that historically when the interstates were built, they killed small towns. The state is looking at moving traffic and nothing beyond that and they should be looking at this in the DEIS. Ms. Ingrish stated that they are not doing a DEIS, they are conducting an EA. She said that she agrees with what the Board is saying.

Ms. Dement said that we need to keep downtown and make it better. We need to find ways around downtown for the traffic that is just passing through. Mr. Ham said that traffic coming to and from downtown could possibly be diverted to Hwy 51, then onto US 74 and to I-485. Steve Lee said that there is no good option. What can citizens do to voice their opinions? Ms. Ingrish said that all the comments tonight will be seen by Council. Staff has met with the consultants and they did promise they will be reviewing options for the road. Mr. Lee asked if a neighborhood petition was signed if that would help. Ms. Ingrish said that she hoped to have something new back from the consultants soon. Mr. Ham asked if there will be a public hearing. Ms. Ingrish said that she is not sure of NCDOT's schedule on this. David Pratt asked if the Town could schedule a meeting in order to have citizens voice their opinions. Ms. Ingrish said yes they could do that, but staff is hoping to get some newer concepts that will not be as extreme as what is currently proposed before any public input meetings.

Mr. Markiewitz asked about no left turn on John Street. He stated that there are travel lanes that have no left turn at certain times of day to keep traffic flowing in other communities. Ms. Dement said that a lot of communities place hour restrictions on turn lanes. Mr. Markiewitz said the lights restricting access of reversible

lanes on Monroe Road/Seventh Street into Charlotte work well. Mr. Ham said that the Monroe Road lights work efficiently. Discussion continued on how the left turn lighting works in other locations.

Ms. Dement asked what other small towns have done that have been faced with this type of dilemma. Ms. Ingrish said that it depends on the money and timing. NCDOT is driving this project. We are not saying how and when this will be completed. Mr. Markiewitz asked if we have the ability to slow down or stop a project the community does not like. Ms. Ingrish said NCDOT generally will not spend money on a project that the community will not support. Mr. Markiewitz asked if slowing the project down would hurt the town on other locations where we need money. Ms. Ingrish said it could. She discussed the Weddington Road and I-485 interchange delays.

Mr. Ham said that it would be in the Town's interest to let the public of Matthews know what is going on. Maybe the Planning Board could take the driver's seat on letting NCDOT know how the community feels about the project. Ms. Ingrish said that staff is addressing only what is in Matthews jurisdiction. The consultants have provided options for Stalling and Indian Trail and they are reviewing the proposals for their respective communities. NCDOT would like to have all three towns come up with something similar along the corridor. Ms. Ingrish continued explaining that the proposals are for 2035 traffic. However, recent trends show that if we change our development standards, there may not be that type of increase in traffic. Discussion continued about mixed use development, cost of gasoline in the upcoming years, working from home, and alternative means of travel.

Mr. Pratt asked if there is a meeting between Matthews and the other towns. Ms. Ingrish said that there has been a meeting of staff members. All three towns are going to different recommending bodies from their respective communities to receive input. Staff does expect to see alternatives brought back to the communities.

Mr. Ham asked if the planning department is providing alternatives to NCDOT. Ms. Ingrish said it is ok to slow traffic downtown and it needs to be pedestrian friendly. Mr. Buckley said that this was provided just two weeks ago to the Town.

Mr. Lee said that any widening does not benefit the town and he believes that the road is at the limits of what you could safely cross. Mr. Johnson asked if it would be appropriate to ask for an economic impact study. He continued stating that he feels this will kill the downtown and benefit the Lat Purser development. The economic analysis would show how it could benefit properties near I-485 and how it would affect downtown. Ms. Ingrish said it is appropriate to make suggestion to Council, EDAC or NCDOT. Mr. Markiewitz asked if this is the last time that the Board will see the proposals. Ms. Ingrish said that this is for environmental assessment only. NCDOT has a time limit to meet and complete the assessment in order to start construction. Ms. Ingrish explained the time schedule.

Mr. Ham asked if a portion of the construction area was in the National Historic Register. Ms. Ingrish said that it is one block outside of the register. Discussion continued about possible local historic designation. Ms. Dement asked about extending Crestdale Road to John Street. Discussion was held about alignment, railroad crossing issues and other alternative connections.

Mr. Markiewitz restated concerns the Board had expressed about the proposed E. John Street widening:

- public meetings to review proposal and receive input from the community,
- revisit with other towns,
- economic input study,
- preserving the town in what it stands for along with the history and atmosphere

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Markiewitz moved to adjourn the meeting. David Pratt seconded and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Mary Jo Gollnitz
Zoning Technician/ Deputy Town Clerk