

Advisory Board Priorities 2017-18
Prepared in anticipation of Council Planning Retreat
January 27-28, 2017

Introduction

On December 22, 2016, I asked each Town advisory board chair to identify their Board's top three strategic priorities for the future. I advised them that the Council values their recommendations and perspectives as you think strategically about the future in your annual planning retreat. I provided the current Council Goals for their information and acknowledged that this request was late. Listed below are the responses we have received. We appreciate their effort to share their thinking with the Council.

As I reviewed the attached priorities, I observed some common themes and I thought it might be helpful to highlight these and when possible, share what we already have underway to address these priorities. In addition to your review, we will also provide these interests to our Senior Leadership Team as we prepare our Recommended Budget.

Common Themes

SUPPORT

Communications among development boards:

- We have begun meeting with the development review advisory board chairs after our annual breakfast with them to further refine how we can support each other.
- More communications across boards and training for members, focus on diversity and expertise in recruiting new members and increased administrative support were key areas of focus.
- We will continue to work with these chairs to develop our plan of action.
- This effort will be enhanced by an assistant clerk who will focus on boards and commissions and by the teamwork of department heads who rely on these boards.

Planning staff: We have recently filled a number of key positions and we have shared with the Council our plan for addressing the multiple priorities ahead of us. Our new director of Planning and Development Services is positioning himself to offer his years of experience and expertise in our efforts.

Training and expertise: Our new assistant clerk will work with department heads and the advisory boards to train new members and reach potential new members. We are actively exploring a mentorship program for this purpose.

Events and telling the story of our successes:

- We have recognized and focused on telling the good stories of the efforts of the Town. Our Communications Manager in Communications and Public Affairs continues to develop new ways to tell our story.
- We will soon be engaging a firm to help us tell our economic development story in a way that focuses on our strategy for the future. This story, of course, is the story of the Town as a whole, from core service to strategic initiatives.

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PROJECTS and PARTNERSHIPS

Design guidelines, connectivity plan, downtown plan: These key projects are underway in a collaborative and innovative way and continue to have the support of the staff and the Council

Youth: Our cross departmental team continues to address the issues raised around services to youth in our community

Partnerships: We agree with partnerships as a key strategy for the future. We are working closely with the University, UNC Healthcare, SECU, the County, nonprofits and the other towns in the area to strengthen those partnerships

Policing practices: Chief Blue has been leading multiple community conversations on this topic. I believe we are leaders in this discussion across the state and the country.

Greenways: Bond funded projects are underway

New facility: As you heard at your recent meeting, plans for this facility are proceeding.

Performance measures and data: Our business plan focuses on performance measures as a way to tell if we are reaching our goals. We recently engaged Dr. David Ammons with the School of Government to work with the Council and the housing advisory groups to establish performance measures in the area of affordable housing. Our Open Data portal will continue to expand the information shared with the public in a way that invites them to suggest new and different ways to see the data and approach the issues.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARDS PRIORITIES:

Community Design Commission

- Creation of Design Guidelines: Create Architectural Design Guidelines with Winter & Company for EF and Downtown. Should the CDC find this process beneficial, devote more resources and expand guidelines to all of Chapel Hill.
- Improve communication with other boards to assist in the review process: This is intended to facilitate efficient communication between boards. A list of comments from other boards to be given to the CDC prior to each meeting.
- Create Annual Design Award: This award will be given to one project each year. The focus will not only be design, but how the project implements energy and water efficient practices.

Environmental Stewardship Advisory Board

- ESAB will work with Town staff and advisory board Chairs to increase collaboration, communication and coordination between Town advisory boards and commissions.

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- ESAB will attend and table two events – Festifall and Eno River Festival – to provide environmental education and solicit community input on Town’s environmental stewardship. Funding is requested for event registration (Eno River only) and informational materials.
- ESAB will coordinate with the Town to host an Earth Day public panel discussion on an environmental topic organized by the ESAB in partnership with UNC Student Government. Funding is requested for speaker compensation, refreshments and advertising.

Transportation and Connectivity Advisory Board

- Bike Plan Implementation- We are getting numerous inquiries from concerned citizens that this is not occurring. Yet when I talk to Staff it appears that significant progress has occurred. The Town Staff needs to do a much better job of getting the word out and the TCAB is the one of the appropriate venues to accomplish this. A user friendly map and spreadsheet of Bike Plan Projects that is updated monthly needs to be accessible to Town residents on the Town's website
- Mobility and Connectivity Plan- This is critical for the Town's future development. The TCAB needs to be intimately involved as this plan is developed in 2017.
- Increase TCAB effectiveness- It has been become obvious in 2016 that some of our recommendations have not been well understood by other Town Boards and Committees. The TCAB strongly recommends that better communication between Board Chairs become a priority. The possibility of more joint meetings when appropriate, Board Chair breakfasts, etc. As Chair I am also encouraging TCAB members to attend more Town Council meetings especially when TCAB petitions are on the agenda.

Housing Advisory Board

- Further explore and define developer incentives related to affordable housing.
- Create performance measures to assess affordable housing strategies and goals and make recommendations accordingly.
- Continue to build the Board's expertise on local/current affordable housing issues.

Historic District Commission

- **Data needs** In LUMO section 8.4.10 it states: “The commission shall prepare, maintain, and consult maps showing the historic and architectural significance of structures within the historic district. Such maps shall be updated at least every five (5) years.” The Town has not done so in more than twenty years. The HDC believes that this mandate is important and that the effort to update such maps and supporting information should be undertaken ASAP with appropriate funding to accomplish this task.
This effort should, at a minimum, include updated maps of the Historic Districts that define the special character each district embodies, including the National Register list of contributing structures and their description and an assessment of buildings and landscapes that define the unique character of each of our three districts. Other helpful information would include easy

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access to Sanborn Maps, lot-to-house ratios, better GIS information, and additional supporting information that the HDC might suggest at the time of the update. Some consideration also might be given to describing sub-districts within the existing districts where there are significantly different characteristics within a district.

All of this will result in a cache of objective information and clearly stated design guidelines and standards that will be available to inform realtors, architects, and property owners about the various districts and how to undertake the process for obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness.

As noted, this effort will require resources beyond which the staff would be expected to provide (e.g. outside help will be required at a cost to the Town.)

- **Increase public awareness of and support for the Chapel Hill Historic Districts and the Historic District Commission** Increased awareness of the Historic Districts—our downtown neighborhoods closest to the University. The Chapel Hill history visibly preserved in the Historic Districts as well as on the UNC campus contributes to tourism (an obvious economic generator) whether it be for educational or sports events or for UNC fundraising efforts. To enhance that experience, Town staff might consider developing outreach programs like walking tours of the historic districts led by volunteers on a periodic basis for citizens and visitors and promoted by the Visitor’s Bureau. Recently, the head of the Planning Department, Ben Hitchings, has been holding walks through various districts in the Town for town staff and some selected residents. This is an excellent way for the Town staff (not just the Planning Department) to learn more about the town. The HDC believes support of local institutions that will preserve our history and the character of our historic town center are important. For example, the Chapel Hill Historical Society, Preservation Chapel Hill, and the possible revival of the Chapel Hill Museum, among others, are valuable resources.
- **HDC Staffing** The Town Planning Department has been understaffed for some period. We understand that situation is being rectified (four vacant positions recently filled and interviews for two of the three remaining vacancies underway.) We bring this up because staff supporting the HDC has been stretched very thin, often having to attend to other matters that delay efforts related to HDC matters. We should have robust support from the Town that embraces the mission of Commission’s mission. We are hopeful that with increased staffing that is occurring, this issue will be rectified.
- **HDC Procedures** The HDC will begin to refine our procedures through a working session to be held on Saturday, January 28. Training for Commission and staff is very important. We need to revisit our Design Guidelines, and in particular to include a statement defining the “special character” of each historic district. (See above regarding data needs.) We will be identifying what additional training might be appropriate for the Commission and staff. To the extent it will involve some expenditure of funds, we will recommend such efforts to the town management, and if necessary to Council.

OTHER BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS PRIORITIES (alphabetical order)

Board of Adjustment

“As indicated by our inviting Mr. David Owens of the NC School of Government to speak to Town boards and commissions on January 4th, we are concerned about the conduct of quasi-judicial proceedings. Our three top priorities center about the publics’ understanding of these type of proceedings.

Those that I have consulted feel that documents need to be developed that: 1) highlight the difference between a public hearing and a quasi-judicial hearing; 2) explain the nature of an adversarial proceeding; and, 3) discuss testimony and a simple approach to the submission of evidence in a quasi-judicial proceeding or hearing. Somewhere in number 1-3 above would be a discussion of "standing" to bring an action, as State law appears to have taken a rather important new direction with the recent *Cherry v Weisner* Court of Appeals decision.”

Chapel Hill Public Library Board of Trustees

- Fund ongoing and expanded outreach services to underserved populations, with an emphasis on digital inclusion strategies.

Rationale: part of the ongoing mission of the public library is “creating connections.” This requires continued efforts to understand users and non-users of the Library (community assessment), to develop innovative approaches to reaching underserved populations (collection and program design), and to provide these resources in a variety of formats for the population (access) so that the Library can build on its reputation as a community-centered organization. We feel that one of the best ways to reach out to these underserved populations is with digital access to library resources. We ask the Town Council to help underwrite these efforts as the Library also seeks other sources of funding to bolster these initiatives.

- Increase funding to build collections – and access to them – at the Library.
Rationale: costs for materials continue to rise each year, so incremental increases in the Library’s materials’ budget are needed to offset these costs. The collection also needs to remain responsive to changing formats and community interests so that it can truly address multiple literacies with multiple formats. To this end the Board recommends continued support for the Pop Up Truck and associated services as a way to improve access to and visibility of Library collections and services. We also support going “fine free” as an important way of furthering the Library’s mission and re-engaging users who currently avoid the library due to their accrued fines.

- Fund enhancements to the exterior of the Library.

Rationale: As the inside of the Library receives ongoing study and attention (improvements to the space, way-finding, service delivery, etc.), we feel the exterior of the Library also deserves ongoing attention to improve visibility and access. To achieve this, we would recommend:

1. Increasing the parking available at the Library (as internal enhancements reap the reward of increased visitation)

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2. Enhancing the entrance to the Library for improved visibility (the sign is buried amongst the trees, though its recent repainting and lighting is certainly an improvement, and the entrance could be improved by landscaping/plantings)
3. Funding seating or other furnishings on the rear patio, and other changes discovered as part of the Library's ongoing external space assessment.

The Board supports creative ways to accomplish these initiatives, perhaps through collaborations with local organizations.

Community Policing Advisory Committee

- Continued support for recruiting/retention strategies of officers and staff.
- Continued support for new facility plans including location, design, and construction.
- Support for plans to initiate and coordinate community outreach sessions to gather feedback on policing strategies and priorities from citizens.

Cultural Arts Commission

- To continue to work with community, school, and cultural organizations to make connections, build partnerships, and expand access to cultural opportunities. Examples of these include our artist in the schools program, small grants program to artists and non-profits, advisory and informational meetings with arts, university, and community groups.
- Initiate % for art projects utilizing streetscape and greenway bond funds upon approval of council. Projects are being developed as a result of conversation and consultation with town departments, commissions and stakeholders to identify areas that will have an impact.
- Work with town staff, commissions, and stakeholders on the downtown plan on improvement of alleyways, streetscape design, way finding, parking, and public spaces to enhance the pedestrian experience.

Human Services Advisory Board

- **Priority Area #1:** To fund safety-net services for disadvantaged residents.
- **Priority Area #2:** To fund education, mentorship, and afterschool programming for youth facing a variety of challenges.
- **Priority Area #3:** To fund programs aimed at improving health and nutrition of needy residents.

Justice In Action Committee

- Housing: The JIAC will be collaborating with the Chapel Hill Police Department and Housing Department on revising the trespass policy. We hope that the town will consider the issues presented, the suggested changes to the current policy, and will continue to review its implementation.

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- Policing: We are looking forward to the continued improvements in policing practices in Chapel Hill. We hope to see the town initiate follow ups with recommendations made by Orange County Bias Free Policing Coalition, with special attention to the implementation of body cameras on all officers and associated policy development.
- Diversity of town boards and staff: The Justice In Action Committee would like to see increased diversity in the composition of town boards and staff. We would like the town to consider utilizing a racial equity toolkit or lens in order to increase diversity on boards and town staff so that it better reflects the makeup of the town.

Parks, Greenways and Recreation Commission:

- Continue to participate in Greenway Projects; including the construction phases of Bolin Creek, the design phase of Tanyard Branch and the planning/public input phases of the Morgan Creek Projects.
- Assist with gathering input regarding program needs/wants from areas of the community not currently being served by the Parks and Recreation Department.
- Support departmental efforts to expand summer camp offerings.

Stormwater Utility Advisory Board

“Thank you for inviting our input on strategic priorities for this next budget year. We won’t have the opportunity to hold a Stormwater Board discussion before January 20th. However, I am happy to give you an overview that I think is likely to be supported by our Board. Without an official meeting with all of our members, a more specific list is not possible at this time.

Given the extensive stormwater needs identified in the recent Lower Booker Creek Watershed report, I feel strongly that the Town of Chapel Hill needs to move aggressively on addressing storm water issues by beginning to spend the 5.9 million dollars from the bond that was passed in 2016. In addition, the town needs to consider additional fee increases or other measures in order to complete more of the recommendations coming from the sub-watershed studies.

Our Stormwater Board, in consultation with staff, will address FY 2017-18 stormwater priorities in more detail during our next several meetings in January and February. We would be happy to forward to you those recommendations as you develop the Manager’s budget to be delivered to the Town Council later in the Spring.”