

MINUTES OF JOINT MEETING OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE
TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL AND THE GREENWAYS COMMISSION
AND TRANSPORTATION BOARD, MUNICIPAL BUILDING,
MONDAY, AUGUST 31, 1987, 7:30 P.M.

Mayor Pro-tem Bill Thorpe called the meeting to order. Council Members present were:

Julie Andresen
David Godschalk
Jonathan Howes
David Pasquini
R. D. Smith
Arthur Werner

Mayor Wallace and Council Member Preston were absent, excused. Also present were Town Manager David R. Taylor, Assistant Town Managers Sonna Loewenthal and Ron Secrist, and Town Attorney Ralph Karpinos.

Greenways Commission Members present were:

Kathryn Harris - Chair
Anne Loeb
Eva Metzger
Betsy Myers
Betsy Pringle
Phil Sloane

Commission Member Dorothy Talbot was absent. Also present were Parks and Recreation Director Jim Herstine and Recreation Specialist Bill Webster.

Transportation Board Members present were:

Charles Antle
Jennie Capparella
Larry Lanset
Richard Palmer - Chair
Mario Pieroni
John Thomas
Don Thomson

Board Members Clinton Jones and Bob Moorhead were absent. Also present was Transportation Director Bob Godding.

Kathryn Harris, Betsy Pringle, Phil Sloane and Eva Metzger of the Greenways Commission gave an update of what had occurred during the past year in the Greenways Commission. Ms. Harris pointed out that the Tanyard Branch greenway had been opened and dedicated and that the Commission was in the process of developing another section of greenway trails. Ms. Pringle gave an update on the current status of the greenway development.

Mr. Sloane explained the future plans of the Greenways Commission. He said this involves what he would estimate to be a ten-year program to connect the greenway trails. He said he hoped three trails, Battle Park to the Community Center; Bolin Creek from the Community Center to Umstead Park; and Morgan Creek to Wilson Creek to the Southern Park would become showcase greenway trails. Ms. Metzger pointed out some of the problems the Commission had encountered in developing greenway trails. She said these involved dealing with the public and their concerns, to easement acquisition, and the implications of the Resource Conservation District.

Recreation Specialist Bill Webster gave a slide presentation on the current and some of the proposed greenway trails.

Council Member Howes asked what lessons had the Greenways Commission learned from their dealings with the Morgan Creek residents regarding greenway development. Ms. Harris responded that the Commission had learned the art of compromise and the effectiveness of dealing with each situation neighbor to neighbor.

Council Member Andresen asked if were clear what kind of compromise had been agreed upon between the Morgan Creek residents and the Town regarding greenways. Mr. Webster replied that the agreement would only be in effect when easements were obtained. He said the actual conservation agreement between the Town and the N.C. Botanical Garden had not been finalized.

Mr. Sloane commented that he felt the agreement allowed for more preservation of land than public access to greenways but that land preservation was one of the goals of the greenways.

Council Member Werner asked if the Commission felt the Council had been responsive to the Commission's needs. Ms. Harris responded that she felt the Council had been responsive and helpful.

Council Member Godschalk said he had gone to the first informational meeting on the Battle Branch greenway and that he had been impressed with the way the meeting had been run and with the representatives of Dewbury and Davis. He asked what was the schedule for completion of this trail. Mr. Webster replied that construction would start almost immediately with the help of local boy scouts. He said there were two easements that needed to be obtained before the trail could be completed.

Council Member Smith commended the Commission for the work they had done the last year. He said the ten-year program would be an expensive one. He asked if the Commission had any idea of ways to fund the program. Mr. Sloane commented that Raleigh included funding in their Capital Improvements Program (CIP) each year. He said the Town had allocated \$50,000 in its CIP this year and that he felt this was a reasonable amount.

Manager Taylor asked if the staffing for the Greenways Commission was adequate. He also asked if the Commission would prioritize their needs for the next few years so that this information could be considered for inclusion in the new 5-year CIP.

Mayor Pro-tem Thorpe thanked the Commission for attending this meeting.

Richard Palmer, Chair of the Transportation Board, commented that the Board was pleased to be meeting with the Council. He said that the Board needed feedback from the Council on areas of disagreement, particularly with regard to Board recommendations concerning transportation related development issues. Mr. Palmer said that it would be nice for the Board to have some idea as to why the recommendations were not acted upon. He said that it was frustrating at times for the Board to be the first to review an item; then that item be sent to the Planning Board where modifications were made; and then sent to the Council, often with other modifications, all of which the Transportation Board has no knowledge.

Council Member Werner suggested that the Transportation Board receive minutes of the meetings of the Planning Board and the Council.

Mr. Palmer said the Board had been pleased with the new responsibilities of reviewing development proposals with regard to traffic impact. He said he felt the Board's recommendations have been sound. He commented that he felt, however, that the Town had not learned how to say no, and this resulted in developments that were not always what was best for the Town.

Mr. Palmer said the Board felt the Transit system was well managed and maintained. He said transit usage was up and that during the Olympic Festival alone, 33,000 people had used the system.

Mr. Palmer commented that the outlook was not as bright as it could be. He pointed out that the transit fares did not come near covering the transit costs. He said the system was highly subsidized. Mr. Palmer stated that this past year they had had a consultant study to develop contingencies in case of federal cutbacks.

Mr. Palmer said the Board was looking forward to being involved with the University and its traffic development plan, the revisions to the Thoroughfare Plan and with the 5-year CIP.

Council Member Andresen asked how much time was spent on the Thoroughfare Plan. Mr. Palmer said they had not spent much time yet on the plan but that they would be involved as more information was made available.

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Board Member Capparella spoke of the need for more bike lanes and that these lanes be a part of the roadway and not sidewalks or separate trails. She said it was more dangerous for bicyclists to use bikepaths that were like sidewalks than bikelanes in the street right-of-way. Ms. Capparella suggested that when reviewing developments in their planning stages, bikeways should be considered just like sidewalks were considered.

Council Member Andresen asked if bikelanes had been included as part of the Merritt Mill Road improvements. Ms. Capparella responded that she had talked with Town Engineer George Small regarding this issue and that he had seemed interested. She said the Town really needed to look at the intersection of the bikeway between Carrboro and Chapel Hill at the intersection of Merritt Mill Road and Cameron Avenue. She pointed out that this was an exceedingly dangerous intersection.

Ms. Capparella also suggested that the Board needed more commitment from the Town's Transportation Planners for bikeways.

Council Member Howes asked Ms. Capparella's opinion of having a separate right-of-way for bicycles, that would be prohibited to pedestrians. Ms. Capparella responded that she felt it was better to mix the bicycles and cars in the same right-of-way, like Carrboro did.

Council Member Andresen asked about the status of the additional Transportation Planner. Mr. Godding replied that there had been an initial recruiting period earlier this summer that had not drawn any successful candidates and that the Town was currently readvertising for the position.

Council Member Godschalk commented that something needed to be done on East Franklin Street with regard to bicycle traffic. He said he seldom saw bicycles using the designated bikepath, but instead used the pedestrian sidewalk.

Council Member Smith suggested the Transportation Board review when discussing the Thoroughfare Plan revisions, the means of funnelling traffic around Chapel Hill to Carrboro using a route other than Estes Drive. He said this would become especially important when Interstate-40 opened.

Council Member Werner asked if the Town were looking at placing bikelanes on Weaver Dairy and Erwin Roads. He commented that the traffic was fast on those roads and that he was not sure bicyclists would be safe.

Council Member Godschalk said he was pleased with the transit system operations during the Olympic Festival. He asked if there were any plans to have a transit transfer facility (terminal) downtown, possibly around parking lot #5. Manager Taylor responded that as part of the plans for the extension of Pittsboro Street had been the idea of using part of lot #5 as a terminal for bus transfers.

Council Member Andresen said it would be nice to have a study of potential park/ride lots.

Council Member Smith said that as the Thoroughfare Plan and University land use plan were being reviewed it might be possible to come up with park/ride lot locations to help alleviate the traffic problems. He said this might negate the need for road realignments as suggested in the University's land use plan.

Council Member Smith complemented the Board for their work and said that when the Transit system had begun, there had been some who said it would never work, but that he was glad to be able to say that Chapel Hill's Transit system had worked.

Council Member Howes asked about the contingency plans for the Transit system in case of further federal cutbacks. He asked if reducing service and increasing fares would be the alternative. Mr. Lanset responded that the consultant study had dealt with several different scenarios but that no specific plan of action had been decided upon. Mr. Palmer replied that it would depend upon the circumstances at the time that any subsidies were reduced.

Don Thomson commented that the formula for fare prices and division of revenues between the Town and University was something that could also be reviewed as a means of offsetting any cuts in federal funding. He also said that the Board felt the time constraints put on them to prepare fare schedules and thoroughly analyze the recommended budget was too tight during the budget process.

Manager Taylor replied that the time constraints were in part due to the Council's policy that the Council received the budget information prior to any other group. He said the timetable for the Transportation Board was the same as that of the Council for adoption of the budget and he would look at ways of assisting the time for review.

Mayor Pro-tem Thorpe thanked the Transportation Board for attending the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

