

**TOWN OF WEDDINGTON
SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
THURSDAY, AUGUST 27, 2009 - 4:00 P.M.
MINUTES**

The Town Council of the Town of Weddington, North Carolina, met in a Special Session at the Weddington Town Hall, 1924 Weddington Road, Weddington, NC 28104 on August 27, 2009, at 4:00 p.m. with Mayor Nancy D. Anderson presiding.

Present: Mayor Nancy D. Anderson, Councilmembers L.A. Smith, Tommy Price and Jerry McKee, Town Planner Jordan Cook and Town Administrator/Clerk Amy S. McCollum.

Absent: Mayor Pro Tem Robert Gilmartin

Visitors: Joyce Helms, Walker Davidson, Craig Horn, Katherine Armstrong, Lynn Wingard, Lauren Kerley, Lynda Paxton, Barbara Harrison, Brendan Ciganek, Carol H. Pinsak, Dr. George F. Pinsak, Larry Almond, Marnie Thomas, Rob Dow, T. McGremis, Bill Stout, Chris Blackburn, Steven Jarvis, Chris Wasulko, Richard Rotchstein, Daniel Barry, Gregg Wyant, Walter Staton, Mike Treske, Carol C. Wyant, Michelle Pelaman and Liz Simmerman.

Item No. 1. Open the Meeting. Mayor Nancy D. Anderson called the August 27, 2009 Special Town Council Meeting to order at 4:26 p.m.

Item No. 2. Determination of Quorum. There was a quorum.

Item No. 3. Welcome and Introductions. Mayor Anderson introduced Mr. Jim Trogdon, Chief Operating Officer with NCDOT and Mr. Barry Moose, NCDOT Division Engineer.

Item No. 4. Presentation by Mayor Anderson Regarding Providence Road Widening Project. Mayor Anderson presented a PowerPoint Presentation regarding the Providence Road Widening Project. A copy is attached to the minutes.

Mayor Anderson stated, "Thank you for coming Mr. Trogdon. My purpose for inviting you here was two-fold. I would ask that you give your Division Chiefs more authority. For mayors like me it drives us crazy when people in Raleigh who have never been to Weddington can make decisions that override our Division Chief. I am happy to report that the new and improved NCDOT is working much better with their Division Chiefs. Also there is the need to identify some of the limitations of the current design that we have, explore some of the remedies and talk about some of the unintended consequences of how this is working. We are going to talk about the background of the project, look at the current plans and talk about the end results and what we are trying to get to. Weddington is the poster child for how not to get roads built in the state. We are about a decade late and a few million dollars short. Plans for this road started back in the late 80s. It was supposed to be done in 2000 and is just now getting done. In 2000 we were less than 2000 in population and now we are approaching 12,000 people. We are in a mess and some of this is self-inflicted. In early 2004, I tried to get support to get a comprehensive transportation plan and we never did that. Things are looking up and we are working to help ourselves. We know that NCDOT helps those who help themselves. Weddington initiated a Local Area Transportation Regional Plan and we are working with three other municipalities - Marvin, Wesley Chapel and Waxhaw. We have a comprehensive plan networking all the roads together. Weddington has hired consultants do to a detailed study of the downtown. They are coming on board September 2. It will not be ready until the earliest – next spring. Their objective is to see how we can improve access to the existing shopping area,

interconnect all those parcels so they have access to all different directions and work with DOT to figure out how to get that done. NCDOT did a great job with designing the current plan because it moves traffic too well. It will be a speedway coming through here. The shopping center will be right in and right out only. This is not good for the merchants. On Highway 84 there will be a median which makes that a one way street with no access. The business owners are very concerned about how their customer base is going to get there. The businesses have to compete. We need uninterrupted access to the shopping center. We can't block off Highway 84 accesses until we get them something. We need a complete street concept for Highway 84. We need to be able to walk over there and not cutoff the other side of 84. It is currently the church right now but it won't be that way forever because they are moving across the street. Eventually that will be part of the downtown. I do not want our temporary fix to dig it up and then start over again. I would like our temporary fix to be part of the permanent fix. The Downtown Committee and I want a traffic circle. The Downtown Committee wants more trees than asphalt, function and form and to be able to make a safe u-turn there. We need some traffic calming strategies with as many trees and grassy medians as we can get. We are going to have a major traffic jam. All traffic goes down to Rea Road. We are going to merge three to four lanes into one lane. We are moving the traffic jam from 485 down to Rea Road."

Councilmember Price stated, "This was presented like it was a Council presentation. I don't know if the other council members have seen this or whether it is the Mayor's Presentation. I agree with most of what the Mayor said. I am still not a big fan of the traffic circle."

Item No. 5. Report from Barry Moose, NCDOT Division Chief for Division 10 Regarding Last Week's Staff Meeting with Local Business Owners.

Mr. Barry Moose – We met with staff and the business owners of the Weddington Corners Shopping Center regarding these issues. We have a really good appreciation of their true concerns. The last time I was here Councilmember Price asked would the queue of traffic on Highway 84 back up through a proposed roundabout in the design year. We did some analysis and giving the assumption that the Rea Road Extension is not built to the ultimate four lane section, all indications would be that the queue of the traffic would back up through the roundabout. We tried to determine what year it will actually fail. We did not have any background data on this section of Highway 84. It was hard for us to predict. We do know that the roundabout will fail in the design year. After going back we need to think harder about the roundabout. We try to build projects that are sustainable. My take away from the business owners was that the main concern was the ability to turn left. They can get in easily coming down Highway 84 into the center but right now the project does not afford any left turn movements on Highway 84 to go back towards Wesley Chapel and Monroe. The business owners said the majority of their business is in this part of the County. You can go in any other direction in the way it is designed now. The only one that is prohibited completely right now is that left turn out. We had several ideas. The business community asked if I would consider converting this to a traffic signal. I promised I would study this but did not promise any approval. A traffic signal could back up traffic. I do not have any results on that. I recommended we build a back access. I think that is a very good option. I walked the site after we left. I said I would consider temporarily shortening the island to be able to make a left turn out. At some point in the future we would have to go ahead and put the rest of the concrete median island in. That may be a short term solution. It also introduces what I refer to as "Good Samaritan Accidents." When you have a traffic queue that backs up and they see a person wanting to turn left, most of the time a good natured person stops and leaves a gap in traffic. That person tries to shoot the gap and they are sideswiped. We talked about the church. We came up with a lot of good solutions. The only one I could recommend was to consider constructing a driveway access across someone else's property. I am pursuing as an add-on to this project something that I wanted to do during the planning phase which was is to realign Weddington Church Road and create a signal that can be coordinated with other signals. It will eliminate the problem of people cutting through the church to get to the signal. We did not pursue that at the planning stage because the church was concerned about that because they were in the process of constructing the Family Life Center. They came back to me at a

later date and asked if we would reconsider that if they donated the property. I said yes. That is on the drawing board in Raleigh being designed. I am interested in the Town's view about a library.

Mr. Chris Blackmon (Harris Teeter Representative) questioned how someone would get into the Harris Teeter Shopping Center southbound on Highway 16.

Mr. Moose - We are building a directional crossover. Someone coming south down 16 can turn left in. Getting into the property will not be difficult. Getting out will be more critical. If someone is coming south and wants to go back north they can turn in and do their shopping and come back out here at the light.

Mr. Blackmon - They won't be able to go back out the same entrance they came in on?

Mr. Moose - They can go right. The only option they have is to go all the way up to Hemby Road or do a turn around in the parking lot and neither one of those options are very good.

Councilmember Smith – Have you looked at connecting the shopping center and the activity center?

Mr. Moose – Yes we have. The activity center generates a lot of traffic. I would consider developing an alley way type of road, developing that better, and punching it out to the parking area.

Councilmember McKee - If you connected the activity center and shopping center, you still could not get a left turn.

Mr. Moose – Correct, it is not a direct access.

Harris Teeter Representative - We are going to have a real issue with people using the parking lot as a road through to another piece of property. I don't think we will be thrilled with that not to mention the added cost of having to repair.

Mr. Moose - We are trying to balance. Weddington has a unique problem in where you are sitting in the County. You have a lot of tremendous growth in Waxhaw and Wesley Chapel. All that traffic is funneling through Weddington trying to get to 16 to go to Charlotte or Rea Road to get to 485. You have to live with a lot of traffic that you don't generate. We can't lose sight of getting that traffic out of town as quickly as possible. We want to provide adequate access but we also want to try to keep 16 and the integrity of the design as sound as we can so that we can get that traffic out because the quicker we get that traffic out of town then the people that want to be serviced by this development will have an easier time coming and going from it.

Councilmember McKee – Highway 84 is the real problem for local residents who live within a ½ mile of the shopping center. We could live the way 16 will be designed. You are not only cutting off shoppers, you are cutting off employees of the church and people coming into the church everyday to do church volunteer work. They have no left turn in from 84. What you are doing to 84 is impacting the whole area. You said possibly cutting the median back some. Why not cut it back further and let's see how many wrecks we have. There won't be any more wrecks than there are now. You can see for miles now. The traffic is not going to be stacked up like it is now.

Mr. Moose - I talked to the church that had three representatives at the meeting last week and I asked that specific question. They are concerned but my takeaway from them was they were not concerned about that as much as they were concerned about their main campus. They said that eventually the operation on Highway 84 will be moved.

Councilmember McKee – Five to ten years from now.

Mr. Moose - The representatives here indicated that they could live with that as long as we provide ability for them to develop a cohesive campus like they have a desire to do so and not have Weddington Church Road split their campus in two. This is a delicate balance/subject for us. As we buy the right of way for road improvements, if the road is going to move closer to a building or compromise the access to the building, not only do we pay for the value of the right of way but we pay for damages that the road could potentially create to that property. Before we go back and say we are going to build this road, we will need to see if any damages were paid here. If we build that driveway and damages are paid here, we will be paying those property owners twice.

Councilmember Price – If you are talking about reducing the median on Highway 84, you are not going to reduce the lanes are you?

Mr. Moose – No.

Councilmember Price - Right now someone turning left only has one lane of traffic to cross. When this is complete they have three lanes of traffic to cross. I would rather see a new entrance to the shopping center here where it is visually noticeable than farther down the road.

Mr. Werner Thomisser - During the Mayor's comments, she said one of the objectives was good stewardship of tax payer dollars. The option behind the Animal Hospital appears to be a shorter distance than the other option up above the Harris Teeter where you would have to go through two pieces of land that are up for sale. Could you talk about the cost of the access road behind the Animal Hospital versus the other one?

Mr. Moose - I have not looked at the cost. Our preliminary estimate for a road behind Town Hall was \$84,000. That does impact the Town land quite a bit. The basic road (not gravel) would be built like a road should be built. We need to figure out the damages before I can say we will pay for it.

Councilmember Price - When we talked about the back entrance Council had some concerns about tractor trailer trucks being on Matthews-Weddington Road in that area with the amount of traffic back there. My personal preference would be to have that back road limited to passenger cars only.

Mr. Moose - I would consent to whatever the property owner and business owners wanted. Truckers are going to go wherever they think they can go. This is going to be a public street. We could not prevent a truck. The tenants and business owners would need to advise their delivery trucks where to come into.

Councilmember McKee – Are you talking about Town property? What about the future use of the Town property?

Mr. Moose - I will go plot it as to what I think is the best alignment. Quite frankly it could be on the back property line or it could be right across the property line. We will try to impact the least ground and vegetation we can.

Councilmember McKee - We do have a consulting firm helping with a Downtown Master Plan. We need to see the outcome of that plan.

Mr. Moose - This project is not going to be completed until next year. We are headed in the right direction. I'm confident we are going to come up with a solution.

Councilmember McKee - The best solution is to not put a median and just put a turning lane. You will save money. There is no flexibility with NCDOT.

Mr. Moose - I disagree with that.

Councilmember Price – That would present a safety concern.

Councilmember McKee - Nobody is concerned about wrecks now so why be concerned.

Mr. McGremis – A lot of my patients are from the South Charlotte area. There is a precedent for a very busy area that would fit this scenario, if you would look at the Arboretum. It does not hold you up and gives you a left and right at that intersection. Why are we married to these two entrances? Why can't we compromise and have one in the middle of those two. You are going to have a lot of back up from Rea Road so you are going to have to stop the traffic somewhere.

Mr. Moose - We are going to look at a stop light. I would probably advise against a central entrance here because the shorter distance that you have from your main intersection to another intersection that is signalized you are going to start having conflicting movements. We try to get 1500 feet spacing between lights. We can make this look more like a main entrance.

Harris Teeter Representative - We have dramatically cut business in that shopping center with construction alone. I hear everyday that when that divided road goes up they are not going to shop there anymore.

Mr. Moose – It is balancing act between keeping the integrity of Highway 16 moving traffic and serving the adjacent property.

Councilmember Smith – Can you answer his question about the placing of those lights at the Arboretum versus out here?

Mr. Moose – If I had my way, I would take them out.

Councilmember Smith – They seem to work. I agree with him.

Mr. Moose – It does work but the flow through there will not be as good as the flow through here.

Councilmember Smith – The flow through 16 but not supporting the local businesses. There will not be any flow. The Arboretum gets plenty of flow.

Mr. Moose – We are looking into the future as well. We need to solve the immediate problem but we also need to think about the sustainability about what we leave here. We want to be sustainable into the future. I would not have agreed to study a signal if I had my mind made up.

Mr. McGremmis – It would help with the speed issue and it would serve everything that we have a concern about at that intersection. The entrance needs to be more centrally located into the shopping area so that cars can go either left or right.

Mr. Moose – I agree with everything you are saying. From a geometric point of view I do not know if we will be able to accomplish that here. We met last week and I am just now starting to look at all this. Let me go back and look at the signal and look at some of the other things and come back maybe a month

from now and hopefully I will have all of the analysis done. I will compare the Arboretum and here. Whatever we do here, I do not want to back the traffic through that signal.

Mr. Jim Trogdon – The Mayor got me involved in the issues here in Weddington and I understood very early the point that she made with people in Raleigh overriding the local division and local governments. We are committed that the solutions that are generated here with you, Mr. Moose, Mayor and Town Council are the solutions that I will make sure are implemented. What I am seeing are problems of development that occurred prior to all of the growth and now you find yourself as a small town that is bound by North Carolina highways and thru traffic to other areas and that is a part of this balancing act of how do we move traffic through but not to ruin the quality of life. Today we would not permit a site like that. If there was any access on the major route it would be minimal. In this air quality challenged location that you are in, signals are evil when it comes to air quality. They are good for helping to provide access to property and development but when it comes to air quality any time you stop traffic and allow it to idle you are making your problem worse and you are not helping your congestion. Highway 16 is a major traffic mover through here and anything that you would do to impede that major movement is going to exasperate not just you but the entire area. I think you are on the right track and keep up the dialogue and we can work from Raleigh to support a consensus that you come up with and to fund what should be our responsibility or even extend and go beyond to make it work.

Councilmember Smith – If the Rea Road Extension were in now, would be having this discussion?

Mr. Moose – I was told something from our planners in Raleigh this week that I disagreed with. My gut says the Rea Road Extension would greatly improve this area because a lot of people that want to use 84 now will turn left and go down and use the extension.

Councilmember Smith – If we had Rea Road there now, we would not have this right here. This could have been kept as more of a pedestrian friendly downtown type of street even to the point of possibly not allowing access onto that road from Highway 16.

Mr. Moose – We are doing a feasibility study to look at all of 84 all the way to Airport Road and I asked them to include the extension of Rea Road into that study because when that work was done it was probably eight to ten years ago and it is really outdated. What they told me was in the future, 30 years down the road, not only was the four lane Rea Road needed but multi-lanes on 84 are going to be needed. They are looking at all of this raw ground and they are assuming the worst case scenario. My gut tells me that it will not be that dramatic. I do not think the desire of this community is to get that dense. Our planners are looking at that raw ground and assuming the maximum trips that piece of dirt can generate and that is how they come up with those numbers.

Councilmember Price – It is not our density but it is the density of Wesley Chapel.

Mr. Moose – You are not the problem. You are living with a problem, good or bad, that other communities create. There is a tremendous amount of growth around you and all that growth is funneling through you.

Ms. Janice Propst – New Town Road is a big road that takes traffic around Weddington. Is NCDOT looking at how big of an impact that could be? How can NCDOT improve New Town Road so that people do not even come near Weddington?

Mr. Moose – Quite honestly given our revenue and priorities in this region, it is not even on the radar screen. I think that Highway 16 needs to go all the way down to Waxhaw and I have not been able to get that on the radar screen. We have basically half the revenue versus the need.

Ms. Barbara Harrison – What does the Rea Road Extension do for Weddington other than maybe take some traffic away? What it does not do is help this shopping center and there are people that come from Rea Road that zip in to go to the Harris Teeter and that is my concern. As a citizen I use this shopping center, the doctors, vet, etc. I want to continue using this. Why we are not considering what can be done to help this shopping center. Rea Road is not going to help you.

Mr. Moose – The purpose is to help the shopping center. How will the Rea Road Extension help this area? It will give people, who are really driving through your community and have no plans to stop, a better choice to get around your Town.

Councilmember Smith – And if we had that we might be able to have the left turn out of here if we did not have so much traffic here. If we had done better planning years ago, we may not face the issues we are now with the shopping center.

Mr. Thomisser – This shopping center is important to the Town and we need to do everything we can to ensure that the shopping center survives. I know what you are up against distances between stop lights. I would ask you to look at this in terms of not just air quality but survival of the Town and the shopping center.

Papa's Pizza Representative - I would love for you not to get married to only one option.

Mr. Moose – This can be one or a combination of options to help the access.

Item No. 6. Adjournment. Councilmember Price moved to adjourn the August 27, 2009 Special Town Council Meeting. All were in favor, with votes recorded as follows:

AYES:	Councilmembers Smith, Price, McKee and Mayor Anderson
NAYS:	None

The meeting adjourned at 5:46 p.m.

Mr. Moose stayed to meet with the public after the meeting was adjourned for an informal question and answer session.

Nancy D. Anderson, Mayor

Amy S. McCollum, Town Clerk