

**TOWN OF WEDDINGTON
SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL AND DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE MEETING
MONDAY, JUNE 14, 2010 - 6:00 P.M.
MINUTES**

The Town Council and Downtown Committee of the Town of Weddington, North Carolina, met in a Special Session at the Weddington Town Hall, 1924 Weddington Road, Weddington, NC 28104 on June 14, 2010, at 6:00 p.m. with Mayor Nancy D. Anderson and Chairman Scott Buzzard presiding.

Present: Mayor Nancy D. Anderson, Mayor Pro Tem Daniel Barry, Councilmembers Werner Thomisser, Robert Gilmartin and Jerry McKee, Town Attorney Anthony Fox, Downtown Committee Chairman Scott Buzzard, Dudley Stone, Carolyn Pace, Jan Taylor, Carol Wyant, Town Planner Jordan Cook and Town Administrator/Clerk Amy S. McCollum.

Absent: Downtown Committee Vice-Chairman L.A. Smith, Melissa Emerine and Jack Steele

Item No. 1. Open the Meeting. Mayor Nancy D. Anderson and Chairman Scott Buzzard called the June 14, 2010 Town Council and Downtown Committee Special Meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. There was a quorum of both boards.

Item No. 2. Discuss the Role of the Downtown Committee. Chairman Buzzard – We would like to try and get an idea about what Town Council sees as the role of the Downtown Committee. Most of the members of the Committee thought it would be a good idea if we got guidance from the Town Council. This Committee has been together about a year and has met approximately 10 times. The first three to four meetings were prior to the consultants being hired.

Councilmember Robert Gilmartin – What has the Committee been talking about over the past six to seven meetings? What is your vision?

Chairman Buzzard – At the time the consultants were terminated, we were trying to wait until they came up with some final ideas so that we could look at it and start working on it from our end. That would be the starting point and then we would take what they came up with and get input and further make it the vision of the Town as opposed to just the vision of the consultant. They came up with five different options and we were not particularly happy with any particular one of them. We liked different pieces of two or three of them. We asked them to take what we had and throw out what we did not want and then come back with a new and improved plan.

Mayor Anderson – What this Council needs to discuss is what do you want this Committee to do?

Councilmember Gilmartin - We have 95% of the information we are going to get from the consultants. We had a series of five different options and visions that they have. Most of which I thought were too voluminous. I wanted to come up with the area that we would call our Downtown and most of us here know where the boundaries are roughly. At the Retreat, we discussed having developers or visionaries come to us and say this is what we want to do and we would like to do it in your prescribed footprint. We would then start to, as a Council, in concert with the Committee approve and tweak it. I would like this group to help with some of the requests that you might get before we get it. They come to our Planner with an idea or vision then the Downtown Committee gets involved as a buffer and brings it to us and starts to tweak some of the specifics. We all know we do not want fast food restaurants. I think we are keen on the idea of a sports complex and higher end restaurants. Before it gets to us you make sure you are comfortable with what their request is and you can deliver it to us in a more cohesive, bullet point analysis.

Mayor Anderson – How is that different than what the Planning Board is already doing?

Councilmember Gilmartin – This may not be. This is more special as it relates to Downtown Core commercial where Planning Board is everything.

Councilmember Thomisser – It is ultimately what the people want – not what we want. In past surveys, people said that they wanted a gathering spot, a restaurant and a library. Your role is to define exactly what kind of gathering spot, restaurant and library you want.

Mayor Anderson - The role of this Committee is to design a streetscape and coordinating the streetscape with the landscape that we would like to expand to our two acres and along Highway 84. So this Committee is to vet and fetter out every request that comes from a property owner. If someone comes to the Town Planner with an idea, do you agree with Councilmember Gilmartin that this group is now the group that is coordinating what is going on and how they all connect together and this group will coordinate the landscaping and the connectivity of every parcel that we decide is in the Downtown area?

Councilmember McKee – In the MX Zoning District, is there a Design Review Committee?

Town Planner Cook – Yes.

Councilmember McKee – Could the Downtown Committee serve in that role?

Town Planner Cook – Yes, if they are assigned that role.

Mayor Pro Tem Barry - It is ultimately a subcommittee of the Planning Board with the explicit responsibility for what we define as the Downtown Area to create cohesive direct planning in that specific area. The Planning Board has global responsibilities for the entire Town.

Mr. Dudley Stone – This Committee had met and then we had several meetings with the consultant. We met with them again to consolidate the final version of the master plan and then we would have presented that plan to the Town Council. I always thought our charge was to come up with a recommendation for a plan. The Town decides here is how we want this Town to grow. Master plans start from one point that we all agree this is what we want. The purpose of the master plan is to guide development for the future.

Mayor Anderson – Could your group take all the information that has been gathered and make a master plan?

Mr. Stone - We are not in the position to do the master plan. We hired the consultant because they have the expertise and knowledge to put that together. We had given them guidance and gotten right up to the point where we were close to doing that but then the consultant was let go. As a Committee, we could meet with that consultant again, in one meeting we could have a master plan that we would recommend to this group.

Mayor Anderson - No one liked 100% of any of the ideas. They were cherry picking all of the good features to develop a new and improved plan.

Mr. Stone - It was going to be very close to Option D or E. I thought it was a variation of those two.

Mayor Pro Tem Barry – Didn't Option E have the town homes?

Mr. Stone – I think we had asked them to take off the town homes and make them single family.

Councilmember McKee - That was all part of the input that was put into it. The Committee never got to the point of putting their own information into the information that the consultant had gathered. We were one meeting short of putting that all together. I do not think anyone was in complete consensus of Options A through E. The Committee would have eventually come up with a mixed bag of all of it.

Chairman Buzzard - The two-way information street between Council and the committees tends to get blocked a lot. I understand that the election happened and the views changed. If we are a buffer between you, then we would have to know things to buffer you from. We tend to find the things out at the 12th hour.

Mayor Pro Tem Barry – One of the long processes we went through at our Retreat was not just to deal with the firing of the consultant but was to really spend a lot of time trying to eliminate that frustration. Our current zoning process requires conditional use permits which means we can't talk to you about it. Someone came up with this great idea to force MX Districts down here so that we could sit around this table with a giant map and say let's figure this out. We want to give you responsibility for that map. You come back and sit down with us and say here is where we ended up and let's figure out if we have the financial resources to put this together. Do we need to acquire property and do we have willing sellers? All of that has to fall within the parameters of that exercise. I have a lot of frustration with the process that the consultants used.

Ms. Carolyn Pace – So are the consultants totally out of the picture and will not be rehired? Would you like for us to come up with a master plan without a consultant?

Councilmember Gilmartin – Why would we take the 19 pro-commercial people in Weddington to sit in a room with consultants and draw something up for us? I drive around America all the time. Nothing is really different. All of the master plans are the same stuff. I am not a fan of consultants. You will get in the room with folks that are generally pro-commercial. If you get to the master plan, then it is their plan. There are some things that you could do that would be very applicable to this Town.

Ms. Carol Wyant walked out at 6:26 p.m.

Mayor Anderson – I believe that people want a place to eat and a place to play. The shopping center is what it is. The adjoining property is what will make it different. We can plant some trees and flowers and dig up pavement. What we do around it is what will make it different. The Weddington Activity Center is interested in increasing their capacity for recreation. What I think I hear you guys saying is that you are still interested in looking at ways to make the downtown unique. You would be amenable to rezone the property if it made good sense for certain uses.

Chairman Buzzard - We either look at doing things very slow and methodical which is where we were prior to this. Then we move to the next step. The current Downtown Committee went with more of a big picture. Which approach does the Council prefer? I think it is more of the slow and methodical approach as opposed to the plan and then see what happens.

Mayor Pro Tem Barry – Weddington never does anything fast. I am sorry there is tension. If I had started this meeting, I would have started it by saying that good people are allowed to disagree. All of our intentions are pure. If I could have done it differently I would have fired the consultant without it sounding like we rejected all the work that you did because the way that went down created friction and animosity. It doesn't mean we don't respect or want the work that you are trying to accomplish. It was in the enterprise or the activity that was going on that was driving that. If I could wave a magic wand, your

Committee would have a budget, you would be charged with building streetscape, getting it approved and then go contract that work and to come up with a consistent landscape plan that you would have done. We do not need to be deciding whether we want pink or white azaleas. There is an instrumental role you play.

Councilmember Thomisser – Rather than go down the road of a master plan, there were things in that master plan that the people of Weddington do not want. Why should we go down a road that the majority of people say that they do not want to go? Let's work together to try to put together what the majority of the people say that they can live with.

Mayor Anderson – What is wrong with us saying where the Downtown boundary is? But then I hear from people saying that you do not want to do that, that the developers need to come to us and that we are not going to change the Land Use Plan. You are contradicting yourself. What I hear you nodding your head to then when it comes down to drawing the line and saying we are going to change the Land Use Plan to include various parcels, then you say we are not going to do that.

Councilmember Gilmartin - I actually enjoy this footprint – this is a nice footprint. I thought we could take this footprint which is Option E and MX it. That is one of the reasons we thought the consultant's job was over because we thought they were tipping over into what could go there.

Chairman Buzzard - If that is what you want from us, I would suggest that you come up with that in writing so that I can get that out to the Committee members because it is quite possible that some of my Committee members do not really want to participate. They may have expected more of we are coming up with a plan to present.

Ms. Jan Taylor – My background is in Interior Design and I have a vision. In creating a house, we have a plan before we lay the first brick. I am concerned - do we have the footprint before we interview the developers and see what opportunity is there? We never got any further than what they said tonight. I did not agree with a lot of this. We never had the opportunity to dissect it. I think it would be good to gather information and then you are the final say. I think it would be nice to allow us to gather information like we were asked to. We were not trying to guide it in any way. We were trying to get a presentation to you. I am concerned with boundaries being stated before we even know what we will put in the boundaries. It has to be a neat little package and well planned in every area. I do think we go about this slow and steady instead of just stamping it and then say make this fit here. There is a lot of vision out there and until we meet with people we don't know the opportunities.

Mayor Anderson - If we are going to entertain any ideas, don't we need to change the Land Use Plan first and define our potential footprint?

Town Planner Cook – The developer comes to you with a site specific plan and at that point you rezone to MX. You have to change the Land Use Plan from that residential land use classification to business for the developer to be able to come in to ask for an MX rezoning. Otherwise the developer is going to have to do exactly what is going on across the street and apply for a Land Use Plan amendment and a rezoning.

Ms. Taylor - How do we know what to put in it? If you narrow it down to a footprint, it is decided and there is no turning back. What if the developer comes up with a different idea and we have already defined where everything is going to go?

Mayor Pro Tem Barry - We want to lay the parcels out and not what goes on the parcels.

Councilmember Thomisser – What do you want in the footprint? The developer is going to come in with stuff that the Weddington people do not want. The important thing is to realize what the people do not want and then put what they want in the footprint.

Item No. 3. Discuss the Impact of the May 10, 2010 NCDOT Meeting. Chairman Buzzard - The May 10th NCDOT meeting ties into boundaries. I believe that there are connectivity issues that need to be addressed rezoning-wise to allow the current Downtown to be more accessible. We have to rezone to be able to work with where the connectivity needs to occur. We have to rezone the existing B-1 and B-2 to MX so that we can look at their proposed plans for where the connectivity is. You can't do everything as a conditional use permit. If you want to add a stoplight out of the shopping center, you have to have a significant volume that would have to go to the Weddington Activity Center. These are the things we need information on. We would like to make an informed decision.

Mayor Anderson - This is what I understood NCDOT to say. They are going to put a full service intersection down at the current driveway of Weddington Activity Center. If and when that parking lot expands to connect to the rest of this, they will consider putting a light there. They specifically talk about if and when that connector road because that connector road actually was their solution to the screw up that they made on Highway 84 because they made this into a one-way street with the median there. They still believe the connector road is the solution.

Item No. 4. Discuss Council's Decision Not to Fund the Conduit Improvements for Proposed Future Downtown Street Lighting. Chairman Buzzard - Our Committee decided that due to the significant costs savings that are only going to occur with the work being done concurrently with the road project that if the Town Council plans to put lighting up in that area that it makes sense to do it now. It could be done in stages for budgetary reasons. This type of streetscape tends to calm traffic which would make it a safer downtown area. If Council thinks that streetscape is a good idea, you should approve the conduit plan at \$41,000 and if feasible we recommend that you do it as a complete project.

Item No. 5. Adjournment. Mr. Stone moved to adjourn the Special Downtown Committee Meeting. Ms. Taylor seconded the motion. Mayor Pro Tem Barry moved to adjourn the Special Town Council Meeting. Both the Town Council and Downtown Committee members were in favor of the motions to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

Nancy D. Anderson, Mayor

Scott Buzzard, Chairman

Attest:

Amy S. McCollum, Town Clerk