

**TOWN OF WEDDINGTON  
SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL WORK SESSION  
THURSDAY, JANUARY 31, 2013 – 4:00 P.M.  
MINUTES**

The Town Council of the Town of Weddington, North Carolina, met in a Special Work Session at the Weddington Town Hall, 1924 Weddington Road, Weddington, NC 28104 on January 31, 2013, with Mayor Walker F. Davidson presiding.

Present: Mayor Walker F. Davidson, Mayor Pro Tem Daniel Barry, Councilmembers Werner Thomisser, Pamela Hadley and Barbara Harrison, Town Planner Jordan Cook

Absent: None

Visitors: Bill Price, Joyce Helms, Reece Gibson, Bill Deter, Paisley Gordon and Wesley S. Hinson

**Item No. 1. Open the Meeting.** Mayor Walker F. Davidson called the January 31, 2013 Special Town Council Work Session to order at 4:00 p.m. There was a quorum.

**Item No. 2. Public Comment Period.** Mr. Reece Gibson spoke to the Council regarding several proposed ideas for his property located at Lester Davis and Highway 84.

Mr. Bill Price urged Council to be very cautious in their update to the Land Use Plan. He showed an article from 28 years ago discussing items similar to what the Council is discussing now. He stated, “No changes have been made in a lot of them. A lot of the issues that have been presented could be better served by the developers or the homeowners associations. If we approve these things, think about the cost of the upkeep and we are going to be paying for it for the rest of our lives. The majority of the people that responded to the survey have only lived in Weddington less than 10 years. I intend to live the rest of my life here. Think about these things before you change our plan drastically.”

**Item No. 3. Discussion and Possible Action Relative to Updating the 2002 Land Use Plan.** The Council discussed possible dates for upcoming meetings regarding the Land Use Plan. Councilmember Thomisser discussed an email he received regarding a citizen’s inability to make a 4:00 p.m. meeting because of work and questioned whether the Council needed to schedule the meetings later in the day. Mayor Davidson advised that there were several night meetings planned and a couple of Saturday meetings to allow public comment.

**Proposed Meeting Schedule**

- February 11 - 6 to 7 p.m. (Public Comment Period)
- February 11 – 7 p.m. (Attorney Fox to review with Council protected language/text and to advise whether an expiration date is needed in the Land Use Plan.)
- February 13 – 4 to 6 p.m. – Review Factual Information for Chapters 1 through 5 of the LUP, Councilmembers develop preliminary vision map and Public Comment Period
- February 22 – Discuss Land Use Plan at Retreat
- February 23 – Open House Meeting to receive Public Comment from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- February 25 and March 25 – Possible Joint Meetings with the Planning Board beginning at 5:30 p.m.
- March 16 – Open House Meeting to receive Public Comment from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Council asked that the following item be added to the February 11 Regular Town Council Meeting agenda – Review and Consideration of Extending the Expiration Date of the Land Use Plan to April 8, 2013.

**Item No. 4. Discussion and Consideration of Planning Board's Role in Reviewing and Updating Land Use Plan.** Chairman Dorine Sharp advised that the Planning Board had discussed having different members attend the Council's workshops to have representation. Councilwoman Harrison advised that members of the Planning Board had knowledge of the history of the Town and she would like to have them help the Council in that area of how the 2002 Land Use Plan was developed. She stated, "It says every year that the Planning Board would review the Land Use Plan to make sure it is still in compliance. I know that some changes were made in 2006 and 2011 but I would like to see this plan not become so outdated."

Ms. Sharp - I think that is up to the Town Council on how often you would like the plan reviewed.

Mayor Pro Tem Barry – This is a vision document and every year it is incumbent on the Planning Board to call to the Council's attention items that impact the Land Use Plan such as changes in regulations or General Statutes.

It was discussed that text may need to be added to the Planning Board's Rules of Procedures to include a yearly review of the Land Use Plan. Council asked that the Planning Board determine a list of items that the Town Council needs to know regarding the process for updating the Land Use Plan.

Council asked that any time the language for the Land Use Plan is being discussed that Dorine Sharp, Rob Dow and Jim Vivian try to attend the meeting.

**Item No. 5. Discussion of Land Use Map Vision by each Councilmember.** Mayor Davidson advised that each Councilmember was given a map and was asked to give their vision of how they see the Town over the next five to ten years.

Mayor Pro Tem Barry - I really struggled with this. I have been educated that you always draft the vision document and then apply. I think we are ahead of ourselves.

Councilwoman Hadley - I am going to have to agree with that as well. I would love to see the road from the activity center extended to Weddington-Matthews Road. I need feedback from the public. The only things that I can definitely commit to are three locations for possible substations for the fire department. I can circle those right now. Other than that road and the three substations I am at a loss to go any further.

Councilmember Thomisser asked Ms. Hadley to give some background on the substations.

Councilwoman Hadley – If this is a 10-year plan it behooves us to look at three locations. In talking with the Department of Insurance they have recommended to me to go out 2 ½ to 3 miles from Providence VFD and look at locations for substations. The trend is to now, because of response times, to have stations three miles apart instead of five miles apart. The more population growth you have the more important it is to have smaller stations as opposed to a bigger station to reduce response times. I met with Providence and we looked at three locations. Those locations would put us in line for the fire service to go along with the population of Weddington. I would say probably the first one that would be needed to be considered is around the Beulah Church and Antioch Church Road Intersection. The second site located at Rea Road and Providence Road and the third site on Highway 84 probably at the Rea Road Extension area. I want to bookmark these areas in the Land Use Plan.

Councilmembers talked about how public safety ranked in the survey results.

Councilwoman Harrison – I had difficulty with this. Where do I see the Town in five to 10 years? I feel like I do not have the data to do this at this time. I do not know the projection of our growth. I do not want to do parcel specific.

Councilmember Thomisser - I kept looking at the survey which said preservation of open space was 94%. We have had discussions recently with property owners that have come in and said that they have the right to sell their property. If they are approached by a developer that wants to develop either R-40 or R-CD they have the right to do that – of course it has to go through the process. If they want to go beyond that and get into mixed use that is a different story. We have to weigh that relative to what the citizens want. It is the Planning Board and Town Council's role to determine whether that works or does not work based on the survey and to handle each one on an individual basis as opposed to identifying which parts should be commercial. I want the property owner to present their creative ideas to the Town and we ultimately decide whether that is good or not.

Mayor Pro Tem Barry advised that he does not want to eliminate creativity by landowners.

Councilwoman Harrison felt that the Town needed to develop more land use boxes first.

Mayor Pro Tem Barry felt that the Council could get a developer or planner to come in and discuss the process of getting an option on a property.

Mayor Davidson discussed his map with the Town Council and advised that the intent of the exercise was to get a starting point. He advised that he went through the survey and asked has Weddington changed significantly? Based on the survey results, 97.6% say Weddington is an excellent or good place to live. They are happy with the place. On the survey, keep low taxes was 59.3%. The towns that have more commercial than we do have a higher tax rate than we do. I want to support the one house per acre. One issue that is being discussed is age-based communities. I am fine with age-based communities but I think the best way to do that is through R-CD but I do not want to break the one house per acre zoning. The greenway issue is a dead issue with me because of how people answered that they want to keep taxes low in Weddington. The Town Council is not preventing a restaurant. We have never turned down a restaurant. Additional zoning of commercial would provide more opportunity. You have to have more density to survive as a restaurant. The survey lists the adverse effects to Weddington would be higher density and that is why I want to keep to one house per acre. Traffic congestion – the more commercial development (if it is successful) the more transportation congestion. Increased large scale retail – I think no one here is taking about that. When you talk to developers some of the prices that are being asked for these properties is going to make it difficult to do these small specialty shops. It is going to be a lot of money to buy these properties. What is important is keeping a low tax rate, public safety, preserve open space, low density residential development which I hope we can define as one house per acre.

Councilwoman Harrison - That is not what I am getting when I talk to people. We have to have a discussion. We had a discussion about the survey. I would not say it is valid. I agree it is what it is. It is only 10% of the population. There are reasons that people are not filling out the survey.

Mayor Davidson - I would like Weddington to stay a residential community with one house per acre lots; R-CD is fine with age based communities in R-CD. Keep Highway 16 flowing to Highway 485. I know we cannot control population growth and burden from that on the roads. I would like for us to start looking at buffers and how to change from residential to commercial. I enjoy the fact that when you come into Weddington from other areas, you see you are in Weddington - you do not need a marker. That is my vision of Weddington at this point.

Mayor Pro Tem Barry – Right now it is a buyer's market. As land prices escalate, it is going to almost be prohibitive because you cannot make the performance for a mixed use development work. I think we need to be careful as we continue to look at our one house per acre zoning and what is the impact that it has on the roads, water and sewer, schools and green space.

Mayor Davidson - I think the number of houses built in Weddington will not be altered whether we do commercial or no commercial. If we bite on this age based housing – we can't protect that if the developer goes bankrupt that these homes will still only be for active senior adult housing. We are not the ones building up the schools like other towns.

Councilwoman Harrison - I think the difference is what is being built. When I first bought my property in 2002, Providence Road was considered the million dollar mile. No house in my neighborhood was less than \$1 million. Bromley went bankrupt and there were \$1 million homes in there but now \$500,000 houses will be there as well. We are seeing the lower economic housing coming in.

Mayor Davidson – It is lower relative to Weddington?

Councilwoman Harrison – The congestion of traffic is not a result of commercial but we have a younger population that is taking their children everywhere. That is what I struggle with. When you talk to the landowners such as Buffy Crothers she said it is nice that people want green space but guess what that is costing her. She just bought a house in Sun City because there is no where for her to go in Weddington. We are squeezing out a certain population.

Mayor Davidson - We are squeezing out a lot of the population and the people that can come here moved here for a reason. From the investment standpoint everybody has the right to get the most out of their property. We are not hurting their rights. There have been some here forever and then there are the speculators. It is not our job to maximize the value of their property. We have the right to tell people what they can or cannot do with their property. There are two sets of people. This is the side that I am on. There is a different set of people out there. This is my map.

Councilwoman Harrison - I don't want everything commercial but I am being a little bit more realistic.

Mayor Davidson - I am being unrealistic?

Councilwoman Harrison - No I am not saying that. Maybe the word is I am more pragmatic. People do not know where the borders are. To say that we are never going to make something that is abutting up to commercial - commercial because no one is going to want to live across from "x".

Mayor Davidson - That is the place of the buffer – then someone is not going to want to live beside that. How are you going to transition from those areas?

Councilwoman Hadley - I would hope that there is not a huge attitude that once I am done with my acre I can move down to Charleston. I moved here and raised my family here. I am hearing something unique – it is a small community that incorporates small retail that has a buffer with small density homes on the outskirts and has the green space and the one acre lots that is all incorporated into something that is unique and high end and not like anything around us. Those are the ideas I have. Growth is going to come in. I want the growth to be unique and different. It would be nice to have some unique opportunities that incorporate some diversity. Buffy cried when we talked about that our firemen and deputies cannot afford to live in Weddington. I think it is sad that we have nothing to offer them to be able to live where they work. I think it is sad to tell empty nesters you have done your deal with Weddington. We are not going to provide you with any place to go.

Mayor Davidson – When did we say that?

Councilwoman Hadley - You say we pushed out a lot of people. If we do not provide for them then they will be gone.

Mayor Davidson - Why can't you go to R-CD?

Councilwoman Hadley - Maybe I don't want to – maybe I want to move to something unique.

Mayor Davidson - Why does the unique not already exist in Western Union County? What will bring all this together? Why is Weddington the only one can do that?

Councilwoman Hadley – If it is the desire of the citizens which I hear that it is and the economics make it feasible then why should it not be looked at?

Councilmember Thomisser - I identify with what you say. It is a breath of fresh air when you drive into Weddington. If we are not careful the whole Town is going to be cookie cutter. We need to define what density means. By keep allowing one acre lots you are putting a tremendous strain on the school system. You are creating a vehicle to raise taxes. If we do it right and have some housing for senior citizens, they do not have any children and do not put a strain on the tax system. Those are the people that like to get involved and volunteer and it is good for the community. People told us that they wanted greenways, a library, a passive park, a YMCA.

Mayor Davidson - They did not tell us they wanted this stuff. Look at the YMCA number.

Councilmember Thomisser - The YMCA number is different because people do not understand what a YMCA can do for the community

Mayor Pro Tem Barry asked Mayor Davidson if he thought the Town needed a YMCA.

Mayor Davidson - I am of the opinion that we do not need a YMCA. If it is the Morrison model with no retail then I am good, the Siskey model I am not good. It is what the citizen's want, not what I want.

**Item No. 6. Adjournment.** Mayor Pro Tem Barry moved to adjourn the January 31, 2013 Special Town Council Meeting. All were in favor, with votes recorded as follows:

AYES:	Councilmembers Thomisser, Hadley, Harrison and Mayor Pro Tem Barry
NAYS:	None

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

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Walker F. Davidson, Mayor

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Amy S. McCollum, Town Clerk