

**TOWN OF WEDDINGTON
SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING/OPEN HOUSE
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2013 – 9:00 A.M.
MINUTES**

The Town Council of the Town of Weddington, North Carolina, met in a Special Meeting/Open House at the Weddington Town Hall, 1924 Weddington Road, Weddington, NC 28104 on February 23, 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 and Town Planner Jordan Cook and Town Administrator Amy S. McCollum

Absent: None

Visitors: Buffie Crothers, Jan Sloop, David Sloop, Tony Rolfes, Jim Bell, Vinay Patel, Bob Davis, Larry Wood, Elton Hardy, Mike Sealy, Ken Millette, Melissa Millette, Laura Sorrell, Carter Sorrell, Tom Low, Carole McLeod, M.C. Sorrell, Mike Sealy, Ned Williams, Bruce Klink, Don Titherington, Bill Deter and Mike Treske.

Item No. 1. Open the Meeting. Mayor Walker F. Davidson called the February 23, 2013 Special Town Council Meeting/Open House to order at 9:01 a.m. There was a quorum. Councilwoman Pamela Hadley advised that she had invited two individuals to make presentations to the Town Council and would like for them to have at least 10 to 20 minutes each. Council advised that they preferred a back and forth dialogue format for the meeting.

Item No. 2. Citizens are invited to attend the Open House to share their input and comments regarding the updating of the Weddington Land Use Plan. Councilwoman Hadley introduced Mr. Tom Low to give the first presentation to the audience.

Mr. Tom Low – I have lived in the Charlotte Region and this area for about 30 years. I am an architect; however, for the last couple of decades or more I have been doing more neighborhood planning. The company I work for works with communities to help develop master plans and redevelop big cities and small towns. The company is DPZ and we are known for walkable, connected, mixed-use lifestyle communities. The McLeod Family approached me about looking at their property next to Skycroft. I have helped them develop a series of scenarios that are possible for this location so that they can get feedback. The property is located at Twelve Mile Creek and is approximately 28 acres. We look at the region and we find out the best characteristics and we build on those. The project needs to fit hand and glove with the vision of your comprehensive plan and it needs to be calibrated to be the right project for the location. What is evolving now in terms of lifestyle is an inviting walk, trails, open space and greenways. There is recreational walking and destination walking. We have done some spectacular projects over the years around the country and world.

Mr. Low discussed the process they use in developing a project. He advised that the feedback they received from the McLeod scenarios was very positive and went through the four different plans with the Council. Mr. Low talked about the lifestyle trends associated with these types of developments and that 10 to 20 years from now it is predicted that there will be a 20 million surplus of large homes across the country that there is not going to be a market for. He advised that people are looking for a different scale and more amenities. He stated, “Every place is different and you have to calibrate to the community that you are working with. Weddington has a very particular lifestyle and they are interested in things a certain way. Your survey is a starting point.”

Mr. Low gave a presentation of different projects that his firm has planned. He also discussed the positive impact that the projects that they have designed have had on the area. He stated, "If the project is woven in properly it affects the property values around it considerably. If it is separated there is a bump in a positive way but it is not as much as what is inside the neighborhoods."

Mr. Tony Ross expressed concern with the number of housing units it appeared that Mr. Low was showing. He discussed the traffic congestion that already exists in that area of Weddington and that traffic upgrades would need to be taken into consideration. He stated, "The other reason I am here is because of the church that is going up on Hemby Road. I wanted to get more information on that. It is literally in my back yard. I moved to Weddington because of the nicer neighborhoods on one acre lots."

Town Planner Cook – I have talked to the applicants twice probably three months ago. That is the last I have heard from them. I have not received any type of application for the church. Once I receive an application it would be a three to four month process.

Councilmember Thomisser discussed several rumors and misinformation that was circulating. He also gave an update from the YMCA presentation given at the Council retreat and the status of a library in Western Union County.

Ms. Buffie Crothers – I have talked with most of the Councilmembers on an individual basis. I have lived in Union County and Weddington since 1988. We have 34 acres. When we moved here it was very rural. When I moved here I said I would never move again. The two most important things on the survey were the low taxes and the great schools. The things that would most adversely affect Weddington were increased traffic and higher density housing. What is higher density? Somebody's perception and my perception can be totally different. How do you maintain low taxes and great schools? One of the things that came up in the survey was age restricted housing. It is hard to keep up with 34 acres. We have actually wanted to sell our house for almost five years and the economy tanked and nobody wanted land. My property taxes are not low anymore and 69% of my property taxes go to the schools. I pay over \$7,000 a year towards schools. Everyone that lives on their one acre may not have the property taxes I do but I cannot afford to live there anymore. That is part of our issue as well. Age restricted housing does not increase traffic because we are not driving at peak hours. We have a home in Sun City and that is our intent to live there. I would have much rather stayed in Weddington. If something were to get built here I would come back here. The land behind me sold in 2005 for \$70,000 an acre and that same land sold in 2011 for \$16,000 an acre. Without those houses on that property that is going to be the tax base for Union County at the new revaluation. Everybody's taxes are going to go up because they have to have the revenue somewhere. That is something that needs to be considered.

Mayor Davidson and Mayor Pro Tem Barry discussed the revaluation process.

Mr. Ned Williams asked the Council for an update on the Rea Road Extension Project. Mayor Pro Tem Barry and Town Planner Cook gave a brief update on the status of this road project. Mayor Pro Tem Barry advised that the road has been approved but work should be done through the alignment to minimize the impact to current property owners in the area.

Councilwoman Hadley introduced Mr. Vinay Patel to give the next presentation. Mr. Patel advised that he lived in Weddington and owns a restaurant in Indian Trail. He discussed the process they went through with developing their restaurant and what it takes to make a restaurant successful. He discussed how he determined the best spot for his restaurant and different business models.

Council took a brief recess.

Mr. Craig Hazeltine expressed that he was confused with the term Open House and he felt like it would have been more of a drop in type of meeting instead of formal presentations being given. He stated, "I came in and saw this picture on the screen and found out that someone wants to do this in Weddington. Once you open a parcel of land up for commercial development you can put all the restrictions on it you want but ultimately the developer is going to develop what goes in those little boxes that he is developing. Once you open that door, you will have a hard time determining what actually goes in those boxes. I am against commercial development here. I think we have enough around us."

Mr. Don Titherington – I have lived here 15 years. I walked in and about fell out of my chair when I saw the screen.

Councilwoman Hadley - We are trying to educate ourselves. We are talking to a planner about different ideas not necessarily for Weddington. He was just giving us some examples of his work.

Mr. Titherington - The value that we get for our \$250 a year we pay in Weddington taxes is significant. When the fire department did what they did five to six years ago, my insurance rate actually dropped that \$250.00. I wanted to also talk about affordable housing. If you go back to a lot of these neighborhoods that have been here 20 to 30 years there is affordable housing in Weddington. There are the million dollar homes, not the majority of our residents live in those million dollar homes though. If you look at housing today there are \$150,000 to \$300,000 homes in Weddington. For a 30 year mortgage today on a \$350,000 house it would be a \$1,247 monthly payment. We are not pricing ourselves out of our citizenry here. There are opportunities. Another question that was raised was regarding empty nesters. I went back and did an audit. We have 196 homes in our neighborhood and my block has 34 homes. Empty nesters outnumber us. The reality is we are not losing a wonderful asset to this community. They are choosing to stay. We need to be transparent about what we are looking at and need to listen to our citizens. The citizenry is saying one acre lots and minimize commercial. Thank you for your time. Keep our Town the way it is because a lot of people love it.

Mr. Low proceeded to go through his presentation and gave examples of projects they have done. He reiterated that the McLeod Family invited them to look at their property. He stated, "We said we do not know the right fit for this location; therefore, we need to develop a series of scenarios that we can dial up and down and sit down with the stakeholders and have discussions with them to see what the right fit is. Our process is important to us. We like to design our projects with the community. There was an interest to see what we could do here."

Ms. Carole McLeod – I want to thank you for allowing us to have time to speak. We live here. Our family has 14 lots in Skycroft and we have this land that we have had for about 25 years. We are aging and trying to figure out what we are going to do with the land as a family. We wanted to have a vision to speak to the community first. We asked Tom and his firm to help us with a vision to go to our neighbors first. We did not come here first. We have had two sessions with people at the farm house showing this exact plan and asked them what they did or did not like. Aero Plantation and Skycroft were invited. We do not want to devalue our land. We are all about helping our neighbors. Of course we are trying to help ourselves too. We have not talked with a developer yet. We wanted our vision with our neighbors because if they do not want it we are not going to get it. We are trying to figure out something that is quality that brings value. There are multi million dollar homes in Skycroft so they do not want us to devalue their property. I have a big house and a lot of acreage and I do not need that anymore. I like where I live and I do not want to move anywhere else. If Weddington does not want this, fine but we wanted to give an option for this corner. We want this because we live here and we want this to be a valuable thing and we want the neighbors support.

Item No. 3. Adjournment. Mayor Pro Tem Barry moved to adjourn the February 23, 2013 Special Town Council Meeting/Open House. 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 12:00 p.m.

Walker F. Davidson, Mayor

Amy S. McCollum, Town Clerk