

Planning Committee Virtual Meeting - Zoom

DRAFT Minutes

February 16, 2021 – 5:00 p.m.

Attendance

Planning Committee Members Present: Chairperson Sam Spencer, Vice Chairperson Phillip Gussman; and Commissioners Astrid Chirinos, John Ham, John Fryday, and Cozzie Watkins

Planning Committee Members Absent: Commissioner Courtney Rhodes

Planning Staff Present: Kathy Cornett, Zenia Duhaney, Alberto Gonzalez, Travis Johnson, Catherine Mahoney, Alysia Osborne, and Candice Rorie

Other Staff Present: Caroline Sawyer, Asset and Facility Management, Erin Oliverio, General Services, Anna Radcliff, General Services, and Bob Sorrell, CMS Facilities, Planning & Real Estate

Welcome and Introductions

Vice Chairperson Gussman called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m., welcomed everyone and introduced each commissioner and staff member.

Virtual Meeting Rules and Guidelines

Vice Chairperson Gussman explained the virtual meeting rules and guidelines. The meeting was livestreamed on Facebook Live. A link for the public to view the meeting's livestream is posted on the Planning, Design & Development Department's webpage.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Commissioner Fryday and seconded by Commissioner Watkins to approve the January 19, 2021 minutes. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Mandatory Referrals

M.R. #21-02 | Lease (only) old school property located at 510 S. Torrence St., Parcel ID 12522502 containing 1.178 acres, in the Cherry neighborhood.

M.R. #21-03 | Extend the current lease on the former Tryon Hills School located at 2600 Grimes St., Parcel ID 07907618, containing 7.0 acres in the Tryon Hills neighborhood.

M.R. #21-04 | Park and Recreation would like to acquire +/- 0.69 acres of parkland at 1449 and 1453 Lake Dr in the extra-territorial jurisdiction of the City of Charlotte (Tax Parcels 031-472-02 & 031-472-44, respectively). The properties are in northwest Charlotte on a tributary of the Catawba River and are entirely within the floodplain.

M.R. #21-05 | The City of Charlotte's General Services Department (GS) proposes to acquire one parcel of approximately 5.115 acres (108-042-24), zoned R-3 per the Charlotte Zoning Ordinance, in the Hickory Grove area of Charlotte for tree canopy preservation.

M.R. #21-06 | The City of Charlotte proposes to purchase 5800 N. Tryon St., PID 049-011-12, for the construction of the Charlotte Fire Department Hidden Valley Station.

Vice Chairperson Gussman reminded Commissioners of their option to discuss the mandatory referrals individually or to approve them without any additional comments. He acknowledged the submission of six mandatory referrals for approval and asked if Commissioners had questions.

Commissioner Ham asked about M.R. #21-02, Vice Chairperson Gussman asked about M.R. #20-04 and for a clarification on M.R. #20-05. Commissioner Ham commented that M.R. #21-02 was recommended for institutional use and the property was previously a school or is to remain a school. Can someone lease the facility if their intended use is not institutional or that of a school? Bob Sorrell, CMS Facilities, responded that the property has been vacant for several years. The proposed tenant Arch Plus, has requested to lease the property for arts education, performing arts and other kinds of arts. Commissioner Ham thanked Mr. Sorrell for his response and the Vice-Chairperson thanked Commissioner Ham for his question.

Vice Chairperson Gussman asked if M.R.#20-04 is essentially the expansion of the planned future park? Carolyn Sawyer, Mecklenburg County responded yes, it is a park acquisition that is a way to bring the park closer to the river front. She also, explained that Stormwater in the past has purchased property along Lake Drive. There has been some flooding in the area, so it also helps to compliment some acquisitions that Stormwater has made in the area.

Vice Chairperson Gussman also asked if affordable housing was considered in M.R.#20-05. Candice Rorie, Planning Staff replied this is a question on every mandatory referral that is viable for affordable housing and is not in a flood zone or encumbered in any way by any other topography. The Vice-Chairperson thanked Mrs. Rorie for her response. He asked if there were any other questions and addressed the committee's need to make a motion.

A motion was made by Commissioner Watkins and seconded by Commissioner Ham stating that the Planning Committee reviewed M.R. #21-02, M.R. #21-03, M.R. #21-04, M.R. #21-05 and M.R. #21-06 on February 16, 2021 and has no additional comments for the submitting agency. The motion was unanimously approved.

Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan Update and Comment Review

Alysia Osborne shared a presentation with Commissioners on the Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Osborne built on the previous discussion from the full Planning Commission meeting. She gave Commissioners the option to walk through their comments or the community's comments and shared comments received since last month and a process update.

Process Update

- In January/February working closely with the Planning Commission and City Council Committee to share what is being heard from the community in the process.
- Comments are being collected in several different ways and staff will share comments with the Commission. Comments are displayed on our website, thus listed publicly.
- We will have a public comment session in March and will seek a recommendation for adoption April.
- Comments are received online, by email, snail mail, or through 311.
- We have received over 259 comments, mostly through email.

Ms. Osborne thanked Commissioners for their active participation and for sharing their comments using the Eplan comment feature, sending emails and by using the template provided by Candice Rorie. Staff is updating the interdepartmental team throughout the process as the plan connects directly to their work. We are making sure that we have alignment and that we are being consistent in our goals, objectives, recommendations, policy and programs.

- Most of the comments are from the community and to date we have 152. These include comments about grammar, graphics and other plans outside of the Comprehensive plan.
- Comments received by section of the plan center around the policy framework and complete communities. We have received comments about the implementation strategy.

Also, more recently we've received comments on what the plan will and will not do for single family neighborhoods. Many of the concerns, questions and misinformation is expected and we knew this would be an issue or concern because it is one of the largest changes within the Comprehensive Plan around housing diversity. There are ten plan goals and two are focused on housing and housing diversity and inclusion. These goals speak about removing barriers to providing more housing options in our single-family neighborhoods. What the plan does not do is eliminate single family housing; rather, it removes the barriers to providing more housing options in our single-family neighborhoods. This is one of the biggest questions, concerns and points of discussions over the past three to four weeks with some of our community groups.

- Does the Comprehensive Plan eliminate single-family zoning?
- Does the Comprehensive Plan allow duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes on any residential lot within the City and will the plan override restrictive covenants or homeowner's association regulations for my neighborhood?

To address these concerns, we created an Ambassador Toolkit that includes ready to use information, particularly about single-family neighborhoods, the message, key questions and facts from the plan and what the plan will and will not do.

The most common miscommunication about the plan is that the plan will automatically change the zoning in neighborhoods. This is not what the plan does or is intended to do. Another issue is covenant and regulations - plan is not a regulatory tool; it is a policy guidance for the next 20-years. The Ambassador Toolkit contains a FAQ about single-family recommendations, graphics, newsletters, social media posts and emails ready made to spread the word about what is in the plan. It is available on our website and launched today.

Another tool that will launch in March is an animated video that focuses on why we are doing a plan, what is in the plan and how we will implement the plan. We are also launching a social media campaign, as in this virtual environment social media has been one of our most reliable and consistent tools. We are also launching a letter of support as a tool to email or mail to our appointed or elected officials. We have also been meeting with the community, one on one and in groups. We are also meeting with the development community to hear their concerns.

We have had 184 comments collected during focused discussions. We are continuing to do our community conversations speaker series and we had two speakers in January and February. Kimberly Driggins from the Washington Housing Conservancy shared her experience building the Comprehensive Plan for the District of Columbia (DC). She was also Assistant Director in Detroit Michigan and worked on some of their housing initiatives, Place Types and capacity building around community benefits. Paul Mogush spoke about the 2040 Minneapolis Plan and lessons learned. We launched our Virtual Open House today, February 12, at 5:30 pm. This is another platform for our community to experience the content of the Comprehensive Plan. It is available 24 hours per day allowing you to view a station at your leisure. It is an easy way for people to experience the plan. It has links to surveys; story maps, etc. We also continue our game play and this weekend we have had a surge of requests for approximately 300 copies of the game. Our next community conversation in the series is with Charles Hales who is the former Mayor of Portland. He is a place maker, planner, and elected official.

What Happens after the Plan is Adopted?

Kathy Cornett and Catherine Mahoney will manage this part of the process. We will take the ideas and put them into policy implementation which will then connect to the UDO. Hopefully, the UDO will be adopted this this fall. The community should be excited about the area planning process as we are revamping it. Currently, we have over one-hundred plans. We are thinking we will have over 15 geographies and 15 plans that cover the entire City. There will also

be strategic plans and playbooks that feed into the larger Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Osborne asked Commissioners if they had any questions, if they preferred to walk through their comments or any other comments. The Chairperson responded that Ms. Osborne has gotten great kudos in the chat on what she presented as well as on all the outreach efforts. Commissioner Ham commented that it was a great presentation as always. He asked of all the comments received were there any that made you think that you have to pivot because it was something not thought about or considered? Ms. Osborne responded that Commissioner Chirinos had some good comments about the vision, the guiding principles and the vision elements. Commissioner Chirinos comments made me think about that and some of the comments around digital inclusion or the digital landscape. The plan is not strong around that language and it could be stronger. Those are strong points that I think we can change direction on.

The most substantial thing we heard is about the single-family zoning. At this point we are listening and taking it in. Here is what is in the plan, here is what the plan does or does not do. No position has been taken on anything at this time.

Commissioner Chirinos thanked Ms. Osborne for her comment. She stated that the plan is well written. The research, the care, and level of excellence merits kudos to everyone on the team. Commissioner Chirinos stated there were a couple of things she found as a pattern across the board, starting with our vision and going across our policy framework. Our lens was not broad enough to include newcomers into the conversation. She did a global search on the word “newcomer” and found it zero times in the document. Commissioner Chirinos was surprised because if we are looking at the next 20-years we will have newcomers and immigrants to our City. She did not believe it is intentional. We are therefore focused on the infrastructure part of things, forgetting about the integration part of things in terms of the people that are building our community. In our vision, we talk about thriving, but not belonging. Therefore, what we are creating is a pass-through city where people are merely going to stay a few years and then leave because they don’t feel like they own their part of the process. In Charlotte most people are from somewhere else. Hopefully, we will add to the vision at the end the words thrive and belong as an aspirational goal and a vision for the future. Overall, throughout areas of the document Commissioner Chirinos found that the words inclusion and diversity weren’t used. It was somewhat confusing because in goals one, two, three, four, and even seven when we are speaking about diversity and resilience, we don’t really talk about integration. It is all about the physical aspect. I think that the community aspect of it, building community to create this plan was a big part of our equitable growth framework. Especially, with the metrics which we were looking at on at least page seven of the Executive Summary. Commissioner Chirinos agreed with Ms. Osborne’s statement that we need to be mindful when looking at the whole document with a lens of integration and of community. The integration of communities and intentionality of opportunities I don’t think has been expressed in the policy framework. Newcomers are not mentioned once in the whole document from anywhere, not even from other states or other countries.

Commissioner Chirinos also asked that we engage the City of Charlotte’s Office of Equity, Mobility and Immigrant Integration (EMMII). We have not engaged the principles that they have established. Commissioner Chirinos added that she did not find this office as a strategic partner in this process. Neither are any of the Ethnic Chambers of Commerce or any minority organizations. There are no mentions of any of these organizations, and Commissioner Chirinos believes this is important to engage these as part of the vision process. Ms. Osborne thanked Commissioner Chirinos for her comments. She stated that comments were shared with the group making a distinction between what was received by the Planning Committee, the Planning Commission, and comments received since then.

The Chair asked if there are any other questions. Commissioner Fryday posted a note in the chat asking about the new general statutes note which was also in last month’s presentation and asked staff to elaborate a bit on what it means to

us. Ms. Osborne responded that there is a requirement for a Comprehensive Plan and a unified ordinance. We have until July 21, for adoption and necessary amendments, and to be in full compliance by July 2022. If we do not adopt the comprehensive plan that will impact the schedule for the Unified Development Ordinance. This, in turn, will possibly make us non-compliant with the General Statute.

The Vice-Chairperson asked if we must create a Comprehensive Plan in months, or does that mean we move ahead with the UDO? Ms. Osborne responded that the UDO was that the districts are based on place types. If the Comprehensive Plan Place Type palette does not get adopted, we can't map place types or the zoning districts. It is a domino effect. The engagement and the work on these two projects have been going on for quite some time. The new statute is also not new and it is not driving the schedule. What is driving the UDO and the Comprehensive Plan's schedule is the community's desire to have a new toolbox. The toolbox will be for our vision for growth and development and how we implement that vision.

Vice-Chairperson Gussman agreed and asked what the three most asked questions are and if we address those questions in the virtual open house? Ms. Osborne responded that the answer to those questions was in the single-family neighborhood messaging that is in the Ambassador Toolkit and in the frequently asked questions. They are attachments of separate documents that clearly state the responses. Staff added the link to the chat. Ms. Osborne stated that the link could be shared with anyone in the community and is also located on the 2040 website. Vice Chairperson Gussman stated that we need to acknowledge that community plans will not be executed right away and will not begin immediately when the Comprehensive Plan is approved. There is a lot of prework that is being done now.

We are developing a set of graphics to explain area plan process. The Comprehensive Plan will be a living document and there are steps to updating and modernizing our plan policy. The first step in the Comprehensive Plan process was a policy audit. It looked at all the area plans and strategic, corridor plans, and identified relevant policy or modern policy that we can extract from these very place specific plans and apply broadly to the community. The next step was Place Types and Place Type mapping, which is also a community wide process that links to the UDO process. The UDO will also be a community, wide project that will have engagement. Another thing to note, is that we will provide an annual report on the Comprehensive Plan. How well are we doing, do we need to pivot on short term actions. We will look at updating the plan every five years and provide a full update every ten years. The plan will be something that we are always assessing, pivoting, making sure that everything is relevant. We will make sure it doesn't sit on the shelf but connecting and making sure it connects to our community needs and how resources may change over time.

Commissioner Chirinos added that there is not enough mention of alternative energy in the plan. She asked if this is going to be required in terms of the building process. Commissioner Chirinos added that she believed this is significant in terms of growth and development in the next 20-years. She could not find an instance of it in the goals or policy. Ms. Osborne responded that Goal 7 addresses this. The plan is the overarching document that connects to our strategic plans. We have a Strategic Energy Action Plan. There are some very strategic policies in there that are zero carbon emissions and reducing our carbon footprint. The Safe and Equitable Mobility Goal is one and the another is the Energy Action Plan. This focuses on creating districts that support resiliency and some of the major goals in the Strategic Energy Action Plan. We wanted to make sure the plan ties to the land use parts of what the Comprehensive Plan would do. There are recommendations in place types, specific language that will connect certain place types to those goals in the Strategic Energy Action Plan. These are some of those things that support the Strategic and Energy Action Plan that will be in the Unified Development Ordinance as well.

Commissioner Chirinos noted that perhaps there could be an added note that says solar energy. We need to make sure

we are articulating that and be more specific when talking about policy. We also need to add disability. In the factors about our communities, disability was not mentioned. We have talked about race, poverty, age, education attainment, but we don't talk about ethnicity or disability. Those are important aspects when talking about the vulnerable communities to address. If we could add a global note saying we are looking into those areas across the board as a policy. Ms. Osborne asked, "How are you defining disability?" Commissioner Chirinos responded disabilities in general. I just want to make sure that we are keeping the lens that keeps all the dimensions of diversity in this spectrum of opportunities that we are providing. Ms. Osborne noted that Ms. Cornett provided links in the chat. These links speak to the three goals that speak to resiliency and energy recommendations. The other suggestions are things that we will take into consideration when reviewing the comments and proposing revisions to the document.

The Vice-Chairperson asked if Commissioners had any other questions. He asked if Ms. Osborne had any specific take ways from the comments. Ms. Osborne noted that a lot of the comments were recently received and there have been a few from the Commission. People have more question about what is going to happen to me when this plan is adopted. What will happen to my neighborhood, and property? The simple response is that this is a policy document not a regulatory.

Ms. Osborne summarized that what we need to do is remove the fear from the community. Planning is an ongoing process. We will continue to engage the community once this document is adopted. We will report progress or lack thereof and make sure that we are transparent. We would like to create predictability for residents. We will continue to bring the voices to the table and continue that dialogue in every step of the process. The Vice-Chairperson asked a few additional questions relating to the Comprehensive Plan process and asked if there are any other questions. There being none, the meeting was adjourned.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:12 p.m.