

**MINUTES
CITY-COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
VIRTUAL WORK SESSION
FEBRUARY 25, 2021
4:30 P.M.**

MEMBERS PRESENT: George Bryan, Melynda Dunigan, Jason Grubbs, Clarence Lambe,
Chris Leak, Mo McRae, Brenda Smith, Jack Steelman
MEMBERS ABSENT: Tommy Hicks
PRESIDING: Chris Leak

I. CONTINUED DISCUSSION ON NCGS 160D TEXT AMENDMENT

Chris Murphy will summarize information related to a text amendment containing UDO changes required by NC General Statute 160D (briefed at the January work session). A Planning Board public hearing is scheduled for this item on March 11th. This item is a 2020-2021 Planning Board work program item [attached]. (No Board Action Required)

At the January Planning Board work session, the Board was briefed regarding the NCGS 160D Text Amendment. The text amendment will be brought before the Board for a public hearing in March and will go to City and County officials for adoption by the end of June. Chris Murphy presented a recap of the text amendment and answered questions from the Planning Board.

George Bryan asked if the term "Development Applications" included UDO changes and if there was a reason that specific phrase was used. Chris stated that the term does include UDO changes and that he could not speak to the intent of 106D language usage. Chris added that the Planning Department views this term as including all applications that we may receive.

Jack Steelman thanked Chris for answering all of his questions regarding the text amendment in a timely manner.

II. VIRTUAL OUTREACH REPORT

Kelly Bennett will present the Board information on virtual public outreach techniques and strategies, including findings from peer cities and recommendations for our agency. This item is a 2020-2021 Planning Board work program item [attached]. (Board Action Required)

In researching this report, Kelly Bennett spoke with other City departments in Winston-Salem, as well as peer cities, planning organizations, and the American Planning Association to see how they were conducting virtual outreach during the pandemic. Virtual meetings have afforded more opportunities for public participation, and there have been more quorums and larger attendance. Some of the pros to hosting virtual outreach meetings are that staff can better include stakeholders who feel intimidated about coming to a public meeting and speaking in front of a large group, and that staff can share results from surveys instantaneously on screen.

Some of the main problems seen in relying on virtual outreach relate to the digital divide between citizens with easy access to computers and high-speed internet and those without. Winston-Salem's marketing director believes this digital divide may not be as wide as some fear, as most folks have access to smartphones, and if one does not have broadband access, the City or County provides it in a number of public settings (such as recreation centers and libraries).

Kelly broke down best practices for virtual outreach, live online meetings, and recorded meetings, and gave several examples for each category. He suggested expanding public comment periods to give people more time to participate. He presented an example of an interactive map produced by the Transportation Department which allows citizens to actively show on a map where they would like to see sidewalks or crosswalks. The map also shows how many stakeholders have participated, thus making it a very helpful tool for everyone. By showing where citizens participated on the map, the Transportation Department was able to see which neighborhoods were not being reached by social media posts, and they could reach out to those specific neighborhoods with postcards and door hangers.

In summary, staff presented four recommendations for virtual meetings:

- embrace virtual meetings, which can bring in more folks who cannot make it to an in-person meeting.
- consider the availability of local broadband internet access, such as at libraries and recreation centers, when planning outreach efforts.
- invest in multiple outreach methods, such as social media or an information line to request information, and
- consider using consulting services when it could benefit the project.

Melynda Dunigan asked Kelly if during his research he thought about what staff person would be responsible for the outreach and whether or not it might make sense to have a dedicated person responsible for all department outreach who could more consistently use multiple methods.

Kirk Ericson assured Melynda that that is something that staff has discussed. Given staff's workload, Kirk stated that it is best for the project manager to oversee public outreach for a project, as such a person would be best equipped to answer questions about that specific project, should they arise. Kelly added that Marketing and Communications is sometimes included in discussions at the beginning of a project regarding outreach due to that being their area of expertise.

George thanked Kelly for his efforts in researching virtual outreach modalities and requested best practices regarding Planning Board meetings. He felt that while the Planning Board members certainly are visible on all Zoom meetings, he would very much like to see people that are commenting at the meetings be visible when speaking. In addition, when technical difficulties arise, he would like to see that there is a plan in place to suspend the meeting until a later time so that no one is excluded from participating. Lastly, George did not agree that we were reaching more people through virtual meetings.

George shared his thoughts for informing neighborhoods of what is going on related to Planning issues by using annotated agendas with direct links pertaining to the neighborhood or area being discussed. The links would take one directly to the section that concerns that neighborhood. George also recommended more use of social media sites. He also brought to the attention of staff that Work Session is no longer publicized in the newspaper as it once was. He also suggested surveying citizens what would help the Planning Department get information into their hands. George also had concerns about using the NextDoor site.

Melynda was in agreement with George's comments and stated she would like for staff and the Board to find practical ways to address some of these issues. If staff does not have a dedicated person responsible for all public outreach, we should adopt a more articulated outreach plan.

Aaron stated that all Planning Board meetings are required to be posted in the newspaper per statute, which he noted does not generate a lot of return from the one paragraph that appears ahead of the meetings. He also stated that staff did not have control over when and if articles appeared in the newspaper about meetings or a specific zoning case. However, notification letters are sent to neighbors within 500 feet of a subject property informing them of a rezoning request. Staff also meets with a sub-committee of the Neighborhood Alliance each month to go over zoning cases and uses social media to get the message out about plans. Aaron reached out to peer cities to see what new procedures they have put in place throughout COVID, and the only thing our peers noted was utilizing social media. Aaron stated that he would look at City protocol related to using an annotated agenda as mentioned.

Jack Steelman asked if there was just cause to ask the marketing department to put together a coordinated City of Winston-Salem outreach strategy rather than each department acting independently.

Aaron stated that marketing staff has been utilized on a number of projects, such as the Census, and staff will continue conversations with them pertaining to area plans and the new comprehensive plan. Discussion of moderating social media posts was brought up, and Jack also stated that he was agreeable to having more tools in the toolbox but that there are invaluable things that take place in face-to-face, person-to-person conversation and asked that we maintain a balance between the two. Aaron made clear that the online and virtual input tools were to be used in addition to in-person meetings.

Kirk added that back in 2012 (when social media was becoming more popular) staff conducted a survey, and even at that time print media advertisement came in last as citizens' preferred contact method. In that poll citizens mentioned neighbor-to-neighbor contact, and social media as the preferred contact methods. Another tool that has been successful is individual mailers to addresses within a study area. Jason Grubbs mentioned how fast things are changing with social media and outreach. Other notification methods were also discussed, such as mail inserts in water bills. Mo McRae expressed that she liked the interactive map idea and believes that it would be engaging, if it is an affordable method.

Amy Crum noted that attendance was up this year for the virtual CAC awards, which are usually held in person. The virtual meeting format allowed for folks who could not participate at the meeting time to watch it later at their convenience. Melynda added that

it is very important for people to be able to go back and access videos and be able to watch important events and felt we should be doing this for everything that we do.

With no more Board discussion, Chris Leak called for a vote.

MOTION: Jack Steelman moved approval of the public outreach techniques and strategies presented by staff.

SECOND: Clarence Lambe

VOTE:

FOR: Jason Grubbs, Clarence Lambe, Chris Leak, Mo McRae, Brenda Smith, Jack Steelman

AGAINST: George Bryan, Melynda Dunigan

EXCUSED: None

III. DOWNTOWN INVESTMENT REPORT (2011-2020)

Steve Smotherman will present the Board data on investment in Downtown Winston-Salem from 2011-2020. This item is a 2020-2021 Planning Board work program item [attached]. (No Board Action Required)

Steve Smotherman reviewed the annual Downtown Winston-Salem Development Values report and noted that Winston-Salem saw \$64 million in investment in 2020. Jack Steelman stated that projects such as the Stevens Center investment and new residential projects are not yet investments, but just announcements at this point, and asked if the correct wording is being used for the intent of the report. Steve stated that staff does include announcements, but if nothing happens on a project within a three- or four-year period it is removed from the list. Jack also asked Steve if he had ever done any breakdown of Downtown investment dollars between taxable and non-taxable projects. Steve stated that City finance and/or revenue staff look at things like that, but he did not have knowledge of specific studies.

Clarence Lambe stated that the task of figuring whether an investment is taxable or not may be difficult to assess, but would be worth looking into.

IV. DEBRIEFING PUBLIC HEARING MEETING OF FEBRUARY 11th

Melynda stated that when there is a complex text amendment she would like staff and the Planning Board to consider having more public input built into the process and to make sure that people understand what is actually being proposed. Melynda also stated that the way the Cottage Courts text amendment was presented was inherently confusing to the public, based on the fact that they were thinking that this was just a MU-S text amendment that had Cottage Courts as an allowed use, rather than Cottage Court rules being its own separate provision. She also stated that sometimes it takes a while to understand complex text amendments.

V. STAFF REPORT

Staff will be talking about Cottage Courts and presenting information on accessory dwelling units, sign amortization within the City, and the *Public Art Master Plan* at the March 16th City Council Committee meeting.

Aaron King and Samuel Hunter will be meeting with Dr. Hur, the Chair of the Planning program at East Carolina University, in an effort to promote planning as a career path to folks of diverse backgrounds and to generate more interest in the field. Staff has identified eight colleges and universities in North Carolina to contact over the next several months to discuss ways to promote diversity in planning.

VI. FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER