

2022 Downtown Plan Steering Committee



Meeting #4: Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 10, 2022

Huntersville Town Hall, 6:00 – 8:00 PM

Attendees:

Voting Members

Nate Bowman
Doug Ferguson
John Foster
Lee Hallman
Elaine Kerns
Sarah McAulay
Cindy Trevisan*

Gatewood Campbell
Sean Flynn
Charles Guinard
Janelle Harris
Bob Lemon
Elizabeth Rodriguez*
Jessika Tucker

Ex-Officio Members:

April Dunn
Kathy Jones
John O'Neill

Barbara Gerhardt
Diane McLaine
Mike Russell

Town Staff:

Dave Hill
Brian Richards
Jackie Huffman
Bobby Williams

Jack Simoneau
Tracy Barron
Kim Strickland

Consultant Team:

Terry Shook
Henry Stepp
Bob Gibbs (Remote)

Larry Zinser
Alex Borisenko

* Attended via Conference Call

- 1. Call to Order** – Chairperson McAulay called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. A recorded video of the meeting is available at:
<https://www.facebook.com/HuntersvilleNCTownGovernment/videos/downtown-plan-steering-committee-meeting-3/308375621325227/>
- 2. Roll Call** – Meeting attendance is noted above.
- 3. Approval of Agenda** – Charles Guinard made the motion to approve; Bob Lemons seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.
- 4. General Public Comment** – **Amy Hallman**, 100 Cambridge Road, invited the Committee to attend Pottstown events during Black History Month. She was concerned about traffic and referenced back-ups from the Gilead/115 intersection. Speeding truck are already a big problem. Widening of Gilead is not the solution. The Town Board needs to take ownership of this project. "Drive to, not drive through."

5. **Staff / Consultant Observations/Takeaways – Jack Simoneau**, Planning Director, spoke to Slide #1 of the presentation cited below. He mentioned that \$43.8 million in Downtown improvements resulted from the 2006 Downtown Plan, and that sometimes we need to celebrate our successes.

Terry Shook provided the presentation cited below. He asked the Committee to trust the process. He said he wanted to get into the design process as soon as possible, just like everyone else. The intent is to provide more than just a plan. The public survey and interactive map are tools used to develop a focus effort that is not linear. There will be changes, reexamination, and continuing efforts to get a clearer picture of what the plan should contain. Future meetings will be in-person; Shook Kelley will flex as much as possible to address Committee concerns. A new website portal has been added to allow anyone to submit comments. A draft revised schedule was shown that expand the number of future meetings.

The presentation can be found at:

https://www.letsplanhuntersville.org/files/ugd/68fb0a_a60f06b7e4e54c29a9078df26f6aeab3.pdf

6. **Committee Discussion – Project Improvements – Lee Hallman** wanted more information about what the Alternative Futures will look like. **Terry Shook** stated that they would be multi-variable, addressing several components such as streets, open space, parks, and more. He added that stages along a timeline would be provided as well. Planning horizons can extend beyond 25-30 years regarding actionable recommendations. Terry informed the Committee that his team would deep-dive into the survey and map results.

7. **Downtown Retail Market Analysis – Bob Gibbs**, project subconsultant with the Gibbs Planning Group, made a presentation to the Committee via conference call. The presentation may be found online at:

https://www.letsplanhuntersville.org/files/ugd/68fb0a_97c4a7f6b18648089dbd35f39430dcef.pdf

Bob also referred to a Retail Market Analysis that was provided in advance, found at:

https://www.letsplanhuntersville.org/files/ugd/68fb0a_12211782fb6a46c380c154547849e978.pdf

Bob talked about communities having the “X Factor” – a characteristic that makes an environment unique and appealing for visitors and distinguishes the downtown experience as being superior to other shopping experiences, such as malls. **Terry Shook** mentioned that retail opportunities will be explored as part of the Plan.

8. **Committee Q&A – Market Analysis** – How do we address the lack of available space (**Lee Hallman**)? Bob said to find out what the market opportunities are, have the community determine what it wants, and then devise your plan to get there. Terry Shook said that options will include how to be proactive. Is additional density required to capture additional retail investment (**Elaine Kerns**)? Bob said that an additional 70,000 square feet of retail can happen now; additional density would enhance the quality of the retail businesses. Bob also said that additional density is possible without threatening small town character. Bob talked about the need for retail management district as a preference for retailers. How do we create a uniform character and look (**Sean Flynn**)? Bob said that attainment of ‘aspirational character’ might be the goal; design elements such as scale, window, etc. can be developed to get a desired character. What is the desired parking ratio? Bob said 2.75 parking spaces per 1,000 square feet. A higher ratio can hurt

the walkability. Birkdale Village has 4 spaces per 1,000 square feet. Huntersville regulations require a minimum of 2 spaces per 1,000 square feet. **Charles Guinard** mentioned the need for on-street parking and trees. Charles also favored a Downtown library. Roadway improvements cannot be designed to get motorists through Downtown. **Sarah McAulay** agreed that a library would be an important resource. Huntersville is the only North Mecklenburg town without a downtown library. **Kathy Jones** liked the characterization of Huntersville as a village or small town. Amenities such as parks and playgrounds, specialty markets, festivals, libraries, and street trees need to be prioritized rather than eliminated. More apartments will not get the Town to the X Factor. People moved to Huntersville for the small town, family community feel. **Doug Ferguson** asked about who supervises management of a district. Bob said that the Main Street program is highly successful, or a Business Improvement District. Regardless, some form of management is needed. It allows for shared benefits of marketing, advertising, special events, Christmas or other decorations, and other ways to attract visitors. **John Foster** asked for more information about the possibility of the Town partnering with a developer. Terry Shook said that the Town's role will be addressed among Plan options.

9. Next Steps – Dave Hill mentioned that discussions would continue to develop a revised schedule for future meetings.

10. Adjourn - The meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.