

2022 Downtown Plan Steering Committee



Meeting #3: Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 3, 2022

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

Attendees:

Voting Members

Nate Bowman	Gatewood Campbell
Doug Ferguson	Sean Flynn
John Foster	Don Gest
Charles Guinard	Lee Hallman
Janelle Harris	Elaine Kerns
Bob Lemon	Sarah McAulay
Elizabeth Rodriguez*	Cindy Trevisan*
Jessika Tucker	

Ex-Officio Members:

April Dunn	Barbara Gerhardt
Kathy Jones	Diane McLaine
John McClelland	Mike Russell
Stephen Swanick	

Town Staff:

Dave Hill	Jack Simoneau
Brian Richards	Tracy Barron
Jackie Huffman	Kim Strickland
Bobby Williams	

* 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/629390148173768>
- 2. Roll Call** – Meeting attendance is noted above.
- 3. Approval of Agenda** – Charles Guinard made the motion to approve the agenda; Bob Lemon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- 4. Steering Committee Mission & Responsibilities** – Dave Hill, Huntersville Senior Planner, made a presentation intended to clarify the Downtown Plan process, and to address some of the concerns raised by Committee members and others. The presentation can be found at
https://www.letsplanhuntersville.org/files/ugd/68fb0a_d1902c5492be4d3f948891ae09a0976b.pdf
- 5. Steering Committee Discussion** – Chairperson McAulay opened the floor for discussion by inviting Committee members to speak individually. **Lee Hallman** mentioned the need to find a 'middle ground' but spoke against high density residential. He also said that the Downtown needs

to be a place that all residents can enjoy. **Charles Guinard** said there are small businesses Downtown that are both thriving and hurting. Parking has been gradually taken away over the years. More people are needed to be able to walk to small businesses. The plan must make small businesses work and parking is critical. **Jessika Tucker** said that community is important; she wants more time for discussion without the consultants – it may be a facilitator is needed. She was willing to have more Committee meetings if necessary. **Bob Lemon** said that there have been previous planning efforts to improve the Downtown, but relatively little action taken to implement the recommendations. It is important to have the Town Board implement the recommendations; otherwise, we will not have learned from past mistakes. **Janelle Harris** mentioned her interest in inclusion for her own neighborhood, that the voices of the underrepresented are heard, and that existing residents can benefit from any improvements and new development that occurs. **Doug Ferguson** explained that Huntersville Presbyterian Church is deeply rooted in the Huntersville community. The church has been located at its current location for 100 years and has been and will continue to be committed to Downtown Huntersville. **Gatewood Campbell** read a statement outlining her desire to see an attractive Downtown with several amenities. She cited her concerns about the planning process thus far and asked for more detailed information. She also asked current property owners to share their development intentions with the Committee. Gatewood also asked for a pause in the process to obtain proper public input and allow the Committee more time for discussion. **Elaine Kerns** addressed the process being used for the Plan. She is a therapist experienced in working through conflict with groups. She discussed group dynamics and phases of group behavior, indicating that conflict is normal. She appreciated the meeting tonight and looks forward to continued Committee progress toward the development of an excellent Downtown Plan. **John Foster** owns Foster's Frame and Art Gallery. He said that although small Downtown businesses do see visitors come from outside, more needs to be done to recruit and retain a variety of small businesses. He felt that Huntersville needs to attract a great arts and culture facility (Cornelius has done so). He wants the Town to partner with developers and stay on track with the commuter rail. **Sean Flynn** said he presented his vision of the Downtown, but it didn't work out. He said it's time to come together and reach a common goal without infighting and conflict. It's time to think outside the box and compete with other communities. He knows that several communities already have public-private partnerships – these are needed in Huntersville. Cohesive conversations are needed. **Sarah McAulay** wants to make the Downtown the center of Huntersville and a destination place. This may require more density. Infrastructure is already here. More restaurants are needed where people can sit down in meet. Bring back the Farmers Market. We need to acknowledge the train – it will come. Different housing types are also needed. **Mike Russell** said he looked forward to putting together a plan that makes Huntersville's Downtown a vibrant, welcoming, and walkable place for people of all income levels. **Diane McLaine** wants to make sure that greenway connectivity is incorporated into the plan. She stated that it is very important to hear the opinions of everyone, and that some of the best decisions come from lots of voices in the room. **April Dunn** said the Downtown was once the focal point of Huntersville. There are several infrastructure improvements making their way toward the Downtown. The Public Art Committee is doing its own thing but is primed to do more. Citizen support is high and for the Downtown – it's our time. **John McClelland** hopes to bring good quality opinions from the Huntersville Chamber to create the awesome Downtown that we all want. **Barbara Gerhardt** is waiting for something to happen in Downtown, and soon. She also agrees that the east side of the community should have accessibility to the west side despite the railroad. Easier walking and a better railroad crossing are needed, as well as more attention to affordable housing. **Kathy Jones** wanted growth and urged the Committee to get something done. She

stated concerns with the survey, map errors, and lack of Committee input regarding the survey. She also wanted a better opportunity to interact with Shook Kelley. **Stephen Swanick** stressed the important of the New Town Hall project. He encouraged the Committee to take up this issue and make a recommendation. If not, the Downtown Plan process should be paused.

Chairman McAulay opened the floor for additional comments. **Lee Hallman** said we have an opportunity to be unique. Protect the integrity and density of the core. Residential demand is high, so the market is hot. Don't flood the Downtown with residential units – move it out beyond the ¼ mile center. **Diane McLaine** asked what the next steps would be. **Jessika Tucker** expressed concern for east-west accessibility. **Bob Lemon** believes a great plan will be produced but was skeptical that nothing will be done about it. **Janelle Harris** said she wants Pottstown concerns to be taken seriously. Public-private partnerships could be a solution to address her concerns. **Doug Ferguson** asked how to communicate Committee concerns to Shook Kelley. **Dave Hill** said that Shook Kelley was watching the meeting. He also asked the Committee to continue to point out errors and make improvement suggestions. **Jack Simoneau** explained that maps use for the survey were the best available, even though some map information was dated. **Barbara Gerhardt** stated that some parts of the community have been neglected; some areas don't have sidewalks. Neighborhoods don't have to be torn down – they just need some improvements. **Nate Bowman** said that might be a good example to examine is Smithville in Cornelius. **Sean Flynn** wants to move toward putting together a list of bulleted actions rather than talking about process. Collaboration needs to be improved; long email chains are not working. **Gatewood Campbell** said the project needs to be paused. **Kathy Jones** asked who created the public survey. **Brian Richards** responded by saying Shook Kelley produced the survey; Planning staff produced the interactive map. **Kathy Jones** spoke in favor of moving the new Town Hall site next to the existing Town Hall. She expressed concerns about negative comments posted on the interactive map. She added that some older buildings tagged as eyesores are historic resources and well worth maintaining as part of the Downtown's character. **Elaine Kerns** suggested that some Town Board direction would be helpful. She wanted to know how to estimate how many new residents would live in recently approved projects and agreed that east side accessibility and connectivity should be addressed. **Nate Bowman** wanted Shook Kelley to look at New Town Hall siting options. He also wanted an analysis density within a quarter mile and the upcoming amendment related to attached housing near a transit station. Finally, Mr. Bowman said he offered to buy the school for one dollar, develop the property around it, and use the funds to improve the school. **John Foster** did not want to pause the planning process. The Town Board needs to know how the plan is progressing. He supported increased density in the Downtown. **Stephen Swanick** thanked several members for their support to address the New Town Hall. He wanted more information – the site next to the existing Town Hall may actually be more expensive than the site next to Town center. **Amber Kovacs**, Town Board Commissioner, said she supports and pays attention to the Committee. She asked the Committee to continue to provide input. **Charles Guinard** used to have 38 small businesses in 13 buildings. His goal is to allow small/incubator businesses to have a place in the Downtown. He currently has one vacancy. He appreciated everyone else's comments. **Lee Hallman** stated his intent to have briefings with the Town Board. He favored getting information in advance and reserving Committee meetings for discussion.

6. Adjourn - The meeting adjourned at 8:02 PM (Guinard – Motion; Lemon – Second).