

**TOWN OF WEDDINGTON  
SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL AND PLANNING BOARD MEETING  
MONDAY, JULY 13, 2009 - 6:00 P.M.  
MINUTES**

The Town Council and Planning Board of the Town of Weddington, North Carolina, met in a Special Session at the Weddington Town Hall, 1924 Weddington Road, Weddington, NC 28104 on July 13, 2009, at 6:00 p.m. with Mayor Nancy D. Anderson presiding.

Present: Mayor Nancy D. Anderson, Mayor Pro Tem Robert Gilmartin, Councilmembers L.A. Smith, Tommy Price (Arrived at 6:50 p.m.), Jerry McKee, Planning Board Chairman Dorine Sharp, Planning Board Vice-Chairman Rob Dow, Planning Board Members Jack Steele, Scott Buzzard, Beth Masurat and Jeff Perryman (Arrived at 6:53 p.m.), Town Planner Jordan Cook and Town Administrator/Clerk Amy S. McCollum.

Absent: None

Visitors: Brian Carlton and Than Austin

**Item No. 1. Open the Meeting.** Mayor Nancy D. Anderson and Chairman Dorine Sharp called the July 13, 2009 Special Town Council and Planning Board Meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. There was a quorum.

**Item No. 2. Presentation of Local Area Regional Transportation Plan (LARTP) Executive Summary -Martin/Alexiou/Bryson, PLLC.** The Town Council received the Executive Summary and the Highway Map as information.

Than Austin – I work for Martin/Alexiou/Bryson. We are a Transportation Planning Engineering Firm in Raleigh. We have been working with the four communities in this area for the last year putting together the Local Area Regional Transportation Plan for Western Union County. It has been a cooperative effort between the Village of Marvin, Town of Waxhaw, Town of Weddington and the Village of Wesley Chapel. We are confident that the plan we have put together is a good one and will be useful for your community and will give you the education and the knowledge that you need to empower yourselves as you go through the transportation land use process. There were a number of different objectives in putting together this plan. This area has been witness to a tremendous amount of growth pressure in the last few years and is projected to continue to experience a tremendous amount of growth pressure. Smaller communities are often not equipped to deal with that specifically as it relates to transportation infrastructure with roads, sidewalks, greenways, etc. One of the objectives was to promote regional coordination.

MUMPO is the organization through which federal and state transportation dollars are funneled and eventually trickle down to you. That organization includes Charlotte and Mecklenburg County as well as a number of jurisdictions in the area. There are 16 all together. One of the problems that you share with other small communities in a very large MPO is that often your voice is much smaller than Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. The projects that you have on the long range transportation planning documents often times fall to the end of the list simply because in comparison to Charlotte's transportation issues they don't rate as high. One issue that we are trying to resolve here is putting together this information to provide you with the knowledge and education you need to raise your voice and work together in MUMPO. This was a regional project but we did make a good effort to listen to your local needs and try to help you determine for Weddington what it is that you need. We recognized before the project began that public outreach was going to be an important part of this project. Over the last year one of the most meaningful pieces has been the involvement of the Steering Committee for this project which consisted of

about 20 members of elected and public officials from four jurisdictions as well as other interested parties represented by the development community and other local interests. We met monthly, sometimes twice a month to work to put together this plan before you. There was also a Technical Committee. I would like to thank Jordan at the staff level. There is a lot of work behind the scenes that the staff did on this project. We have held a number of public workshops. Last fall we began the public involvement stage in October and November. We held a couple of public meetings. We wanted to reach out in the community in ways that might involve people that normally don't come to public meetings. We also maintained the project website. We are presenting the plan to each of the four jurisdictions to receive public input. The plan is much more than just a roadway plan. It was intended from the beginning to recognize the need to build up your alternative modes of transportation. Not only to provide viable alternative ways of getting around town but also to provide health and recreational benefits to the community such as walking and bicycling opportunities. One of the important things we heard early on was the desire on the part of the community to maintain the rural image and that is an important component of the quality of life here. We have tried to balance the transportation needs with the values that are important to you as a community. Another important part of this plan is we did a fairly comprehensive look at your land use policies and ordinances and we came up with a series of recommendations on how you can look at your land use policies and ordinances in a way to go back and standardize them but also make you more proactive and more educated as you deal with the development community. The roadway and intersection projects were prioritized. We made an effort working with the Steering and Technical Committee to prioritize each of the projects in the plan. Implementation and funding is the key. We know this is where the rubber hits the road and if projects are going to get built there has to be a mechanism to do that and the resources to do that.

Mayor Anderson - Multimodal is a requirement for DOT now. This has to be adopted at the DOT level and eventually it will go all the way to the State. If we did not incorporate all of those things, we would get turned down.

Mr. Austin - Any project that involves federal funding needs to look at not only cars but bicycles and pedestrians as well. The 16 widening here is a good example of that. Sidewalks and bike facilities are part of that project. It is a multimodal plan. One type of project is improving your existing roadways. The roadways that you actually have out here, which you know are rural two lane roads, which not only have capacity problems in terms of handling enough vehicles to make things work but there are also safety concerns. On the thoroughfare plan, we have identified a number of roadways that need to be improved over time to enhance capacity and improve your safety. There are also a limited number of new roadways. Those are shown as dashed lines on the thoroughfare plan. Those roadways we believe serve as important connectors between other major and minor arterials. One of the main problems that you have is that 16 is so congested because there aren't any other alternatives going north and south. This plan is a regional plan and not just focused on one community. We have identified the need to improve Waxhaw-Indian Trail Road as an alternative to 16 and also some of these connectors that you see in here in the northern Waxhaw area are ways to provide folks options to get around and specifically to make local trips. The nature of the communities down here is that there is not a lot of employment opportunities in this area so those folks are heading towards Monroe or going up to Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. Finding ways to alleviate those pressures especially during peak hours is the key.

One of the things we heard and we have known from working in other communities is there is not a lot of money out there for transportation improvements. Aside from the recent stimulus money, the money from the federal government is getting less and less. There are a number of factors that contribute to that. We want to work with you on identifying projects that would make a difference in the short term but wouldn't be overly expensive projects. We came up with an intersection plan that was part of the thoroughfare plan where we identified close to 30 different intersections in the study area that needed improvement. We did a number of data collection efforts and analysis for those intersections and other

intersections in the study area and the plan recommends improving these intersections because you can gain a lot of capacity in the roadway system if your intersections are working well. For your intersections right now you have two main roads coming into the intersections without turn pockets, without signalization or other things and can really limit your capacity. You have done a lot of intersection improvements in this area and you can see how that has helped you from a capacity point of view and also from the safety point of view. The different kind of improvements that we looked at: turn lane signalization, pedestrian improvements and site distance improvements. This was a tough one because the beauty of your area is in the rolling hills and winding roads and we made a concerted effort not to destroy that. That does create a number of site distance problems which provide safety concerns. We did a crash and accident data analysis to figure out what kinds of problem occur at these intersections and the solutions were derived from that data. We did also look at roundabouts. I know you have a couple in this area and in select situations it is an appropriate treatment to handle the traffic and offer the aesthetic factor to the community as well. Each of the four towns collaborated and understood that this was a system plan and that the benefits derived from projects in Weddington would be felt by the folks in Wesley Chapel and Marvin. There are a number of projects that have been identified in the statewide transportation improvement program for funding. Those are your big ticket items and NC 16 and NC 84 have been in one form or another on that list for some time. We also looked at the Rea Road Extension again and the impacts and benefits that would have on the regional roadway system. You don't have the same connectivity issues we felt that Waxhaw has. Your roads are not quite as disjointed; they are further south in the study area. These dots that you see along here are all proposed intersection improvements. This is very common in rural areas where these roads were not designed to handle a lot of traffic. Your area has grown so rapidly that it would really behoove you to focus on the intersections first and there often is a small pot of money at the region/state level to make spot safety improvements for intersections. There are probably other locations where a roundabout would be appropriate. Roundabouts need to be looked at in terms of the whole system. You can't just drop a roundabout in isolation. They do work very well in some locations but there are a number of factors that need to be considered as you contemplate that.

When we talked about priorities, we came up with a system to prioritize all of the roadway projects into high, medium and low priority projects. The red projects are high priority. Those are Highway 16, 84 and the Waxhaw Bypass Parkway. The medium priority projects are orange lines and the lower priority projects are the yellow lines. We did an extensive analysis of different factors including projected traffic volumes and intersection capacities. Typically your high priority projects are going to be the ones that you will continue to push through the regional transportation process at MUMPO to get the big federal dollars. Those are expensive projects that will not have the funds at the local level. Those are the projects that deserve the federal and state funding and should qualify. The yellow projects on the other end of the spectrum are most likely going to be projects built through developer contributions. Most of those are in areas where you are projecting future growth and development and those would be roadways as new developments come in that the development community could help build. The orange projects help to connect the neighborhood roads with the major projects. The implementation plan that we came up with discusses the projects. One exercise that we thought was important to look at was street design. We did not want to give you a thoroughfare plan with lines on a map. We wanted to help you envision what those lines would be. There is a phrase used in transportation planning a lot now called contact sensitive design. It is important especially in rural areas like this that the roadways are built and improvements are done so in a sensitive way to the environment not only to the natural environment but to preserve historical qualities and other factors that are important to your quality of life.

One of the problems that you have is that DOT historically in rural parts of the state have built very narrow shoulders. They do that for a reason. It is very expensive to add pavement. It causes a number of problems. It doesn't allow bicyclists any place to ride if they want to. It doesn't allow people to fix a flat tire or that sort of thing. There are a number of different techniques for adding shoulder to the roadway.

It is not as expensive obviously as redoing a complete roadway but it would have some key benefits. It was clear that either New Town Road or 84 needed to be 4 lanes in the future. The traffic volumes projected for the future will be too high to be handled on a two lane road. We decided that it was not necessary for both roadways to be four lanes. The decision by the Steering Committee was to preserve right-of-way, to recommend that NC 84 be four lanes but to preserve right-of-way along that New Town Road corridor so that improvements could be made to the two lane section and ultimately if it was needed that section could be four-lanes, but in the meanwhile you would preserve the right-of-way. We did think it was important to think about bicyclists and pedestrians and how they work within the system. There are a number of blue lines on this map. Highways 84 and 16 principally are the roads that have been identified as boulevards in the thoroughfare plan that would have bike facilities included. We went through an exercise to identify opportunities for recreational and bicycling improvements. Then we looked at some of your opportunity areas such as your creeks and that sort of thing where greenways may be appropriate in the future again as creating a nice sub-regional bicycle network. An important piece of this was looking at land use. We are kidding ourselves if we put together a transportation plan without thinking of the land use implications. You have to look at the two together, otherwise the plan you come up with won't be worth very much. We did a comprehensive review of your policies and also of your development ordinances to find out the things that you have in common with the other communities in your study area and also identified a number of different policies and ordinances that we would recommend implementing in this area to help you out. Those were based on the ideas of standardizing requirements across the four towns in the study area and maximizing the benefits from developments. Again, empowering you as communities as you work with the development community to help get what you need in terms of your transportation infrastructure. What we came up with was a series of different recommendations and the appendix of your document details the ordinance changes that we recommend. This is a menu of options. It was recognized that while we wanted to standardize regulations across the study area we also felt it was really important to recognize each individual community and there are some things that we don't need to do altogether at the same time. We gave model ordinance language that you can move toward incorporating into your ordinances and into your land use documents. We provided that information and it will allow you as you move forward to select which things are most important to you as a community and to implement those. Some of them will be important to all the communities like right-of-way dedication. Another important thing is access management and how strategically implemented access management improvements can help preserve your roadway capacity and how it can enhance safety and different kinds of bicycle facilities and parking facilities. Looking out toward the future and thinking about the kinds of development we also recognize that the four municipalities may not have the same kind of development. It may be some mixed use development in one community while other communities may focus on lower density residential development. Thinking about this as a system and how those interact together and how they work together. Implementation is the key. It is important to recognize the different processes that are in play here.

One of the key components is MUMPO which we talked about the regional transportation planning organization that you are a member of is working on two different documents. One is the long range transportation plan which is commonly called the LRTP. The comprehensive transportation plan is a relatively new DOT process which is replacing what they used to call the regional thoroughfare plan and the idea with a comprehensive transportation plan is it is supposed to be more multimodal in nature and it is supposed to be more comprehensive. The comprehensive transportation plan is essentially a wish list of future projects. Any future need is identified. The long range transportation plan takes the plans from the comprehensive transportation plan or thoroughfare plan and it is fiscally constrained so in MUMPO's case there are 3 different 10 years horizon periods and projects are identified within each of those 10 year horizon periods. We talked about this at the beginning of the steering committee. All of the projects in the LARTP currently in Western Union County are very low on the LRTP except for the Highway 16 widening.

The critical thing to understand with this project is the thoroughfare plan and the intersection plan that we came up with was developed specifically to feed into the comprehensive transportation plan at the regional level. That process was supposed to begin concurrently with our process. For DOT reasons it was delayed and has not begun yet so it actually benefits you to be able to adopt your plan and then the 4 communities go to MUMPO and the regional planning process and say here it is. It gives you a huge head start over other communities because you can go to DOT with your projects already identified and prioritized. This project and the format of the map was developed specifically using the DOT format for the comprehensive transportation plan. We are going to give the electronic mapping files for this project to your staff and to the MPO and they will be able to transplant those onto a CD. The DOT will come back to you as a community in the next year to begin that CTP process. Hopefully you will be able to say you have an adopted transportation plan.

The implementation plan identifies potential funding sources for improvements. Not all of the projects on the thoroughfare plan that we have come up with are going to be candidates for federal and state transportation dollars. There is a mixture of federal and state transportation dollars, local improvements, other sources such as spot safety and intersection improvement monies. Some of the projects were developed as candidates for a developer contribution as those projects come on line. All of that together was put in the implementation plan and there is a separate plan for the roadway projects.

Next steps – We are meeting with each of the four member jurisdictions over the next few weeks. We are going to receive comments and input from elected and appointed officials and then it will need to be adopted by each of the four municipalities. There needs to be community involvement and you need to deliberate. I will leave the actual implementation of the adoption stage to your Town.

Councilmember Jerry McKee – Assuming we had this transportation plan in place prior to the Providence Road Widening Project, what impact would the transportation plan have had on that? If we had this adopted would Providence Road look like it does today? What influence would this plan have on DOT?

Mr. Austin - The DOT is required to consult with local communities when they are doing major road improvements like that. I don't know what those discussions were back when the NC 16 plan was developed. I know it probably evolved over time like many of these plans do. The section out there now with bike facilities and sidewalks and planted median and access management improvements would not have been designed 10 years ago. This boulevard concept is a relatively new concept. If you are asking how this plan would have affected that if that project were not underway right now. We did a lot of work with the regional travel demand model which is a sophisticated traffic model that projects different traffic volumes. The traffic volumes that we are looking at on NC 16 over the next 20-30 years are simply high enough we believe that a 4 lane section would be required. It is hard to say how it would have been different. I am not totally opposed to the general design of the boulevard with the bike lanes and the sidewalks and the planted median. Where it is difficult in this situation is retroactively going in and trying to make that fit into an existing developed area and that is a huge challenge. You are automatically restricting movements and making people travel in ways that they are not used to traveling. The short answer is that we believe that NC 16 down to Waxhaw will eventually need to be 4 lanes.

Councilmember McKee - The biggest problem that has arisen from the Providence Road widening is access to commercial businesses in Weddington. It is almost completely eliminated.

Mr. Austin - One of the main issues with 16 specifically is that a lot of that traffic is thru traffic and not local traffic. The DOT is trying to balance the needs of the thru traffic, commuter traffic with the local traffic and it is a tough balance to achieve.

Councilmember McKee - I appreciate all the work that was done. I think this is a very good study and a very good plan. My only question is how much influence will this plan have in the future with NCDOT?

Mr. Austin - We had a sit down with a DOT district engineer and showed him what we came up with and he was very positive and thought it was great that the community had put forth this much effort. In his estimation as long as the plan meets the overall traffic and safety needs they are willing to go for it. There is data and analysis here that support that. In their estimation things have changed over the last few years starting at the federal and going down to the state level in terms of how the DOT is required to interact with local communities.

Mayor Anderson - This is our local area transportation plan. It goes to MUMPO who then adopts it and then the MUMPO plan goes to the State. Most of this study was funded by MUMPO money. They have a vested interest in it succeeding.

Mr. Austin - They have been with us all along the way. We have worked with their staff planners and we presented it to them a week ago and they were strongly in favor of it and were encouraging other communities to use this as a model for how they do this type of planning.

**Item No. 3. Adjournment.** Councilmember Smith moved to adjourn the Special Town Council Meeting. All were in favor, with votes recorded as follows:

AYES: Councilmembers Smith, Price, McKee and Mayor Pro Tem Gilmartin  
NAYS: None

Vice-Chairman Rob Dow moved to adjourn the Special Planning Board Meeting. Mr. Steele seconded the motion, with votes recorded as follows:

AYES: Perryman, Masurat, Steele, Buzzard and Vice-Chairman Dow  
NAYS: None

The meeting adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

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Nancy D. Anderson, Mayor

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Amy S. McCollum, Town Clerk