



MINUTES

The Holly Springs Town Council held a workshop meeting on Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at the Law Enforcement Center. Mayor Mayefskie presided, calling the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. A quorum was established as the Mayor and five Council members were present as the meeting opened.

Council Members Present in the room: Mayor Sean Mayefskie, Mayor Pro Tem Dan Berry, and Council members Tim Forrest, Danielle Hewetson, Chris Deshazor, and Annie Drees.

Council Members absent: none.

Staff Members Present in the room: Randy Harrington, Town Manager; Linda McKinney, Town Clerk (recording the minutes); Daniel Weeks, Assistant Town Manager; Scott Chase, Assistant Town Manager; Corey Petersohn and MaryBeth Spohr, Budget, Innovation and Sustainability; Kameron Womack and Mathew Mutter, IT; John Schifano, Town Attorney; Cassie Hack, Director of Communications and Marketing; Tina Stroupe, Director of Finance; Aaron Levitt and Dirk Siebenbrodt, Utilities and Infrastructure; Chris Hills, Director, Development Services; Sean Ryan, Chelsea Davis, and Elizabeth Goodson, Development Services; LeRoy Smith, Fire Chief; Paul Liquorie, Police Chief; Patty Dressen, Director of Office of Customer Care; Irena Krstanovic, Director of Economic Development; Paige Scott, Public Works; LeeAnn Plumer, Director of Parks and Recreation; Ginny Jones, Interim Human Resources Director.

1. Overview: Randy Harrington, Town Manager, gave an overview of the meeting agenda.

2. Mayor and Council Retreat Follow-up

a. Strategic Plan

Corey Petersohn, Director of Budget, Innovation, & Strategic Initiatives, said that this item was to review proposed strategic plan updates based on feedback received at the Mayor and Council Retreat. He said that, depending on the feedback received tonight, the plan would come back to Council in April for further review or for adoption. He outlined the two options Council had expressed preference for at the retreat, one with four areas one with five, and the changes they had requested for each. He proposed three options for discussion: a rebalanced plan with four priorities (Option A), a rebranded plan with five priorities (Option B) and staying with the current plan.

Council discussed the options and consensus was that they liked distilling the strategic plan to four priority areas, but wanted to work on the wording of the "Community and Economic Vitality" priority to more clearly call out economic development and business goals. The title "Growth Management and Economic Development" or something similar was suggested. Staff agreed to work on the wording and bring it back to Council in April.

Mr. Petersohn outlined the proposed new goals and initiatives that would be the focus for the upcoming year, and some initiatives that were proposed for removal due to their open-ended nature.

Council discussed individual initiatives and asked for clarification on some.

Given the feedback received, Mr. Petersohn said that in April he would bring the revised wording back to Council at the workshop, and bring the plan back for adoption at the April business meeting.

b. Employer Branding to Support Recruitment & Retention

Daniel Weeks, Assistant Town Manager, said that “employer branding” encompasses efforts to enhance the Town’s brand (reputation and competitive advantages) as a top employer of choice among job seekers, current employees, and key stakeholders in the community. He said that key takeaways from Council discussion at the retreat were that public sector recruitment remains a challenge across the county, particularly in public safety and some technical positions. The question was what besides pay could be done to address this. He said that the Senior Leadership Team began discussing this issue in November at their retreat and formed a Workplace Culture ad-hoc committee which met through November and December. In February ideas were taken to the Employee Engagement Committee for feedback. The ideas fall into three main groupings: Training & Growing leaders; workplace policies and benefits; and workplace community. Mr. Weeks outlined several recently implemented programs under each of these groupings but said that we want to do more. He outlined a dozen ideas that were under consideration at the management level, under each of the three buckets, and then said that there were other ideas that would need Council input.

Under the Leadership Training and Organizational Development bucket, possibilities include a 2% - 2.5% target for employee training and development in departmental operating budgets, and an increase in tracking of employee training across the organization, which would require Human Resource resources, both of which would be part of the annual budget approval.

Mr. Weeks said that there were several considerations under Workplace Policies and Benefits including adding a Health Insurance tier for “employee plus child” implementing public safety compensation study recommendations and conducting a 3-year update of the organizational classification and pay study for potential implementation in FY26; Personnel policy enhancements to modernize the longevity benefit to increase the amount and to start earlier; to modify the holiday benefit to equal shift workers’ workday; expanding Eldercare Leave to include Caregiver Leave (with FMLA eligibility); to provide military training leave; a focused personnel policy update; and to update and clarify overtime language. Mr. Weeks then listed some concepts for further study that had been proposed in various discussions.

Mr. Weeks said that at the retreat, Council asked for information on employee turnover by department for the past two years, reasons given for turnover in Police and Fire, and the number of Police and Fire employees who had retired over the last two years. He offered those statistics by department and the average turnover rate as of February 2024. He said the most common reasons given in exit interviews for those leaving police and fire were work life balance, professional growth/training, pay/compensation, benefits, purposeful work, and work flexibility. Other cited reasons included career change, medical, resigning in lieu of termination, unhappy with supervisor/management, and family reasons. Mr. Weeks said that there was one retirement each in Police and Fire in FY22, three in police and none in fire in FY23, and none so far in FY24. However, staff projects the number of public safety retirements could increase over the next 2-3 years due to current employees meeting state retirement thresholds.

Mr. Weeks ranked eleven items for Council consideration in order of cost, linking each to the Council action required. He said that next steps would involve staff progressing new concepts that have Council consensus, which could include incorporation into future budget and or policy change recommendations.

Council discussed the potential impact of the suggestions and how much they would “move the needle.” They discussed the longevity pay schedule, overtime pay, health insurance benefits and other pay ways other than pay to improve employee recruitment and retention.

c. Budget Check-in

Corey Petersohn, Administration, said this item was to provide a preliminary overview of the general fund budget and receive feedback and guidance from Council. He said that projected revenues were \$57.5 million and gave a breakdown of their sources. He said that subtracting current base expenses from those projected revenues left an increase of about \$4.2 million for new expenses. He then outlined top priority budget requests that are needed in the public safety sphere, which added up to a shortfall of around \$881,000. Adding requests that were outside of public safety, including “keep the lights on” requests and typical yearly requests leads to an additional \$1.85 million.

Randy Harrington, Town Manager, said this is a window into what it takes to balance a budget. We probably have about \$10 million in additional requests, all very reasonable. And we probably have another \$5 million in PAYGO requests for things that are needed. Obviously, we aren’t going to be able to do it all. But it is going to be a challenge to whittle it down to a budget that is balanced and acceptable.

Mr. Petersohn discussed the cost of health insurance and compared it to Wake County’s and the other municipalities in the county. Mr. Harrington said if we were to match Wake Forest on our health care, it would cost \$100,000 and we could potentially get 16 additional employees to sign up for it. Five years ago it was about \$1000/month for employees to cover their families. Getting the cost down to \$812 was a big win, and we have tried to keep it down.

Council discussed what it would take to try to match what Raleigh and Wake Forest do on health insurance, how much that would cost, and how many employees might take advantage of that. Mr. Harrington said that now that we are in NCHIP we are building up reserves that would enable us to offer lower rates in the future.

d. Avent Ferry Road Pedestrian Improvements

Aaron Levitt, Utilities and Infrastructure, said Council asked for information on the Avent Ferry Road Realignment Pedestrian Improvements. Originally the plan was to realign Avent Ferry Road as part of an original bond project. However, construction cost escalations caused Council in the fall of 2023 to ask staff to investigate the possibility of retaining the grant for sidewalk and pedestrian upgrades only. Staff explored in-house design with LAPP funds, checked with CAMPO to confirm that the Town can retain the grant, and shifted revenue from the Avent Ferry Realignment to Holly Springs Widening project. The funding has been unused for long enough that it is in danger of being rescinded.

Mr. Levitt said that utilizing the LAPP approach would result in 1,821 linear feet of sidewalk, including connecting Avent Ferry Road to Main Street along Oak Avenue. He explained that it would have a lower cost to the Town for a longer sidewalk, and the connection, but would require more right-of-way acquisition (which increases risk) and, due to NCDOT involvement, would have a longer timeline to completion. He said that staff recommended using Town funds. It would have the connection from the medical offices and hospital and would allow the Town to deliver the project in a reasonable amount of time. It also allows flexibility to bid this project to coordinate with other projects or when costs were down. Using Town funds means fewer permits and reviews. The LAPP program would require 10 to 12 reviews from NCDOT which adds a lot of time to the project – more than months, years.

Council discussed the pros and cons of each approach. Consensus was to go with Town funding approach as that would get the project completed more quickly, expose the Town to less risk from right-of-way acquisition, and improve the walkability of downtown.

Mr. Harrington announced that today we learned from Kendra Parrish, Executive Director of Utilities and Infrastructure that we have NCDOT approval for the Main St. Right turn lane and the turn lane on the bypass. We were not expecting to get approval this quickly, so this is a big win for those projects.

3. Street Tree Program

Chris Hills, Director of Development Services, said the Tree Advisory Committee was formed as part of the initial Tree City USA application. They hold quarterly meetings, sponsor Arbor Day, Tree Pruning Workshop, a HollyFest booth, and Wild About Nature. They also manage the Street Tree Replacement program and prepare the annual Tree City USA application. Holly Springs has been a Tree City for 4 years now.

Mr. Hills said the street tree replacement program is a pilot program in its third year, to assist homeowners with the cost of street tree maintenance and replacement. In FY 2024 its budget was \$30,000, (as part of the TAC budget of \$40,000) with a maximum grant of \$750 per property to assist with tree removal and replacement.

Mr. Hills said that street trees are a town asset as they enhance streetscapes, provide traffic calming benefits, treat stormwater, and increase property values. He said that according to studies a large mature tree in a yard in front of a home can increase the home's value by between 3% and 15%.

Mr. Hills said that the Wake County tree canopy study found some areas of opportunity in Holly Springs for a town-wide tree planting program. This could involve tree plantings on private property, not just street trees, with a goal of increasing the tree canopy and reforesting areas impacted by roadway projects. He said another area of opportunity would be a corridor beautification program with tree planting and intentional landscaping along key corridors to enhance the public realm and coordinate with infrastructure projects to mitigate their impacts. He outlined some challenges to expanding the program and asked for Council feedback.

Council agreed that this was a great program and that expanding it could save the town on maintenance of sidewalks, access for emergency vehicles, and other benefits.

4. Open Discussion

Council member Deshazor spoke about the yard waste carts and said he had noticed a lot of chatter in his neighborhood about it. Mr. Harrington asked Paige Scott, Director of Public Works, if she had any preliminary comments about the program. Ms. Scott said they have received a lot of public comments on this, and they are talking to people. It's a matter of change management. She said we are not charging any fines or fees yet but are trying to educate people on what to do. There is roughly 35% rate of usage right now. If a resident complains about their waste not getting picked up, we are going back to them and educating them about the program. She said staff is logging all the suggestions on how people want the program to operate and will make tweaks when and where appropriate. There are more options now for people to get rid of yard waste. Council member Drees said that she heard that part of her neighborhood didn't get picked up. Ms. Scott said let staff know if you know of an area that gets missed. It does happen but if you let us know we will go back out.

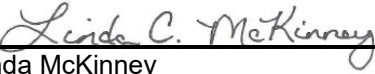
Council member Drees asked Mr. Harrington for an update in the Friday briefing on the process for deciding to put a crosswalk in place.

Council member Forrest asked about software for the legal team. John Schifano said he is working with IT on a solution that is almost complete, with software that is already purchased. He will send information out in the Friday briefing.

5. Closed Session: none

6. Adjournment: There being no further business for the evening, motion to adjourn was made by MPT Berry second by Council member Forrest and passed with a unanimous vote. The March 12, 2024 meeting of the Holly Springs Town Council was adjourned at 8:27 pm.

Respectfully Submitted on Tuesday, April 16, 2024



Linda McKinney
Town Clerk