



CHAPIN TOWN COUNCIL WORK SESSION

**Wednesday April 22, 2021
3:00 p.m.**

**Town Hall - Community Room
157 NW Columbia Ave, Chapin**

Members Present: Mayor David Knight, Mayor Pro Tempore Al Koon, Member Mike Clonts, Member Kay Hollis, and Member Leland Teal

Members Absent: none

Staff Present: Finance Director Laura Culler, Utility Director Andy Metts, Police Chief Seth Zeigler, Public Affairs Director Nicholle Burroughs, and Town Clerk Shannon Bowers

Guests:

Call to Order: Mayor Knight called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m., determined there was a quorum, and acknowledged the appropriate notifications in compliance with the SC Freedom of Information Act had been met.

Items of Discussion

Proposed Dog Park for the Town of Chapin: Director Burroughs began the discussion by presenting to Council the rendering for the Chapin Town Hall Park that was done in 2016. There has been a lot of community support for a dog park since around 2018. Since then, the Town has taken in a phased approach in developing the property for public use by partnering with the Chapin Beautification committee, Chapin Garden Club, and SC Wildlife Association who helped install a pollinator garden, Chapin Garden Club who also helped with the pollinator garden as well as installed a bluebird trail and planted a tree with a bench in memory of Mrs. Toni Brown, and the Public Works department in adding a mulch trail for visitors to walk. The area on Town Hall property designated for the proposed dog park will be approximately 460 ft of fenced in area. The area will need several site improvements such as site clearing, signs, fencing, parking, and curb cutting. Director Burroughs noted that it seemed to be located in a good spot, with good natural plant life to facilitate this dog park.

Mr. Steve Wall spoke to Council regarding the public interest in the proposed dog park. He stated that he had private owners willing to donate land outside of the Town limits, but he would prefer it be inside Town limits to be accessible to all, if the Town were willing to have it on Town property. His participation in the project would include helping raising money to fund the project or paying for the project personally if funds could not be raised. He referenced the Grace Street dog park in Greenwood, SC as an example of how he would like the dog park to look. It has a double gate, separate areas for large and small dogs, an agility training area, and trenching all the way around the fenced in area to allow for drainage. He would like to preserve the natural vegetation to allow for shade in the summer months, provide picnic tables, benches, gazebos, and signage for use at this park. Mr. Wall did acknowledge there were several things that would need guidance on such as insurance issues, park rules, maintenance, and whether or not to charge people

to use the park with controlled access. Mr. Wall also noted that The Justin Pepper Foundation is willing to help with any fundraising opportunities.

Utility ordinance for sewer agreement for environmentally stressed communities: Mayor Knight stated citizens in the Indian Cove community are in need of sewer service. They are private citizens that have septic tanks that are failing, and have approached the Town for assistance in getting sewer to their properties. Mayor Knight and Director Metts have developed a proposed sewer agreement for environmentally stressed communities for onsite and offsite sewer. These homeowners will connect individual homes, instead of the whole community. Chapin Town Code, Chapter 18, sections 18.207 provide for utility extensions in areas not served. The five options in this section are: Properties within the corporate limits, unincorporated properties contiguous to corporate limits, property developer used for residential or commercial purposes that is not contiguous to corporate limits (this is how most sewer lines are developed), properties developed for industrial uses, and property developed for residential, commercial, or industrial purposes whether contiguous or noncontiguous to corporate limits. Most agreements allow for the Town to pay engineering costs but developers would pay the cost of construction and deed back to the Town for operation and maintenance when complete. None of these options currently allow for sewer service where private homeowners, not developers, would pay for construction cost, and, there is currently no plan to assist these homeowners in paying for that cost.

Director Metts is proposing a sixth option in section 207 where properties previously developed for residential purposes only where contiguous or noncontiguous to corporate limits where an environmental pollution source has been observed (by Chapin Utilities Director, County health department, or SCDHEC). Would include wording that exists in the current ordinance, but would include agreement to allow the Town to pay for engineering and design cost and require the homeowners to pay for the construction and easement acquisition costs. It would then allow for the homeowners that originally invested in the project to get a return on that investment over time and as new property owners are added to the line.

Several other options to assist these homeowners were discussed including using separate tax district using the 15% method, which would require a referendum and a vote of 15% of voters in that area. The other is the 75% method, which would not require a special election, were discussed as possible options. A concern was raised as to how these areas would be prioritized once this becomes a possibility. Council would like to do what they can to help these homeowners and protect the environment, but the Town currently does not have the resources to handle future requests.

Town of Chapin Radio Center: Mayor Knight gave the background information from the last work session regarding an emergency radio center that is set up and maintained by amateur radio operators as a service provided to the Town and surrounding areas in the event of an emergency. In the event of a natural disaster or other emergency where supplies or resources are needed, they could communicate on non-encrypted frequencies with state and local authorities to communicate those needs. They have requested funds to upgrade their equipment, and the possibility of moving the system to the new American Legion building, once built, exists, but at a cost to the Town to continue this service.

Chief Zeigler commented that he met with several individuals when he first came on to the position. He noted that this system is good to have in a worse-case scenario as a valuable communication tool in the event that emergency response goes down. He noted that they are a good group of community citizens, and did not see it unreasonable to help update the system now. He recommended that Council take time to speak with this group and develop an alternative for where the system would be located the future, if necessary. Concerns were raised about moving the system to the new American Legion building and the cost associated with that. Concern was raised over their request for funds allocated in the budget, and those funds roll over each year. Director Culler stated that was not how the budget worked and it would have to be evaluated on an annual basis. She also noted that previous money given to this group was allocated for in the budget, they purchased the equipment and submitted receipts to the Town for reimbursement. Director Culler recommended that they submit a request to Council for review when next year's budget is being discussed.

Lexington County Moratorium: Mayor Pro Tem Koon stated that Lexington County passed a moratorium on April 13, 2021 for residential development with subdivision that are 10 lots or bigger at ½ acre per lot for 180 days to help curb the influx of subdivisions in Lexington County. This is in an effort to review the County subdivision regulations to hopefully make them stricter. He proposed that Chapin support the effort, but posed the question should Chapin create their own moratorium. Director Burroughs stated this would potentially force developers to move into the Town limits faster because they could not go through the County. Council was in favor of supporting the Lexington County moratorium effort by submitting a resolution, but did not see the need for a separate one for Chapin, since zoning regulations in the Town are stricter than what the County allows for.

Town updates

The American Rescue Fund Act update: Director Culler gave a brief overview of what the American Rescue Fund Act (ARFA) would include. It was signed into law on March 11, 2021 and would allocate \$1.9 trillion in emergency relief funds, providing \$65.1 billion to municipal governments to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency, offset revenue losses, bolster economic recovery, and provide premium pay for essential workers. The Municipal Association of South Carolina (MASC) recommends reviewing the information about the ARFA and consulting with the municipal attorney since information and guidance on the details are still evolving. The MASC strongly recommends municipalities refrain from using funds until guidelines are released, as it may result in a city or town having to repay those funds to the Federal Government.

The Town of Chapin, under the ARFA, is considered to be a non-entitlement city, classified as having populations of fewer than 50,000. Grant allocations for non-entitlement cities are based on population size and grants allocated cannot be greater than an amount equal to 75% of the city's most recent pre-pandemic budget as of January 27, 2020. Funds estimated the Town would receive are \$609,919.68, but this is not a final total. Funds must be spent by December 31, 2024.

Comprehensive Plan update: Director Burroughs updated council with the Comprehensive Plan process. The firm hired to conduct the Comprehensive Plan hit their goal numbers for community

surveys received and are currently compiling that information with stakeholder group meeting information. The next steering committee meeting will be May 12, 2021 at 2:00 p.m.

Boards and Commissions update: The Planning Commission will be meeting next week to discuss a subdivision submission. The Architectural Review Board approved plans with conditions for building four of the Chapin Commons development.

Director updates – Hiring opportunities: The application process for the open Zoning Administrator position closed on Monday April 19. Staff will be reviewing applications and setting up interviews in the coming weeks. The Utility department currently has an opening for a Deputy Director of Utilities. The application process has not closed on that position.

Council updates: Council did not have any updates to report.

Items for discussion for next Council Meeting: Items that could be included on the next Council meeting, set for May 4, 2021 are: Resolution supporting the Lexington County moratorium, an ordinance to address environmentally stressed communities, amendment to the lease agreement for 103 Columbia Ave that is currently occupied by Lexington County Sherriff’s Office, and a resolution requesting Council to approve the utility department to apply for SRF loans for the east Chapin force main project.

Public Comments:

A member of the public, Kim Murphy, addressed council concerning controlling development through sewer agreements. She commented on Council’s decision to support Lexington County’s moratorium. She stated that the Town could control growth using the sewer taps and would like to see Council create its own moratorium on sewer taps. She stated Council could implement something right now, without a moratorium, by using Town ordinances and regulations. She stated that the ordinances allow for the use of sewer taps to control development by making developers abide by the Town regulations if they want sewer services.

Adjournment: Member Clonts moved to adjourn the Work Session. Member Teal seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

COUNCIL APPROVED: May 11, 2021