

**SUMMARY MINUTES OF A BUSINESS MEETING  
OF THE CHAPEL HILL TOWN COUNCIL  
MONDAY, JUNE 9, 2003, AT 7:00 P.M.**

**Item 5 - Information Items**

Mayor pro tem Evans removed 5c, Response to a Petition Requesting Removal of Traffic-Calming Devices on Lonebrook Drive, and the Council agreed by consensus to hear from citizens regarding that item.

Northwood V resident Mark Zimmerman pointed out that much time, effort and expertise had gone into the draft "Policy and Implementation Process for Neighborhood Traffic Management," which had been formulated by the Engineering Department. He recommended that the Town follow this guide unless someone presents a compelling argument not to. Mr. Zimmerman cited statistics to support the view that speed humps and stop signs were not warranted based on measured speed and traffic volume

Parkside resident Larry Nobles pointed out that more than 60 people had signed a petition because they perceived there to be a speeding problem on Lonebrook Drive. He explained that the Town had conducted a study in response to that petition and that Town Traffic Engineer Kumar Neppalli believed there was a significant speeding problem and had recommended installing speed bumps and stop signs.

Mr. Nobles said that the Parkside Homeowners Association had agreed to accept Mr. Neppalli's recommendation. He had not taken the matter to Northwood, he said, because there was no homeowners association there. Mr. Nobles said that opposition from Northwood had begun after the stop signs were installed. But a survey of residents in both neighborhoods had shown overwhelming support for some form of traffic-calming device along Northwood Drive, he said. Mr. Nobles stated that 94% of those who live along Lonebrook Drive support traffic-calming devices.

Eric Plow commented that 24 of the 119 residents that Mr. Neppalli surveyed do not support stop signs or speed bumps. Moreover, 35 do not support speed bumps, he said, and 19 do not support stop signs. He stated that this totals 79 residents, or two-thirds, who oppose traffic-calming measures in the neighborhood in one way or another, said Mr. Plow. He argued that it would be a travesty of political equity and fairness to give funds to a neighborhood that is divided on the need for traffic-calming while denying it to another that wants it and has clearer justifications for it. Mr. Plow told the Town Council that it was their duty to those who elected them to spend Chapel Hill's limited traffic-calming dollars wisely, and elsewhere.

Northwood V resident Ingrid Metcalf agreed with the previous two speakers' comments. She remarked that it is parents who are responsible for children's safety, not the community. Parents should teach children not to play in the street, she said. Ms. Metcalf argued that placing speed bumps and stop signs in such a quiet neighborhood would not be an efficient use of money. She urged the Town Council to pay attention to the more pressing needs of other neighborhoods and to place "slow children playing" signs in Northwood. Ms. Metcalf concluded that allowing children to play in the road is "an

accident waiting to happen" no matter how many traffic-calming devices the Town installs.

Council Member Kleinschmidt confirmed with the Manager that this was a draft policy and that nothing had been adopted that would guide the Town in this situation. He asked Mr. Horton for background information. Mr. Horton explained that the staff had drafted the policy at the request of the previous Council, who had considered the policy and decided not to adopt it but to address issues as they came up. Council Member Kleinschmidt pointed out that the Town was not violating any policy with its recommendations.

Council Member Bateman asked to hear Mr. Neppalli's analysis of this situation. Mr. Neppalli explained that 65% of the drivers on Lonebrook Drive had been exceeding the speed limit from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. It is true that stop signs alone do not solve speeding problems, he said, but studies have shown that a combination of speed bumps and stop signs are effective.

Mayor pro tem Evans asked Mr. Neppalli if he had considered trying the "children at play" signs, adding that the design of some speed bumps makes it dangerous to proceed over them at the speed limit. Mr. Neppalli replied that the Town does not install such signs on Town streets because it would lead to the perception that the Town is encouraging children to play in the street. He explained that they had not looked at signs because the petition had been for devices. Based on speed studies, however, 65% of the 500-600 drivers were going more than 25 mph and 25% were going more than 35 mph, Mr. Neppalli said. He explained that the speed bump design was the national standard and the one that most Towns and cities are using. Mr. Neppalli agreed to take another look at the design, though, if the Council so desired.

Council Member Harrison expressed distress because the Council had never held a work session on traffic calming even though nearly every Town Council business meeting includes a petition or a response to a petition on that issue. It is time the Council had a traffic calming policy, he said, and he recommended delaying further installations and waiting to see if stop signs have an effect. Council Member Harrison explained that this does not mean he would not support devices at some point. He commented that the speed tables near the NC Museum of Life and Science in Durham had slowed traffic down to about 25 mph, allowed safer pedestrian movement around the museum, and made driving through that area a more enjoyable experience.

Mayor Foy asked if there was support on the Council for Council Member Harrison's suggestion to hold a work session to develop a policy on traffic calming.

Mayor pro tem Evans suggested having the policy brought back to the Council before deciding. Several Council members commented that looking at it had not helped.

Mayor Foy noted that he had served on the Council that had rejected the policy. It had seemed unworkable, he said. Mayor Foy noted that the issue had come back at least twice at Council Member Harrison's request and that the Council had not done anything with it. "So I don't think we need to do that again," he said.

Council Member Strom agreed with Council Member Harrison. He pointed out that the Council would be discussing the Green Infrastructure Bond later in the meeting. That includes funding that could be used for pedestrian safety improvement in neighborhoods, he said. Council Member Strom expressed enthusiasm for working with the Council and staff to develop a policy that would guide citizens, staff and Council.

Council Member Ward agreed in general, he said, because the Town needs a policy for prioritizing needs rather than just reacting on what might seem to be an arbitrary basis.

Mayor Foy determined that Mr. Horton would put materials together for the Council to preview and discuss.

Council Member Kleinschmidt spoke in favor of a tool to help prioritize needs. He remarked, though, that the previous Council probably was correct in its decision not to have a "one size fits all" traffic-calming policy for the Town.

Mayor Foy commented that the Town does have a way to prioritize sidewalks, which might be extended. He stated that the last time the Council went through this it was too complicated. Mr. Horton pointed that the Town had last tried to develop a policy before Mr. Neppalli had been hired. The former report would not represent the Town's "best thinking at this point," he said. Mr. Horton explained that the staff might come up with something that would help establish threshold requirements. These might include having petitions considered first by the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee and/or the Transportation Board, he said, rather than coming to the Council one by one.

Council Member Harrison said that this was what he had in mind. The Town needs to start dealing with this in a routine manner, he said. Mr. Horton stated that he probably could schedule a work session in the late fall.

**MAYOR PRO TEM EVANS MOVED, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER WARD, TO ADOPT 5C, WITH THE STAFF PLACING A HOLD ON TRAFFIC-CALMING REQUESTS, LEAVING STOP SIGNS IN PLACE, AND USING POLICE ENFORCEMENT.**

Council Member Bateman suggested structuring it to include a trial period with data from the Police and Mr. Neppalli. She recommended that the Council re-examine the needs that made this petition look like it was worthwhile. Mayor pro tem Evans agreed to add a six-month time span.

Mayor Foy ascertained from Mr. Neppalli that six months would be adequate.

**THE MOTION, AS AMENDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER BATEMAN TO CONDUCT FURTHER STUDY, WITH REPORTS PROVIDED PRIOR TO TRAFFIC-CALMING WORK SESSION TO COME BACK FOR COUNCIL REVIEW IN SIX MONTHS, WAS ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY (8-0).**