

MINUTES OF A PUBLIC HEARING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL
MUNICIPAL BUILDING, MONDAY, JUNE 15, 1981

Mayor Nassif called the meeting to order. Present were:

Marilyn Boulton
Joe Herzenberg
Jonathan Howes
Beverly Kawalec
R. D. Smith
Joe Straley
Bill Thorpe

Councilmember Jim Wallace was absent. Also present were Mr. Ron Secrist, Acting Town Manager, and Mr. Emery Denny, Town Attorney.

This was the second of two public hearings on the Manager's Recommended Budget for Fiscal Year 1981-82.

Mayor Nassif asked Mr. Ron Secrist to present the introduction. Mr. Secrist reviewed the previous public hearing on the Manager's Recommended Budget for 1981-82, and Capital Improvements Program for 1981-86, held on May 26, 1981.

Mr. Secrist stated that the Recommended Budget called for an appropriation of \$16,586,302 (69½¢ tax rate) and the recommended Five-Year Capital Improvements Program included 28 projects for a total projected Town cost of \$9,034,000. He stated that full copies of the Recommended Budget and CIP had been available and were available in the Clerk's Office in the Municipal Building and in the Public Library.

Mr. Secrist requested that reports from the Planning Board and the Parks and Recreation Commission be recognized by the Council.

Mr. Mike Jennings, Planning Director, presented the report from the Planning Department. Mr. Jennings stated that the Planning Board had discussed the Capital Improvements Program in the June 2, 1981 Planning Board meeting. With the exception of the timing of the land acquisition proposed for a southern Community Park, the Planning Board concurred with the Manager's recommendation. The Planning Board felt it was necessary to start land acquisition as soon as possible in order to reserve land for parks. The Planning Board, therefore, unanimously recommended that the funds for land acquisition in the southern Community Park be moved forward to be included in the bonding period; i.e., the first three years of the Capital Improvements Plan.

Mr. Ray Burby, Chairman of the Parks and Recreation Commission, presented the report from the Commission. Mr. Burby stated that the Commission had met with the Parks and Recreation staff in mid-winter of 1981 and in subsequent meetings to discuss what they felt citizens wanted in regards to the future direction of the Town's parks and recreation facilities. The Commission also formulated what they felt the Department should emphasize in the budget.

Mr. Burby commented further about the operating budget. Given the very large capital investment that the Town now had in its parks and recreation facilities, the Commission and staff placed particular emphasis on (1) publicizing the parks and recreation facilities and services which existed in the Town, feeling that if they distributed more information to potential users, the cost per user would decrease; and (2) not starting new programs or services, but maintaining recreation facilities already in existence, feeling that on-going maintenance of current facilities would do much in preventing large-cost replacement or renovation of facilities in the future.

Mr. Burby commented about the CIP plans for the old bus garage building. The Commission felt that it would be cheaper to renovate that area at some time in the future than it would be to try to replace that facility. On the other hand, there was the feeling among the Commission that they should, at the present time, emphasize land acquisition and development of neighborhood parks rather than build onto another facility at the Community Center Park. The final consensus of the Commission was to recommend that the bus garage be moved so that the Parks and Recreation Department could reclaim the concrete pad (that would be left after removal of the building) for use as a basketball court. Therefore, the space would not be a total loss. With \$5,000 or \$6,000 of additional expenditures, the Town would have a very good outdoor, hard-surface basketball court area at this recreation site.

The CIP for the Parks and Recreation Department included about \$3½ million during the next five years (and beyond). Mr. Burby felt that the Department's greatest concern would be the next year, if \$40,000, which the Manager suggested, were deleted from their budget. He explained that the \$40,000 was to make the Community Center Park actually look like a park, as opposed to the way it looked now: a couple of buildings sitting on a vacant lot. The Commission felt that \$40,000 was a very prudent expenditure considering that the original architects' operating program for that portion of the park outside the community center building was originally \$71,500 (1978 dollars). Mr. Burby stated that the \$40,000 figure that the Department proposed in the recommended budget for outside improvements of the Community Center Park had been pared considerably from the original architectural estimates.

The major parings had been the outdoor wading pool for small children (which Mr. Burby, personally, felt was needed, noticing the number of mothers with very small children in the 3-ft. end of the pool).

Mr. Burby elaborated on the \$40,000 figure: \$20,000 of the \$40,000 was to go for landscaping. He felt that this might be even less, since past experience had been that citizens and garden clubs often donated time and materials to help make area parks first-rate facilities. Another \$10,000 would be used to put in a concrete deck adjacent to the existing swimming pool. He felt that this was critical because that was the original design for the complete operation of an indoor-outdoor pool. As the pool presently existed, the pool could only be used as an indoor pool. The pool did have the sliding glass doors, but no one could go out and enjoy the sun because of the lack of a deck area. This restricted the full potential summer use of the facility. He felt that for a million and a half dollar facility, it was "ridiculous" that it could not be used to the fullest advantage because of the lack of a concrete deck and fencing around that deck. \$5,000 would be used to reclaim the bus garage slab as an outdoor basketball court; \$1,000 would be used for a parking lot where the staff offices presently stood. Finally there was \$4,000 (or 10%) contingency fee.

In addition, the Commission wanted to see another \$35,000 spent on pool furniture for the Community Center Pool and the Hargraves Pool. Mr. Burby felt that pools would be used much more if there were comfortable and inviting areas to rest, relax, read, etc., rather than a hard deck.

Mr. Burby gave further alterations and recommendations for the proposed CIP. These were as follows:

Hargraves: No changes were proposed.

Umstead: The Commission recommended that \$31,000 proposed for paving the parking lot be postponed a year (from 1982-83 to 1983-84), feeling that dust was not really a problem.

Oakwood: No changes were proposed.

Cedar Falls: No changes were proposed.

Ephesus: The Commission did not feel that \$11,000 for paving the parking lot was justified; there was no dust problem in the present lot.

Offices: Postpone the \$24,000 for parking lot improvements (allocated for 1982-83) until 1984-85.

Greenways: The Commission proposed that the \$71,000 allocated in 1985-86 be moved forward to 1983-84, feeling that the Bolin Creek greenway should be developed at the same time that the Bolin Neighborhood Park was developed. This greenway would provide access into the park. The Commission felt that the greenway should be given some priority since it would provide a means of non-vehicular, cross-town movement. People could walk or bike from one side of Town to the mall or to the Community Center without going up very steep hills or having to walk along heavily traveled streets.

Community Center Park: The Commission felt that it was very important that another summer not go by without full use of this pool and proposed that the pool area be completed as soon as possible.

Bolin Creek: No changes were proposed. Commission felt that these park development plans were essential due to the need created by the rapid "in-fill" of this area.

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Neighborhood Parks: The Commission felt it was important to begin land acquisition, as mentioned earlier for future parks. Recommendations were (1) move \$36,000 allocated for 1985-86 up to 1983-84 for land acquisition for a neighborhood park in North Forest Hills, proposing that in the following year the Town would start actual facility development there; and (2) begin land acquisition for a neighborhood park in the Morgan Creek area in 1983-84. The \$300,000 beyond 1985-86 was anticipated for land acquisition use.

Southern Park: No recommendations were made.

Finally, Mr. Burby stated that Chapel Hill had made tremendous strides in terms of investment in parks and recreation facilities over the last four or five years and stated that the Commission felt it was important to maintain these facilities. The Commission had further suggested that a small investment every year in the maintenance of parks and recreation facilities could prevent a very large bond issue proposal in the future.

Mayor Nassif asked if last year's CIP proposed an addition to the existing Community Center. Mr. Secrist answered that it had been proposed, but had been deleted because a review of presently available space and potential space for use by the Department showed insufficient justification for this addition.

Mayor Nassif explained that during a recent work session, directions had been given to the Manager to use two figures: (1) ad valorem taxes generated or shown to have been generated by the adopted 1980-81 budget was \$4,321,965.00. The Council gave direction to the Manager to use that figure, or about \$300,000 \pm in his budget; and (2) in the Transportation Revenue, as pertains to ad valorem taxes, the Council asked the Manager to use the adopted figure of the 1980-81 budget which was \$350,172,000 which is about \$10,000 \pm than projected in the proposed 1981-82 budget. Mayor Nassif stated that a document had been given back to the Council from the Manager and the Council had not yet discussed that document and would probably discuss this after the public hearing in their work session.

Mayor Nassif opened the public hearing to those who wished to make a statement.

Mrs. Kani Hurow, a citizen, spoke regarding the response to her recent request for specific information about the operation and budget of the Chapel Hill Parks and Recreation Department. She thanked the Council for making it possible for her to obtain this information. Mrs. Hurow read facts that she felt related to the operation, administration, and budget of the Parks and Recreation Department and presented copies of the written facts to the Council. Some points presented are as follows:

1. 10% of the Chapel Hill population participated in its programs.
2. A list of statistics showing the number of departmental employees and salaries presently existing to provide these services.
3. Fees charged by the Department in relation to recovery costs and suggested that these figures should be carefully reviewed.
4. She felt there was no justification for the proposed increases for administration, general recreation, athletics, and parks and recreation maintenance, compared to the percentage of citizen use.
5. Concerned that it appeared that money was first spent on a physical plant and administration, and secondly on citizens' needs and wishes.
6. The emphasis on out-of-town trips seemed to contradict the policy of investing large sums of money in local recreational facilities and programs.
7. Suggested review of the Department's programs under the heading of "instructional classes."
8. Suggested an examination of policies governing selection of participants and an evaluation of programs in an effort to attract a more varied population participation.

Mrs. Hurow suggested that these facts be taken into consideration by the Council in their current review of the 1981-82 budget. Mrs. Hurow further informed the Council that a petition from residents in support of her recommendation for a thorough review would reach the Council by the end of the week.

Mayor Nassif asked Mr. Secrist if senior citizens paid their way on the adult trips or not. Mr. Secrist responded that senior citizens paid their way totally, and was in no way subsidized. Mayor Nassif asked if this were also true of other out-of-town sports activities involving other groups. Mr. Secrist stated that fees for other group activities were figured on a percentage basis set up for the particular age group (i.e., youth = 50%, teens = 75%, and adults = 100%).

Councilmember Herzenberg wanted to know if the Department asked participants what their profession was, seeking to understand how Mrs. Hurow came to the conclusion in her report that "several programs attract predominantly university students." The answer from Mr. Secrist was that the Department did not ask a participant's profession.

Councilmember Straley asked if the information that Mrs. Hurow presented was essentially an extension of what was reported in the quarterly reports. Mr. Secrist felt that this information in Mrs. Hurow's report was the same as was reported quarterly.

Mr. Dick Taylor, a resident of Chapel Hill and Director of North State Legal Services, addressed the Council with a request for a commitment renewal from the Council in the amount of \$5,000 because the North State Legal Services was in jeopardy. Mr. Taylor presented an update of the program: the Town of Chapel Hill had helped to create this program by a previous appropriation; the group had begun providing legal services to low-income persons in this county with a \$5,000 appropriation from Chapel Hill and a larger appropriation from the County Commissioners; and, thereafter, federal appropriation for legal services had been provided which enabled them to expand into four other counties (now serving Alamance, Moore, Caswell, Chatham, and Orange Counties).

With proposed cutbacks in federally funded legal services to low-income people, the North State Legal Services had been asked to submit a proposal to reduce the coverage of their program by 40% by September 1 for approval in Raleigh. In considering this drastic reduction, the North State Legal Services would have to consider where to cut, geographically. Prior to now, North State Legal Services had not sought renewal of funds from the Council because of the fact that they had received increased funding from other sources and had money, for a while, to nurture their program prior to expansion. Now, due to the proposed cutbacks, the North State Legal Services needed to consider seeking more funds.

Mr. Taylor felt that a valuable service was being provided to this community and expressed appreciation for the past support the Town of Chapel Hill had given and was now advising the Council that their operation was in jeopardy, hoping the Council would recommit their previous level of support in the amount of \$5,000.

Councilmember Smith wanted to know the number of clients that the North State Legal Services had served over the years from the Chapel Hill area. Mr. Taylor stated that this was difficult to say, but felt that over one-half of the annual total of 25,000 clients came from Chapel Hill. He was not prepared to give a specific figure, but offered to have these figures compiled and mailed to Councilmember Smith.

Councilmember Smith also asked if the courts would appoint attorneys for low-income people if they could not afford to have an attorney. Mr. Taylor explained that the courts were required to provide a lawyer to represent a low-income person in a criminal case, but that there was no corollary on the civil side, despite the fact that the inscription on the Supreme Court Building in Washington, D.C. read "equal justice under law."

Ms. Dee Gamble, a citizen, spoke in support of the Human Services Department. She had spoken before the Council several times previously regarding support for this Department. Earlier, she presented a list of 370 names in support of the Human Services Department. Later she had provided general information highlighting aspects of the Human Services Department that she felt needed special attention. She stated that with the new federal cutbacks in respect to human services, localities would have to provide more leadership in assessing special program needs, facilitating services, and even sometimes providing the human services that would not otherwise be provided to the population. She especially hoped that the Council would support the concept of the Advisory Board, and hoped that this Advisory Board had proven to be of assistance to the Council in the past.

Finally, she hoped that the Council would consider not deleting services provided to local teenagers through the SIFT program as proposed in the Human Services Departmental budget.

Ms. Joann Haggerty, a long-time resident and social worker in the area, also spoke in support of the Human Services Department. She had seen the Human Services Department have one position after another deleted, gradually, over the last five years. She felt that people needed the services that Human Services workers could give and had given. She did not feel that the Department was duplicating services of other agencies. She reminded the Council of the needs assessment survey that the Town conducted three years ago, asking for an assessment of what Human Services should provide. She had worked with the Human Services Department and other agencies in conducting this study. One of the most specific and foremost findings was recreational needs for youths and adolescents. She stated that juvenile delinquency problems had decreased through activities provided by the Human Services Department. The Department had already been severely hampered in trying to meet those needs because of staff cuts in this area. She felt that the Department would be further hampered if the proposed cuts were approved. She was most concerned about the proposed cut of the SIFT program. She encouraged the Council to give the new Department Head a chance. She felt that, professionally, the new Department Head had a lot to offer this Town and realized that he was coming in at a difficult time. She felt that it would be even more difficult for him if there were additional cutbacks in the Department. She urged again that the Council support an Advisory Committee, feeling that the Council needed to have advice from citizens and felt that the Department needed that continuity of having some order of support.

Mr. Michael Kennedy, a resident of Chapel Hill, spoke in regards to the Chamber of Commerce's position on the "absolutely no growth in the budget over the previous year." He urged that the Council take up the slack that the federal government would cause by delinquishing some of the legal service aids, further suggesting that the Council, in general, be prepared to incrementally increase their budget over the coming years to accomplish this.

Mr. Gerry Cohen, a citizen, stated that at the first budget public hearing, statements were made that the Town should cut its budget in absolute dollar terms from the 1980-81 budget. These statements were proposed because, supposedly, the federal and state governments were doing the same. He stated that while it was true that there had been some budget cuts in the federal and state budget, the proposed Reagan and Hunt budgets were actually higher than last year's outlays. The 1980-81 federal budget was \$661 billion. Reagan's proposed budget was \$695 billion. The 1980-81 North Carolina General Fund budget was \$3.2 billion. The proposed 1981-82 North Carolina General Fund budget would be over \$3.4 billion. He believed the Town should seek to accomplish whatever programs it chose with the least cost and balance spending with ability to pay. He felt that voters in our community had shown that they wanted to have the kinds of programs that benefitted the people.

In addition, Mr. Cohen urged restoration of the A bus route; extension of the remaining F/L evening bus to 11:45 P.M., beginning August 15, 1981; and an expansion of the summer and vacation D route service, beginning December 15, 1981. All of these recommendations had been proposed by the Transportation Board. He urged the Council to support the Transportation Board's recommended fare increase. He felt this would provide money to enable the Transportation Department to keep up their present level of service. He also felt the riders realized the good service level and felt that was why the Town had 6,000 regular bus riders--the highest per capita total in the state and one of the highest in the country. He also stated that there had been no negative comments from the general public regarding present bus service and felt that riders were willing to accept a higher proportion of the cost in return for continuing good service levels.

Mr. Robert Greenberg, representing the Animal Protection Society of Orange County, spoke regarding a budget request that had been submitted to Chapel Hill to defray the cost of an emergency animal care system. He stated that for years the local Animal Protection Society (APS) had maintained a program staffed by volunteers for receiving animal-related emergency calls and for arranging appropriate disposition of animals. Calls were received 24 hours a day from citizens through the Police Department and through the Orange County Animal Shelter which was operated by the APS under contract with Orange County. Emergency investigation and care of animals during the hours from 9-5, Monday through Saturday, was provided by the Animal Control Officers, or by APS volunteers, or by the Orange County Shelter staff. However, for overnight and Sundays, calls, investigations, and management of emergency problems in the county, in Carrboro, and in Chapel Hill were performed by the APS workers. They provided first aid and often had to bring the animal to the shelter or make arrangements for emergency veterinary care, or assist the citizen that called.

During the Fiscal Year 1980-81, APS handled approximately 400 emergency calls during nights and weekends. He explained that approximately one-half of these calls required that someone actually go to the site where the animal was located. Approximately 40% of the calls came from citizens of Chapel Hill, 40% from Orange County, and 20% from Carrboro. The total number of calls had increased in recent years and were expected to increase in proportion to population growth. Although APS was continuing its telephone answering service, it no longer had sufficient volunteers to send out to maintain an emergency care system during the nights and weekends. Analysis of the calls received indicated that the services were needed and expected by the citizens and should not be allowed to terminate. Although the calls were related to animals in distress, he emphasized that the calls came from concerned people requesting help.

The APS had recently developed an emergency system, managed by the APS and staffed, in part, by several salaried workers. The additional cost of this system would be approximately \$3,000/year. Partial financial support was also being requested from Carrboro and Orange County in proportion to the number of calls received from each area, in an effort to support this program. Under this new program, the APS would continue to provide telephone answering service. If necessary, the telephone volunteer would nullify the salaried emergency worker who would deal with the problem in the field. The workers had been trained by the APS to provide first aid and to recognize situations requiring veterinary care. The worker would have the authority to bring the animal to a veterinarian for care and also would have access to the Animal Shelter. The APS would pay for any emergency veterinary fees for unowned animals. In summary, the APS was asking the Town of Chapel Hill to contribute 40% of the cost of the salaried workers only--or \$1,232--for this emergency animal service. He felt the APS was an excellent example of how a volunteer organization could cooperate with the government to provide a service expected by citizens in an inexpensive, efficient, and professionally competent manner.

Mr. George Coxhead, a resident and taxpayer of Chapel Hill, stated that he had been a resident of Chapel Hill for about 26 years. When he first came here, there had been no recreation facility whatsoever in Chapel Hill, either private or public, except for that furnished by the university. At that time, he worked with other citizens and groups to try to pass a special tax to provide public recreation in Chapel Hill. Recreation facilities had come along slowly, but now it appeared to him that the Town had an overabundance of recreational facilities in the Town. He commented that the Town had faculty clubs, tennis clubs, country clubs, YMCA, churches, plus the Chapel Hill Recreation Department. He felt that it was time to pull in the reins and level off on services in Chapel Hill. Since 1973, the number of employees in the Recreation Department was up 383%. This included two new employees for the coming year. He stated that the overall recreation budget proposal was double what it was just three years ago, and the proposal for this year was increased 34% over last year. He stated that he was not opposed to recreation, in fact, he believed in it very much. However, he felt that in times like this, when the taxpayers were overburdened with taxes, that leisure time activities were an area that should be cut first. Therefore, he urged the Council to ask the Acting Town Manager/Director of the Parks and Recreation Department to rework the budget to the level of last year (\$633,000).

Councilmember Thorpe did not recall why the outdoor pool plans for the Parks and Recreation pool at the Community Center on Estes Road, were not in existence now. Mr. Burby stated that there had been a budget overrun on the building itself, and the outdoor deck had been deleted, along with the landscaping. In order to complete the building itself with the amount of money originally budgeted, everything outside the shell of the building was deleted, with the expectation that it would be provided later . . . and later had come.

Mayor Nassif spoke to that issue. The Town had an indoor/outdoor pool. The original plans were to be able to open the top of the building. If the door could not be opened, then opening the top would not do any good because there would be no ventilation. With no outside deck area, as the building now existed, allowing egress to the outside would cause debris to be brought back into the pool area. Therefore, egress or ingress could not be allowed until a concrete or hard surface terrace was completed.

Councilmember Thorpe stated that he would like to see the old bus garage (still located at the Recreation Department site) remain.

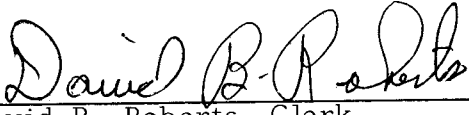
Mayor Nassif pointed out that it would not be appropriate to delete a 5,000 ft. structure in order to add a 3,000 ft. structure three years down the road.

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There were no further statements from citizens or the Council.
Mayor Nassif declared the public hearing closed at 8:33 P.M.



Joseph L. Nassif, Mayor



David B. Roberts, Clerk

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