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HJC Policy and Poli. Ed. Newsletter - 4/9/2021

1 message

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Fri, Apr 9, 2021 at 9:32 AM

To: Housing Rights Education Group <housing-rights-education-group@googlegroups.com>

Hello All,

The saga of the Charlotte 2040 Comprehensive Plan continues this month with town halls scheduled at 5:30 PM on each Thursday of April. According to the [Charlotte Mecklenburg Planning Commission at their April meeting](#), there is a plan to release another draft in May followed by another comment period and then a final draft to be voted on at the end of June.

Currently, there is another formation of groups and non-profits coalescing around the 2040 Plan who wish for Council not to seek any additional changes and to approve the Plan as is. I think given some of the Planning Commission's comments about Charlotte 2040, it does not seem like that's likely to happen before a vote of adoption in June. It will become a question of whose vision will be enacted within Charlotte 2040.

As we've discussed in the past, the group historically with the most sway over Council is REBIC and they have been arriving *in force* to meetings and town halls as well as having private audiences with Councilmembers. One of the town halls not posted in the [original tweet from the City of Charlotte's account](#) was one mentioning an April 22nd town hall on the matter of Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) which will be mediated by Councilmember Tariq Bokhari. Bokhari is an empty suit for REBIC and has [voiced his opposition to CBAs in an op-ed last month published by the Charlotte Observer](#) (one of his campaign coordinators is Lawrence "Larry" Shaheen, a real estate lawyer and GOP operative).

This month is going to be extremely busy and in the coming days we are going to try and plan our own information sessions around the 2040 Plan and the salient details about this plan.

Reminder that our next Policy and Political Education Committee meeting will be on **Tuesday, April 20th at 6:00 PM**. I sent the invite on Wednesday. If you did not receive it, please let me know.

Community Updates

- [From Dr. Sylvia Bittle-Patton](#): The Cherry community wants Mecklenburg County to exercise their first right of refusal in order to ensure that the Historic Morgan School continues to serve the neighborhood. To sign the petition, please visit the website [here](#). I have also attached a PDF from Dr. Sylvia that details the effort. At the County Commissioners' 4/6/21 meeting, they voted to table the issue until their May 18th meeting so there's still time to press the County.

The week of 3/29-4/2

This is one of those unusual weeks in the Council and County Commission calendar where there is a fifth Monday and Tuesday falling on the same week. Neither Council or County Commission had a regular business meeting or meeting of interest.

The week of 4/5-4/9

Charlotte City Council Strategy Session - 4/5/21

(Chelsea provided the notes for this meeting. Thank you, Chelsea! If you'd like to sign up to take notes for a meeting, please let me know!)

Full Video of the Meeting [Here](#)

Full Agenda [Here](#)

- [CARES Act Update: Emergency Solutions Grant and Community Development Block Grant Funding Allocations. Presentation \[here\]\(#\)](#)

- Shawn Heath, Special Assistant to the City Manager, gives the presentation.
- Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)
 - \$3.9MM available. Funding plan: \$2.1MM to United Way. \$700K to Salvation Army Center of Hope. 75 people from “tent city” are eligible for rapid rehousing. Remaining balance: \$1.0M.
- Community Development Block Grant:
 - \$4.8MM available. \$2.5MM to Salvation Army Center of Hope. Support for planned hotel acquisition. \$300K to Social Serve. Create additional capacity for “Housing Navigators” to support housing placement for unhoused people. Remaining balance: \$2.0MM.
- Why is there a remaining balance? These funds don't have near-term disbursement deadlines; we want to be strategic and intentional.
- Graham: Talks about the need to think outside the box with regard to solutions to homelessness, such as container homes and SROs. Thinks we should expand the list beyond what has been suggested/recommended.
- Winston: Finding more ways to play in the 0 to 30% AMI space. Silver lining of the pandemic is the ability to try new things. After July 1st (new fiscal year), should go into policy discussion that involves more planning.
- Johnson: Wants to know more about the eligibility of the 75 people for the rapid rehousing. Why do they qualify? Will they receive housing vouchers? Are we working with Continuum of Care to leverage our funds?
 - Pam Wideman says they are working with Continuum of Care. Housing Navigators are working with LLs to understand what they will need to rent to the 75 people. These 75 people were determined to be ready; the remaining people face more significant barriers. (Doesn't really answer the question.)
- Strategic Employment Plan. See presentation [here](#).
- Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan Referrals. No slides provided.
 - Various Committee referrals which will be discussed in-depth at Committee meetings.
 - Upcoming town halls:
 - April 8th: Discussion of anti-displacement (Graham)
 - April 15th: Discussion of SFZ and 10-minute neighborhoods (Eiselt)
 - April 22nd: Participatory development process (CBAs) and fiscal and economic analysis (Bokhari)
- Council Committee Report Outs. See presentation [here](#).
 - Multiple Council members emphasize the need to strategize regionally with nearby towns for the 2040 Plan and goals. Some say this kind of regional planning needs to be a more formalized process.
 - Malcolm Graham wants council to be more urgent about forming a Source of Income Discrimination Committee.

Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners Business Meeting - 4/6/21

Full Video of the Meeting [Here](#)

Full Agenda [Here](#)

- Historic Morgan School - Cherry
 - After the invocation and pledge of allegiance, Chairman George Dunlap talked about the first of right refusal with regard to the Historic Morgan School in the Cherry neighborhood. Chairman Dunlap said that there are many on the call and who have emailed who believe that the County declining the first right of refusal will let the community the opportunity to buy the school. Chairman Dunlap said that he doesn't know where this idea came from and said it's not correct. Said that a decline of first right of refusal will be subject to CMS and their deed restrictions on the property.
 - After joint proclamations and awards/recognitions, Chairman Dunlap turned the meeting towards public discussion of Consent Agenda Item 21-6764 about the Right of First Refusal for Historic Morgan School. Members of the Cherry neighborhood spoke for the County Commission to both exercise and decline their right of first refusal.
 - After the public comments, Commissioner Mark Jerrell thanked everyone who spoke about the issue. He said that it's an issue of equity, opportunity and respect. He said they've been asked to unring a bill that

they've had no part of. He said that the Board, before making a decision, should take some time to gather more information to make the decision.

- Chairman Dunlap said that there are people on both sides of the issue and did not know if the County would like to set a precedent of buying the land and holding it until the community had the resources for the Morgan School.
 - Commissioner Jerrell made a motion and it was seconded by Commissioner Vilma Leake to table the agenda item. Commissioner Leake asked when this would be lifted off of the table. Chairman Dunlap turned it over to the other commissioners and reminded the other commissioners that this would be discussed at a later date.
 - Commissioner Leigh Altman said that she supported the motion and said that it's sad that there has not been communication with both sides in Cherry. Said there could be a mediator brought in to resolve community issues.
 - Commissioner Pat Cotham said that she does not support tabling the item. She said that the community has not put forth a plan like CMS and Arts+ have (editor's note: not true).
 - Commissioner Ella Scarborough said that she's in agreement to table the motion put forth by Commissioner Jerrell.
 - Commissioner Elaine Powell said that she's heard from the community for many years and appreciates Commissioner Jerrell for standing up for that. She can't just trust that Arts+ is going to do the right thing for Cherry. Said that Cherry deserves agreement with Arts+.
 - Commissioner Leake said that she was going to follow the lead of Commissioner Jerrell and support the motion to table the agenda item.
 - Commissioner Laura Meier said that she supports tabling the agenda item but she was worried about not putting a time limit on tabling the item. Chairman Dunlap said that the County still doesn't make the decision unless it purchases the land.
 - Commissioner Susan Rodriguez-McDowell said that she supports Commissioner Jerrell. Said that she wants to understand the County's role since Arts+ is being displaced at Spirit Square. County Manager Dena Diorio said that Arts+ wasn't being displaced but they said that their space was limited for the program.
 - Chairman Dunlap thanked County Manager Diorio and said that he'd want CMS and Arts+ to reach out to the community.
 - Commissioner Leake added a time frame of the second in May for this agenda item to be brought back to the Board.
 - The vote to table the decision to exercise or decline the right of refusal (21-6764) until May 18th passed on an 8-1 vote (Commissioner Cotham was the lone no vote).
- Historic Landmarks Commission - Annual Report
 - The Historic Landmarks Commission gave their annual report. You can view the presentation [here](#).
 - Charlotte 2040 Comprehensive Plan Update
 - County Manager Diorio turned over the meeting to City Planner Taiwo Jaiyeoba to present the Charlotte 2040 Comprehensive Plan. You can view Mr. Jaiyeoba's presentation [here](#). Mr. Jaiyeoba said that the plan would impact Parks & Rec plan as well as transit plans.
 - Chairman Dunlap turned it over to the rest of the County Commission for comments on the 2040 Plan.
 - Commissioner Cotham thanked Mr. Jaiyeoba for the presentation.
 - Commissioner Altman said she's following the 2040 Plan and said she's glad that there's so much community involvement around the Plan. She thanked Mr. Jaiyeoba for the presentation.
 - Commissioner Powell said that she's concerned about storm water flooding as density is increased. Said that the City planning needs to be mindful about this in the process of rezoning. Said that the pace of urbanization and pace of people coming here is scary.
 - Commissioner Leake said that she's been talking to residents in District 2 and what they expect to get out of Charlotte 2040 Plan. Could not support Charlotte 2040 Plan at this time.
 - Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell said that she's more concerned about the implementation of the Charlotte 2040 Plan. Wants to know how to grow in a smart way and not a reactionary way.
 - Chairman Dunlap said that the time to weigh in is now. Said that many people in Charlotte do not know the history of Charlotte and that's leading to the issue. Said that there's a belief, and doesn't know if it's true or not, that it will impact communities that don't have covenants or restrictions.
 - Eastway Park Apartments
 - The Board of County Commissioners voted unanimously to direct the County Manager to authorize and negotiate and execute an agreement with Eastway Harmony Housing LLC to develop terms and conditions under which Mecklenburg County would contribute \$1.5 million to Eastway Park Apartments.
 - The \$1.5 million will be used to contribute to affordable housing for seniors aged 55 years and up who are making between 50% to 80% of Average Median Income.
 - The full resolution that the County voted on can be viewed [here](#).

- Emergency Rental Assistance Funds
 - Mecklenburg County received \$6.8 million from the federal government for emergency rental assistance and the funding is available until September of 2022. Per County Manager Diorio, this agenda item (21-6767) would approve sending these funds to DreamKey Partners (former Charlotte Mecklenburg Housing Partnership or CMHP) to administer these funds.
 - The County Commissioners voted unanimously to approve the agenda item. You can read the full item [here](#).

City of Charlotte 2040 Comprehensive Plan Town Hall - Displacement - 4/8/2021

Full Video of Town Hall [Here](#)

- This meeting was only an hour long and ultimately seemed to be just reiterating points within the plan. One speaker tried to debate some of the metrics used in the framework of the plan regarding displacement and was quickly told that this was not a forum for debate. From all appearances, this format seems to be an opportunity for Council and City Planner Taiwo Jaiyeoba to point to sections in the Plan and monitor who is showing up in force. REBIC members were all over the meeting but I think there was a good balance of CBC and HJC members in attendance as well. I think our goal with these town halls is to get as many people showing up as possible to reinforce the demands as put forth by the CBC as well as challenge some of the weak links in the language of the Plan and the implementation process.
- Registration for the next town halls can be found [here](#). I have also attached the letter to send to City Council - I think it's important that we keep reaching out to people in the community to send these and keep flooding inboxes.

In the News

- [\\$2M in city funds will house former tent encampment residents for a year - Charlotte Observer 4/6/21](#)
- [Word's out. How Charlotte is becoming a hot tech town - Axios Charlotte 4/3/2021](#) (This article may not seem important to housing but it's indicative of the way that Charlotte wants to grow. The push for tech means that Charlotte, like other cities across the country, will become increasingly harder to afford for those not in industries like finance and tech)
- [How Gaston County could emerge as a hotspot for industrial development - Charlotte Business Journal 3/26/21](#) (Another article that doesn't seem directly tied to housing. When we talk about environmental and economic justice these industrial developments will essentially set the stage for which neighborhoods will be impacted by these kinds of developments which require massive amounts of space. There's also a push to host more industries like logistics that have increasingly terrible working conditions as Amazon forcibly squeezes productivity out of people forcing competitors to do the same. From this article, it seems that I-85 from the airport to Gaston County is going to see increased activity in industrial development)
- [Renters facing eviction must navigate a legal labyrinth that favors lawyers, landlords - NC Policy Watch 4/8/21](#)

Back to Class (Political Education)

- [The Enduring Fiction of Affordable Housing - The New Republic](#): This article was written by a member of the Los Angeles Tenants Union (LATU) who argues that "affordable housing" limits political imaginations and also detracts from the principle of housing as a human right. Affordable housing in the current framework of Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) and City subsidized financing schemes gives affordability a fixed time line rather than permanency. The author argues that expropriation of property by City and local governments via eminent domain should be used as a means to achieve housing as a human right in order for housing to be democratically controlled.

2 attachments



COMMUNITY CALL TO ACTION (The Historic Morgan School_Cherry) (April 2021).pdf
440K



Community Ownership and the 2040 Plan Letter.pdf

45K