



AFFORDABLE HOUSING Ad Hoc COMMITTEE

FOCUS GROUPS

MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 12, 2017

11:35 A.M. A.M.

COUNTY SQUARE – CONFERENCE ROOM B

Ad Hoc MEMBERS

MR. ENNIS FANT, SR., CHAIRMAN

MR. RICK ROBERTS **ABSENT**

MR. LYNN BALLARD

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

NONE

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the meeting date, time, place and agenda was posted on the bulletin board at the County Square and made available to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations and concerned Citizens.

ATTENDEES

Gary Shepard, Greenlink
James Keel, Greenlink
Chris Bailey, Greater Greenville Association of Realtors
Jason Zacher, Greenville Chamber of Commerce
Addy Matney, GTA Board
Katy Smith, Piedmont Health Foundation

Item (1) CALL TO ORDER Chairman Ennis Fant, Sr.

Item (2) APPROVAL OF MINUTES

ACTION: Councilor Ballard moved to approve the minutes of the August 9, 2017 Affordable Housing Ad Hoc Committee meeting.

Motion carried unanimously by Committee members present.

Item (3) DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE GREENLINK BUS ROUTES

Affordable housing and public transportation go hand-in-hand. Greenville is transitioning from a large town into a small city. There are 1500 hotel rooms and 125 restaurants in the area and the Hospitality Industry is growing. But who will work in the hotels and restaurants? There is currently a proposal to cut the bus route on Old Grove Road. Many residents in that area depend on the bus for transportation to work, shopping, etc.

The COA recently completed showed the routes well used and those that are not; how many people actually use each route on a daily basis. The current system in place at Greenlink is inefficient – especially in Southern Greenville County. There are a number of Public Hearings planned to help determine transportation needs throughout the County. The public has reported that the wait times are too long between buses, the hours and days need to be extended. When a transportation system works with affordable housing, this spurs economic growth.

The current system is not just for “poor people”, although many view it as such. If an individual cannot afford a car, public transportation helps gets them to work to earn wages in order to buy a car and eventually housing. All of this spurs economic growth for the County.

Why are there buses back and forth to Furman University all day and yet a proposal to cut the Grove Road route? If someone can afford to attend Furman, can't they afford a vehicle? This has been brought up to Councilor Fant by some of his constituents.

The Furman University Route is the most-used route for Greenlink. Many people work at Furman, Cherrydale, the “chicken plant” and other businesses along the route. It is much more than just Furman students using the bus. The Grove Road route is the least utilized.

Greenlink is exploring other methods of public transportation – UBER, LIFT, smaller buses, vans, etc. Many of the County’s major employers have also expressed interest in helping to subsidize public transportation in order to help current and prospective employees with their transportation needs.

Extended hours in the morning and evenings have also been discussed as well as weekend routes. For every \$1.00 spent on transportation there is a \$3.50 return. The current system is not meeting the needs of the community. GTA Board is open to any solutions. More money is needed.

Every rider on public transportation contributes to the economy of Greenville County. Need more drivers, more vehicles. On September 30, electric buses will be on the roads. Currently, the general perception is that the Greenlink System is a dilapidated system for poor people. Need to change the image perhaps through a PR or Marketing Firm and get business leaders and the general public involved.

The Hospitality Industry is willing to contribute. Some businesses will have to get approval from corporate offices. The need for public transportation is not just for the downtown area but also areas such as Pelham Road and Woodruff Road. There is definitely a lack of workforce in trades. There seems to be an interest in transportation and affordable housing from County Council Members at this point. They see the correlation among public transportation, education, jobs and housing as how these factors all influence economic growth for the County. Most Federal grants have been exhausted at this point.

It was suggested that a presentation to the Committee of the Whole would be beneficial. This will help reshape the narrative and plant the seed for additional funds. Cannot keep doing the same things the same ways. The County is running out of buildable land and will have to start looking at the southern and northern most parts of the County. Will need to have infrastructure in place for housing, industry, etc. Greater advocacy is needed for transportation, housing, educational opportunities, etc. More support is needed from special interest groups and stakeholders.

Item (4) ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Jessica Stone
Administrative Assistant
Clerk to County Council