

School Advisory Committee
March 26, 2008

Meeting Minutes

Member Attendance: Becky Finger, Todd Bowland, Rhonda Lennon, Teri Leonhardt, Laurie Gillmore, Neal Howes, Joe McCourt, Charles Jeter

Commissioner Jeter Called the Meeting to Order

Member Comments

Committee debriefed on the series of CMS Meetings held at CPCC that focused specifically on elementary, middle and high school. Members who attended each respective forum updated the Committee.

The main issue at the Elementary meeting was the proposed school site at Stumptown Road and concerns with transportation issues. The Middle School meeting saw an explanation of curriculum by principals who heard sharp criticism from the public regarding feeding patterns. Lennon pointed out that there are more students from Huntersville attending Bailey Middle than Alexander, which is about 40% free/reduced lunch. She added that with the developments in the pipeline, the feeding patterns will be cleaned up. Bowland told the group the turnout at the HS and Elementary meetings was disappointing, with mild reaction from those in attendance compared to the Middle school meeting.

Howes passed around some information he'd received regarding school safety through a Federal "Safe Routes to School" program and committee had discussion about adding it to the agenda.

Agenda Changes – Add Item C – Discussion on School Safety to agenda. Leonhardt made motion and Howes seconded.

Agenda approved unanimously.

Other Business

A. Discussion on Schools-by-Right issue in Huntersville Zoning. Item before SAC prior to public hearing at April 17 town board meeting. Similar discussion to previous meeting where Bowland pointed out difficulties in placing a school where neighbors would not object. Leonhardt also identified issues with escalating land costs once a site is determined. Howes expressed concerns expressed about need for infrastructure. Leonhardt commented that the town does have review with the APFO and TIA and that Mike (Raible) and staff know where land is, adding that she agreed with Bowland that we need schools so badly that put up with traffic or the consequences of bussing and driving across town through busy intersections to schools. Lennon commented that the town board approved all those houses, let CMS build schools here. Finger added that she'd

rather sit in traffic for 10 minutes than have middle school and high school kids struggling to enter society.

Town Planner Brad Priest attended the meeting to speak to this issue. He said the main issue with schools is traffic, the TIA ordinance is in place to deal with that now (CMS is exempt from the APFO). The TIA has certain formulas based on volume of traffic each type of school would generate and improvements would be required to mitigate the impacts of the school site. The TIA studies major intersections in the area and as long as the performance of those intersections is not worse than current levels, no mitigation is required. The Committee questioned some of the numbers in the TIA and wondered if a different approach could be taken to measure traffic along feeder patterns instead of using a certain mile radius to measure the impacts (which may or may not work to CMS' advantage). Leonhardt pointed out town's history of cooperation with CMS with Joint-Use agreements for facilities and the committee was interested in seeing if something similar could be done with regard to infrastructure. Jeter stated that a vote would be taken at the next SAC on April 30th.

B. School Impact Analysis as part of APFO – Jeter asked the Committee if the Town should ask/add a School Impact Analysis to work similar to a TIA for schools and use it to determine school enrollment. Lennon commented that there were already formulas and examples out there. Jeter stated at some point, the citizenry has to accept some responsibilities for roads and schools in our communities. Questions ranged from how do you ensure that CMS spends the money in the town to who would pay for it. Answers ranged from money being spent on road improvements, school construction, renovation or other related items in the town to putting a flat fee (\$500 was mentioned) on new homeowners or the sale of homes. All agreed it was an idea worth pursuing. Jeter said he'd work with staff to do some research and that it was likely a lengthy process.

C. School Safety – Howes added the item to the agenda and passed around a mailer “Safe Roads to Schools” that he'd gotten in the mail. Howes commented that every school should have flashing traffic lights. He also pointed out that the sign in front of Torrence Creek was hard to see (blocked by trees). He suggested trying to use federal money (as referenced on the flier) to address these problems. Lennon suggested asking the police department their opinion on it. Jeter said we'd talk to the Chief on the safety issue.

Closing Comments

At next meeting, the Committee will vote on Schools by Right and have more information on the safety issue. Jeter told the Committee he's working to schedule a meeting with Mike Raible.

Leonhardt made a motion to adjourn and Finger seconded. Unanimous approval.

Meeting Adjourned.

Agenda unanimously approved.

