



## Item Overview

Public Hearing – 06/20/2016  
Agenda # 6

**Subject:** Discussion: American Legion Property Framework

**Staff:**

Mary Jane Nirdlinger, Executive Director  
Ben Hitchings, Director of Planning and Development Services

**Department:**

Planning and Sustainability

**Overview:** Opportunity for the Council to discuss the summary of the March 16, 2016 Work Session and Possible Town Principles, prepared by Town staff, regarding their interests in the future of the American Legion property in Chapel Hill.



**Recommendation**

That the Council receive this information and provide any additional guidance to the property owner about key community interests.

**Key Issues**

- The Council held a work session on March 16, 2016, facilitated by Dan Jewell of Coulter, Jewell, Thames, to discuss general interests in the future of the American Legion property, located at 1714 Legion Road. The intent of the work session was not to provide detailed site-plan direction for the property but rather to identify broad topics for consideration. Members of the community attended the work session and shared their reactions with the Council during the public comment period.
- As follow-up to the March 16, 2016 work session, Town staff drafted the “Possible Town Principles” to help identify key questions and issues that a future development proposal on this site would need to address, along with standard requirements.
- Council received these materials via email on May 12, 2016 and tonight the Council members can discuss and react to the materials in a public meeting.
- The American Legion provided the Town Manager with a letter regarding their interests in the property, which is attached.

**Fiscal Impact/Resources:** None identified with this discussion

**Where is this item in its process?**

The Legion and their development team anticipate submitting a concept plan for the property in the near future, which would be a required first step prior to a formal application for a Special Use Permit and/or development applications.

**Council Goals:**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Create a Place for Everyone	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Develop Good Places, New Spaces
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Support Community Prosperity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Nurture Our Community
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Facilitate Getting Around	<input type="checkbox"/>		Grow Town and Gown Collaboration

**Attachments:**

- American Legion Property Discussion summary, prepared by Dan Jewell
- Possible Town Principles, prepared by Town staff
- Letter to Town Manager, from American Legion
- Site Hydrology and Topography Map



Coulter|Jewell|Thames, PA

111 WEST MAIN STREET  
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA 27701  
p 919.682.0368 f 919.688.5646

Planning for the Future

## **American Legion Property**

### **Notes from Council Roundtable Discussion of March 16, 2016**

Commentary from Town Council Members can be organized around the following broad subjects  
Key comments that had broader consensus among the Council members are highlighted in **bold type**

#### The Environment

- Perform an inventory of Ecological Assets on the Property
- How much of the Site is truly developable?

#### The Greater Neighborhood Context

- A desire to plan for the Area, not just this property.
- **What does the development of this site look like in the context of future development in this part of Chapel Hill? SECU (former BCBS). Ephesus Fordham, Gateway LRT Station Area. What is the buildout horizon? 5, 10 15 years?**
- There has been no Small Area Plan here in recent memory
- Consider future LRT Station to east, school, and other large properties
- Would like to understand the context of the building heights allowed in the Ephesus Fordham District relative to this site. Building heights on this side of Legion should be lower

#### Infrastructure

- What are the other potential infrastructure capacity issues? Stormwater, etc
- Would like to understand the context of the building heights allowed in the Ephesus Fordham District relative to this site. Building heights on this side of Legion should be lower
- **Need to understand traffic on Legion Road in advance of considering development on this property – road capacity, connections to Europa, necessary improvements to Legions Road**

#### Land Use and the Site

- **How does a proposed multifamily use fit in with the multitude of other Multi-family projects already planned, in the works and under construction?**
- **A mix of uses is preferable rather than solely multifamily residential**
- There may already be too much affordable housing in the immediate area of this site. Prefer not to cluster it in a single neighborhood

- Sentiment to not have all or nothing uses
- Tax base implications are important. Balance with Investment in the Town's quality of life
- **Balance higher density development on a portion of the site with green and recreation space**
- The Town does need more commercial, but probably not here
- What other private uses might be viable here, and has anyone previously proposed them?

Quality of Life, Community Facilities and Open Space

- **Desire to maintain the quality of life as the Town grows. Needs mentioned were indoor rec space, green space, even office space**
- Preserve some of the property as park space?
- There are 10 acres of Park property to the south
- What might be the cost of Community Facilities?
- **Are there opportunities to partner or collaborate with other public or private entities? YMCA, County, etc**
- What are the implications of this property relative to Parks and Rec priorities and the Bond Program
- Do we expand and repair Ephesus Park?
- Connections to neighborhoods are important

General Introspective Questions posed by Council Members:

- **What are the needs of the Town?**
- **What are the Council's priorities?**
- What are the Advisory Boards' priorities?

Organized and summation by

Dan Jewell, RLA, ASLA

## POSSIBLE TOWN PRINCIPLES

These principles were developed after the March 16, 2016 Council Work Session regarding the American Legion property in Chapel Hill. A summary of the work session was developed by Dan Jewel who facilitated the conversation. Town Staff used the summary to develop a set of principles that might guide any future development of the property.

- 1) **Describe how the proposed plan and timing of the development of this site would integrate with the Town's vision** for the future development in northeast Chapel Hill, including its relationship to the SECU (former BCBS) property, Ephesus Fordham, Gateway LRT Station Area.
- 2) **Conduct analysis of traffic impacts on Legion Road**, including existing road capacity and connections to the Europa, and describe what transportation improvements the applicant would propose to mitigate the impact of the project on Legion Road and the surrounding area.
- 3) **Describe how a proposed multi-family project would contribute to the mix of housing options** in the town.
- 4) **Provide a mix of uses in the proposed development**, including office space.
- 5) **Detail how the project would help maintain the quality of life** in the town as it grows, including how the project would provide green space, trails, and/or indoor recreation space.
- 6) **Explore potential partnerships with other public or private entities** such as Orange County, the YMCA, and/or others to provide needed community amenities.

### **OTHER POSSIBLE ISSUES:**

Other issues identified in the meeting summary that may be worth recommending for inclusion in the list include:

- **Illustrate how the proposed development would transition appropriately to surrounding uses.**
- **Describe how the proposed development would manage its stormwater impacts.**
- **Outline how the proposed development would support the Town's goal of providing additional affordable housing**, either on-site or off-site.
- **Demonstrate how the project would provide access to transit service.**
- **Document the anticipated contribution that the proposed development would make to the Town's tax base.**



# The American Legion



## Chapel Hill Post No. 6, American Legion, Inc.

1714 Legion Road, Chapel Hill, North Carolina  
Mailing address: P.O. Box 2323, Chapel Hill, NC 27515 • 919-942-2252

Dear Mr. Stancil,

I have read the report on the Legion Property Meeting held March 16, 2016. However, I must confess I think it was a discussion that should have taken place **after** the Town purchased the property...which it declined to do when given the opportunity.

In the report were heartfelt desires from community residents outlining the needs of the community and Town. **And after all was said and done, there was not one word that had to do with the needs of American Legion members.**

Our Legion members have been in Chapel Hill for about 100 years starting in a log cabin built on Franklin Street. All of the members who purchased the property we now occupy are deceased...this was the legacy they left to those warriors who succeeded them. Those who now occupy the Legion consist of veterans of WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Persian Gulf and other related conflicts.

These are men and women who have been to battle to protect the nation's way of life and I think they deserve better than to become pawns in Chapel Hill politics. I have already attended three funerals this year and I expect to attend three more before the years end. I would like to have the members who have labored to keep this Post viable see the fruits of their labor realized in our new building. **Time is of the essence.**

For over two and a half years, Legion members have been debating how best to serve our members from WWII to present and after hundreds of hours of debate and discussion, the Legionnaires decided to sell the property left to them as a legacy by their forefathers. **The problem is the American Legion needs to move now.** We need to build a legacy as our forefathers did for us. In addition, **we need to attract younger veterans and our facility is not designed for the needs of today's veterans.** Our building is antiquated and barely serves our needs.

It is my greatest hope is the Town Council considers the following and moves forward with the desires of the American Legion and Woodfield Investors (in collaboration with the Town and possibly YMCA) to develop the land occupied by the American Legion.

- The American Legion building is over 50 years old...probably 20+ years older than the building being renovated and occupied by the Town Council or the building now occupied by the YMCA.
- We send between 5-10 men and women to Boys and Girls state each year
- We support the Chapel Hill LEADS group
- We support the Boy Scouts of America
- We promote Memorial Day and Veterans Day events
- We support the Navy, Army, Air Force and Marine ROTC events at UNC, State, and Duke
- We provide space for a local dance studio
- We participate in parades in Chapel Hill

[www.chapelhillpost6.org](http://www.chapelhillpost6.org)

E-mail: [americanlegionpost6@gmail.com](mailto:americanlegionpost6@gmail.com)



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- We raised the money to build the Chapel in the main hospital at UNC (Deeds of now deceased Vets)
- We have participated in the “fix-a-home” project in Chapel Hill
- Members have participated in High School Clean-up days
- Supported yearly Musical Marathons in support of wounded warriors

This is just a small list of routine operations from our Legion veterans. Individual accomplishments would fill pages.

When we moved from Rosemary Street to our current location we were in the “Boonies.” When development started around us, the Legion was silent and didn’t protest any of the developments...it was the “right thing to do.” In fact, our tract of land was designed to be accessed from three different potential roads. Now that it is our turn to sell our land and move, we expect the same courtesies we extended to our neighbors...we do anticipate Town oversight, but hope it does not turn into “analysis paralysis.” I also provide the following for the Council’s consideration.

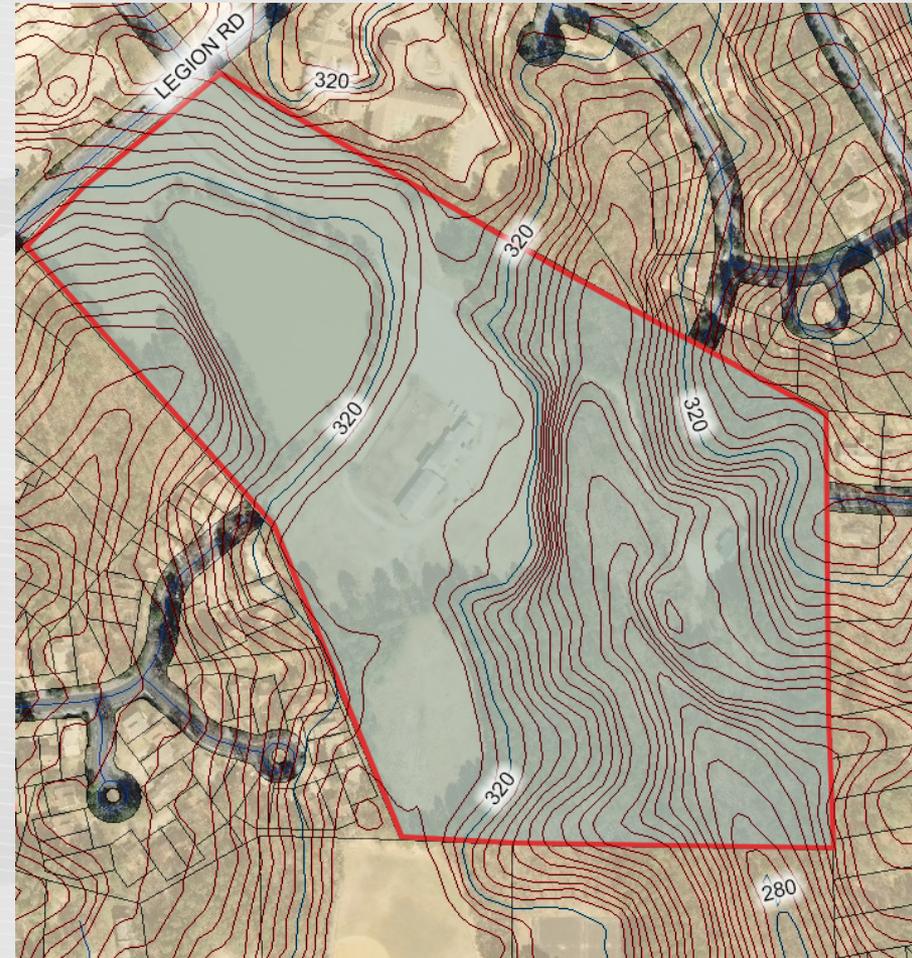
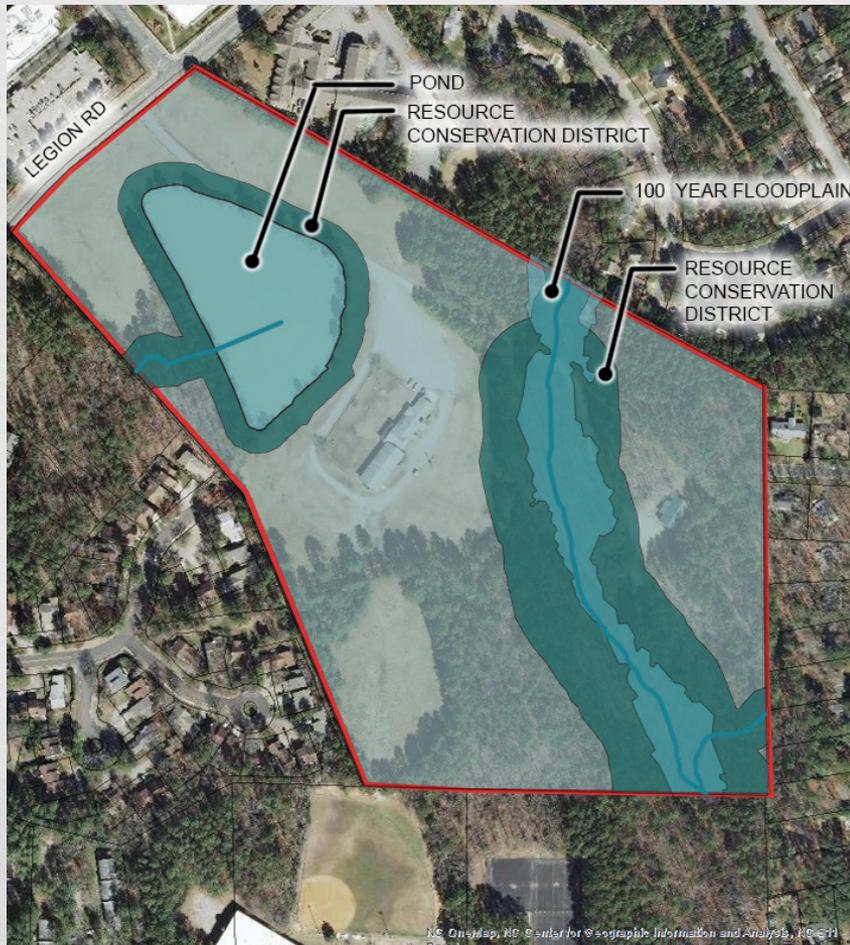
- There are other undeveloped large tract areas along Bolin Creek
- There is a large unused existing meadowland park space along Morgan Creek Trail
- The cost to purchase the land from the American Legion would have been 9 million dollars. However, development and upkeep (to make it suitable for public use) would probably have add 30 percent
- Local schools and current parks have a higher priority and have already been voted on in the Parks and Recreation Budget
- The development as planned increases the tax base for Chapel Hill...that is needed more than another park. In addition, the developer is willing to work with the Town to activate the current park adjacent to the site.
- Many concerns of the individuals are normal land development issues worked out between the Town and the developer.

In summary, I know there is a path that will lead to a three-way, win-win situation between the Town, developer and the American Legion. My members have respected my request to refrain from venting their frustration in news articles and the like...and I would like to keep it that way. My ultimate goal is to assist in moving this process forward with openness and fairness and have Woodfield Investments be in a position to submit a conceptual proposal for developing the Post property within the next two months.

Respectfully,

William E. Munsee  
Commander, American Legion Post 6  
Chapel Hill, NC 27516

# Site Hydrology & Topography



*Buffers on streams and the pond are considered Resource Conservation Districts by the Town of Chapel Hill. Development within these districts are possible through the process outlined in the attached report, and would increase the total developable area of the parcel.*

