



Small Cities Council Meeting Summary

Wednesday, September 30, 2020

9:00 AM via Zoom

as approved on November 18, 2020

Attending:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Mayor Bernie Chamberlain | City of Austin |
| 2. Mayor Tom Farmer | City of Benton |
| 3. Mayor Charles Gastineau | City of Ward |
| 4. Mayor Sammy Hartwick, Chair | City of Greenbrier |
| 5. Mayor Sam Higdon | City of Guy |
| 6. Ms. Jennifer Hill | City of Haskell |
| 7. Mayor Randy Holland | City of Mayflower |
| 8. Mayor Mike Kemp, Vice-Chair | City of Shannon Hills |
| 9. Mayor Terry Mizer | City of Wrightsville |

Metroplan Staff:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 10. Mr. Casey Covington | Deputy Director |
| 11. Ms. Bernadette Rhodes | Community Planner |
| 12. Ms. La'Kesha Stewart | Planner/Public Outreach |
| 13. Mr. Tab Townsell | Executive Director |

1. Call to Order and Welcome

Mayor Hartwick called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM. He welcomed the attendees and asked Ms. Rhodes to proceed with the agenda.

2. Summary of Previous Meeting

The summary of the January 29, 2020 meeting was previously emailed to the Council.

MOTION by Mayor Higdon, second by Ms. Hill

“To approve the summary of January 29, 2020 as prepared.”

PASSED

3. Introductions and City Announcements

Ms. Rhodes invited attendees to introduce themselves or share news from their communities. There were no announcements.

Ms. Rhodes invited Mayor Hartwick to speak about Greenbrier's new 55-acre city park, Matthews Park. Mayor Hartwick highlighted key facts about the playground:

- New all-inclusive playground with handicap-accessible equipment and rubberized surfaces.
- The response from the community has been overwhelmingly positive. The splash pad is particularly popular.
- Citizens passed a 0.5-cent sales tax to build the new park as well as a new fire station, which includes space for 6 trucks and a future full-time fire department. The tax was supported by 75% of voters, which has a sunset clause once debt is paid off. One quarter of the 0.5-cent tax will remain in effect permanently for operations and maintenance of the park.
- The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission has taken over management of the park's pond and stocked it with catfish. Approx. 10-15 people can be seen out fishing every day. Walmart has also sponsored the pond.
- The park features a walking trail with lighting and a skate park, which has been a big hit. A husband-wife team built the skate park, and the wife did all the welding on the park's rails, including a platform in the shape of Arkansas for skaters to grind on.
- Mayor Hartwick said that the previous Sunday afternoon, his wife had counted 22 on the skate park, 14 fishing and 31 on the playground.
- The park is named after Percy Matthews, who owned the property. Mr. Matthews served as mayor of Greenbrier five different times and was the agriculture teacher at Greenbrier High School. The land had been for sale for approximately 20 years before the city acquired it.
- First Service Bank and First Security Bank have committed to contributing \$10,000 each per year for 10 years in support of the park.
- The city also received a \$250,000 grant from Arkansas Parks for Phase 1 and is presenting again soon to Arkansas Parks for Phase 2, which will include an amphitheater, basketball courts, sand volleyball courts, and a dog park.

Mr. Townsell expressed admiration for the scope and scale of the park, which is bigger than one would usually find in a small city. He commended Mayor Hartwick on the aspirational nature of the park and for building it for the future. Mayor Hartwick lauded the cities of Guy and Wooster for their parks as inspiration for pursuing Matthews Park. Mayor Kemp commended Mayor Hartwick for his accomplishment and echoed the importance of visible projects such as parks and walking trails as long-lasting amenities for the community that will attract residents and economic development.

4. Metroplan Update

Mr. Covington reminded attendees that STBG (Surface Transportation Block Grant) applications were due that day and encouraged members to contact him with

questions. Resolutions in support of the applications can be adopted in October. Mr. Covington also updated the group on the Regional Trails Plan project. Proposals from potential vendors are currently being evaluated. The plan will define the regional trail connections that will extend throughout all central Arkansas, connecting many communities. Metroplan has also contracted with a firm to develop design standards for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, with a focus on how those facilities interact with transit. That project starts next week and mayors are invited to participate in a Zoom meeting to share their thoughts on design considerations.

Mr. Townsell invited attendees to attend the Executive Committee meeting via Zoom immediately following this Small Cities Council meeting. The Executive Committee will be asked to provide input on the scoring and selection process for the STBG grant applications. Attendees will also look at evaluation criteria for a possible new Complete Streets tract in the STBG funding process. Attendees will also be asked for input on future meeting dates, with a staff suggestion to move the November Executive Committee meeting to the 18th to avoid Thanksgiving week, and hold the Board of Directors meeting to December 16th before the Christmas holiday. The committee will also discuss whether to continue meeting virtually or explore a location for in-person meetings.

5. Model Code Update

Ms. Rhodes summarized priorities learned through visits to each of the SCC communities, which include:

- The need to balance long-term goals with immediate economic development needs
- The need for training and clear direction on interpreting and implementing zoning and subdivision codes
- The desire to grow and attract residents while still maintaining the community's values, identity, and most desirable attributes.

Ms. Rhodes emphasized that the Metroplan staff is keeping those priorities in mind while working on model codes for cities to consider adopting.

The model codes are being developed as a result of the Metroplan board's desire to focus on implementation of the region's long-range plan, with zoning and development ordinances being important documents to realize the region's long-range plan as well as individual cities' comprehensive plans. A common template for zoning and subdivision ordinances can be implemented broadly across cities and adjusted to fit each city's individual needs. To ensure the codes meet each small cities' needs, Ms. Rhodes requested active input from SCC members throughout the development process.

[At this point in the meeting, Metroplan's offices lost internet connectivity and the Metroplan staff was not able to access the Zoom meeting for approximately five minutes. The participants remained on the Zoom meeting until Metroplan staff was able to reconnect.]

Ms. Rhodes outlined the benefits of adopting common model codes throughout central Arkansas, which include:

- Simplify existing codes into one easily navigable document and provide a predictable, consistent set of regulations for new residents and developers.
- Allow Metroplan to provide in-depth training for planning staff, planning commissioners, and city officials.

Ms. Rhodes outlined the guiding principles: clarity, ease of use, flexibility, safety, connectivity, sustainability and resilience, and equity and choice.

- **Clarity:** common language, clear definitions, and illustrations will make the codes clear and easy to understand.
- **Ease of use:** clear navigation, a limited need for overlays, and on-going Metroplan support.
- **Flexibility:** ability to be used in a way that meets each community's needs and desires, allowing a variety of uses in each zone.
- **Safety:** incorporate best traffic safety practices and increase connections and proximity between residential and commercial zones.
- **Sustainability and resilience:** provide options and suggestions for ensuring economic and environmental sustainability, focusing on value retention and maximum city income per square foot of development/mile of road.
- **Equity:** give residents the chance to invest in their community and providing quality housing options for residents of all ages and abilities.

Ms. Rhodes shared the staff's next steps in the model code development, which will include drafting zone descriptions and a use table to share with the SCC for feedback.

6. Preview of Next Meeting

Ms. Rhodes stated that pending the Executive Committee's approval, the next Small Cities Council meeting would take place on November 18th. The bi-monthly meetings will focus on networking, community spotlights, guiding model code development, and educational opportunities.

7. Adjourn

Mr. Covington thanked attendees for their patience with the Zoom format and encouraged them to log back on for the Executive Committee meeting immediately following the Small Cities Council meeting.

The Small Cities Council meeting was adjourned at 9:52 AM.