



# Small Cities Council Meeting Summary

Wednesday, January 27, 2021  
9:00 AM at Jacksonville Community Center  
*Approved March 24, 2021*

## SCC Members Attending:

- |                                    |                      |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Mayor Sammy Hartwick, President | City of Greenbrier   |
| 2. Mayor Bernie Chamberlain        | City of Austin       |
| 3. Mayor Charles Gastineau         | City of Ward         |
| 4. Ms. Jennifer Hill               | City of Haskell      |
| 5. Mayor Trae Reed                 | City of Lonoke       |
| 6. Mayor Terry Mizer               | City of Wrightsville |
| 7. Mayor Terry Don Robinson        | City of Wooster      |
| 8. Chief Josh Woods                | City of Mayflower    |

## Other Metroplan Members Attending:

- |                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 9. Mayor Tom Farmer   | City of Benton      |
| 10. Mr. Keith Keck    | Hot Springs Village |
| 11. Mayor Ken Kincade | City of Cabot       |
| 12. Mayor Allen Scott | City of Bryant      |

## Metroplan Staff:

- |                           |                         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 13. Mr. Casey Covington   | Deputy Director         |
| 14. Ms. Bernadette Rhodes | Community Planner       |
| 15. Ms. La’Keshia Stewart | Planner/Public Outreach |
| 16. Mr. Tab Townsell      | Executive Director      |

## 1. Call to Order and Welcome

Mayor Hartwick called the meeting to order at 9:01 AM. He welcomed the attendees and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

## 2. Introductions

Mr. Covington introduced himself and announced that there would be a special board meeting at 10:00 AM following the Small Cities Council meeting to discuss the TIP (Transportation Improvement Program) and state highway construction projects. He advised that the Metroplan Executive Board would meet after the special board meeting, and that attendees were welcome to stay on the Zoom for all three meetings. He stated that all meetings would be streamed on Facebook Live for public access.

Following Mr. Covington's announcements, the rest of the attendees introduced themselves (see attendee list above).

Mayor Hartwick asked Ms. Rhodes to proceed with the agenda.

### 3. Summary of Previous Meeting

The summary of the November 18, 2020 meeting was previously emailed to the Council. Ms. Rhodes asked for comments or corrections. Mayor Robinson requested an amendment to the summary, stating that only two of the eight proposed new subdivisions were within city limits; the other six were in the county.

**MOTION** by Ms. Hill, seconded by Mayor Robinson,  
"To approve the summary of November 18, 2020 as amended."

**PASSED**

### 4. City Announcements

Ms. Rhodes invited attendees to share news from their communities.

- Wooster: Mayor Robinson reported that the city had finished its road project serving Wooster Elementary School, called Church Circle. The construction was completed in two phases over two years. The project had been in the planning stage since 1989. It provides additional street and sidewalk access to the school.
- Lonoke: Mayor Reed shared that Lonoke has gone green recently, adding recycling services to its garbage contract. Charge Up! Arkansas, a new partnership between Entergy Arkansas and the non-profit Adopt a Charger, has installed two new electrical vehicle charging stations in Lonoke's downtown. The city's energy services contract aims to lower the city's carbon footprint and offset the remainder of its carbon footprint with solar energy systems.
- Proposed State Legislation: Mayor Hartwick was informed yesterday of a bill sent to Committee from the House (HB 1252) that would affect cities in Arkansas. It would cause county party committees to conduct party primaries for municipal offices. Mayor Hartwick stated that Arkansas Municipal League was opposed to legislation, and encouraged participants to contact their legislators about the bill and to stay informed of other proposed legislation that could affect cities. Mr. Covington reminded attendees that Metroplan staff can aid cities with Census data for redistricting purposes.
- Census: Mayor Hartwick asked for an update on Census data timing. Mr. Covington expects to receive some Census data in the first half of 2021 but stated that Census block data could take longer. Typically, Census data comes out in March, but Mr. Jonathan Lupton (Metroplan staff) had learned that there would be some delays this year. Metroplan will keep members updated on expected timeframes.

## 5. Metroplan Update

Mr. Covington reminded members to stay on the Zoom for the special board meeting at 10:00 AM.

Mr. Townsell added that he would be asking the board to move its full board meeting up from the last Wednesday in March to the fourth Wednesday in March in order to expedite the approval of the TIP for the Arkansas Department of Transportation.

## 6. Model Code Update & Review

Ms. Rhodes outlined the update, which includes a review of the model code development timeline and proposed residential lot standards.

### Model code development timeline:

- A menu of zones, definitions, a use table, and lot standards for each zone have been drafted to-date.
- Staff has and is continuing to discuss priorities and challenges individually with city leaders.
- The cities of Ward, Austin, and Mayflower have expressed interest in potentially adopting the model code in 2021. Other cities are invited to contact Ms. Rhodes if they are interested in being in the first round of cities adopting the code.
- Staff is currently outlining and beginning to draft the zoning ordinance text. The subdivision ordinance text will follow.
- Ms. Rhodes will continue to hold informal, optional model code work sessions one hour before the full Metroplan board meetings in even-numbered months. The next work session will take place on Wednesday, February 24, at 9:00 AM via Zoom.
- The staff's goal is to present key sections of the code to the SCC at its regular March 24<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- Staff will continue to work individually with cities towards adoption. It is possible adoption could occur mid- to late-2021, however the timeline will be fluid depending on community input and revisions.

### Overview of residential lot standards: *See meeting presentation for details and images.*

- The model code includes three residential zones: Low-Density, Medium-Density, and Flexible Residential.
- Ms. Rhodes outlined the regulated elements included in the lot standards:
  - Lot dimensions (size, width, depth)
  - Building setbacks (front, rear, side street, side interior)
  - Number of stories
  - Lot coverage (buildings and impervious surfaces)
  - Sidewalk and buffer widths
- The residential standards are focused on minimums instead of maximums. Ms. Rhodes emphasized that even though the minimums (lot size, setbacks, for example) may be small, developers have the flexibility to choose larger lot sizes, setbacks, etc. if that is their preferred development style.

- Common requirements in all residential zones:
  - 60% maximum building coverage, 70% impervious surface coverage
  - 5-foot sidewalks plus additional 5-foot buffer between the sidewalk and the street.
- Ms. Rhodes emphasized that the lot standards are still in the draft stage, and Metroplan staff is actively soliciting cities' feedback on how well they feel the standards meet their needs. She also encouraged first-round adopter cities to consider where they might apply each zone on their zoning map.
- Ms. Rhodes presented the lot standards for each of the three zones along with illustrations showing what a residential development might look like in accordance with those standards. She stated that architectural details can vary, but the illustrations show how structures could be situated on the lots.
- In the Medium-Density Residential zone, Ms. Rhodes pointed out that the proposed minimum lot width of 50 feet may be smaller than most cities are used to. She emphasized that this is simply a minimum to give developers the flexibility to build more densely if desired, but that larger lots are allowed and probable in many subdivisions. Mr. Covington added that he lives in a neighborhood with 50-foot lots and it does create a more walkable neighborhood but emphasized that these standards could be modified based on a particular city's wishes.
- In the Flexible Residential zone, the lot standards vary based on type of development (detached and attached single-family, duplex, triplex, quadplex, multi-family). Ms. Rhodes stated that cities will have the option to add site design or architectural requirements for multi-family developments (duplex and above) to ensure high-quality construction and landscaping.
- Ms. Rhodes reminded members that these zones will be part of their menu of options, but cities are not required to place every one of the zones on their zoning map if certain zones are not needed in their community.

Discussion:

- Mayor Robinson of Wooster said the community's desire is to preserve its rural nature in the still undeveloped northern part of the city. Their desire is to stick with 90-foot residential lot width minimums with city sewer, which equates to three homes per acre. He could foresee smaller lot sizes allowed closer to downtown. Mr. Covington stated that cities will have the option to change the lot standards in each of the zones based on their preferences, and changes would not preclude them from implementing the model code. Ms. Rhodes added that some added density around downtown and the elementary school would bring in additional water service revenue and potentially add to the financial sustainability of the sewer line.
- Mayor Hartwick of Greenbrier compared the proposed lot standards to his zoning ordinance and found that while Greenbrier's codes required slightly larger minimums, the codes were close.

- Fire Chief Woods of Mayflower posed a question about the side interior setback minimums and if there were considerations about adequate space for life safety measures. Ms. Rhodes responded that the standards would be cross-referenced with building codes and were consistent with other Arkansas cities, but more research is warranted into building/fire safety codes in denser developments.

## **7. Educational Presentation**

Ms. Rhodes informed attendees about Metroplan's newest publication, the *Best Practices* newsletter, which is scheduled to come out within the month. Its inaugural issue focused on improving connectivity in cities and neighborhoods. One of the articles focused on the connectivity index, a tool for objectively measuring the connectivity of any development or subdivision. Ms. Rhodes anticipates incorporating the Connectivity Index into the model subdivision ordinance.

Benefits of connectivity include:

- a) better distribution of traffic
- b) less capacity pressure and wear on individual roadways
- c) safety
- d) accessibility for all modes of transportation

Calculating the connectivity index involves dividing the number of road or path segments by the number of segment endpoints they connect (intersections, cul-de-sacs). Ms. Rhodes provided an example of the connectivity index applied to a proposed subdivision in Ward. *See meeting presentation for instructions and example.*

## **8. Next Steps**

- Ms. Rhodes will send the PowerPoint presentation including photo examples for each zone to members following the meeting.
- The next model code work session will take place on Wednesday, February 24, at 9:00 AM via Zoom.
- The next Small Cities Council meeting will take place on Wednesday, March 24, at 9:00 AM, location TBD. Ms. Rhodes will present a portion of the model zoning document.

## **9. Adjourn**

Mayor Hartwick thanked members for their attendance. Small Cities Council meeting was adjourned at 9:55 AM.