

CHARLOTTESVILLE CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
WORK SESSION MINUTES
November 1, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.
City Hall Basement Conference Room, 605 E. Main Street

The Charlottesville City Council held a special meeting in the format of a work session on Wednesday, November 1, 2023. Mayor Snook called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m. with the following members present: Mayor Lloyd Snook, Councilor Michael Payne and Councilor Leah Puryear. Vice Mayor Juandiego Wade gave prior notice that he would arrive late, and Councilor Brian Pinkston requested to participate electronically.

Councilor Pinkston requested to join the meeting electronically by Zoom and confirmed that he could not be present because of illness, and that he was located at his home in Charlottesville. On motion by Puryear, seconded by Payne, Council unanimously approved electronic meeting participation by Councilor Pinkston.

James Freas, Director of Neighborhood Development Services provided an overview of prior discussions. The topic for this meeting was “Core Neighborhood Districts – Development Code and Zoning Map review”. According to the most recent memorandum from Mr. Freas to City Council:

“The Planning Commission’s recommendation to Council on the proposed Development Code included two new districts – the base district identified as Residential Core Neighborhood A (RN-A) and the overlay district identified as Core Neighborhoods Corridor Overlay District. Each of these districts is responding to a challenge presented by the proposed new zoning that, even as the City allows for a greater intensity of development in order to increase housing supply and stabilize housing costs, there is the possibility of raising property values, particularly in certain neighborhoods close to the University and downtown that have historically had lower property values. That increase could then, in turn, result in an acceleration in the current rate of displacement in these neighborhoods. Both districts therefore feature a reduction in the proposed allowed intensity that would potentially reduce the increase in property values in these neighborhoods. However, there are also potential implications for equity and the objectives of this project in implementing these districts.”

Council discussed neighborhood preservation, with consideration for historic displacement, potential implications and affordability for renters and owners as property values increase and taxes increase, predatory buyers, corridor issues, sensitive area neighborhoods, and uncertainty about displacement of existing commercial entities and small businesses.

Mr. Freas stated that zoning cannot dictate whether businesses remain or move elsewhere.

Councilor Payne stated that many discussions have been centered around homeowners, and there should be additional consideration for impacts on renters.

Councilors discussed concerns about displacement of renters as well as owners of rental properties, and the potential consequence of inhibiting wealth-building in neighborhoods if certain overlay designations are given,

Vice Mayor Wade arrived at 6:26 p.m.

Regarding RN-A districts, councilors were generally in agreement with the framework. Regarding text within the broad outline of Core Neighborhood Corridor Overlay Districts, Council was in general in agreement. Regarding Preston Avenue, Council generally agreed on the map iterations presented at the October 13 and October 18 meetings.

Lee Einsweiler of Code Studio and attorney Sharon Pandak participated in the discussion.

Vice Mayor Wade brought up the idea of pre-approved building plans, and Mr. Freas stated that there has been some discussion. The costs and benefits of the Special Use Permit process were discussed, as well as the difference between special use and special exception. Council debated whether to reduce discretionary processes or to eliminate them.

Mr. Freas, attorney Pandak and City Attorney Jacob Stroman clarified language for use in the citywide public hearing notification scheduled for mailing the next week. Mr. Freas outlined upcoming work sessions: November 8, November 13, and November 29.

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

BY Order of City Council

BY Kyna Thomas, Clerk of Council