

March 3, 2018 meeting,

The Franklin Town Council held a special called retreat on Saturday March 3, 2018 at 9:00 a.m. at Town Hall Board Room. Mayor Robert S. Scott presided. Vice Mayor Barbara McRae, Council Members Joe Collins, David Culpepper, Adam Kimsey, Dinah Mashburn, and Brandon McMahan were present.

Town Staff present were Town Attorney John Henning Jr., Town Planner Justin Setser, Town Clerk Travis Tallent, and Town Manager Summer Woodard

Introduction of Facilitator Mr. Russ Harris

Russ Harris from Region A of the Southwestern Commission introduced himself as the facilitator of the Town's retreat.

Nikwasi Initiative

Vice-Mayor McRae presented this item.

Whitmire Property

Town Manager Summer Woodard opened up the discussion by going over the assessment that was recently finished on the property.

Council Member Culpepper – It is already shaped with mature landscaping so that it could easily be made into a passive park or maybe a little more than that. If anybody has been to Cashiers they have something called the Village Green that is in their downtown. It isn't so much a park for recreation but a meeting place or gathering place park. They have several shelters there where they host exhibits, artists, art shows. They have a couple of concerts there, several picnic shelters. It would be expensive but the way they did it was they had private people come in and contribute and they put their names on the shelters. They have memorial parks. If you haven't seen this park I recommend going to look at it.

Council Member Kimsey – I share a lot of the sentiment that David has. I would like to look at some grant opportunities that may be available.

John Henning Jr. – Town Attorney – I really like coming back to the public-private partnership. You could set restrictions and find a way for the town to retain ownership but develop restrictions to your liking.

Council Member Collins – The property has been idle too long. Are we looking at a park because we need another park or is it just a fallback because we have a piece of land and we've got to do something? Either way, but an option that I believe is on the table and worth pursuing is the drive-in theater property on Frog Town. It's about seven acres and lays just like an amphitheater. The county owns it and they have owned it for about a generation or so. Sometime they may use it for school expansion but I get the feeling that they would be amiable in working with us if the town wanted to get a dollar lease on it or something like that. I think for every positive at the Whitmire Property would probably fit better at the drive-in property when you look at its proximity to the town and the potential uses with the farmer's market, Pickin' on the Square, maybe we have theater presentations or a drive-in night. The beauty is that we maintain the Whitmire property which I contend is better suited for commercial use.

March 3, 2018 meeting continued,

Mayor Scott – I strongly disagree. You need to take the parks to the people. Strong assets to towns all across the country are their livability. I would say that the Whitmire property needs to be publicly used to make Franklin more livable. I don't see any advantage in the town getting the drive-in theater.

Council Member Culpepper – I think livability is the key to this town. People have to want to live here. Tourism is great but we need people to want to live here. That's how jobs are going to come and people will open businesses. But to that point I do like the idea that Joe [Collins] has, too. I like both ideas. We could use that as a walkable path right through the middle of town, starting at Memorial Park where we were last night and ending at Nikwasi.

Council Member McMahan – On the Whitmire property I tend to see it the way David [Culpepper] brought it up. Everybody always talks about renewing East Franklin and I think that would go a long way towards doing that. I like looking at having some areas for private use but keeping the largest area for public use but not a typical park in the sense of see-saws and slides but a public gathering place in a beautiful outdoor area. I think that would be amazing. On the drive-in movie theater property, I'm with Joe on that one. If we could utilize it that would be great.

Council Member Mashburn – I'm not against parks but I don't feel like all of East Franklin needs to be turned into a park. I like Joe's [Collins] idea of looking into the theater property. If Whitmire is turned into anything I feel like at least a portion of it should be land banked. I tend to lean more towards commercial use when things turn around.

John Henning Jr. – Town Attorney – Whatever use you do have to keep in mind you're going to have to keep control in what happens. I hope you don't decide to just put it on the market. If it goes into private hands you want to tightly control what happens with it.

Council Member Kimsey – I think we need to open some dialogue with the county about the drive-in property. It doesn't sound like anybody is against that.

Memorial Park

Discussed the previous night of March 2, 2018.

Old Drive-In Theater Property

Gazebo

Summer Woodard – Town Manager – We have an agreement with the county that was made May 5, 1998. The county owns the property where the gazebo is. I just wanted to give this to you so you can look at it over the next month or so. The agreement expires this year.

John Henning Jr. – Town Attorney – There's things in this agreement that I'm not crazy about but even if we just had a renewal of that lease its fine. It may be a good way to take the temperature on leasing the old drive in property.

March 3, 2018 meeting continued,

Council Member Culpepper – I would say if they're not going to draw up the lease that you are more than capable to represent us and handle that. This is probably a good time to talk about bathrooms too.

Council Member McMahan – I wanted to hear other people's thoughts on improving the Gazebo. It's the heart of downtown. It's already a hub for a lot of important things so I would like to improve it aesthetically, maybe even functionally.

Council Member Collins – As Spartan as it is, if in fact we're looking at potentially two more sites that could handle some of the events, we need to see how it all fits together. It is our ground zero. The only thing that makes me not want to put a lot into it is that people seem to like it the way it is.

Restrooms

Discussed the previous night of March 2, 2018.

Downtown Grant for Residential Revitalization

Summer Woodard – Town Manager – I recently attended a Region A manager's meeting and the manager of Clyde was discussing how their town does facade grants. I think they put in \$50,000 for the businesses throughout Canton and then they have to match. I think he said the most they could apply for was \$5,000 but the business had to show where they would match it. I wanted the council to think about this. There's so much opportunity downtown for residential revitalization. It's a proactive approach. So many millennials want to live downtown. I was thinking that if the board is receptive to the idea, what if we looked at in this upcoming budget setting aside some grant money for this type of approach.

Council Member Collins – How many owners would we need to be in contact with? Three? Maybe we could just have a meeting with them to talk about it. Ever how many it is, it's a small group.

Council Member Culpepper – I think it's more than three. We need to meet with various groups including building inspections and the fire marshal to see what we can do. That brings me to another point. What about balconies on Main Street? Would we allow a building owner to put a balcony on the building?

Justin Setser – Land Use Administrator – Yeah as long as it meets the codes. They couldn't infringe above the DOT right of way.

Ray's Chapel

Vice-Mayor McRae Presented this item.

Vice-Mayor McRae – Ownership was with the trustees and there is only one trustee left. She is willing to deed the church to the town. This is a special property. There are ways to make sure we're not left with a lot of responsibility. We could possibly lease it to a nonprofit. The costs are nothing except what the legal costs would be.

March 3, 2018 meeting continued,

Council Member Culpepper – I would like to see it. I always wondered what is going on there.

John Henning Jr. – Town Attorney – It's as easy as drafting a deed. I want to make sure that I have the council's blessing before I move forward doing anything like that. Do you want to bring it up at the meeting on Monday?

Council Member Collins – Yes.

Women's History Trail

Vice-Mayor McRae presented this item.

Opioid Epidemic

Council Member Mashburn – On March 27th there is going to be a joint meeting at 11:00 a.m. that is going to pull in a lot of the mental health aspect. It is trying to get everybody to come together and make things more accessible. I just want the town to think about where we see ourselves in this epidemic. We've got to come together and regain our youth.

Sidewalks

Council Member Collins – We have sidewalks that are in disrepair and they have been for a generation. I really think we need to consider an internal way to go street to street and rebuild the older sidewalks. We have an engineer on staff now. I want us to have a crew internally that can fix these. They will get better at it as time goes by.

Council Member Culpepper – Are we capable of doing that?

Summer Woodard – Town Manager – You are capable with the current staff. We have done some small ones in town but when you do get into larger projects because it is such a long process. It is hard at the moment. We do smaller repairs.

Justin Setser – Land Use Administrator – I went through and did a ranking system of the sidewalks. In the Bike and Pedestrian Plan it is recommended that you have a full plan to address fixing sidewalks.

Council Member Collins – Could we use Powell Bill money for sidewalk repair?

Summer Woodard – Town Manager – You can. We used some on the Lakeside project last year.

Vice Mayor McRae – I think it would be great for the public if we could tell them that your sidewalk is on our list, it may be number three on the list.

Rules of Procedure

Mayor Scott presented this item.

March 3, 2018 meeting continued,

Ethics

Mayor Scott presented this item.

Strategic Planning

Summer Woodard – Town Manager – We’ve been looking at the possibility of a comprehensive plan.

John Henning Jr. – Town Attorney – To speak about the legalities of it, you’re required to have a comprehensive land use plan. The whole idea of zoning is how do we make things fit together and where do uses work best? The planning board and the council is supposed to make reference to that plan when making changes. We’ve gotten by for years because we do have principles of growth in the UDO. It would be much better if we had a completely mapped out land use plan. There is a new law that almost says you have to have a comprehensive land use plan. It is going to be increasingly possible for somebody to challenge your zoning decisions because you don’t have a land use plan.

Justin Setser – Land Use Administrator – It doesn’t have to be just for land use. You can tackle other areas too like future growth of Franklin or the opioid epidemic. The consulting firm can look at areas like transportation, housing, etc.. and see how to move forward there. A lot of the things that we’re talking about today can be laid out in a comp plan.

Vice-Mayor McRae – There’s so many things happening now that we couldn’t have dreamed of 15 years ago like internet and the county’s public transportation. This may be a good way to encourage fiber, or the cell phone towers, or even your underground utilities. It became clear to me at the planning board meeting last week that we really do need it.

Mission Statement

Council Member Culpepper – I feel like if we had mission statement that says our focus is to make Franklin the best place to live, work, and play or something along those lines, when something comes up like DOT projects and the plan doesn’t have buried underground power we can reference this mission statement. It gives town employees and even me, something to reference when we’re talking about it. We can say this is part of our mission statement. It gives us something to fall back on.

Council Members Collins – I don’t see anything wrong with that.

March 3, 2018 meeting continued,

Greenway

Council Member Culpepper – It looks like the Chamber of Commerce owns that property we discussed. The county is working with the chamber to get that property. Maybe we did have some positive impact there. We may have influence on another connection. There is a possibility of it going under the bridge and through the new Ingles parking lot to Roller Mill Road. I don't know if we can help to influence a walkway under that bridge but maybe it's something we can look at.

Robert S. Scott, Mayor

Travis Tallent, Town Clerk