

# Holly Springs Town Council Minutes

## Special Meeting (Annual Retreat) Feb. 16-18, 2007

The Holly Springs Town Council met in a duly-called special meeting for its annual Winter Retreat in three sessions from Friday, Feb. 16, 2007 through Sunday, Feb. 18, 2007, at Pine Needles Lodge in Southern Pines. Mayor Dick Sears presided at two sessions, calling members to order at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 16, and at 9:15 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 17. Mayor Pro Tem Hank Dickson presided on Sunday morning, calling the last session to order at 9:30 a.m. Sunday, Feb. 18. A quorum was established for each session as the mayor and all five board members were present as each session opened on Friday and Saturday. A quorum was established on Sunday morning as the mayor pro tem and all four remaining council members were present.

**Board Members Present:** Councilmen Vinnie DeBenedetto, Parrish Womble, Chet VanFossen, Peter Atwell and Hank Dickson and Mayor Sears. (Mayor Sears fell ill and was absent for the Sunday morning session.)

**Staff Members Present at the Friday Evening Session:** Carl Dean, town manager; Charles Simmons, assistant town manager; Joni Powell, town clerk (recording the minutes) and Daniel Weeks, project analyst.

**Staff Members Present at the Saturday Session:** Carl Dean, town manager; Charles Simmons, assistant town manager; Joni Powell, town clerk (recording the minutes) Daniel Weeks, project analyst; John Herring, chief of police; Jenny Mizelle, director of economic development; Gina Clapp, director of planning and zoning; Kendra Stephenson, senior engineer; and Rodney Campbell, development inspector administrator.

**Staff Members Present at the Sunday Session:** Carl Dean, town manager; Charles Simmons, assistant town manager; Joni Powell, town clerk (recording the minutes); John Herring, chief of police; and Daniel Weeks, project analyst.

The purpose of the meeting was to hold a winter retreat to focus discussion on several Town projects and issues as described in the summary below. The summary serves as the minutes of the 2007 Holly Springs Town Council Retreat.

## 2007 Holly Springs Town Council Retreat Summary

### Friday Evening -- Individual Council Member Interests/Concerns:

**Councilman Dickson:** Councilman Dickson said one of the reasons he ran for office originally was

because he felt that he could help the Town evolve with technology (a website, email, etc.). He continues his efforts now at making sure parks and recreation programs and facilities are top of the line.

**Councilman Atwell:** Councilman Atwell said he ran for office originally because he felt the Town Council needed to experience spirited debate so that many ideas and perspectives could be considered. His goals continue to be a community center for the Town and continuing improvements to the overall parks and recreation opportunities in Holly Springs (including facilities for middle school age youth like places for skateboarding and roller blading); the appearance of Holly Springs, particularly publicly-owned properties; and enhanced code enforcement to take care of eyesores and safety hazards.

**Councilman Womble:** Councilman Womble said he ran for office originally many years ago because he wanted the same prosperity for Holly Springs that was being experienced in other Wake County towns; he explained that when he first took office, Holly Springs did not have basic utility services and that many residents still had outdoor privies. He recounted how the town leaders recognized that they would have to provide public water and sewer in order for the town to grow, and now he wants to see Holly Springs continue to grow with an independently abundant water and sewer capacity. He said he would like to see all of the council members to work together to accomplish good things for the community.

**Councilman VanFossen:** Councilman VanFossen said he ran for office originally because he had volunteered his professional background for a downtown design project and then served on the town's Planning Board. Those experiences, he said, made him feel like he could contribute more to the development of Holly Springs as a member of the Town Council. He said he ran on a pro-growth, but quality growth, platform and feels his efforts will continue to be on achieving that vision.

**Mayor Sears:** Mayor Sears agreed that his vision, too, is on the quality growth of Holly Springs, particularly of the non-residential type of development the town needs. He said he also is very interested in encouraging the development of facilities and programs for youth and seniors, specifically, after-school programs for middle school aged youngsters; a community center with dynamic programming for all ages; and a senior center with programs that would appeal to older residents.

**Councilman DeBenedetto:** Councilman DeBenedetto said he ran for office out of a sense of community service. He said he felt he could help Holly Springs define and create its sense of place and deal with its residential density issues and infrastructure challenges. He said he would encourage members of the Council to work together and not be critical of each other and their differing opinions. He said that, after being on the Council and getting familiar with operations and the financing of operations, he feels very confident about the town's financial position. As for future goals, he said he would like to the Town to have more involvement with school system issues and perhaps the creation of committees to assist with certain areas of town and Council operations.

### **Friday Evening -- Appearance of the Town:**

Council discussion followed the lead of Councilman Atwell, who provided an extensive photo slide show of aesthetic problems in Holly Springs. Particularly disturbing, he said, were the photos taken on Town-owned property and of Town-sponsored projects.

He said he felt if the Town is going to require a high standard of development from its residential subdivision developers, then it should hold itself to at least an equal to, if not higher, standard. He said he wanted the Town to strive for a more manicured appearance.

#### ***Council Direction and Suggestions:***

- *Show Councilman Atwell's slideshow to department heads and all other staff members.*
- *Take care of the specific problems illustrated, particularly those at the Main Street property where Public Safety used to be located.*
- *Emphasize with department heads that they should instill in their staff members a new staff mentality that all employees are responsible for how the town looks.*
- *Budget for professional lawn care for Town Hall, parking lots, key properties and landscaped medians; or, if done in-house, increase the level of care.*
- *Management should oversee various efforts and increase the level of code enforcement that is being performed.*
- *Creation of a "Spot Award" for employees who are observed taking care of problems that are outside their normal work duties.*

- *Creation of a position or additional duty for an existing position of coordinating a manicured appearance for the Town's properties, entrances, rights of way, etc.*
- *Establishing a decorative Holly Springs street sign and/or post to be used throughout the town in place of the plain ones.*
- *Establishing a visible "brand" for Holly Springs – an image that comes to mind of Holly Springs like gas lamps do for some towns. Councilman VanFossen said the town has a good start with the common use of stacked rock pillars in the community. He suggested carrying that forward as a brand.*
- *Management should create and encourage a continuing awareness among staff members and an organization-wide philosophy that spotting aesthetic problems and getting them taken care of promptly is a basic job duty for all positions.*
- *There is value in regularly driving throughout the town for the expressed purpose of spotting and solving problems.*
- *Council would like to revisit the town's sign ordinances to determine if they are adequate and possibly combine them into one enforcement office and one set of rules.*
- *To address the problem*

### **Saturday Morning -- Gangs**

Following a presentation by James Johnson, a consultant offering services to curb gang creation and activity in communities, the Council also heard from Chief Herring. Chief Herring said he feels most of the work needed in Holly Springs could be done in-house with existing staff members within the police department. He added, however, that it may be helpful if the Council would budget funds so that he could use Mr. Johnson or other experts, not on a continuing contractual basis, but on an as-needed basis for certain projects or programs.

#### ***Council Direction:***

*Chief Herring may take care of gang-related issues using in-house programs and staff and consultants on an as-needed basis at his discretion.*

### **Saturday Morning – Community Center**

During this discussion, Council was advised that an appraisal of the Town's Main Street property is expected on or about Feb. 28. At this point, there was brief discussion on cleaning up the property and/or demolishing the old police station.

#### ***Council Direction:***

- *Get a cost comparison in writing of moving and renovating and the cost of demolition of the old police station. Present this to the Council along with appraisals of the land. Also need to have a survey conducted to establish property lines.*

Mr. Weeks explained that properties in another portion of the town's core recently were examined and values determined for the combined parcels. Individual parcels are valued at much less than the parcels together would be, Councilman VanFossen explained.

The Council discussed the pros and cons of this site as a spot for a new community center for the town.

Pros – The town already owns more than half of the property; if a developer partners with the town has described, the town would be a leasor and have no debt; it would create activity and pedestrian flow downtown; it would be a destination for downtown; the project could be completed pretty quickly since the town would have little property to acquire.

Cons – It is an urban location, which would limit the amount of outdoor space; parking may be a problem; the property may be more marketable in the future for another type of use that would benefit the town's downtown greater.

#### ***Council Direction:***

- *Begin assembling properties in identified area, but determine a use for it later after further*

*investigation.*

- *Investigate the ownership and value of vacant property nearby that may be preferable to or could be added to the subject property.*
- *Continue with acquiring properties near former police station.*
- *Investigate whether piping of the gully bordering the old police station building is feasible so that the property could be adjoined to the former public safety tract or made into a pocket downtown park.*

### **Saturday Morning -- Traffic-calming Options**

Engineering staff members Rodney Campbell and Kendra Stephenson explained that stop signs are regulatory signs and should not be thought of as speed control devices. That said, she admitted that many of the stop signs in Holly Springs were erected at odds with the town's policy.

She encouraged the Council to consider a focused attention on other options for speed control devices, such as traffic circles, chicanes and a variety of styles of speed humps.

She said the engineering department is suggesting that for new collector roadways that the town offer developers a "tool box" of options, including but not limited to no-load streets, for avoiding speed problems on those types of streets in the future.

For retrofitting problem areas such as what residents on Crossway Lane are alleging, she said some devices such as circles and chicanes and specially designed speed humps that are more emergency vehicle-friendly could be considered.

#### ***Council Direction:***

- *Rewrite the town's existing traffic-calming device policy to include other types of devices*
- *Do not rewrite the town's policy on 4-way stops and generally apply it.*
- *Provide developers with a tool box of options to control traffic speeds on new collector streets.*
- *Encourage that collector streets be designed as no-load streets whenever feasible.*

### **Saturday Morning – Non-Residential Development Update**

Mrs. Mizelle reported on the progress of Novartis Vaccines & Diagnostics, which is essentially doubling its original proposed facility footprint. She also said Holly Springs is prominently featured in a Novartis recruitment CD.

#### ***Council Direction:***

- *Provide information on the town's website about the project and provide link for jobs to [novartisvaccines.com](http://novartisvaccines.com).*
- *Add web link also for the CD video presentation.*

### **Saturday Morning – Parks and Recreation Project Update**

Council members received a written report in packets on numerous park facility projects.

In response to a staff question as to whether or not the parking lot at Jones Park could be used for Veterans Park, the Council indicated that it had no objections to the proposal.

### **Saturday Afternoon – Development Issues**

The after-lunch meeting opened with a discussion of suggestions staff has developed for development to incur with incentives for larger-lot subdivisions in the ETJ. Using a large topographic map, Mrs. Clapp explained that the town's engineering department had identified areas in which the town would find it more difficult to provide sewer service. In these areas, she explained, it would be best to offer larger-lot development incentives whereby developers would be required to hook on to the town's water system, but not to its sewer system.

Staff's proposal recommended that the location to consider such development would be land south of Spence Farm Road/Rex Road and east of Cass Holt Road. This line was determined based upon the location of existing sewer infrastructure, the location of proposed sewer infrastructure, and staff's recommendation to ensure recouping of expenses and facility capacity that has been included in the Town's estimates and reserves in the designing of the new treatment plant and pump stations/forcemains

in the area. This line was also chosen due to the location of existing subdivisions without sewer facilities and the fact that the intersection of Piney Grove-Wilbon Road and Honeycutt Road is designated as an Activity Node or Growth Area on the proposed Future Land Use Plan which would denote this area for higher density residential development or commercial/office development—not rural residential development.

**Council Direction:**

- *The Council approved staffs recommendation on the appropriate location for large-lot developments with public water, but without public sewer (generally south of Spence Farm Road and east of Cass Holt Road.*

**Saturday Afternoon – Progress Energy**

Councilman Atwell addressed this issue, saying he feels that the company owes more to Holly Springs than it has shown a willingness to provide. He said the company's nuclear plant's proximity to Holly Springs should merit a significant investment in this community.

He pointed out that the company has made several long-term and expensive investments into the City of Raleigh, which bears little impact from the facility.

Specifically, he said, he would like to see Progress Energy assist financially in the widening of Avent Ferry Road, since it is a designated evacuation route; provide land for easements as needed and development; and be a user of town water, sewer and/or reuse water.

Councilman Atwell said the town needs to push hard for the things it needs from the company, and he suggested that town officials go as high up the corporate ladder as possible.

**Saturday Afternoon – Infrastructure Reimbursement Agreements**

Mr. Dean explained that the town has entered into many reimbursement agreements over the years and asked the Council if the town had reached a point where it curbs the use of them.

Council members said whatever the town decides to do is fine, as long as developers know up-front what they will and will not be expected to provide.

After much discussion, it was decided that:

**Council Direction:**

- *An independent development issues workshop is to be scheduled this spring to work out a variety of topics, including the use of IRAs and an adequate facilities ordinance.*

**Saturday Afternoon – Engineering Topics**

**Council Direction:**

- *Look into possibilities of installing waterline to open up areas for development.*
- *Fight the Apex ETJ expansion request in regard to contested areas*
- *Proceed with North Main Street sidewalk by securing a reimbursement agreement from NCDOT for repayment in 2009; go ahead with construction and pay for it now with reimbursement to come; spring construction.*
- *South Main Street sidewalk can be installed as development occurs.*
- *Holly Glen to Holly Springs High School sidewalk should begin with a temporary pedestrian path now until the Overlook develops*
- *Bass Lake Crosswalk – Send letter to NCDOT that the speed limit is 35 mph and that the town is going to install a crosswalk, either using in-house crews or by contracting the job out.*

**Sunday Morning – CIP**

Mr. Weeks went over the Capital Improvements Plan booklet.

Councilman Atwell questioned the inclusion of funding for renovations at the Hunt Center, when the Council has not decided what to do with the property. He suggested that before the town goes forward with renovations that the town needs a more concrete plan for what ultimately the town will do with it.

Councilman Atwell also said he would like the town to begin placing on its long-range planning tools like the TIP and CIP a north-south route connecting Avent Ferry Road to New Hill Road. Otherwise, he

said, all traffic will be funneling on Avent Ferry Road, which will not be able to handle that amount of traffic.

**Council Direction:**

- *Provide Council with options for use/renovation/disposition of the Hunt Center.*
- *Include N-S transportation route on town's TIP so that right of way can be reserved*

**Sunday Morning -- Grants**

In a discussion about how the town's grant program is progressing, council members expressed concern as to how much funding is needed each year and for what purpose is the funding being used.

Council members expressed some basic guidelines that may need to be followed in rewriting the existing policy.

**Council Direction:**

- *Rewrite the grant policy and distribute it to council members for input*
- *Include in the draft a budget limit, such as \$1 per person in the population per year.*
- *Include in the draft provisions for how long the funding would be made available and for what purpose it should be spent.*

**Sunday Morning – Chamber of Commerce**

In a discussion about how the town intends to support the Holly Springs Chamber of Commerce in coming years, there was much discussion about the cost of production of the chamber's membership directory.

In the end, there was clear support for the town's maintaining its Platinum membership plus offering support in some kind for publication and distribution of the membership directory, particularly since the directory benefits everyone who receives it.

**Council Action:** The Council approved a motion to direct a committee comprised of Councilmen VanFossen and Atwell, Chamber representatives Bob Volpe and Scoop Green and town staff members Chuck Simmons and Joni Powell to meet and consider the various options for financial support of the chamber and production/distribution of the chamber directory and town calendar and to report back to the Council with a recommendation that can be formally approved.

**Motion By:** Atwell

**Second By:** Dickson

**Vote:** Unanimous.

**Saturday Morning – Parks and Recreation Issues**

Councilman Atwell said he would like to spend some time addressing some lingering concerns he has about the town's Parks and Recreation Department. He said it is his perception that not all is going well and that there is generally dissatisfaction among participants and volunteers.

Councilman Atwell said there is a perception that the department is resistant to change and that there is no enthusiasm for new ideas.

**Council Direction:**

- *Tell our story better and with more enthusiasm*
- *Expand our vision and promote an enthusiastic attitude throughout the department*
- *Be aware of the audience when communicating and attempt to respond in respectful and interested ways.*
- *Be more receptive to new ideas and suggestions from the public and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee.*

**Adjournment:** There being no further business for the weekend, the 2007 Winter Retreat of the Holly

Springs Town Council was adjourned following a motion by Councilman Womble, a second by Councilman DeBenedetto and a unanimous vote.

Respectfully Submitted on Tuesday, March 20, 2007.

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Joni Powell, CMC, Town Clerk