

Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting
July 23, 2013
Lord Spencer Compton Conference Room

Present:

Steering Committee Members	Bonnie Nelson
Carlos Braxton	Tom Pollard
Howard Capps, Vice Chair	Jennifer Rigby
Kemp Burdette	Robert Rosenberg, Chair
Deb Hays	Paul Lawler
Elizabeth Hines	J. Clark Hipp

Absent:

Linda Pearce	Kevin Smith
Randy Reeves	Frank Smith

Staff Members
Glenn Harbeck – Dev Svs
Christine Hughes

Others Present: Ryan McAllister, Kathleen Riley, Bill Hance (New Hanover County Schools)

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 by Robert Rosenberg.

Minutes from the June 25, 2013 meeting were approved.

At the request of the committee, Bill Hance, Assistant Superintendent for Planning and Operations with New Hanover County Schools, was asked to attend the meeting to discuss the school system's planning efforts. Mr. Hance stated that the county's schools are growing at a rate of about half an elementary school, or 300-400 students per year. While there have been cycles of slower growth over the past 20 years, there has never been a period of population decline over the past 20 years.

The schools system has contracted with a consultant to provide a demographics analysis that will evaluate each school and each attendance zone with projections for each.

The school system has asked New Hanover County to place a local bond referendum on the ballot for 2014. This bond is being requested to cover the construction of a new elementary school (location to be determined) and major renovations of College Park and Blair elementary schools.

Mr. Hance stated that most schools in the county are currently over-capacity, with very few schools having open seats for additional students.

There is significant movement of students within the county and to the county from outside of the county, with most of the growth occurring in the northern part of the county. The population and capacity for each school is available on the NHCS website.

Steering committee members asked several questions about site selection and growth patterns. Mr. Hance indicated that NHCS currently uses the following standards for site selection and student population:

Elementary schools – 17-20 usable acres to accommodate 600 students

Middle schools – 30-42 usable acres to accommodate 800-1,000 students

High schools – minimum of 60 usable acres to accommodate 1,600 students

Mr. Hance indicated that there is little desire to deviate from these standards, as doing so impacts the amenities and parking that can be provided on-site and schools with fewer students are more costly to operate. Mr. Hance stated that NHCS must submit a 10-year growth plan to the state every five years. Final site selection is the decision of the School Board.

Existing infrastructure is considered, as is the potential impact of a new school on the area in terms of traffic and site development. The school system provides transportation to students attending their assigned school; however, typically only around half of the student population uses school-provided transportation. Yellow school busses can only be used to transport students to and from school and for emergency evacuation purposes. Other busses may be used for other purposes.

Several schools are used as emergency shelters. If new schools are to be built and designed for use as a shelter, there is considerable extra cost. The Department of Homeland Security will soon be requiring that new schools be built with safe rooms and with restricted proximity of vehicles to school entrances; Mr. Hance was not aware of what those regulation may be.

When asked how NHCS and the city's planning efforts could be harmonized, Mr. Hance indicated that the city encourage non-vehicular transportation connections and the Safe Routes to School program.

The committee reviewed the information related to the August 13th Lunch and Learn and Liz Hines agreed to moderate the event. Any committee members wishing to attend should RSVP. The information presented at the August Lunch and Learn will be also be presented to the steering committee. The purpose of the Lunch and Learn series was reviewed and it was clarified that these events are organized for the average citizen to gain basic knowledge about planning-related issues in order to make more informed decisions throughout the plan development process.

Committee members received a draft of the emerging themes and were asked to come prepared to adopt a final draft at the August meeting. Committee members are encouraged to use the Google Groups forum for discussion related to the themes.

No one has yet completed their Meeting in a Box. The deadline for completing this is September 3, 2013.

The next steering committee meeting is August 27, 2013 at 4:00 in the Lord Spence Compton room.

The steering committee adjourned at 6:12 PM.