

**TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES**

Thursday, January 19th 2017

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Colleen Barclay, Chair
Rob Dow
Diana McDuffee, Vice-Chair
Kurt Štolka
John Nicopoulos
Linda Haac
Bethany Chaney

STAFF PRESENT

Bergen Watterson

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Derek Powers

GUESTS

The TAB participated in a public input meeting on the Comprehensive Transportation Plan at the Chapel Hill Public Library beginning at 6:00pm. There was a presentation by Andy Henry of the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO, followed by a general discussion and time to view maps of proposed projects.

I. Call to order

Colleen called the TAB meeting to order at 7:36pm.

II. Approval of Minutes (November 17th, 2016 & December 1st, 2016)

Linda moved to approve both sets of minutes, Diana seconded. All in favor.

III. Discussion of 103 Center Street SUP

Bergen explained to the group that the manager of this project presented at the January 5th, 2017 joint review meeting, for which the TAB did not have a quorum. Bergen, Colleen and Bethany attended the meeting. The site is a single-family home operating as an Air BnB short-term rental. There are both commercial and residential properties on the block, which is in the middle of downtown. The home has been operating as an Air BnB for a while, but has recently come to the Town's attention due to a complaint by a neighbor. The Land Use Ordinance (LUO) currently requires tourist homes to have a Special Use Permit, but the many Air BnBs in Town have essentially flown under the radar until now. The Planning Department is under direction from the Board of Aldermen to research how other municipalities handle Air BnBs in their LUOs, but there is nothing specific on the books yet. Bethany explained that it is a very complex issue and

the Board of Aldermen are encouraging the Planning Department to be thorough in their research so as to be fair and equitable in their final recommendation. The small-scale tourist home Special Use Permits process is currently complaint-driven, meaning that if there is a complaint then the Town must act.

Linda noted that that the email from the neighbor defines the property as a ‘commercial motel’. She stated that she does not agree with this definition and does not agree that Air BnBs would change the character of Carrboro’s downtown or any other neighborhood. She gave an example of Beaufort, NC that has a lot of Air BnBs and has not changed as a result. She disclosed that she operates an Air BnB on the coast and does not think there is any problem with the business. She stated that she believes that if there is any sort of noise or nuisance complaint resulting from an Air BnB then it should fall under the same category as any other neighborhood complaint. Colleen said that she thinks there is potential to change the character of Town and that she is concerned about the impact Air BnBs could have on rental availability and vacancy rates in Town. She said that in California there are some serious issues in towns that already have low rental vacancy rates, which have been exacerbated by Air BnBs because owners can make so much more money operating the short-term rental than a normal rental. Rob said that he sees it as a balancing act – it is preferable as a traveler, especially with young children, to stay in an Air BnB instead of a hotel, but he also sees the issues with driving up rents and taking rentals off the market. He noted that Air BnBs tend to be well kempt, whereas many regular rentals are not. For this reason, he believes that Air BnBs can contribute to the preservation of the historic nature of downtown because the properties are taken care of and not allowed to fall into disrepair.

Bethany said that the property manager seems to do a good job operating the business and that there have not been any complaints about noise or nuisance. The woman also manages the Air BnB above Johnny’s Gone Fishing. The root of the neighbor’s complaint seems to be the cars in the driveway, which appears to be shared but is not. She stated that the neighbor could put up a fence in the driveway to separate the properties. Bethany noted that this property and process sets a precedent because it is the first Air BnB to go through the SUP process, and the TAB’s comments should include comments on the larger process for Air BnBs because it can have policy implications.

Linda said that she wants to be careful about making distinctions between people who rent a room in their house on Air BnB and those who rent their entire house and live elsewhere. She is worried about having two categories of people who operate Air BnBs who are treated differently. Diana said that 103 Center Street is a commercial operation; the person lives out of state and rents their home as a business. It is not about someone who is trying to afford their home by renting a room out. She noted that there are laws regulating hotels/motels for safety and health reasons, and Air BnBs do not have those same rules. She provided the example that if someone

wanted to operate a coffee shop out of their home they would be subject to rules and regulations and would need to get a permit. She said that she likes the direction the Board is going in by researching ways to regulate Air BnBs. Bethany added that there is commercial revenue coming from the Air BnBs.

Rob said that he does not think that there are transportation-related comments to make on this particular SUP. The group discussed the parking conditions on Center Street and noted that there is on-street parking allowed. Linda told the group that Air BnB has many rules that its operators must follow, and if you do not follow them you will get in trouble.

The TAB does not have any comments on the 103 Center Street SUP, but looks forward to reviewing the SUP application when it is submitted. The TAB also anticipates participating in the development of Town regulations for Air BnBs and the related SUPs.

IV. Other Business/Staff Report

Bergen told the group that there will be a Walkabout on the site of a new small subdivision off Homestead Road that is set to submit their concept plan soon. It is for the five homes that will be adjacent to the twelve lot subdivision that the group recently commented on. The Walkabout will be on 2/2 at 8:30am and a representative from TAB should participate. She said that she will send out the information tomorrow and asked the group to let her know if they are able to join.

V. Adjourn

Colleen adjourned the meeting at 8:00pm.