Memorandum

To: Mayor Weaver
            Town Board members

From: Operations team members

Date: August 1, 2022

Subject: Responses to projects identified at February 2022 meeting

During the February regular meeting, board members identified topics or projects they wanted staff to work on with no specific schedule or priority assigned. A report was provided in April, but there was not sufficient time to discuss in detail. This document has been updated with work done since April and added one additional topic inadvertently omitted previously.

Staff found the items fell into 4 categories:
- things we were already working on
- projects that needed more specificity
- larger projects
- projects not recommended for further action

This classification is based on staff understanding of the complexity of the topic and required effort to implement reviewed in light of other responsibilities and priorities. Without question, the board can prioritize these actions as they wish and direct staff to pursue any and all tasks.

Under the headings, the items are listed in approximate order of completion, based on workload and complexity. The responsible division is listed in parentheses with the item.

Already working on
A few of the requested topics were very easy to address or already being worked on by staff. Those items are detailed below.

1) **Determining option to continue broadcasting at least Town Board meetings after we resume in-person meetings (Clerk/Communications/IT).**
   □ Response: Complete
   □ Staff intends to continue broadcasting town board meetings using the Meeting Owl until directed otherwise.
   - If the board wants other options investigated, please advise.
   - There is no plan to broadcast volunteer board meetings at this time. If that is a board interest, please advise.
   - Expansion beyond the Meeting Owl for town board meetings would be challenging before FY24 due to workload and complexity.

2) **De-criminalizing of penalties currently listed as criminal per the list we sent to the North Carolina General Assembly and determining which to move to civil penalty (Legal).**
   □ Response: Complete.

3) **Posting bios of Mayor and Commissioners on the web (Communications).**
   - □ Response: Complete.

4) **Report on amplified sound provisions – is it working? (Police).**
   - □ Response: Complete.

5) **Review of advisory board composition, appointment processes, training, etc. to help build competency and alignment with Board priorities (Clerk).**
   - □ Response: Clarity on outstanding questions and what needs to be done is needed.
     - Existing information was provided to the entire board in late June.
     - Staff have discovered that the attendance policy is not consistent across all boards and needs work.

6) **Establish an on-going funding stream for bicycle and pedestrian improvements (Budget).**
   - □ Response: Board action and available funding are all that is needed.
     - The board can designate funding as part of the budget process for this purpose. Funds could accumulate over time and then be used to take advantage of opportunities as they arise or for identified projects. The town has a similar process for funding small connectivity projects and climate change initiatives.

Clarification or direction needed to fully respond

The following topics need some additional specificity about priority or the type of information the board is seeking for staff to respond. Direction is needed on each item. Please remember that these are all tasks in addition to staff regular workload and staff are not indicating we have capacity to address any of these without other work tasks being delayed.

1) **Town-funded solutions to promote affordable housing in Hillsborough (Community Services).**
   - □ Response: Board action and available funding are needed.
     - The place-holder policy endorsed in April is a guide.
     - The town has received significant funding requests from partner organizations. How these relate to town-specific action needs discussion.
     - The Comprehensive Sustainability Plan will also provide guidance on this topic.
     - Staff will provide funding options consistent with the place-holder policy when any funding is designated.

2) **Accessory Dwelling unit status & update (Planning).**
   - □ Response: staff has prepared a mappable dataset of all accessory dwellings and lots with multiple dwellings (attached).
     - Question: What is the board's objective? Is the location and number of units the interest? Are there particular details you want tracked for these units? Is it how has ordinance changes impacted development of accessory units? Is it how to encourage more or different types?

3) **Revisiting Code of Ethics ordinance from earlier in the year (Legal).**
   - □ Response: This is pending project for the legal team.
     - Direction as to relative urgency/priority of this project is requested.

4) **Revising our firearm regulation with something similar to what Apex has in their Code (Legal).**
   - □ Response: This is a pending project for the legal team.
     - Direction as to relative urgency/priority of this project is requested.

5) **Administering the Non-Discrimination Ordinance (Legal).**
   - □ Response: This is pending project for the legal team and was inadvertently left out of the previous report.
   - □ Direction as to relative urgency/priority of this project is requested.

Items with a longer response time

Some items require deep research or are tied to other processes. These are detailed below. No specific schedule has been proposed for response. Any guidance about relative priority from the board is helpful. Please remember that these are all tasks in addition to staff regular workload and staff are not indicating we have capacity to address any of these without other work tasks being delayed.

1) **Creating a searchable online depository of town contracts (Clerk/IT).**
   - □ Response: Clerk and IT have been looking into this. We are waiting on some technology shifts coming from the selected vendor.
     - Some direction is needed to indicate whether this is every contract of only those that meet a certain threshold. This will also need to involve Finance staff as they receive every contract.

2) **Apex is implementing Dark Sky provisions – learn from and piggyback on their activities/actions (Planning).**
   - □ Response: Planning staff have met with Apex staff. They are still in the formulation stage. Nothing has been adopted or implemented. They are very willing to share, and staff will continue to monitor this project.

3) **Assess bicycle/pedestrian friendliness of community and develop plan to address problem areas (Public Space/Planning).**
   - □ Response: The Community Connectivity Plan has served this function in the past. The Comprehensive Sustainability Plan will incorporate updates to the Community Connectivity Plan and will serve this function moving forward. Additional work can be scheduled if the plan response is lacking.

4) **Investigate options to meet the community where they are – alternatives to traditional engagement (Communications).**
   - □ Response: This is a current project for Communications. Options under discussion include community message boards, rotating the location of the citizens academy to different spaces around town, as well as offering transportation and perhaps childcare. Prior to the pandemic, Communications staff had discussed trying to visit neighborhood meetings to be able to answer questions about the town and to encourage residents to sign up for communication methods and OC Alerts. It's unclear if neighborhood meetings have resumed and staff are still recovering from pandemic workload impacts.
     - Question: What does the board wish to accomplish?

5) **Investigate options to provide public Wi-Fi in town parks and Fairview Park (in partnership with Orange County) (IT).**
   - □ Response: This is a current project for IT. The infrastructure does not exist in the parks to implement this. Additionally, there would be the on-going expense for internet service at each location and the need to develop policies about internet use that would need to be posted in all locations.

6) **Investigating social districts (Planning/Police).**
   □ Response: Staff have reached out to other jurisdictions to learn from their experience. We have a fair understanding of the level of effort and how to go about this if further effort is desired. Hillsborough is rather different that other communities who have implemented these districts. We contacted Greensboro and Hickory. This will require significant staff effort and community cooperation to implement. The issues we have identified so far include:
      • We have a limited number of establishments. Will they all participate? Will they all comply? Is this something they want?
      • We have residents who live very close to the area likely designated as a district. What is the impact to them?
      • We have heavily traveled roads through the area likely to be a district. The risk of injury is much higher.
      • This recalls the issues we observed with increased trash throughout the downtown with previous businesses who did not monitor outside beverage service without food.
      • How will this impact alcohol service in adjacent public spaces (courthouse square & Riverwalk) and at events?
   □ If a presentation about how districts work in other locations is needed to help the board members envision positives and negatives, staff can schedule this for a future workshop.
   □ Clarity about board support for pursuing this and its relative priority is needed.

Not recommended for further pursuit (alternatives suggested)

These topics take significant effort and staff are concerned that the real benefit to the community will not exceed that effort. For each item, staff need information about what the board wants to accomplish with the project. We ask that in hopes of identifying alternatives to reach the desired outcome. As state previously, if the board wants these projects pursued, staff stand ready to try.

1) **Investigate options to take commissioner meetings to neighborhoods on some sort of basis (Clerk/Communications).**
   □ Response: Some basic research indicates implementing this project would take a significant amount of effort to accomplish. Most neighborhoods do not have public buildings where meetings could be held. Locations would have to be handicap accessible, have reliable internet if meetings are to be broadcast, and may have rental costs. The readily identified locations include Durham Tech, Orange County Library, Dorothy Johnson Community Center. Each location has its own challenges for set up and broadcast. Changing locations then requires transport, set up, and break down of seating, tables, recording and broadcast equipment. By changing locations, the public will be confused as to where the meetings will be held. We ran into this when meetings were shifted to the Whitted Building and later to the annex.
      • Question: What does the board wish to accomplish? Are there other alternatives that meet the same objective?

2) **Investigate establishing a youth council to engage our younger residents (Public Space).**
   □ Response: The Parks and Recreation Board looked into this concept when its membership was expanded to have age-specific members. That option was pursued rather than the separate Youth Council model. There is not staff capacity to establish another volunteer board at this time. Further, GARE training is indicating standing boards are not the best method of equitable engagement.
      • Alternative suggestions: Staff is willing to look into this further but suggests youth summit or youth survey as options that might be more attainable in the short term.

3) **Noise ordinance related to nuisance noises & reducing noise pollution (Legal).**
   □ Response: Noise enforcement is a time intensive enterprise and highly subjective. Short of designating specific staff to focus on this as an on-going responsibility, ordinance work is unlikely to be effective. Further, complaints about lack of enforcement will accompany anything less than robust and routine enforcement.
   - Question: What does the board wish to accomplish? Are there other alternatives that meet the same objective?

4) **Creating a searchable database of emails that are sent inbound to all Commissioners via our website (IT).**
   □ Response: This initial concern is that inbound messages may contain information that is confidential. This practice is not immediately recommended by State Archives staff, so additional discussion and refinement is needed. This could lead to the need for emails to be redacted which could be very time consuming. IT continues to research the mechanics involved while the policy is also discussed.
   - Question: What does the board wish to accomplish? Can it be accomplished in another way?

5) **Investigate participatory budgeting (Budget).**
   □ Response: Budget staff provided a report on participatory budgeting during the board's December 2020 meeting. This method is very staff intensive, and the town has very limited flexibility in funding from year to year. The budget staff has very limited capacity to take on this program.
   - The town board initially expressed an interest in exploring participatory budgeting in October 2020. Budget staff researched participatory budgeting and met with staff who manage these efforts in other jurisdictions and then presented these key findings:
     (1) Staff Investment – Regardless of whether your organization is investing $25,000 or $2.5 million, a successful program requires significant staff investment. For instance, the City of Durham has 2 full-time employees dedicated to their participatory budgeting efforts. Budget staff are involved throughout the entire process, from initial marketing to project implementation and process evaluation.
     (2) Funds – Organizations vary in terms of how much funding is provided to participatory budgeting. Funds are needed not just in terms of the participatory budgeting funds to be allocated, but also the cost to administer the program. Some jurisdictions choose to include additional expenses, with the City of Durham including funds to provide childcare for their events, need-based stipends for their volunteers, and for parking and bus passes.
     (3) Engagement – Engagement needs to happen throughout the process and it's important to meet the community where they are. For example, during the voting phase, the City of Durham had voting sites at bus stations, health & human services facilities, and public schools.
   - One of the biggest challenges we face in the budget division is related to staff capacity. A couple examples that illustrate our limited capacity include being delayed on completing a budget document and struggling to find time to work on the strategic plan. We've also been continuing to learn the new budget software system. Part of the challenge is our work has gotten more complex and varied over the years, with more budget involvement in capital financings, audit prep, ARPA funding, enterprise-wide projects, etc. While we have added a budget analyst position this fiscal year, the Administrative Services Director is currently responsible for both her former budget duties as well as the new duties that have come with the reorganization. Once the budget analyst is fully onboarded, the administrative services director will be less involved in some of the day-to-day aspects of budget and will transition fully to the director role. Thus, there hasn't been much added in terms of budget capacity.
   - Given our limited capacity, staff strongly recommends that the town not pursue participatory budgeting. We are a small organization and unfortunately, it's not possible to scale down participatory budgeting to match our size. Pursuing this effort would further stretch current staff and severely hamper our ability to meet our current workload unless additional staffing is added.