

Cashiers Area Community Planning Council
Special Meeting Minutes
February 21, 2022
5:00 p.m.
The Village Green, Commons Hall

Members	Present	Absent	Members	Present	Absent	Members	Present	Absent
Daniel Fletcher		X	Sonia Morales		X	Dr. Douglas Homolka		X
David Bond	X		Carole Stork		X	Michael Cox	X	
Glenn Ubertino		X						

Staff Present

Michael Poston- Planning Director
 John Jeleniewski- Senior Planner
 Anna Harkins- Planner I
 Heather Baker- County Attorney
 Allison Kelley- Administrative Assistant III

Others Present

Stephanie Edwards, Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce
 Ed McMahon, Panel Chair
 Lisa Rother, Panel Member
 Johnathan Bartlett, Panel Member
 Meredith Byer, Panel Member
 Tom Murphy, Panel Member
 Ralph L. Núñez, Panel Member
 Rick Reinhard, Panel Member
 Ross Tilghman, Panel Member

Call to Order

Chairman Michael Cox called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m. and a quorum was not present.

Special Meeting

a) Urban Land Institute (ULI) Public Introduction

Stephanie Edwards stated on behalf of the Cashiers Area Chamber Board of Directors they welcome the ULI Special Advisory Services Panel in Cashiers and they are streaming live from the Village Green. This community initiative is sponsored by the Cashiers Area Chamber with the participating partners of Jackson County with a commitment by the Cashiers Area Community Planning Council, and with funding from the Jackson County Tourism Development Authority, and more than 200 community stewards and stakeholders. The chairman of the panel will introduce the process which is inclusive, expert, and unbiased. Ms. Edwards stated on the chairs provided there are index cards in the interest of Covid protocols and if you have questions about the process, please jot it down and then just pass them to the outside of the aisles. If the community has commentary about the process other than questions or about ULI's visit here, she encouraged them to please share that input on the cashiersareachamber.com website at

the link that will go directly to the panel and is private confidential input that should be sent prior to their deliberations.

Ed McMahon stated he was a senior resident fellow at the Urban Land Institute in Washington, DC. The Urban Land Institute (ULI) is an international nonprofit research and education organization focused on promoting best practices in land use and development. ULI has been around since 1936, has 45,000 members, and has offices in Charlotte and Raleigh in North Carolina. Our members are made up of everyone involved in land use for real estate from architects, landscape architects, planners, developers, financiers, environmental people, etc. The panel process which we are a part of started more than 50 years ago and we have conducted 700 kind of panels that we are going to be involved in here. The panel process is designed to provide inclusive and unbiased recommendations on the questions posed to us by the sponsors. In this case, it is the Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce and the County. Each of our panelists was chosen specifically because of their expertise, experience, and talents and those panelists are not being paid and are volunteers. The process is a process we have found tried and true over many years dealing with many subjects involving everything from land use and environmental protection to economic development, and so on and so forth. Before the panel got here, we all received a Briefing Book that was put together by the Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce and the County that has the basic information about the area, County, demographics, population, and what some of the issues are. One of the big issues was growth and change as this is an area that is growing very rapidly. The question for those in the community and for us as a panel is not whether Cashiers will grow and change, because it will, the real question is how and we hope to help answer that question. The panel met last night and had a wonderful dinner here in town with a number of community leaders who have talked to us about their issues and concerns. This morning, the panel had an hour and a half briefing by the sponsors, giving us an oral overview of what we are about to see and went on a two-hour drive around the community and also got out and walked to different places. The panel will be interviewing 120 people tomorrow, starting at 8:00 a.m. and ending at 5:00 p.m. Each of these interviews are confidential, we will never attribute anything that any individual says to that person, we will not quote them in our in our reports or in our presentation, etc. These interviews give us a chance to get sort of candid and unbiased information about what people love about this community, what they are concerned about, and what they would like to see in the future. The truth is that you can grow by choice or you can grow by change, you can grow by default or you can grow by design. The best way to predict the future, as Abraham Lincoln once said is to create it yourself and that is what we hope to do is to help you create the future that you want. After we do all the interviews tomorrow, the panelists will spend the next two days on Wednesday and Thursday, locked in a small room over at the Cashiers Hotel discussing what we have heard, and what advice we might offer to you to try to implement some of those things. The panel will make a public presentation on Friday morning, based on what we have learned and what we would recommend and then we will provide a written report to the community.

Mr. McMahon stated he was a lawyer and a community planner, but has spent most of his career involved in land conservation. He was involved with the purchasing protection of about 5 million acres of land in every state he has stayed, including very important properties here in the state of North Carolina. He is the chairman of the board for the National Main Street Center, which is the umbrella organization for all of the state main street programs. He has been working with the National Park Service on gateway communities for about 30 years, which are communities outside of national parks and other public lands like Bar Harbor, Maine or Springdale, Utah, the gateway to the Zion National Park, and Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, etc. In addition, he stated we have worked

National Park, and Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, etc. In addition, he stated we have worked with lots of resort mountain communities around the country and that is why he was invited to participate.

Panel member Lisa Rother stated she lives outside of Washington, DC and for the last decade and a half she was executive director of ULI Washington, which is the local district council and a chapter of ULI. She stated we had 2500 members in the region around DC and we did a lot of leadership training and other kinds of training for all the people that are a part of ULI. Prior to that, Ms. Rother was a community planner in a large County outside of DC and spent almost two decades as a planner doing everything from zoning, planning, variances, special exceptions, and other kinds of processes in the communities. Currently, she serves as the chair of the board of a nonprofit affordable housing organization outside of DC that is 2200 units and they are looking to grow.

Panel member Bob Murphy stated he was the former mayor of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania for 12 years. Pittsburgh is made up of 90 neighborhoods and all of those neighborhoods have all the same issues, some just did not want to change and want to stay the way they are, and others were worried about gentrification. Most cities are not just the big city, but they are made up of a lot of little villages and how that is managed becomes a really critical part whether that city works or not, and you are facing some of the same challenges of some of those neighborhoods. His interest and why he is excited about being here goes back 52 years, as his wife and he were in the Peace Corps and were assigned to work in a very rural community in Paraguay and what they learned there was the most enduring lesson. In addition, when he became mayor it was that the most powerful person town was not the person with all the guns, or all the money it was the person who spoke all the languages. When they came back to America, they realized that their community was exactly the same, it was divided by race, class, ethnic origin, etc. When they came to realize the most powerful person or people are translators as they are the people that were able to articulate a vision to help people see a place for themselves. His challenge in Pittsburgh, when they were changing as a city, going from a heavy manufacturing city to a technology state of mind was to try to translate to the people a place for them in a city that was going to change. He stated Cashiers is facing that same challenge, and you need to figure out who your translators are so you can articulate a vision for Cashiers that makes sense to people so your community is in a much better place. He stated he came back with a completely changed focus as he was in biology and chemistry, and got a degree in planning in urban studies and ran a neighborhood development group in a neighborhood in Pittsburgh and fell in love with what it means to build a community.

Panel member Ralph Núñez stated he was a landscape architect and was originally born and raised in central Pennsylvania in small little town called Mountain Village. He stated he is the guy that does the drawings and does the visual communications as far as what that vision is to look like and what our plans are. The vision will come from the conversations tomorrow from the interviews as he will listen and see what are the community's interest and goals. He then will have to figure out with the panel team, how they will put this together to make it the community's recommendations as they are a part of the design and it is not just their design it is from what they have heard from the community.

Panel member Jonathan Bartlett stated he was with Jacobs Engineering and they are headquartered in Dallas. He stated one of the smartest decisions he has ever made in his life was leaving Boston, Massachusetts to get a master's degree at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, where he studied real estate. His role on this panel and in his career is a real estate strategy consultant and he works with cities and corporations around the world looking at real estate strategies, real estate market analysis, and

demographic analysis. He is currently serving as the Director of Economic Development for a city just outside of Atlanta, and he teaches at Emory University.

Panel member Rick Reinhard stated he lived in the greater Washington area now and grew up in the Finger Lakes area of upstate New York. He spent the better part of 30 years working on city center management and city center redevelopment in Richmond, Buffalo, Atlanta, Derry, Northern Ireland, and then for the last 15 years he has been in Washington, DC. About six years ago, he left that world and worked for the United Methodist Church, first in Washington DC at its social justice agency, and then had a two-year assignment in New Jersey. The main part of his job there was to try to figure out how to redevelop and reuse underutilized and closed churches. He stated America is going to be looking at somewhere between 50 and 100,000 closed houses of worship over the next 5 or 10 years. In addition, he stated it is very important for communities to figure out what to do about that, and how to use them.

Panel member Ross Tilghman stated he is a professional transportation planner and does private consulting practice in Seattle and most of his work is in the Seattle area and elsewhere around the country. He focuses on projects that are often involving environmentally, historically or culturally sensitive sites. He also has experience being a business improvement district director with one of the original three main street communities, Galesburg, Illinois. This is his 25th ULI panel and in Seattle he also served five years on the Seattle Design Commission, as chair effigy for excellence in urban design, which combined all of the arts for design architecture, site layout, landscape, transportation. In addition, he spent a dozen years working as a volunteer with the Seattle Parks and Recreation.

Panel member Meredith Byer stated she was from the Washington DC area from the Maryland side. She works for a multidisciplinary company called Dewberry, which does civil engineering, land planning, landscape architecture, etc. Her role is the director of planning for their Maryland offices, and they have four offices in Maryland, which range from very urban design to more suburban residential. In addition, she stated they work on developing other things that are being put in ground for solar appeals for the ground community solar program. Her background is how products get through and meet all the requirements.

The panel opened for questions from the public.

Question: “Can you explain what the final deliverable will be?”

Answer: The first deliverable will be an oral presentation with a PowerPoint of what our recommendations are and we will discuss why we are making those recommendations. Those recommendations will be followed up within a few weeks, with a detailed written report that goes into much greater detail about the things that we have recommended, and why we recommend it and so forth. The beauty of this process really is that none of us has a particular bias one way or the other about what should or shouldn't happen here. Some of the recommendations they may recommend maybe things they have already heard or talked about and others maybe new things you have never thought about or heard about. One of the things we have learned as travelers is we are all traveling all the time to other parts of the country, and everybody says, “my community is different” and that's true in certain ways. However, there is also a similarity between the issues faced in many communities, particularly rapidly growing communities like Cashiers around the country. We hope to offer some fresh ideas, as well as maybe some of the things you have already talked about. The deliverables will be both an oral report and a detailed written report that is typically 30 to 60 pages of recommendations and it is up to the community to decide what to do with those recommendations.

-Ed McMahan

Question: “How were the people selected for the interviews?”

Answer: *The interviews were not chosen by us, but by the Chamber and the County and they try to represent the full range of interested groups in the community. We have already met, for example, earlier today with the County planner and with the District Engineer for the DOT. We are meeting with probably one of the largest groups we have ever interviewed as part of the panel process of 120 people from all sections.*

-Ed McMahon

The interviewees are a selection of people that either volunteer, they were nominated or they were specifically recruited so that we have a wide range of socio-demographic criteria. We wanted to make sure that we did get that full representation across the community and it ranges from how long have you lived here, if you're here full time or part time, where you live, gender, age, ethnicity, local affiliations, occupation, etc. We were very deliberate to ensure that we got a full cross community representation and that includes a few commuters so that we understand why they don't live here as affordable and housing diversity is a huge issue for us. They have had more than 200 people asked to be interviewed and they have tried very hard to accommodate the request and encourage the community to take advantage of the opportunity of the tool on the website to submit their commentary directly to the panel.

-Stephanie Edwards

Question: “Do you stay involved with the community after presenting the recommendations to see whether those recommendations have been implemented?”

Answer: *Yes, we do and a lot of communities have done exactly what we recommend, others have done some of what we recommend, and a few have not done any of what we have recommended. He was involved in a series of panels down in Colorado, funded by the Colorado Health Foundation around the issue of building healthy places and one of the communities there has done every single thing that we've recommended, and sort of went even beyond that. Another one did 90% of what we recommended, and the third one did approximately 50% of what we recommended, so it really varies from place to place. We do follow up on what has happened because implementation is critical.*

-Ed McMahon

Question: “How often do you have experience with unincorporated communities like this and is that going to have any influence on the overall process?”

Answer: *Yes, we have experience with unincorporated communities and that does affect our recommendations because you do not have the all the tools in the toolkit that incorporated communities oftentimes have. However, that does not mean that there are not a lot of things you can do, for example this building was built by volunteers who contributed to the creation of this building. In addition, we have found that the answers are not all in regulations as we may recommend things like partnerships, incentives, voluntary initiatives, guidelines, etc. The most critical thing is figuring out what you want to be and what is the future because the future is coming and change is coming whether you like it or not. For example, the economy, demographics, technology, consumer attitudes, travel and tourism, healthcare, and the weather is changing. There are two kinds of change in the world today planned change and unplanned change, and in his experience unplanned changes is what has destroyed what people love about the place they live. He stated he was a young lieutenant in Vietnam War, had been to Field Artillery School and jungle warfare training as was getting ready to go to a small firebase in the central Highlands. One week before leave, he received a call from the*

Pentagon and they asked if he had any interest in being reassigned to Europe. He said yes and he was one of the really lucky few and was sent to Heidelberg, West Germany, which is the headquarters of the US military in Europe, and one of the most beautiful small cities on the planet Earth. He was assigned to as an aid to the US General, and then spent the next two years of his life traveling all over Europe and that experience completely changed his life. He flew home to where he grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, got out of the airplane and for the first time ever he saw the American landscape with a completely different set of eyes, because to travel is to learn. That is what we try to do at ULI is to learn what works and what does not work. Because there is more than one way to do something we try to show people how you can actually make more money by developing things in a more environmentally sensitive way.

-Ed McMahan

Question: “Will you make the assumption that we are in the same governmental structure or can you recommend a structure for Incorporated?”

Answer: *We could and we have not come to any conclusions about that, but we are open to all kinds of suggestions and recommendations. What is a part of this is what is realistic, feasible, etc. We have recommended incorporation in other places before and that is not something that's off the table necessarily.*

-Ed McMahan

When places incorporated in some ways, the leadership, for better or for worse is more clear. He wanted to compliment the community as this building and the ramble is community spirit as you have all done that off ad hoc and that's a great story. However, there's a downside to it, which is that people love it and he was here Sunday afternoon, and your park was filled with kids playing and everything. People love it to death and they might come from Highlands and other places to come here and at some point, somebody needs to think about how you manage all of that and not just let it happen and that's what he believes that is where we are. In addition, whether it's unincorporated or incorporation, the issue is really is the leadership of who is going to bring this vision together. He believes that is what we are trying to figure out so you do not lose that wonderful sense of community that you already have.

-Bob Murphy

Question: “We are distinct from our neighboring community of Highlands but in the context of our community, we share so many people, services, has the panel had a chance to visit Highlands?”

Answer:

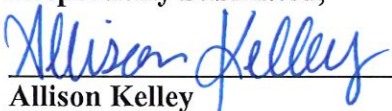
We have not been to Highlands yet, some of us have been to Highlands and Cashiers before but we will be going to Highlands tomorrow.


-Ed McMahan

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:42 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,


Allison Kelley
Administrative Assistant


Michael Cox
Cashiers Planning Council Chairman