

MEETING SUMMARY | Lakes Subcommittee Committee Meeting 1

November 2, 2018

The following is a summary of the first meeting of the Lakes Subcommittee for Tuscaloosa's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code Update process. Attached to this summary are the meeting attendance sheet, agenda, and additional documents.

Process Overview

During the process overview, the subcommittee job description was reviewed alongside the intent of the subcommittee. Brock Corder was selected to serve as the subcommittee's representative at Steering Committee meetings.

Group Discussion

During the group discussion regarding Lakes 101, subcommittee members were able to ask questions from the professional staff and provide comments.

1. How much revenue does the lake generate for the city and what types of revenues are generated?
2. A statistic should be added to the informational material that the Lakes provide drinking water to 200,000 people each day (not just City residents) – we should also educate people that it's our drinking water source.
3. The full scale of the fish consumption advisory should be captured in the document.
4. Boat launches on the lake become entry points for invasive species into our lakes – may want to consider ways to avoid invasion (hot water washes, etc.).
5. McWrights Ferry Road will be a game changer for this area in terms of development.

In the discussions on the focused categories of private property, public property, and recreation and tourism, the group identified both desired outcomes and critical information they need in order to make decisions. The following comments, questions, and concerns arose during the discussion.

Private Property Considerations:

1. Desired Outcomes:

- a. Once areas for development are identified, the city will have to fully assess infrastructure needs – what do we have, what do we need, and how long will it take to achieve it?
- b. Protect the lakes – we need multiple sources of feedback to know what kind of development is needed and desired on the lakes
- c. We need flexible development standards that allow for a range of lot sizes and types of development. “One size fits all” will not work; To say we only want one type of development would be narrow-minded.
- d. Commercial uses would be wonderful – where would they locate?
- e. Would like to see a recommendation for a minimum shore width for lot sizes.
- f. How do you deal with steep slopes in a flexible way? Parts of the lake are extremely steep while others are flat.
- g. Dock sizes may need be based on the amount of shoreline owned. Dock and boat house height may need to be based on the slope of the lot.
 - i. Should we have areas of the lakes where docks should be built parallel to the shore instead of perpendicular? Narrow channels should not be blocked by piers.
 - ii. Consider prohibiting docks/piers on lots under a certain width.
 - iii. Concept of “duplex docks” to better plan use of shoreline.
- h. Trees – should we consider the quality of trees that are cut and/or re-planted?

Road Widths – consider narrow roads, as they force people to drive slower, use less asphalt, and clear fewer trees. This may not be appropriate everywhere, but maybe in certain areas.
- i. Tuscaloosa puts a lot of resources and thought into our historic districts. Could we have a commission that hears and deals only with developments on the lake?
 - i. OCA noted that there is state-enabling legislation that allows the historic commission to exist. Without such legislation for the lake, the body might not have “teeth” behind it

2. Critical Information:

- a. Plott Treatment Plant – capacity available?
- b. What have other cities done to address these challenges?
- c. Research former requirement for lake lot widths in City code that was removed before Maison du Lac.
- d. Is there a strategic plan in place for growth?
- e. What are best practices for dock sizes, dock orientation, and structure heights?
 - i. Bring imagery from other places

City side of the Acquisition line (Lake Tuscaloosa):

1. Desired Outcomes:
 - a. How do you require/enforce proper maintenance of seawalls? In what areas should they be used? What design standards should be in place?
2. Critical Information:
 - a. How difficult is it to lower the water table so that properties can be maintained?

Recreation and Tourism Opportunities and Challenges:

1. Desired Outcomes:
 - a. Consider redirecting recreation activities to Harris and Nicol to relieve the burden on Tuscaloosa
 - b. Man-made water skiing system that uses a pulley/track (no boat needed)
 - c. Lake Nicol has no signage related to conditions for swimming, boating, etc. Signage needs to be posted if there are conditions for use.
 - d. Need to educate people about Harris and Nicol.
 - e. Would like to see a camping area/areas – would also like to develop trail maps if there are trails around the lakes that currently exist.
 - f. There is very little access to the Lakes if you don't have a boat.
2. Critical Information:
 - a. Consider a non-profit to collect donations to manage lakes to the request for money is not coming from the government.

Next Steps

The subcommittee decided to meet again for two hours in early February, allowing time to talk to subject matter experts and for staff to complete various analyses. The group wants to discuss recreation, infrastructure, watershed protection (reviewing all tributaries feeding into lakes with mapping), and tour the lake by road or water. The group decided to take one topic at a time instead of covering multiple topics at each meeting. The next meeting will discuss infrastructure, asking water and sewer personnel to talk about the infrastructure needs around the lake. For future meetings, the group recommended having Tuscaloosa Sports and Tourism present to speak about marketing the lakes for tourism and recreation, as well as having a watershed expert present when that topic is discussed.