

MEETING SUMMARY | Lakes Subcommittee Committee Meeting 2

February 6, 2019

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

Importance of Our Lakes from a Utility Perspective

Mr. Barton gave a history of the lakes, including construction points and different federal regulations (formation of EPA and Clean Water Act). Adding to the history, he noted that, while we do have a river, we chose to build lakes instead of getting water from the river. If you build a reservoir, capacity is the biggest gain – dampens the effect of dry weather/drought.

Mr. Barton briefed the group on the watershed surrounding Lake Tuscaloosa, which extends outside Tuscaloosa County to the north. Lake Tuscaloosa itself and the immediate area is only 1/3 of the watershed. The staff team discussed water quality concerns – the three primary being erosion (particularly slopes), runoff, and septic systems. Another large item of concern: blue-green algae contamination – it is difficult to treat, and runoff from fertilizers contributes to it. Residential development along Lake Tuscaloosa and the desire for manicured lawns contributes to fertilizer runoff.

Mr. Barton discussed water treatment and said we are in good shape from a water supply perspective – we would run out of the ability to treat before we run out of supply. The 2008 recession lowered the demand for water. The tornado also had an effect – older, less efficient fixtures were destroyed and replaced with more efficient fixtures when rebuilt.

Challenges were outlined by Mr. Barton: aging infrastructure; municipal code (updates needed – example shown was regarding irrigation pumps); potential for water quality degradation sedimentation; source water protection; and funding.

Private Assets on Lake Tuscaloosa

Mr. Milligan provided an overview of the Lakes Division. Annual lake costs: \$850,000; annual lake revenues generated: \$100,000. He briefly mentioned the

private docks, ramps, and seawalls on Lake Tuscaloosa. These will be discussed in depth at a future meeting.

Recreation Infrastructure

Mr. Milligan discussed Harris Lake and Lake Nicol, including ownership of the property surrounding the Lake.

Public recreation infrastructure includes landings, restrooms, etc. Mr. Reynolds asked if the City had ever thought of a boat permit/user fee – staff can commit to looking into that further for a future meeting about recreation.

Water/Sewer Service Areas/Assets

Mr. Milligan discussed the water and sewer service areas. Carrols Creek provides water service on the north end. South and west, the City provides water. Northport's water service area does not touch the Lake.

Water/Sewer Infrastructure

Mr. Rumsey asked if we would expand sewer on the east side of the Lake. The study was done, but nothing further. Many of the sewer lines on the west side of the lake are private lines, where the east side of the lake has public lines.

Group Discussion

Mr. Reynolds noted that the Planning Commission has started requiring specific requirements to not remove trees of a certain caliper. Clear cutting is problematic an concerning. He wants to strongly encourage the City to implement stricter standards for clear-cutting. Mr. Reynolds also noted the trend of utilizing ribbon curb instead of curb and gutter in subdivisions around the lake. Require the installation of catch basins, possibly, instead of allowing the silt to run into the Lake.

Mr. Rumsey said that he thinks the 300' requirement of septic tanks in the subdivision regulations has accomplished its goals. He said that the city will miss an opportunity if a sewer line isn't extended on the left side of the Lake. He did acknowledge that he has property on the left side of the Lake.

Mr. Reynolds pointed out that Lake Tuscaloosa is one of the unrecognized gems in the state – when McWrights Ferry is completed it will allow you to get from Birmingham to Tuscaloosa in 50 minutes. Because it is a reservoir, the water level does not change. Mr. Reynolds wondered how many second homes or non-resident

owner homes exist along the Lake. Mr. Reynolds said we need to be proactive and recognize the opportunities.

Mr. Rumsey said that the proposal from Elevate Tuscaloosa to create recreation opportunities in Lake Nicol and Harris Lake needs to happen regardless.

Ms. Stephenson asked if there were fines for clear-cutting. Mr. Woodson explained the regulations and that it was only below the acquisition line. Mr. Williams asked if there would be a way to regulate it since they were getting water from the City.

Ms. Crites said that there could be some visual items from other lakes that could be shown at the next meeting, in addition to some previous discussion items between the Planning Commission and staff (A-18-0366).

Ms. Crites pointed out that a sewer extension plan was to be part of Framework. She asked Mr. Milligan what it would cost to run a sewer line to the west. Mr. Milligan said that there was a study \$10-15 years ago. At the time, naturally, the cost was lower; now it's likely \$10-12 million. The City would install the main line.

Mr. Brooke asked if the City's point source water plan took protections into account. He pointed out that the Lake was designed to be drinking water. Mr. Reynolds said that residential development was likely, otherwise the City would have bought all the land around Lake Tuscaloosa. He said that protection could be done through lot sizes and setbacks. Mr. Brook noted that the long-term idea of protecting lakes is often missed by cities. He believes that there can be both growth and protection.

Mr. Reynolds said he would rather see a minimum lot width, requiring a wider lot with less density on the shoreline and have satellite disposal lots further away. Mr. Williams said that development makes sense as long as it is responsible.

Mr. Rumsey used Edgewater as an example of sanitary disposal lots. City staff went through the preliminary plats for both Rising Tide and Edgewater, which were heard in January 2018 by the Planning Commission.

Next Steps

The subcommittee decided to meet again for two hours in the middle of March, after Spring Break. The group asked to hear from Al Cabaniss, a representative from McGiffert and Associates, and a representative from TTL, along with Hansel King to discuss development along the Lake. Ms. Stephenson asked to hear more about boat dock regulations and how they are to be built, as well as sea walls. Mr. Reynolds asked to review some of the proposed changes from the Planning Commission's 2018 discussions about development on the Lake.