

SEARCH

[Home](#)

# Joint Meeting on Arts and Transit

ARTICLE | APRIL 21, 2011 - 5:20PM | BY VIVIENNE CHEN



Photo by Vivienne Chen

Princeton’s Borough Council and Township Committee plan to introduce the new zoning ordinance for Princeton University’s Arts and Transit project on May 3, with a final decision possible sometime in June. This was decided at a joint Borough-Township meeting last evening,

although no formal action was taken. The meeting also sought to clarify questions from concerned residents and debate the process by which zoning ordinances and negotiation committees would be presented and approved.

The Arts and Transit controversy began as the result of a creative and performing arts initiative from University President Shirley M. Tilghman in 2006. The hotly debated proposal called for an arts neighborhood that would require moving the “Dinky” station 460 feet away from the center of town.

Over the course of five years, the University faced opposition from local residents, who objected to the Dinky’s relocation or potential termination. Last February, the University abandoned its original \$300 million proposal and has since been working with the borough and township on creating a new proposal.

“I think that the whole arts center complex would be built by now if the University hadn’t insisted on moving the terminus of the Dinky,” said Alain

Kornhauser, Director of the Transportation Program in Princeton, at yesterday's meeting. "I think it's really bad public policy to move the terminus of a transportation system farther away from the center of demand."

Other concerns raised included questions about how much the townspeople would benefit from the arts district, and about the legitimacy of the traffic study paid for by the University.

University Vice-President Bob Durkee came forward to address some of the concerns raised. Durkee claimed that the University asked for a public review by New Jersey Transit, who confirmed that the University had the right to make decisions on the Dinky's location, and that the traffic study was conducted by independent consultants from the planning board, not the University.

Durkee also insisted that they would develop that area even if the arts neighborhood would have to be placed elsewhere.

"The question that is not on the table is: 'Will the University expand for the arts?'" said Durkee. "We will; we can do it in places that are not in this location."

"'Will we develop our lands in this part of the community?'" Durkee continued. "We can do that within the existing zoning. What we can't do within existing zoning is develop this area for the arts. That's the question we've been putting up."

The University previously proposed that the arts neighborhood would benefit the local community by providing performance spaces, restaurants, and cafes that would boost the Princeton economy. Skeptical residents wondered whether the space would really be as accessible as the university claimed.

Princeton alumnus and secretary of the Princeton Community Democratic Organization Peter Wolanin suggested that the arts center be located in the old chemistry building near the current arts building on Nassau Street, which he felt would be a more centrally located area.

"I see the proposed move as really detrimental to public transit," Wolanin said. "As an alumnus, I generally think the University's behavior in this matter has been unfortunate."

The meeting also included the approval of two budget requests by Princeton's volunteer fire department and the Princeton Public Library respectively. The Fire Department budget would expand their previous year's request by

\$38,114, which would be spent for maintenance and repair on their vehicles. The library's proposal would constitute a \$104,188 increase that would allow them to maintain current operation without raising contributions or decreasing library hours. Both were approved unanimously.

***About the Author »***

---



***Vivienne Chen***

Vivienne Chen is a student at Princeton University majoring in English. She recently moved to Princeton from Pleasanton, California.

**RELATED TERMS:** Development arts and transit zoning Borough Township University Princeton University Alain Kornhauser Bob Durkee director Director of the Transportation Program New Jersey Transit president Princeton Branch Princeton University Princeton University Princeton, New Jersey Shirley M. Tilghman

***Google Videos Like This »***

---