

**LYNCHBURG CITY COUNCIL
PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING HIGHLIGHTS
Tuesday, April 12, 2016
9:00 a.m.**

Members: Council Member Turner Perrow, Chair, Council Member Ceasar Johnson, Council Member Joan Foster, Mayor Michael Gillette, ex-officio

Staff Present: Kimball Payne, Bonnie Svrcek, Lee Newland, Gaynelle Hart, Kent White, Tom Martin, Rachel Frischeisen, Maggie Cossman, Tim Mitchell, Anna Bentson, Jim Talian, Angie Shepard, Michelle White

Others Present: Eames Powers, Spring Hill Cemetery Association and Heather Kennedy, Lynch's Landing

Contract Awards: no contract awards for this month.

Update on Priority Projects:

Mr. Newland updated PDC on priority projects:

- Timberlake/Logan's Lane Intersection- is back before PDC today with a revised layout.
- Midtown Connector- paving to begin again this spring.
- Greenview Drive Phase 2- starting construction this month, some traffic signs are up.
- Kemper Street Bridge/Interchange- ongoing and are currently a little ahead of schedule.
- One Way Pairs @ 501/221- the right-of-way vacation/zoning will be going to council soon.
- Memorial-Park-Lakeside Intersection- is under construction.
- Odd Fellows Road- P3- is under construction.
- Juvenile Services Group Home- will be finishing shortly.
- Downtown Streetscapes- construction starts this month with the waterline project.
- LU Intramural Field Road- Phase 1- is underway.
- LU Intramural Field Road- Phase 2- will be out to bid shortly.

Council Member Perrow inquired as to the Juvenile Services Group Home completed possibly being this month. Ms. Hart expressed an inspection would most likely be done July or August and that an official ribbon cutting would be held in response to Council Member Foster's inquiry as to the possibility of a ceremony.

General Business:

1. ***Rives Street Vacation*** — *Spring Hill Cemetery Association is petitioning to vacate a portion of the right-of-way known as Rives Street, between James Street and Gordon Street. The petitioner is requesting the right-of-way vacation so that the portion of the road separating two large properties can be fenced off, thus creating one contiguous area for the cemetery. The total area of the proposed vacation is approximately four hundred ninety-six thousandths (0.496) of an acre. The City's Transportation Engineer has reviewed the traffic study and concluded that traffic safety and congestion will not be adversely impacted. In addition, if this portion of Rives Street is vacated, Gordon Street will be converted to two-way traffic to accommodate the change.*

Ms. Frischeisen summarized that Spring Hill Cemetery Association, the owner of 3000 Fort Avenue and 1550 James Street, is petitioning to vacate a portion of the right-of-way known as Rives Street, between

James Street and Gordon Street. The purpose of the request is so that the cemetery can create a safe environment for cemetery staff and visitors by fencing off the portion of Rives Street, so they can pass freely between the two sections of cemetery. The total area proposed for vacation is .496 acres.

This item came before PDC in November of 2015. Since the last PDC meeting and at the committee's suggestion, the FLUM (Future Land Use Map) has been amended from low/medium density residential to institutional to appropriately reflect the cemetery's intent to expand. The R3 zoning still requires a conditional use permit to expand the cemetery. At the meeting last November, the committee also requested more study on the petition, specifically with regards to traffic impact. Spring Hill Cemetery commissioned a traffic study by Bill Wuensch, which is in the packet and found that impact would be minimal and that surrounding streets have the capacity to absorb the anticipated shift in traffic without additional congestion or safety concerns. The traffic engineer agreed with the results of the study and is also here to answer any questions about traffic impact. Based on the results, staff recommends approval of the petition. Gordon Street will still be converted to two way traffic if the petition is approved. Eames Powers with Spring Hill Cemetery Association joined Ms. Frischeisen before the committee.

Council Member Foster expressed her appreciation to Mr. Powers for doing their homework on this project, taking the time to meet with each Council member and providing a guided tour at the cemetery. Mr. Powers expressed his gratitude for Council members taking time to come out and meet with him. Council Member Johnson learned a lot from his meeting at the cemetery, appreciates the Spring Hill Cemetery for making it more inclusive, working with the community and he sees that the community seeks out Spring Hill for their support in that area and he supports this project and noted the quality of the rental properties. Mayor Gillette agreed this right-of-way vacation makes sense. He noted the quality of the properties in the area managed by Spring Hill Cemetery and the level of care and quality provided. The ability to alter one of the streets does not have a negative impact and any reservations he had have been overcome. Council Member Perrow stated that Spring Hill Cemetery has done what was asked by PDC.

Council Member Perrow recommended forwarding this item to full council with PDC's approval.

2. Logan's Lane Ramp Solution —*A traffic analysis of the roundabout configuration for the Timberlake-Logan's Lane-Expressway off-ramp has been performed by AECOM. Per the analysis a standard size roundabout is the preferred alternative as it provides superior traffic flow and safety compared to an all-way stop alternative. An all-way stop condition at the intersection of the off ramp, Logan's Lane at the bank entrance is more economical to construct than the roundabout configuration. However, the all-way stop produces longer delays and poses a greater safety risk as traffic unfamiliar with the intersection could travel the wrong way onto the off ramp. VDOT has reviewed the proposed roundabout alternative. The AECOM study addresses VDOT's concerns regarding queue lengths.*

Ms. Cossman explained that a number of questions arose from the last PDC meeting regarding this project: reducing asphalt, traffic backup on 501, and if the proposed roundabout had to be that radius. AECOM did a study and the standard roundabout is the best option from a traffic and safety standpoint. The mini roundabout is not the best application, more for an urban area. This allows for trucks to move over the radius. A standard roundabout is a better application with no backup. There are concerns with a four way stop that people may go back on to the expressway. Ms. Cossman recommended to PDC to proceed with the roundabout as designed, which is the smallest radius per AASHTO standards. VDOT had looked at the project/design and had no major comments and noted to make sure traffic is not backed up.

Council Member Johnson asked if there were any additional costs to do an extra piece of the study. Ms. Cossman explained that this study was already a part of costs worked into a study analysis with AECOM, and the cost was \$10,000. Council Member Foster noted the \$10,000 spent actually saves several million in the long run. Mayor Gillette inquired as to how we come to the conclusion there will be no backup and are assured this will relieve traffic on Timberlake, if this project is being phased in the right order and if this is contingent on Schewels changing their entrance. Ms. Cossman explained the Interchange Modification Report was done by AECOM with the roundabout data configuration based on future growth and that the discussion has not been had yet with Schewels on changing their entrance. Mayor Gillette shared concerns about the entrance, and with this design, the back entrance to Schewels, individuals may use the parking lot as a street. This design creates access but may have caused a secondary problem. Ms. Cossman indicated this design relieves traffic on Timberlake and combines two signals in to one and that the roundabout along with work on Timberlake will be phased close together. Council Member Perrow stated that about 30 to 40% of traffic in that area is turning left on Wards Ferry and having a straight through will help. He raised questions about the restaurant (property the city purchased for the purpose of the roundabout). Mr. Newland responded that the marketing for that property has not been looked at yet.

Council Member Perrow recommended moving this item forward to full council: PDC concurs this is a better plan and to send to full council.

- 3. **TIGER Grant Application-** The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) issued a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for 2016 TIGER funds on Tuesday, February 23, 2016. The TIGER program is a USDOT discretionary grant that funds capital investments in surface transportation infrastructure that generates economic development and improves access to reliable, safe and affordable transportation in communities. Grants are awarded on a competitive basis and must include a minimum of a 20% match from the locality. City staff, along with some consulting assistance, is working to submit a TIGER grant application that, if approved, would provide funding for multi-modal transportation improvements in conjunction with the Downton Utility Line replacement and Streetscape improvements.*

Ms. Svrcek explained that about a year ago there were conversations about utilities downtown, the streetscape project, and etc. The city decided to engage a lobbying firm in D.C. to help with relationships there. The TIGER Grant is the impetus to engage lobbyists. Maggie, Jim and Michelle went to D.C. in March to explore what to do to apply for the grant. Application deadline is April 29th. The team consists of Bonnie, Tom, Jim, Anna, Lee, Michelle, Rachel, Maggie, Tim and Heather. The team had a brainstorming session and is a work in progress. Ms. Svrcek and Ms. Cossman presented the overall plans for the grant application as being multi-modal and connectivity improvements. Ms. Cossman indicated that Phase II is a continuation of the current streetscape and waterline projects along Main-8th to the Expressway; Commerce- 5th to Main Street. Phase I plans are to include the addition of new bus stops at Commerce Street with bicycle parking with the addition of an elevator to Midtown deck; upgrading to a freight elevator on Commerce; diverting trucks on to Commerce; a Park and Ride component which would provide parking on the perimeter of the Central Business District, acting as a mini-hub for GLTC; and protected bike and pedestrian lanes on the John Lynch bridge. Also in Phase I, the provision of sync signal in the 5th Street corridor. Phase II is a continuation of 8th Street over to Main Street. This includes an elevator, bus stop, bike parking, a pocket park area, and work on upper Bluffwalk. There would be connection from the trail from 7th to Depot, connect Blackwater Creek trail and enhancement on Jefferson Street.

Council Member Perrow suggested this may be interesting for this to come back to full Council to explain the concept details to layout the thought process.

Ms. Svrcek stated the grant application request is for \$40 million. This is a very competitive grant. Last time there were more than 600 requests, and only about 50 funded. If not awarded, will go back to D.C. to see what can be done to strengthen the grant application. Last year Virginia was not awarded a grant and does not think anyone applied. The projects must be transformative. Mayor Gillette inquired as to

the timing of the payout should the grant be awarded. Ms. Svrcek indicated it is reimbursement based. A contract must be signed within three years and spent within five years of grant award. There is one hiccup- no source for the match currently if awarded \$40 million, but have a match if awarded half of the \$40 million; the match is 25%. Ms. Svrcek and Ms. Cossman indicated that if awarded this grant, this accelerates the waterline replacement by about 50%.

Mayor Gillette conveyed he is doubtful about the Park and Ride idea and the useful/effectiveness of this downtown. Ms. Svrcek suggested is it a change in mindset and Josh Baker with GLTC is a part of this. Council Member Foster added this may be beneficial to elderly and disabled and open up more mobility. Council Member Johnson expressed he thinks it's a wonderful idea, makes downtown more accessible and a vision for the future. Ms. Cossman and Ms. Svrcek indicated that the first phase project doesn't count toward the match, only non-federal money allowed as that match.

Council Member Perrow recommended moving forward to City Council without objection.

- 4. Two-Way Conversion for Main/Church Streets-** *Work on the first 8 segments of the Downtown Utility and Streetscape project has commenced with the relocation of the AEP poles along Church Street. Road and utility work will begin in April. The utility project provides the opportunity to improve downtown roads and sidewalks. Road closures will occur during construction to expedite the work. The logical time to convert Main and Church Streets to two-way traffic is at the completion of this project, when the roads open to full traffic. Per a traffic study conducted by Engineering & Planning Resources, P.C. conducted in 2014, the downtown road grid system has the capacity to support the two-way conversion. Traffic speeds will reduce increasing pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular safety, while congestion will rise. Two-way conversion will also increase visibility to commercial uses, is more navigable to visitors, and decreases travel distance. Studies show two-way traffic conversions result in decreased crime with more "eyes on the street" viewing from both directions and with vehicles traveling at slower speeds.*

Mr. Payne stated they are continuing to look at how to implement Two-Way conversion on Main and Church Streets. They are ready to go out to the public to have a meeting to discuss this. Concern has been heard from the public over loading zones, which ties back in to the use of freight elevators on Commerce. Mr. Payne visited Charlottesville to see how this is handled there. There is work in the packet from Whitman, Requardt & Associates, LLP. It is compelling to promote the pedestrian experience, promote retail and fill up vacant buildings. Staff is on board. Reasons have been given in the packet for why this is a good idea.

Council Member Perrow was curious as to why in the history of the City, traffic was converted from two way to the current one way pattern now. Mr. Payne stated there were several reasons from his understanding: the expressway encouraged one-way traffic; fear of nuclear war- one way was the best way to evacuate in the mindset of the 60s and 70s. At that time, the mindset was to get people in and out more quickly, doing things they thought would save downtown but the culture has changed now. People want to be downtown now. Two-Way conversion improves visibility of businesses, safer for pedestrians, and decreases crime rates. Downtown needs to be a destination.

Council Member Perrow has some concerns with loading queuing from Rivermont in to downtown and the sequence of stops. He feels a mechanism is needed to lead people out toward John Lynch bridge, and curious as to what that will look like. Discussion was held among PDC as to possible ways for conversion. Council Member Johnson indicated there will be growing pains during conversion, but it won't be forever. Council Member Perrow stated he is comfortable with the philosophy of two-way conversion, but not the mechanics. Mr. Payne emphasized there needs to be a consensus on goals the City is trying to achieve. The goals are to revitalize downtown and make it a destination place for living,

working, lodging, meals and events. Two-way streets help this goal. Discussion was had about public concerns over this potential project, perception, and possible reasons for objections. Mr. Payne explained the need to examine how two-way conversion may work in order to better work with the community. Council Member Perrow inquired as to how we improve on the communication with the community going forward. Ms. Svrcek stated there needs to be an education process with business owners and we need to be able to tell the story and haven't been able to do this. Council Member Foster agreed with this and felt a good job has not been done with education and communicating this. Discussion was had among members of how to better effectively convey information to the public about the potential project. Council Member Perrow would like to have a discussion on what cities Lynchburg is like and what the process was for converting to two-way. He would like examples of how this works. Mr. Payne added that Charlottesville and Staunton and other places are pedestrian oriented and for traffic it is not about just getting from one end of the town to the other, people are looking to stay within the cities. It is not currently set up that way in Lynchburg. The reason to do this is to support the businesses downtown. Mr. White noted that other communities like Alexandria, Fredericksburg all have two-way traffic. He will get a list of the cities that have this for PDC. Council Member Johnson remarked this is about the delivery system in getting this information out of how this makes the whole downtown work and get around more easily. Discussion continued on possibilities of how streets are connected, using social media to get information out and having a communications plan in place then rolling this information out and how to have the meetings with the public.

5. Split Pairs/501

Council Member Perrow noted that his brother owns property in the area to be discussed, but this has no bearing on him financially or his judgement.

Mr. Payne explained are currently in the first year of the HB2 process. In 2015 HB2 was adopted by the General Assembly. This provides a more precise process for determining road projects across the commonwealth. The scoring process is based on the ability to make improvements (environmental, congestions, safety, etc.) and then put on a list where projects are scored and ranked. Decisions will be made on what projects are funded. The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) will be making some decisions on what gets funding. The next round of HB2 is September 2018 for 2019. The Split Pairs/501 project was not recommended for funding. It ranked about 32nd in the region and 117th in the state. Construction of the Split pair is about a \$20 million project. Fifteen million has been spent in the past. A survey was just completed and will come to council with a vacation of the right-of-way property and create economic development opportunity parcels.

The Odd Fellows Road-Phase II project ranked 27th in the region and was recommended for funding (about \$17 million). Shannon Valentine, our CTB representative will have a discussion on moving money around to fund the split pair project sooner versus later. Various discussions have been had on if this is feasible. Funds could potentially be moved from the Odd Fellows project to the Split Pairs/501 project. There could potentially be a third step in the process that may result in no funds at all. The CTB will meet next week. Mr. Payne needs to gauge if there is any interest among staff and council in doing this. VDOT has raised some issues. A NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) evaluation would need to be done within six months to a year. There are concerns over limited access and is not designed to move people through rapidly. If money is switched from the Odd Fellows project to the Split Pairs/501, there is a \$2 million funding gap. If money is shifted, then this project may not be able to compete again. If it is put through HB2 for funding, if the costs increase by \$5 million, have to go through the process again. Mr. Payne emphasized that the Odd Fellows project is ready to go in October. Discussion was held among PDC members on thoughts, options, and what could happen. Council Member Perrow recommended investing the money in NEPA and not wanting half a project on Odd Fellows. Mr. Payne

stated Split Pair/501 would still come to PDC for rezoning/right-of-way process on this project. Mr. Newland added that a state environmental process has been done, but not a full NEPA. The public hearing will be next Monday at 5:30 at the VDOT auditorium. Mr. Payne commented this would be the time to speak up if there was interest in swapping the projects. He would like to put the Split Pairs project in a better position for the NEPA, surveying, etc. Mayor Gillette noted he felt there were too many moving parts right now to swap.

Mr. Martin, City Planner, commented the city is moving ahead with rezoning and vacating the right-of-way for the Split Pairs/501 project. Signs are up and it will be going to the Planning Commission. There are no plans to sale the right-of-way at this time, just preparing it. Mr. Martin explained they want to have zoning and parcels in place. Mr. Newland responded that we know where the right-of-way needs to be. Mr. Payne reiterated that no property will be sold until there are site plans. He will communicate with Shannon Valentine for continuing on with Odd Fellows.

Roll Call:

Council Member Foster indicated concern about cars turning on Church from 8th (turning right) and are headed the wrong way. She doesn't believe there is a sign in place. Ms. Cossman, Traffic Engineer, said she would look in to it.

Next meeting: May 10th, 2016

****Note: Meeting time for PDC has been moved to 11:00 a.m. on May 10th**