

PROSPERITY AND LIVABILITY COMMITTEE
Committee Members Ewing, Alexander, Hill and Wagner
Chaired by Council Member Ewing
July 15, 2015 – 9:00 a.m.
Parks & Recreation Administrative Offices

Present:

Committee Chair Jason Ewing and Committee Members Alyce Hill and Jay Wagner

Absent:

Committee Member Latimer Alexander

Also Present:

Council Member Cynthia Davis

Staff Present:

Greg Demko, City Manager; Randy McCaslin, Deputy City Manager; Jeron Hollis, Communications Officer; Eric Olmedo, Budget and Performance Manager; Loren Hill, President, High Point Economic Development Corporation; Mary Sizemore, Director of the High Point Public Library; Scott Dingus, Engineering Services; Mark McDonald, Director of Transportation; Keith Pugh, Director of Engineering Services; Terry Kuneff, Engineering Services; JoAnne Carlyle, City Attorney; Lisa Vierling, City Clerk

Others Present:

Ross Lackey, Patricia Bellochio, Richard Wood, Gloria Halstead, David Willett

News Media:

Fox 8

Chairman Ewing called the meeting to order and reminded everyone that this is a Council Committee with conversation between Council and staff and public comments should be made during Council meetings.

David Willett, a resident on Delk Drive, stated he would like to speak regarding Rotary Drive. Chairman Ewing explained that this is not the appropriate time to make comments because this is the time for discussion between staff and the Committee. He encouraged Mr. Willett to provide any written remarks to him to pass along to Council. Mr. Willett stated he has some ideas that he would like to share with Council to help in making a decision.

DISCUSSION- TRAFFIC CALMING PROPOSALS (Johnson Street & Farriss Avenue)

Mark McDonald, Director of Transportation, shared some options staff put together for Johnson Street & Farriss Avenue.

Option 1- Install a 3-way STOP

Estimated Cost: under \$5,000

Requires minor modifications to existing conditions that would add the following at the Farriss Avenue intersection:

- STOP signs on both sides of the street
- STOP bar on southbound Johnson
- Advance “STOP AHEAD” signs and pavement legends (between Guilford and Farriss)
- Change out amber flasher to red
- Overhead STOP sign
- Add “3-way” sign to all STOP assemblies (4 total)
- Refresh centerline entering intersection and other markings and signs as needed

Committee Member Hill inquired about the timeframe to implement this. Mr. McDonald replied that staff could begin implementation within a week of Council’s approval and would put out the message boards to indicate that a change is forthcoming and after the new signs are installed these message boards would stay up for another week with another “STOP AHEAD” message on it. In addition, staff will work with the Communications Officer to get the word out about the change in the traffic pattern.

Chairman Ewing asked if the STOP AHEAD signs would be sufficient or if rumble strips might better serve as a warning. Mr. McDonald explained that staff would see how the advanced warning signs would work and have not considered using rumble strips at this time.

Option 2a- Install a 3-way STOP and Reduce Johnson Street to One Lane

Estimated Cost: \$30,000

Mr. McDonald advised this is a more complex option that starts at the intersection of E. Lexington. He explained this requires grinding up existing markings and re-striping the street to one southbound lane from Lexington Avenue to approximately 350 feet north of Parkway Avenue. New markings would allow for one 14-foot travel lane with bike “sharrows”, and parking on both sides of the street. This single lane would transition back to two lanes approaching the traffic signal at Parkway (no changes).

Includes Option 1 improvements at the Farriss intersection, with the following additional changes:

- Remove “through” arrow from the southbound Johnson Street left lane approaching the traffic signal at Lexington.
- Install “ONLY” pavement legend to southbound left lane.
- Install “Left Lane Must Turn Left” sign on shoulder approaching Lexington, and overhead “LEFT ONLY” sign on signal span.
- Requires signal plan modification and approvals from NCDOT.

Committee Member Wagner asked staff what might be a more viable option to slow traffic. Mr. McDonald felt it would be better to begin with the simplest solution (start with the 3-way STOP at Johnson and Farriss) and see how this works before moving onto something else that will be more costly.

Option 3- Install a 3-way STOP and/or roundabout/diverter; reduce Johnson Street to one lane
Estimated cost: \$60,000

Mr. McDonald explained if the other efforts were not working, this could go in at the intersection of Johnson and Farriss and would require traffic in the single lane to divert their route around the island. Traffic on Farriss would also have to go around the island. He noted this does not really have an effect on eastbound traffic coming from Main Street. Felt this was a more drastic measure to take when simpler measures could be used to address the issues.

Committee Member Hill asked about sight lines from Farriss crossing Johnson. Mr. McDonald explained the sight lines are caused by trees close to the edge of the curb, and a slight rise with a small picket fence and these things combined create visibility issues. Committee Member Hill suggested putting up some kind of signage to warn motorists of the limited sight lines.

Mr. McDonald noted staff's recommendation at this point would be to proceed with the multi-way STOP and continue to monitor and evaluate the intersection to see the effect of the measure.

Committee Member Wagner inquired about the speed humps. Mr. McDonald advised that speed humps could possibly be a future option for consideration and mentioned that he made a visit to Raleigh yesterday and took pictures of speed humps they are using in various places and talked to them about the way they are handling things. At this point, staff is not recommending that speed humps as a part of the options to consider. Mr. McDonald noted speed humps could possibly be implemented at a later time, if these options do not address the issue.

Council Member C. Davis asked how long staff might evaluate doing Option 1 (3-way STOP) before trying something else. Mr. McDonald advised it would probably take at least six months to one year to see how it works. Committee Member Hill asked if moving the single lane to the center would improve the sight line from Farriss and staff felt it would, but it would require parking restrictions away from the intersections to keep them clear.

Committee Member Wagner favored Option 1- 3-way STOP at Johnson/Farriss and moved to forward this to the City Council with a favorable recommendation with a six-month evaluation/report from staff after implementation. Committee Member Hill made a second to the motion, which carried by a 3-0 vote. [Committee Member Alexander was absent]

Mr. McDonald advised that this would actually be an amendment to Article P of the Traffic Schedule and staff could have it drafted and ready for Monday's meeting or the August meeting. The committee asked that it be placed on Monday's City Council agenda for consideration.

DISCUSSION- TRAFFIC CALMING PROPOSALS (Rotary/Farriss)

Option 1- Install a 4-way STOP at Farriss Avenue

Estimated cost: Under \$5,000

Requires minor modifications to existing conditions that would add the following at the Farriss Avenue intersection:

- STOP signs on all approaches
- Add “4-way” sign to all STOP assemblies (4 total)
- STOP bars on all approaches
- Advance “STOP AHEAD” signs and pavement legends on Rotary

(Changes could be made as part of resurfacing on Rotary Drive)

Option 2- Install a roundabout at Farriss Avenue

Estimated cost: \$25,000

Construction of a small roundabout with splitter islands on each approach. Includes signing and pavement markings. No apparent right-of-way needs to do this.

Mr. McDonald pointed out rather than being a STOP condition all the way around, would be a YIELD condition, very similar to the roundabout behind the Library on Elm/Lindsay. This would allow traffic to continuously flow around it.

Chairman Ewing asked inquired about the street lighting in this area and Mr. McDonald replied that staff would need to make sure that the street lighting is adequate.

Option 3- Install tandem roundabouts at Fairway Drive and at Woodland Place

Estimated cost: \$60,000 without deflection

\$120,000 with deflection

Construct roundabouts at these two intersections, which are about 300 feet apart. The deflection option would be more effective at reducing speeds, but requires reconstruction of existing curb & gutter and sidewalk with significant property impacts.

Mr. McDonald advised that these intersections are separated by 300 feet and in order to get the type of deflection desired with a roundabout, there would have to be some changes made to the curb lines. He pointed out this would impact the front yard of a property owner’s driveway (which would be at either end of the splitters). He noted this is on the south end of the 25 mph zone and probably wouldn’t have a lot of effect on the speed at Farriss and Parkway or Hillcrest.

Council Member C. Davis asked if Option 1 (4-way STOP) and Option 4 (speed humps) could possibly be done together in strategic locations on Rotary. Mr. McDonald reiterated that speed humps could be considered in the future because the city has no real experience with speed humps, but he wanted to put the option out there. Committee Member Wagner expressed concerns that putting a 4-way STOP ON ROTARY/FARRIS would not really address the

speeding issues on the southern end between Fairway and Ferndale and was not addressing anything to slow the speed down on the other end. Mr. McDonald added that finding the right locations to put speed humps would be critical for their effectiveness.

Mr. McDonald informed the Committee that he did go to Raleigh to see how they were doing traffic calming mitigation and they are in the midst of conducting a peer review and collecting traffic calming practices and policies from the major cities in North Carolina and will share it with everyone once the data is in. At this time, Mr. McDonald shared some pictures and a video he took while visiting some of the areas in Raleigh neighborhoods with traffic calming measures such as speed humps/speed bumps.

Committee Member Wagner asked what kind of budget the city has for these types of measures and Mr. McDonald replied “zero.” Mr. McCaslin explained in addition to the money issue, there is a Traffic Calming Policy that has been adopted by City Council that calls for a petition process for public input and also calls for the neighborhood to participate and pay the cost of the improvements. He stressed that Council really needs to address the policy side of it because of the number of anticipated future requests. Chairman Ewing noted the forthcoming report from the Raleigh DOT would be beneficial to Council when considering changes to High Point’s Traffic Calming Policy.

Committee Member Hill made a motion to start with Option 1, a 4-way STOP at Farriss/Rotary with a 6-month evaluation period and to send this to Council with a favorable recommendation. Committee Member Wagner made a second to the motion. The motion carried by a 3-0 vote. [Committee Member Alexander was absent].

Mr. McCaslin noted this would also require an Amendment to Article P of the Traffic Schedule and staff indicated they could get the information together for replacement on the July 20th Agenda for consideration.

For further clarification, Committee Member Hill pointed out staff would have the information that is being compiled by the Raleigh DOT for traffic calming devices at the end of the 6-month evaluation period, and at that time could consider any changes and funding options for any more extensive changes that might be necessary.

UPDATE- S. MAIN STREET STREETScape PROGRAM

Mr. McCaslin shared that this came to the Prosperity & Livability Committee several months ago and the Committee instructed staff to move forward with contacting property owners in the first phase, which started at Business-85 on S. Main Street and working back toward the north. He explained that Wendy Fuscoe, Core City Administrator, has made contact with those property owners.

Terry Kuneff with Engineering Services provided an update on the S. Main Street Streetscape program, which was broken down in four phases:

- Phase 1: begins at Business-85 to S. College Drive (estimated cost almost \$21,000- does not include any purchase of easements or right-of-way, but does include trash cans and benches)

He mentioned that the Committee was undecided after the last update as to if they wanted to do median improvements or just along the perimeter in the sidewalk right-of-way area and Ms. Fuscoe was directed to contact the property owners in Phase 1 to see what their take was on it.

He shared the plans from Phase 1, as well as reviewed some of the comments that were received from the property owners from this area. He explained that Phase 1 consists of approximately a dozen lots with the City of High Point owning a large lot. He noted that not many of the property owners responded, but from those that did about 50% were okay with it, but the property owners at Vann York dealership and another relative of a property owner shared that they did not want anything that would block the view.

- Phase 2: S. College to W. Ward (estimate cost \$58,075- does not include any purchase of easements or right-of-way, but does include trash cans and benches)
- Phase 3: W. Ward to GTCC (\$35,133- does not include any purchase of easements or right-of-way, but does include trash cans and benches)
- Phase 4: GTCC to E. Russell (\$47,438- does not include any purchase of easements or right-of-way, but does include trash cans and benches)

Chairman Ewing asked how the property owners' comments would affect the cost of the project. Mr. McCaslin felt the car dealerships on N. Main Street would fight these plans because they want the visibility and noted it might be possible to concentrate the landscaping more in the areas that want it. He suggested that staff could start the plantings/landscaping in the fall and noted that Ms. Fuscoe has already started contacting the property owners in Phase 2. Mr. McCaslin reported that staff anticipates getting all phases completed by the end of the fall. Chairman Ewing asked if it might be possible for Ms. Fuscoe to contact the property owners in Phases 2, 3 and 4 and have the information ready by September for the Committee to move forward. Mr. McCaslin explained that this is merely an update from staff and no further approval from the Prosperity & Livability Committee is needed, noting the \$600,000 for the project is already in the budget. He suggested staff proceed and be prepared to provide another update in September.

Mr. McDonald advised that he has talked with NCDOT and asked them to take into consideration when constructing the new bridge, to make sure that it can be expanded and fit an interchange improvement there as well. Staff suggested possibly putting in a little pocket park on the property owned by the city just coming off Business-85 (planting trees, putting in benches, and possibly a Welcome to High Point brick sign). Council Member C. Davis suggested narrowing some of the lanes to possibly facilitate some additional sidewalks, bike lanes, etc..... Mr. McDonald explained it would be difficult to do this as the lanes are already pretty narrow. Ross Lackey volunteered to come up with a landscape plan for the park area that would include some edible landscaping.

Committee Member Hill asked if staff had a cost breakdown of the medians and planters and asked if there would be a cost savings if some of the planters were eliminated. Mr. Kuneff noted

that he only had the total cost for the different phases. Greg Demko, City Manager, pointed out it was important to keep in mind that the real cost would be in the maintenance. Committee Member Hill liked the idea for a Welcome to High Point sign at this location and Committee Member Wagner agreed that it would definitely make a visual impact. He stated he was not necessarily opposed to the pocket park, but questioned the number of people who actually walk in this area.

The Committee questioned whether or not the park improvements, installation of the brick medians and plantings could be done for the \$600,000 that has been budgeted. Staff felt this could be done and asked the Committee if they desired staff to get some cost figures on installing the Welcome to High Point signs also. It was the consensus of the Committee to have staff move forward on notifying the property owners in the additional phases, have staff come back at the September meeting with a design for the pocket park and concept for the Welcome to High Point monument sign (including cost estimates).

UPDATE- FAÇADE GRANT PROGRAM

Mr. McCaslin reported that the 2014-2015 Façade Grant Program has been completed with \$35,000 allocated for the total program. Out of this, the city awarded 15 grants totaling \$34,900 (twelve grants completed, three did not follow through and accept the grant), so the total for those twelve grants was a little over \$29,000 and this left about \$5,700 in the program. He pointed out for every public dollar spent, about \$5.5 dollars were spent in private dollars. Staff plans on starting the 2015-2016 Façade Grant Program and begin advertising around August 1st, then accept applications, which will need to be in by September 6th. He noted that Council would need to appoint a Façade Grant Committee in accordance with the policy and should include an architect, business people, citizen, real estate interest, etc.... Once the Committee is designated they will meet and review the applications received and will make a determination and send out notifications by mid-September. The amount budgeted in the 2015-2016 year for façade grants is \$50,000.

Council Member C. Davis asked if these façade dollars are the same dollars mentioned in the MSDs. Following a brief discussion, staff clarified that the façade grant money and the MSD money are two separate pots of money. Mr. McCaslin explained the façade grant money is budgeted separately and can be used in all four MSDs and the incentive funds that would be discussed next is the \$200,000 that was part of the settlement that Council put towards this or earmarked towards this and can only be used in the downtown incentive districts, or downtown MSD. He noted this was merely an update from staff and no action is needed by Council because this has already been done with the appropriation.

UPDATE- DOWNTOWN DISTRICT INCENTIVE PROGRAM

Mr. McCaslin explained that both of these incentive programs (i.e. Downtown Incentive Grant and the Building Revitalization and Demolition Grant Guidelines) were brought to the Prosperity & Livability Committee in February and some minor revisions were made since that time, so staff is bringing it back to the committee for consideration in moving this forward to the City Council for final approval.

Committee Member Wagner if these applications should go to the Business Development Committee for evaluation and recommendation. Mr. McCaslin replied that is the way it is set up and noted the City Council would appoint the committee with the Core City Administrator serving as the ex-officio member of staff.

Council Member C. Davis expressed concerns regarding #10 on page 2 of the Building Revitalization and Demolition Grant Guidelines:

“Since one of the purposes of this program is to upgrade the building stock and stabilize declining buildings, successful applications will likely involve buildings that have not been significantly renovated in the past 15 years.”

She shared her biggest objection to this is the fact that it is the responsibility of the property owners to maintain their own property without having to dip into taxpayer’s dollars to fix their property up. Committee Member Wagner explained this was not about maintenance, but it was about the improvement of properties in order to stimulate growth to the tax base and trying to stimulate some reinvestment in the downtown. He pointed out other cities have successfully done this to help stimulate growth in their downtowns. Committee Member Hill shared a conversation she had recently with someone who was in High Point, sold their business, and basically semi-retired for a few years and is now interested in starting some type of new business venture. She noted he has been looking in Asheboro because of the great things that are happening in their downtown and the fact that Asheboro has made a difference by committing to making Asheboro a place for development while supporting the business owners and their ventures. Committee Member Hill stated that the person told her that they did not see any kind of commitment from High Point in the downtown area. Council Member C. Davis noted she is not against the development of business or incentivizing, but echoed the concerns she shared earlier about property owners being responsible for maintaining their own property.

Chairman Ewing explained part of the problem is that the downtown in High Point is unique due to the number of showrooms and in the past, property owners would lease the showrooms out and those leasing the property would upgrade the property by making repairs and performing any necessary maintenance that was needed. He noted the showrooms are dwindling and there does not seem to be a demand for these buildings anymore and the buildings need work to be converted to another use. Committee Member Wagner pointed out Council Member C. Davis’ argument could be made the same with the façade grant program because the property owners were given money to fix the facades, but pointed out that it is a proven return on the investment (\$5 in private investment for every dollar the city spends). He noted this downtown incentive program would incentivize people to repurpose their buildings and if it is successful, it will result in more non-showroom uses in the downtown and the city would eventually recoup the money. He stated it was good for taxpayers to do this over a long term rather than have buildings sit there vacant and unused while declining in value, which puts a downward stress on property values and the property tax the city collects.

Council Member C. Davis pointed out the city is not giving money to residential property owners to fix their homes and noted there are clearly individuals in the city that cannot afford to make repairs to their homes and voiced strong objections again about using taxpayer dollars to

incentivize somebody's commercial building or commercial property. Committee Member Wagner explained the bottom line is the city is driven by property values and has not done anything to try to stimulate the redevelopment of downtown. He felt the most growth of the tax base would be realized from commercial development, not from improvements made to residential property. Chairman Ewing reiterated that this idea has been vetted over and over and came out of other successful cities that have similar programs. He advised that the Prosperity & Livability Committee wanted to try this to see if it would boost business development and revitalization and suggested to move forward.

Committee Member Ewing then moved to forward the Building Revitalization and Demolition Grant Guidelines and the Development Incentives Grant to Council with a favorable recommendation. Committee Member Wagner made a second, which carried unanimously. [4-0 vote]

UPDATE- LIBRARY PARKING LOT PROJECT

Mr. McCaslin reported that staff would be providing an update on the Library parking lot project and that Engineering Services has been working on refining the option that Council chose. Scott Dingus, of Engineering Services, advised there are two options: SPOKE option and ARC Option. The **SPOKE Option** requires acquiring the lot to the northwest; total parking spaces = 202 (20 more additional spaces than the existing lot); allows for more market stalls; and four entrances. The **ARC Option** uses the existing Library property; 182 parking spaces (which is very close to the existing number of spaces); closes entrance on northeast side. This option has three entrances; traffic flow is not as smooth.

Mr. McCaslin stated that staff hopes to have a final product in the not too distant future and be able to go out for bids, which will come back to Council for consideration.

UPDATE- WASHINGTON STREET PROJECT

Terry Kuneff of Engineering Services provided a brief update on the Washington Street Project. He reported that the project is going as planned; the new water line, sewer line and storm sewer installation is complete; the sidewalk, curb/gutter, and locations for the tree grades on the north side of Washington Street is complete. He advised that the contractor has moved to the south side of Washington Street near Centennial and is beginning to break up the concrete, sidewalk, curb/gutter, boring new sidewalk and curb/gutter all the way down to the park at the end near Gaylord Court. Once this work is done, it will complete the length of the project and the contract plans to come back with new paving and striping for the roadway and will plant the trees after the paving is complete. Staff anticipates the project to be completed at the end of August. Mr. McCaslin pointed out the project is several months ahead of schedule.

INVITATION FROM ROSS LACKEY FOR A SITE VISIT TO HIS FARM

In anticipation of the discussion at the next Prosperity & Livability Committee regarding possible changes to the city's code and ordinances, Ross Lackey issued an invitation for Council to visit his farm sometime around the 1st of August to get a first-hand look at his farm (grows food, has chickens and livestock, etc...).

NEXT PROSPERITY & LIVABILITY COMMITTEE MEETING

Chairman Ewing asked if there were any objections to possibly changing the date of the next Prosperity & Livability Committee meeting since the Council had canceled the first meeting in August. He suggested possibly meeting on August 12th. He noted that he would follow up with Committee Member Alexander on this since he was not present at this meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m. upon motion duly made and seconded.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa B. Vierling, MMC
City Clerk

Jason Ewing, Chairman