

TOWN OF LAUDERDALE-BY-THE-SEA

TOWN COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

Jarvis Hall

4505 Ocean Drive

Monday, April 16, 2012

6:00 P.M.

1. CALL TO ORDER, MAYOR ROSEANN MINNET

Mayor Roseann Minnet called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Also present were Vice Mayor Scot Sasser, Commissioner Mark Brown, Commissioner Stuart Dodd, Commissioner Chris Vincent, Town Attorney Harlene Kennedy, Town Manager Connie Hoffmann, and Town Clerk June White.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

3. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION

- a. Presentation and Discussion of Modified Streetscape Design Concepts for the two Westernmost Blocks of Commercial Boulevard (Town Manager Connie Hoffmann)**

Town Manager Hoffmann noted the project designers previously presented two design concepts. The Commission indicated a preference for one and directed staff to address a number of issues voiced by some of the area businesses. She stated Hugh Johnson and his team spent considerable time creating alternate designs. Town Manager Hoffmann added at the Commission meeting on April 24, 2012, Vice Mayor Sasser would be attending the meeting, so the Commission could decide at that time which design concept they wished staff to proceed with.

Town Manager Hoffmann clarified the project went from the base of the intracoastal bridge to Sea Grape Drive. The two blocks between Sea Grape Drive and the A1A would be a different project.

Traffic Planner Molly Hughes focused on the circulation and parking aspects of the project. None of the options now presented utilized parking that directly backed out into the travel lane on Commercial Boulevard. She stated all three options maximized the traffic calming effects; in each option everything possible was done to slow the traffic.

Vice Mayor Sasser asked if it was possible to block off West Tradewinds. A resident suggested putting a cul de sac at Basin Drive to allow traffic to go up to Basin but block traffic going west.

Ms. Hughes felt this was a plausible suggestion, noting it would help in terms of welcome signage as well.

Mayor Minnet remarked further exploration to determine how the rest of the residents and businesses in the area felt would be needed before pursuing such action.

Hugh Johnson, landscape architect for the project stated the designers believed all three schemes would create a wonderful people place for the Town.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mayor Minnet opened the meeting for public comment.

Dolores Hamilton felt, out of the three options, the Commission should consider the one that allowed for the most parking, as the Town could not afford to lose any spaces.

Bill Vitollo thought Option 1 was the safest, and it allowed for sufficient parking. He believed people would continue to access the plaza through the exit. The suggestion of plants in between the street and the parking was unnecessary. Businesses wanted people to slow down and see their stores; a line of bushes would hamper that.

Lenore Nolan Ryan stated her business had been operating for 12 years in the same plaza as Ace Hardware. The key issue for her was parking for both her employees and clients/customers. She liked Option 1.

Mayor Minnet asked Commissioner Dodd whether he had any questions. She noted he had to leave the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Commissioner Dodd referred to Option 3, noting the Town was critical on the loss of parking places. He wished to know if the median and the sidewalk could be reduced in width to allow a row of parallel parking alongside the median. This would raise the number of parking spaces again, as the plan simply moved the parking spaces currently on Commercial Boulevard to the other side of the median. He said Option 3 would then be similar to Option 1 but allow a row of parallel parking to increase the parking spaces by some 20 spaces.

Town Manager Hoffmann asked if it would be possible to get in the bike lane.

Ms. Hughes replied the bike lane could be included by reducing the promenade area.

Beverly Wilson preferred Option 3.

David Nixon preferred Option 3 with the inclusion of Commissioner Dodd's suggestion.

Frank Tropepe, owner of Beach Ace Hardware, echoed the importance of sufficient parking and suggested incorporating permitted parking for employees. He stated every

week someone's car was hit by another car due to parallel parking behind his store, so there might be a need for barriers or separators.

John Boutin felt Option 2 created too many safety hazards. Including parallel parking in Option 3 would increase the incidents of accidents. Before Scheme B was revised, it addressed all the issues and the Commission and staff should consider going back to the original Scheme B.

Ms. Hughes stated there were ways to prevent people from entering driveways in the wrong direction, such as channelizing the entry point, so it was obvious and impossible to enter the wrong way. The design team endeavored to show this on a smaller scale, but it did not come through as well.

Rosa Michailiuk agreed adequate parking was the number one concern, urging the Town not to plant ficus trees, due to their susceptibility to the white fly.

Jim Silverstone stated he was both a resident and business owner on Commercial Boulevard near Benihana. He thought a hybrid of two of the three designs was best with regard to parking, mentioning the use of a design for the parking similar to the parking lots in Fort Lauderdale just west of the bridge south of Commercial Boulevard. The turnaround for West Tradewinds was a good idea as well.

Ken Brenner said the preferable design for the area had yet to be achieved, but the team was getting close. Option 1 gave the most flexibility, but there were still issues that were unaddressed.

Harry Kappas, owner of La Spada's Hoagies preferred Option 1. It provided the most parking. The sidewalks along Las Olas Boulevard and Lincoln Road were not 20-feet wide, yet pedestrians appeared to have no problem moving along them.

Wayne Dillistin of Interior Digs commented Option 1 was the most desirable, stating a 20-foot promenade was sufficient, and a pattern could be included in the sidewalk coming up from the beach as a form of way finding. Option 2 was totally unacceptable, though he could live with Option 3 if it were approved by the Commission; the turnaround was a good idea as well, though he doubted FDOT would approve.

Dave Marshall, owner of Judy's Car Rental said his business was not in the project area, asking if Option 3 included a bike lane.

Town Manager Hoffmann pointed out all three options included bike traffic.

Mr. Marshall noted he had a slight preference for Option 3, though the idea of the turnaround in Option 1 was interesting.

Barbara Winston of Joanne's Papers was in favor of Option 1, as the Town could not afford to lose any more parking.

With no one else wishing to speak, Mayor Minnet closed the public comments.

Mayor Minnet reminded everyone the decision on the design option would be made at the May 24 regular Town Commission meeting.

Commissioner Brown preferred Option 1 for ease of circulating traffic and the preservation of as many parking spaces as possible. He felt the plans presented thus far were secondary to the outcome of the entryway feature. It would convey an overall impression of the Town more than how cars were parked, landscaping, etc. He believed this was the reason more people liked Option 3; it made a more dramatic statement. Before voting to approve one of the project design concepts presented at the next Commission meeting, he wished to see the design of the entryway feature that went along with that concept. He did not believe Option 3 would slow down the traffic because the parked cars along Commercial Boulevard stuck out a little more and there was the nine-foot buffer zone. He thought Option 1 probably cost the least of the three, as it did little more than reverse the existing parking and added a 20-foot sidewalk that was more than enough for a promenade. He preferred to invest more dollars in the entryway feature and have an impactful entrance to the Town. The \$2 million budgeted for the improvement project for the two blocks included the cost of an entryway feature. If the Town went with Option 1 at a lower cost, it could devote the unused portion to an entryway feature and a parking garage.

Town Manager Hoffmann clarified the budget for the improvement project for the two blocks was \$1.2 million and included an entryway feature that had yet to be designed. It was the budget for the east Commercial Boulevard project that was \$2 million. She stated the cost of the entryway feature had not been determined, but the designers were informed by Town staff that if they were able to come up with a spectacular design, the Town Commission might be amenable to increasing the budget.

Mayor Minnet asked if the designers had explored any possibilities for an entryway feature within the scope of the current project's budget.

Mr. Johnson replied the design team had considered the location of the entryway, but they had not worked out the actual look.

Mayor Minnet asked the design team to show where the entryway would be in the three design concept options presented.

Mr. Johnson commented the location of the entryway feature was in the first block on Commercial Boulevard as one came over the bridge, close to the existing flag pole podiums. The aim was for the feature to have the most impact when descending from the bridge going into the Town, but not be too close to the intersection, where drivers needed to be paying attention to the road. They felt the entryway feature should be 100 to 150 feet back from the intersection, so it would not interfere with any driveways into the businesses or the parking lots or while descending from the bridge.

Town Manager Hoffmann added the design team also discussed with staff including some identifying features at the entrance of each of the four shopping centers along Commercial Boulevard.

Mr. Johnson illustrated where those locations might be on options one and three.

Commissioner Brown encouraged the designers create an impressive entryway.

Ms. Hughes stated she agreed with the entryway feature being something big, but FDOT was not encouraging about a span over the state road. They were willing to listen to what the Town was planning, but if installing an entryway feature that spanned the roadway would be an uphill battle.

Mr. Johnson remarked the design team briefly looked at a few options that went from the side of the road and implied a span that arched over the road.

Vice Mayor Sasser stated the entryway was very important, but it was not the most important thing. Having a spectacular entryway would be a nice feature, but it would be pointless if there was no substance to back it up in the Town; the substance was what was after the entryway. The question as to cost was extremely important, as it would be difficult for the Commission to make a decision on a design option without any idea of their cost difference. He preferred Option 3 but liked the reverse circulation of Option 1. Every business owner mentioned the importance of parking, whether the project was east or west Commercial Boulevard, and the Town's commitment to a parking solution for the future was important. He believed the Town should consider a partnership with the businesses to somehow share the burden of addressing parking with those businesses for both east and west Commercial. He did not object to the dedication of a portion of his taxes to a long-term parking solution, but businesses should also contribute. He stated it was important when approaching the Town from over the bridge after passing the entryway to see a boulevard effect all the way to the ocean. He asked the designers to present what the landscaping would look like going down the median and both sides of Commercial Boulevard at a future meeting. The landscaping was the reason for his leaning toward Option 3 while, at the same time, liking Option 1 for the reverse circulation, as long as the additional parking spaces could be achieved.

Commissioner Vincent did not think having an entryway feature design at present resolved or helped the functionality of the design the Commission selected. He was not trivializing the significance of the entryway, but it should be something that came later, once the Town was convinced of the function of the design concept chosen. He felt the three options should be considered in terms of the short and long-term vision everyone held for the Town. It would be a wonderful vision if it included a parking garage four or five blocks away. If people had to park where they were forced to walk to their destination, they would walk by the stores. He said the Town wanted to become even more walkable with store visibility, not just from slow moving, window shopping vehicles.

With regard to the left turn heading westbound to access the plaza where Interior Digs was located, only Option 1 would work.

Ms. Hughes pointed out all three options could incorporate the U-turn, with modifications.

Commissioner Vincent stated there would be more loss of parking with the modifications being suggested. He felt the existing situation of parallel parking on Commercial Boulevard was more of a safety hazard than Scheme B presented, as vehicles stopped in the traffic lane to parallel park.

Ms. Hughes clarified in Option 2 there was no back-out parking; vehicles pulled into parking spaces frontward and left driving forward. The original Scheme B, now Option 3, could be approved under a special program that FDOT encouraged.

Town Manager Hoffmann added Option 3 had replaced the original Scheme B because it was a better solution.

Commissioner Vincent felt Option 3 was a duplicate of the present situation along Commercial Boulevard. It created problems if the parking lots shut down for events.

Mr. Johnson indicated the solution was to make the sidewalk two feet wider, take away the curb stops and make the space shorter; this meant the car would hang over the sidewalk, as the curb would become the curb stop.

Commissioner Vincent disagreed. The original Scheme B eliminated trip hazards and vehicular flow where pedestrians would be, discussing how the hazards could be reduced in the present Option 3. A 20-foot sidewalk was sufficient for a promenade.

Vice Mayor Sasser asked if Commissioner Vincent would move toward accepting Option 3 if the traffic flow were reversed and the parking put on the backside.

Commissioner Vincent replied he would be more open to Option 3 with those changes.

Commissioner Brown noted going with Option 3 meant losing more parking spaces, though some would be recovered with the addition of parallel parking being suggested.

Vice Mayor Sasser added some sacrifices might have to be made in the short term, as having a parking garage in the long-term plan meant increased parking spaces.

Town Manager Hoffmann remarked most business owners liked Option 1, as parking was their greatest concern. Option 1 caused the least loss of parking. She said Option 3 would cause a loss of 24 spaces for the four shopping area combined; in the revision the Commission was suggesting, that loss would either remain the same or a few more would be lost.

Mayor Minnet asked if the Town Commission were to go with Option 1, would FDOT give the Town the designation Ms. Hughes alluded to earlier.

Ms. Hughes stated the designation was called the Transportation Design for Livable Communities, noting there was no reason to think FDOT would not award the designation if the design team did a good job in its submittal.

Vice Mayor Sasser inquired if the Town ever submitted anything to FDOT on getting the designation for the original Scheme B, commenting even if the submittal were approved, the Town did not have to execute it.

Ms. Hughes replied the design team submitted nothing formal, as the Town Commission did not approve a design. If the Town were awarded the designation, it was at liberty to use any design features it chose. She was unsure of how long the approval process was, though it was usually done as part of an 18-month roadway project.

Mr. Johnson discussed the cost estimates of each of the three options, as well as with the original schemes A and B. The design team looked at what it would take to do a quad or one of the four and, in general terms, they felt confident they could bring the project in on budget with any of the options, including the entryway.

Town Manager Hoffmann reminded Mr. Johnson the drainage upgrade they recommended was never included in the original \$1.2 million cost estimate.

Mr. Johnson affirmed this was the case.

Commissioner Brown commented he preferred not to lose parking spaces, but if the consensus of the businesses was to go with option 3A, he could live with it. As he traveled on Commercial Boulevard going west or east, he rarely saw all the parking areas completely filled, though the aim was to get to where those spaces would be needed. If he had to vote for an option that reduced the parking spaces, it would be with the understanding that a parking garage was on the Town's list of priorities for future capital improvements.

Vice Mayor Sasser thought Option 1 did not provide the boulevard view all the way to the beach, which Option 3 did, along with other benefits.

Commissioner Vincent pointed out low profile shrubs were half the height of any vehicle and moving the vehicles closer to the buildings would hide more of the storefronts.

Mr. Johnson addressed the retailers' concerns about visibility. He explained they would use low shrubs, high tree canopies way above signage, placed so they had a big visual impact, but did not block the front of stores.

Commissioner Vincent preferred the cars to be further away with the low-profile bushes.

Town Manager Hoffmann sought the Town Commission's direction on developing option 3A.

Mayor Minnet felt other communities developed on the premise of "If you create the venue, they will come". She acknowledged parking had always been a huge sticking point for both businesses and residents, but she was not sure if it was the problem everyone thought it was, as she witnessed underutilized spaces. If an option had to be chosen, she preferred a hybrid of options one and three, as the smaller loss of parking was important. Parking was needed not just for patrons but for employees. Thus, she was not sure any of the options created what the Town needed.

Vice Mayor Sasser stated the importance of giving consideration to a parking solution located away from the area.

Town Manager Hoffmann remarked options one and three changed the game plan, and the subject area would become dramatically more beautiful than it was at present.

Mr. Johnson noted the design team had this conversation on more than one occasion in the last week. They remained confident they could create a significant impact with these designs and a 20-foot sidewalk.

Mayor Minnet and Vice Mayor Sasser stated they remained unconvinced.

Town Manager Hoffmann believed there was a desire to get these projects completed, and to now suggest the need to find a grander parking solution would delay the project for a very long time. She suggested if after building Option 1, the Town found or created a parking solution later, the Town could later come back and landscape the section of parallel parking on Commercial Boulevard and achieve the grand boulevard look desired by Vice Mayor Sasser. She suggested doing Option 1 now, look for the long-term parking solution, and then fill in the parallel parking spaces left in Option 1 with beautiful landscaping.

Mr. Johnson remarked the existing conditions had very long runs of parallel parking with no landscape relief in between, but in Option 1, landscape relief would be added that created a tree lined street on the sides of the road, marking the entries and crosswalk. There would be no area with more than three parallel parking spots in a row without landscaping relief.

Town Manager Hoffmann thought the impact of the entryway design features, and the identification features and public art being proposed for each shopping center, along with banners, and pedestrian lighting in the parking lots, and the widened promenade in front of the stores was being underestimated. The area would become such an attractive location when the project was complete, it would look nothing like what existed currently.

Mr. Johnson concurred stating the boards presented this evening did not illustrate the landscaping, as they wished to clearly show the traffic circulation and where plazas and green spaces would be located. The corners were more generous and furnished opportunities for kiosks, public art, more signage and seating.

Town Manager Hoffmann pointed out with a relatively small kiosk, life could be brought to each one of the shopping centers that did not presently exist, such as bringing in a kiosk that served coffee or ice cream; something to draw people in and make them linger.

Commissioner Brown had no desire to delay the project until a long-term parking solution was found; the delays had gone on long enough. He was also prepared to put a proposal on the next Commission agenda to hire a consultant or start the planning process for a parking solution. As the public came into Town Hall to view the options, Town staff could get them to indicate which option(s) they preferred.

Commissioner Vincent observed each time a new idea was added, it caused a further delay, and the Town needed to proceed. He felt everyone was backtracking with ideas of parking solutions and entryways, and they should concentrate on getting one aspect of the improvements completed.

Vice Mayor Sasser thanked Town Manager Hoffmann and the design team for clarification on Option 1, but he preferred to explore Option 3 to see how many actual parking spaces were lost once the circulation was reversed. He thought this was the look the Town envisioned.

Mayor Minnet believed in the past the parking was set up as it was in Option 3. Thus, for her to consider doing it again, she needed to explore why it was changed to see if the reasons had to do with safety.

Vice Mayor Sasser added once the Town developed a longer-term parking solution, it could do away with the proposed interior parallel parking spaces. It was a temporary fix, but for now it allowed the grand boulevard look all the way to the beach from the bridge.

Mayor Minnet asked if the design team could put together a modified version of Options 1 and 3 to see how many spaces would be lost, possibly getting those revisions to the Commission by the coming Friday. She agreed it was important to move forward with the project.

Town Manager Hoffmann responded the revisions would not be presented in a "pretty picture" and would likely be calculations on a plan with the numbers.

Mayor Minnet emphasized the key to the option selected would be the parking.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Minnet adjourned the meeting at 8:07 p.m.



Mayor Roseann Minnet

ATTEST:


Town Clerk, June White

5-23-2012
Date

