TOWN OF LAUDERDALE-BY-THE-SEA

TOWN COMMISSION

SPECIAL MEETING

MINUTES

Jarvis Hall

4505 Ocean Drive
Tuesday, January 17, 2012
7:00 P.M.

1. CALL TO ORDER, MAYOR ROSEANN MINNET

Mayor Roseann Minnet called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Also present were Vice Mayor Stuart Dodd, Commissioner Birute Ann Clottey, Commissioner Chris Vincent, Commissioner Scot Sasser, Town Attorney Susan L. Trevarthen, 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 of Streetscape Conceptual Design Recommendations for the Three (3) Easternmost Blocks of Commercial Boulevard (Town Manager Connie Hoffmann)

Jaime Correa of Jaime Correa & Associates presented the conceptual design in a detailed PowerPoint presentation.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mayor Minnet opened the meeting for public comment.

Mark Brown supported a downtown renovation project and the proposed concept. He said that although a number of local business owners indicated support for a beautification program, they had reservations. The Town should not rush forward with a plan until it had the full support of the people most affected by it. Mr. Brown believed if one of the three blocks was improved the citizens would be more amenable to the plans for the other blocks.

John Demko objected to the proposed design concept. He said it eliminated too much parking. Mr. Demko favored planting royal palms over coconut trees.

Fred Berger found that although limited, the plans pertaining to block three were reasonable.

Guy Contrada believed that one lane with parallel parking would back-up traffic across A1A. He suggested the sidewalks could be 16 or 18 feet rather than 24 feet; the pull-in parking should remain; there should be a median from A1A to El Mar Drive so cars and pedestrians knew where they should be. Mr. Contrada believed the proposed plaza in front of the pavilion could be smaller to allow enough room for drop offs and for two cars to pass. He thought the suggested crosswalk could be a problem when people were dropped off. Mr. Contrada suggested that the improvements include doing something with El Prado Park; numerous trees proposed for the end of Commercial Boulevard were likely to block the view of the beach.

Nancy Demko expressed concerns about the proposed design concept, including: lack of parking; the flow of traffic from A1A to the beach; parallel parking with only one lane causing traffic backups; the area between El Mar Drive and the beach without parking and a lot of trees that attract birds; a crosswalk from the park area to the pavilion would lead to traffic backups; adequate accessibility for fire and EMS trucks; and the location of disabled parking. Ms. Demko suggested putting the new park area west of A1A to attract more business to that area, or perhaps a green market. She and her family were against the proposed project concept.

Spiro Marchelos believed that with the proposed changes, the ability for emergency vehicles to access the area was inadequate and could lead to chaos, confusion and loss of life. Mr. Marchelos was willing to move his exit west but not where the design team suggested. He needed vehicles to access his lot with ease; they had patrons with large SUVs and limousines, as well as delivery trucks, garbage trucks, gas trucks, Florida, Power & Light trucks, etc. The turn space should allow easy access. Mr. Marchelos disagreed with parallel parking, and building a park with trees in front of the pavilion that would block the ocean view and the Anglin's Fishing Pier. He stated there appeared to be nothing in the plans for bike lanes or parking bikes. Mr. Marchelos urged the Commission not to approve the proposed concept as is.

Edmund Malkoon said a number of business owners agreed that improvements were needed but had concerns with the present design concept. Overall, he thought it was a good project that would enhance the community and protect the character of the Town. He supported a second public hearing.

Patrick Murphy felt the proposed conceptual design was less of a change and more of a facelift that would attract more business and revenue. He supported the implementation of the full plan.

Hannah Hempstead said that while walking to the beach, she observed numerous areas in Town that were unkempt and in need of maintenance; some presented safety hazards. She suggested before the Town spent $2,000,000 on a large renovation plan for the area, the funds should be spent cleaning up the "little" Town the citizens loved.

Louis Marchelos thought the conceptual design to be innovative, exciting and a good start, but there were issues. He said the increased number of trees would attract additional birds (already a problem). Moving the pier access a further west, closer to the building would hinder the future development of their business. Mr. Marchelos was concerned with losing the old charm of the Town but supported moving forward with the project. He believed the area by the pavilion did not need a 50/50 split with the pedestrian/roadway.

Bill Ciani said his conception included bringing the ocean and the beach more into view from Commercial Boulevard west of A1A; he had no desire to lose any parking, including angled parking. His tenants were very attached to the existing parking, as it was needed for their businesses. With the right tweaks in landscaping, the visibility of the beach from a distance was possible. The proposed park in front of the pavilion should be moved west of A1A to slow traffic down and help the businesses in that area; and the sidewalks should be 14 or 15 feet rather than 24 feet. Mr. Ciani preferred palm trees.

James Demko, owner of Aruba Beach Café and Anglins Fishing Pier, remarked on his family's long history with the Town, and he strongly opposed the proposed conceptual design. Their parking had always been insufficient, and losing 23 spaces might amount to a loss of $67,000 annually; the lost parking resulted in having no provision for handicap parking to allow those patrons to access the pavilion. He could not support the new park area, as it seemed to be building something in the middle of the road and placing pedestrians in harm's way, echoing concerns as to the number of trees increasing the existing problems with the birds. There would be traffic backups if there was only one lane coming into the Town, and a median was necessary to prevent drivers from taking unsafe chances on the road. He believed taking the parking away that was east of El Mar Drive would remove the equal opportunity business concept, as all the parking would be located west of El Mar Drive and affect the businesses to the east. The Town Commission and staff needed to consider the concerns voiced by the local business owners, as they were in the best position to know what changes would have a negative impact on their businesses.

Nectaria Chakas thanked Town Manager Hoffmann and the design team for meeting with her clients, owners of Aruba Beach Café, on a Saturday to view and discuss the plan. She mentioned four modifications her clients wished to see in the proposed plan and they pertained to block one where the Café and the pier were located and block two. One point was the reduction of the eastbound lanes to one lane and the reduction in parking, along with wider sidewalks; the latter would be beneficial but narrowing the roadway to one lane would lead to a bottleneck in the traffic, particularly when cars tried to parallel park. Thus, they felt it would be more prudent to leave it as two eastbound lanes. Another point dealt with the size of the area to be considered the new central square in block one that would have seating going around the plaza; they felt this, coupled with the proposed crosswalk, could pose a safety hazard to pedestrians.

Lawrence Wick stated the best way to clean up the conditions at the corner of A1A and Commercial Blvd. was to shut the vehicular traffic down for a minute and a half both ways and allow pedestrians go back and forth. Though this might cause some traffic delay, it would be safer for those walking across the road. He suggested removing the existing signs at the east end of Commercial Blvd. that said there was no stopping, parking or dropping off. The Town should consider reducing the area back there, taking out the light at the east end in the median, moving it ten feet to make it into two easy lanes to turn. He hoped to see more bicycle lanes; the Town should consider buying some lots, tearing down the buildings and building a parking facility, as parking was the number one problem in the Town.

John Keller commended the Town Commission and staff for the efforts made on the proposed project. He asked them to keep in mind that some of the local business owners did not fully support the conceptual plans. Taxpayers did not wish to see their taxes increase, and he thought it lacked the support of the general population.

Susan Delegal encouraged the Town Commission and staff to continue their consideration of the proposed project, as it was in its conceptual stage. Many of the concerns voiced at the meeting were valid, but they could be addressed once the project went beyond the conceptual stage. She felt the area was in much need of improvements but not to the detriment of the business owners, traffic circulation, etc. The improvements should be for all three blocks to have a well-integrated project.

With no one else wishing to speak, Mayor Minnet closed the public comment portion of the meeting.

Commissioner Clottey said the proposed conceptual plans were beautiful but felt the design team needed to listen more to the feedback given by the local business owners. She mentioned one factor that was always important to local businesses and residents was being able to see the beach on approaching the Town from west to east over the bridge on Commercial Blvd. This desire should be incorporated into the final plan.

Commissioner Sasser inquired as to the inclusion of curbs, as he wished to prevent water flowing into the businesses. Was it possible to reduce the area closest to the pavilion to allow entry into the pier further east as well as widen the drop off area; both were past requests of local businesses. He questioned if the lower trees in the plaza area would block the ocean view; if so, how could this be addressed.

Vice Mayor Dodd desired a better balance of shade. He believed the numerous trees made it difficult to see the businesses. The pavilion block had ten parking spaces and two disabled, and El Mar Drive had 13 to the north and 11 on the south. The plans indicate nine parking spaces to the north and nine parallel parking spaces to the south, representing a nearly 50 percent reduction in parking for that area; this was unacceptable. A suggested alternative was four spaces on the east side of the widened sidewalk outside the Village Grill and four spaces outside the Ice Cream shop; at the pier, the proposed plaza could be reduced to allow two disabled parking spaces and

possibly three load/unload end on facing east/west. Of the traffic engineer, he asked whether it was feasible for the southbound turn on A1A from the westbound traffic on Commercial Blvd. to take place at Bougainvilla Drive, thereby reducing the traffic in that area.

Commissioner Vincent asked what was the difference in the number of trees that would be removed and the number added. He asked if the impact on tree maintenance costs for the Town, and whether there could be a root problem with the proposed Live Oak trees. On the reduction of the parking by nine spaces, Commissioner Vincent believed they were used mostly by beachgoers; thus no adverse effect on businesses. The 25-foot sidewalk should be reduced, as it looked too far removed from businesses; the same went for the proposed sitting area by the pavilion, which should be moved further east to create more space between the proposed sitting area and the center median.

Commissioner Clottey asked whether Town staff could look into making the area a no-beach parking area or enforce a time limit. On the southern alley, she wondered if the Town could run into legal problems if it was made into a permanent one way out. This change also needed the sanction of the businesses on the north side. She echoed concerns with regard to the loss of parking spaces.

Mayor Minnet expressed concern as to: emergency vehicles and there being sufficient access way for them; handicapped parking. She wanted staff to show where the parking spaces would be relocated.

Mayor Minnet recessed the meeting at 8:45 p.m. and reconvened at 9:00 p.m.

Mr. Steven Fett, architect and urban designer, indicated the design team would respond to the questions block by block. For block one, where the pavilion was located, in reference to the pier parking, they tried to balance the design for business owners and residents alike. In terms of the ratio of roadway to sidewalks and the desired minimum 50/50 ratio between car space and pedestrian space, they felt this block should be more of a pedestrian environment and the maximum pedestrian involvement was best for the area to continue to thrive. It was not simply a street; it was a public area in which they wished to convey the impression of the pedestrian controlling the space, the exact opposite of the current use of the area. He said they hoped to create two public plazas, one larger, linked directly to the beach, and a smaller, more formal area that was a good place to wait for a restaurant or to sit and enjoy the view. Mr. Fett discussed the issue of the beach view coming west to east on Commercial Blvd, stating the designers wanted to maximize the view to the ocean, noting that the existing medians with the trees inhibited that view. He pointed out that in the design for blocks 1 and 2, the medians and the trees were removed from the roadways, thereby eliminating the obstruction of the ocean view. The center of the pavilion was the one area with an unobstructed view of the beach; at the edge of the pavilion where it turned there was an oblique view where the columns clustered, and it was at those sides that the design placed trees. Thus, the trees were placed to the north and south of the centerline of the pavilion. On the issue of the trees blocking the view, Mr. Fett advised the trees in the

plan would be less obstructive, and the design goal was not to overwhelm the area with trees, but for the vegetation to have less impact. In regards to the trees attracting too many birds, Mr. Fett believed the more shade there was, particularly in the hotter months, the more space was likely to be used and the more successful the surrounding businesses would be.
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Mr. Fett noted that the plans must meet code requirements, and they would address the width of the access ways for emergency vehicles as the plans developed. Regarding the crosswalk that would link the two plazas, Mr. Fett said the design team disagreed that it would create a dangerous situation, as the purpose of the crosswalk was to create a safer pedestrian crossing. The design encouraged pedestrians cross over to the beachfront plaza; at the crosswalk.

With regard to block two, Mr. Fett said the most significant concern was the reduction in parking spaces, and the design team would argue having great quality public spaces was worth it. Along El Mar Drive, there would be on-street parking. Aruba and the pier would be the only two businesses that did not have immediate parking in front of their businesses on the street, but they had their own valet lots. Mr. Fett remarked at the prior meetings, particularly during the charette, they repeatedly heard members of the public ask for all of the parking to be eliminated in block two. Also, the design team felt strongly there should be some parking to maintain the perception that it was possible to get a parking spot as you passed by local businesses.

Mr. Fett explained the Live Oak was an appropriate tree because of its root structure and taller, better shade canopy, and they recommended trimming the trees relatively high so pedestrian and vehicular traffic had sight exposure to the storefronts. He agreed the 25-foot sidewalks were wide, but this afforded the possibility of having sidewalk dining with sufficient space for pedestrian traffic. The downtown area was the heart and soul of the Town, and this was the best place to have such space allocation. He noted the turning of the two-lane intersection into one lane road had little impact, as the existing two lanes stacked into one lane at the intersection currently.

In regards to block three, Mr. Fett stated the changes to the streets consisted of installing more shade and street presence. The trees would have a high canopy and would not block the visibility for the businesses, and they would provide shade. He understood parking was a general concern and needed further consideration, mentioning the new lot west of A1A was relatively close by. They understood that with the restriping of the A1A lot, some 30 additional spaces would be created, which was close to the amount of parking being considered for elimination in the three blocks together.

Traffic Consultant Molly Hughes responded all the streets would have curbs. She explained the shared street was one in which bike and cars both used the street, and it was done mostly on low speed streets. This was one of the reasons they recommended narrowing the lane; traffic would slow down and businesses would get more visibility. If they did not put the bikes in the lane with the cars on the east two

blocks of Commercial Blvd. and El Mar Drive, a bike lane would have to be cut out of the sidewalk. She had conducted some counts on a Sunday at the intersection of Commercial and A1A, and there were over 50 bicycle crossings in 60 minutes. The design team was willing to go with what the Commission and residents desired, whether there should be a dedicated bike lane or a shared lane.

As to eliminating parking spaces, Ms. Hughes stated the only change the design team recommended for El Mar Drive parking north and south of Commercial Blvd. between the two alleys was to open the median opposite the alleys. The parking spaces would be removed on either side; four at the north alley and four at the south alley to open up the space and make turning movements possible. On the A1A, they recommended parallel parking on the east side to replace the present angled parking; she emphasized this was a pedestrian safety improvement. Pedestrians did not want to walk along the sidewalk adjacent to northbound travel lane; the space was more of a space to back onto to exit the parking space and not sidewalk. For the entire study area there were 117 existing spaces, and the team recommendations parallel parking or no parking resulted in the loss of 40 spaces in the study area.

In reference to reintroducing parallel parking in the beach block, including sufficient handicapped spaces, Ms. Hughes commented that the location of the handicapped parking spaces would be determined. In response to a question by Vice Mayor Dodd, Ms. Hughes thought elimination of an eastbound right-turn lane east of Bougainvilla Drive would work. The area had a very high level of service. She explained, for the right-turn lane, they would not force people to turn right onto Bougainvilla Drive, and the Town Commission, staff and the public needed to determine if this was something they wished to do. She also noted the plan had to be reviewed by the County where the guidelines as to access ways for emergency vehicles were very strict.

Teresita Falcon, the landscape architect for the project, reviewed portions of the presentation related to the trees, stating the trees represented in the drawings would be spaced farther apart than depicted in the renderings. The team suggested relocating existing trees to other areas of the Town and planting new trees in the subject area. Root barriers and structural soil would prevent the roots of the Live Oaks from spreading and undermining the sidewalks.

Commissioner Vincent expressed concern that the roots growing downward could adversely affect the Town's sewer and drainage system. Ms. Falcon noted this was the reason the team suggested the alternative to use of the Pigeon Plum tree.

Mayor Minnet sought clarification that there would be four trees per row in the proposed area of the secondary pavilion. Ms. Falcon answered yes. She noted royal palms trees were not high salt tolerant and would not fare well in that location.

Mayor Minnet said there was a general consensus among business owners that there was a need for beautification of the area. Many had no wish to lose parking spaces, but

acknowledged that increasing the amount of pedestrian traffic in the area would facilitate improvement in their business revenue.

Commissioner Clottey asked if Ms. Hughes was aware of why the medians by the alleyways were closed. Ms. Hughes said she was not able to determine the reason.

Commissioner Clottey informed her that the area was closed off because some of the drivers that used the alleyways created an extremely dangerous situation.

Commissioner Clottey asked Town staff to review the archives regarding opposition to routing the southbound traffic to Bougainvilla Drive when FDOT made the same proposal.

Mayor Minnet stated that the Commission needed to decide whether they wanted to give direction to the designers to move forward.

Commissioner Sasser supported moving forward with the project, stating small compromises were possible. He reiterated his suggestions: a reduction of the proposed sidewalks to allow wider lanes both east and west for people to get into the parallel parking without impeding traffic flow either way; and decreasing the plaza closest to the pavilion to the west side to allow ingress and egress from the pier parking lot to be where the Marchelos requested, and this would increase the turning radius. He desired further discussion on the types of plants and landscaping for the area. Commissioner Sasser felt there was a conflict with having bicycles and cars sharing the same lanes; he preferred the bicycles to have their own lane.

Vice Mayor Dodd supported the proposed concept design from its inception and wished to move forward and break ground in July 2012. However, moving forward required the full support of the local businesses; he reiterated his objection to losing ten plus two disabled parking spaces to achieve the creation of a public space, as two plazas with no parking in that block posed a hardship to the area businesses. He believed the parking in that area could be adjusted to one-hour parking to discourage beach parking. The responses by the design team to the concerns expressed by the public and the Commission appeared mostly to be in support of the concept itself rather than how it was possible to put some of the proposed eliminated parking back into the plans. He said reducing 117 parking spaces by 40, within the critical two blocks of reducing 34 spaces to 18, threatened the ability of the businesses thrive. He supported the beautification of all three blocks, but the design was in need of adjustment before proceeding.

Commissioner Clottey supported the project concept but felt it needed considerable tweaking before proceeding. Further public meetings for residents and businesses to voice their concerns were needed after the plans were adjusted. She believed the Town had to find a balance between the residents and businesses; losing 40 parking spaces seemed to create a situation that might severely hurt the businesses.

Commissioner Vincent supported moving forward. He wanted dedicated bike lanes, and the installation of bike racks incorporated in the design. On the matter of opening the median on the south end coming out of the alleyway, Commissioner Vincent believed vehicles should be directed south to Flamingo Avenue and out to A1A south.

Mayor Minnet summarized Commission consensus to move forward with the project with adjustments: examine the impact of reducing the size of the sidewalks in terms of accommodating sidewalk cafés; address the enforcement of no bikes on sidewalks; how the Town could enforce a one-hour time limit for beach parking; the design team needed to meet with the businesses again to discuss and seek to address their concerns. The next presentation of the design concept should include bike racks and where they might be located. Move forward in a positive but slow manner to bring the concept to a point at which the community could agree to its actual execution.

Mayor Minnet was disappointed to see the desire to cater to cars when it was to pedestrians who would help the downtown businesses succeed. It was pedestrian traffic that would go into shops.

Commissioner Sasser remarked it was cars that brought that brought the pedestrians. He reminded the Mayor to include in the summarized direction for the design team to reduce the plaza for a larger turnaround to allow ingress into the pier and for the drop off area, possibly allowing some traffic to traverse the area.

Mayor Minnet directed the design team to explore the possibility. She stated both Town staff and the design team had sufficient direction for further discussion on the February 14 Commission meeting.

Town Manager Hoffmann reviewed the Commission's directions. She would let the Commission know what date would be best to make a follow-up presentation to the Commission.

Mayor Minnet reopened the meeting for public comment.

Bill Ciani stated the removal of the angled parking to parallel parking outside his property would likely result in the loss of his tenant, as access to the existing parking was the essence of the tenant's business. Mr. Ciani believed that in making the alley two-way traffic, there would be no place for delivery trucks to access the two restaurants.

Ken Kugler stated that insufficient parking had always been an issue for the Town, mostly due to the continuous flow of people flooding the Town's streets. He suggested building a parking garage and allowing pedestrians to walk past the shops in the area.

Mr. Nixon thought the proposed conceptual plan was a good design and would be improved with the additional tweaking; meeting with the business community once more to address their concerns was good.

Patrick Murphy requested a computer animated presentation at the next meeting rather than a schematic rendering of how the design would look, as well as a comprehensive traffic study. He believed that a visual illustration would achieve a better understanding of the plans.

Paul Novak stated that he owned property on block 2 and that parallel parking would be a problem, but one he could live with. The size of sidewalks had to be increased, as the only types of businesses that were likely to come to the area were restaurants, and providing for sidewalk café uses was a positive. He stated he was persuaded by Mr. Fett's presentation.

With no one else wishing to speak, Mayor Minnet closed the public comment portion of the meeting.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Mayor Dodd made a motion to adjourn. With no further business before the Commission, Mayor Minnet adjourned the meeting at 10:25 p.m.

Mayor Roseann Minnet

ATTEST:

Town Clerk June White, CMC

Date 2/22/2012