

PLANNING COMMISSION WORK SESSION

Tuesday, August 23, 2016

5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

I. PLANNING COMMISSION WORK SESSION

Members Present: Chairman John Santoski, Commissioners Kurt Keesecker, Genevieve Keller, Jody Lahendro, and Lisa Green

Staff Present: Missy Creasy, Brian Haluska, Alex Ikefuna, Ryan Davidson

Call to Order: by Chair Santoski at 5:00 p.m.

AGENDA

1. Capital Improvement Program
FY 2017 – 2021 CIP Process Priorities

An overview of the Capital Improvement Program was presented by Ryan Davidson.

It was also noted that City Council and the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors signed a series of memorandums of understanding in Spring 2016. One line item indicated that the two localities would collaborate on a small-area plan for Hydraulic-U.S. 29 to help improve the transportation network

Commissioner Keller asked about staff costs for maintenance of projects and if they are in the CIP.

Commissioner Lahendro asked about timing of operational costs allocation.

Commissioner Green wanted to look at other items such as emergency communications equipment and maintenance of that equipment. She wanted to look at rental vs. purchase costs of equipment to stay ahead of the game.

Mr. Davidson said there wasn't much cost savings between rental and purchase. We did explore leasing options but we have to measure expenses and take all factors into account.

Chairman Santoski asked Planning Commissioners about their priorities.

Commissioner Keesecker asked about funding priorities and the code audit. It was noted that code audit expenses would likely be more operational in nature. He also asked how small area plans could be funded.

Ms. Creasy noted that funds are available for small area planning but there is a need for prioritization on both the City and County side. There have been a number of discussions on potential projects but both groups have not determined where to place funding.

Commissioner Keller said we have plans for how to transition to dollars for hard projects, street and sidewalks intersection changes because of Streets That Works. How do we as planning commissioners make recommendations about that when we don't have those facts and figures necessarily at hand. She believes Streets That Work should be a priority since we have put a lot of work into developing a program for what we envisioned would enhance our street and sidewalk network. We need to be moving toward implementation.

It was noted that funding should be provided specifically to implement Streets that Work. Following extensive discussion it was noted that Streets that Work will be a consideration where it is applicable and a reporting of implementation will be shared with the Commission

The Commission then reviewed prior year's CIP priorities and made adjustments so the following will be included in the CIP package this year:

The following are the priorities identified by the Planning Commission for the FY 2018 – 2022 Capital Improvement Program process:

- Provide ample robust funding for broader planning initiatives currently underway including:
 - o Small Area Plans/Adjacent Area Plans
 - o River Renaissance
 - o Green Infrastructure and Environmental programs

- Provide ample robust funding to implement place based initiatives including:
 - o SIA
 - o West Main Street
 - o Belmont Bridge
 - o Streets That Work
 - o Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan
 - o Affordable Housing – Fulfillment of 2025 Vision

2. Small Area Plans

Brian Haluska, Principle Planner opened the discussion on Small Area Plans

Alex Ikefuna, NDS Director advised the group to focus on other areas like River corridor or Cherry Avenue

Mr. Keesecker said there are three ways to describe the Small Area Plans:

- Large – holistic partnership plans like the SIA and West Main
- Medium – using leveraging items with other groups
- Small – targeting items with staff and consultants

Mr. Haluska said there is a significant expansion of the University of Virginia Medical Center and the new hotels are expected to bring more traffic to Cherry Avenue.

Brian Hogg, UVA's liaison to the Commission, commented that Cherry Avenue strikes him as a street that is about to come under immense pressure, with the hotel at the corner of Ridge and with the huge enlargement of the University hospital. The completion of those two projects has the potential to have a terrific influence on that street because it's a regular path of travel. He said if he were choosing he would encourage us to start looking at Cherry Avenue because it gives us the opportunity to get a little bit ahead while the two projects are under construction and think about what could and should happen to help the neighborhood as a national register neighborhood. It has a lot of human and architectural character with the avenue itself being where it all falls down a bit and maybe there is something the city could do to anticipate changes that would help enforce the neighborhood and make it a good travel corridor for people on the street.

Commissioner Keesecker said he agrees that Cherry Avenue is more pressing. He said the zoning needs to be looked at and asked if we could get a review.

The Planning Commission suggested the possibility of hiring a consultant to create the plan.

Ms. Creasy said soliciting bids and choosing a winner would take six to eight months.

Chairman Santoski acknowledged that there is neither funding nor a clear path to how the plan will be created and implemented, but it is important for the commission to set a priority.

Chairman Santoski said it seems everyone agrees that Cherry Avenue is top priority. The two other locations toured by the commission eventually will be studied.

Commissioners agreed that the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission should take the lead on a small-area plan for the intersection of U.S. 29 and Hydraulic Road.

Commissioner Keller said it makes sense for the TJPDC to do this because they've been so heavily involved in U.S. 29, and it makes a good transition project for them because they have background knowledge.

Chairman Santoski asked Commissioners Keller and Keesecker to come up with a list of ideas for the full Planning Commission to consider.

Commissioner Lahendro moved that the Planning Commission chose Cherry Avenue as a top priority for a Small Area Plan. (Commissioners Cory Claiborne and Taneaia Dowell were not present), seconded by Commissioner Green, motion passed 4-1, (Commissioner Keller voted no).

Commissioner Keller discussed that a study of Cherry Avenue should be part of a larger examination of community zoning in Charlottesville. She suggested using the PLACE Design Task Force to do the supplemental work or perhaps use them on an on call basis for part of the plan.

Ms. Creasy said the city lacks both the money and staff time to oversee a more comprehensive effort at this time.

Commissioner Lahendro said he hesitates to do that because it's hard enough getting staff time just to do Cherry Avenue.

Ms. Creasy said staff might be able to devote a few hours a month to work on the Cherry Avenue plan and that other planners already are devoted to other initiatives, such as updating design manuals to comply with Streets That Work and working on the West Main Street plan.

Commissioner Lahendro said we can't wait a year to do Cherry Avenue.

Mr. Haluska suggested the next step for Cherry Avenue could be to have a city planner meet with the neighborhood. He said part of the issue that he sees coming from the neighborhood is related to information about zoning and about how these changes have happened. He said we need to talk about the issues and the concerns because there may be some education needed about the rules.

Bill Emory, who campaigned for Woolen Mills to be selected for the city's next small-area plan, supported the choice of Cherry Avenue. He took the tour in June. He said going from there and coming back to the Woolen Mills was like going from purgatory to paradise, and they really have many more issues than we're facing.

Chairman Santoski said we need to send a message to City Council, and he said he would write a letter to elected officials asking for more resources.

The Planning Commission selected Cherry Avenue corridor for a small-area plan to help its neighborhoods cope with looming development.

Commissioner Lahendro said he agrees with Cherry Avenue being the higher priority and not only because of the pressures, but combined with the derelict buildings and open lots that are there just waiting for redevelopment.

The Planning Commission is considering other areas for the next small-area plan such as Woolen Mills and the intersection of U.S. 29 and Hydraulic Road.

Adjourn: 7:35 p.m.