

TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND
Planning Commission Meeting
Wednesday, January 20, 2016
3:00p.m. – Benjamin M. Racusin Council Chambers

Commissioners Present: Chairman Alex Brown, Vice Chairman Peter Kristian, Jim Gant, Bryan Hughes, Caroline McVitty, Barry Taylor and Todd Theodore

Commissioners Absent: Judd Carstens, Lavon Stevens

Town Staff Present: Shawn Colin, Deputy Director of Community Development
Brian Hulbert, Staff Attorney
Darrin Shoemaker, Traffic & Transportation Engineer
Jeff Buckalew, Traffic Engineer

1. Call to Order

2. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

3. Roll Call

4. Freedom of Information Act Compliance

Public notification of this meeting has been published, posted, and mailed in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and the Town of Hilton Head Island requirements.

5. Approval of Agenda

The Planning Commission **approved** the agenda as submitted by general consent.

6. Approval of Minutes

The Planning Commission **approved** the minutes of the December 16, 2015 meeting as presented by general consent.

7. Appearance by Citizens on Items Unrelated to Today's Agenda

None

8. Unfinished Business - None

9. New Business

Annual Traffic Report.

Mr. Shoemaker stated that this Annual Traffic Report and recommendation are prepared and submitted to the Planning Commission in accordance with the requirements outlined in the Town's Land Management Ordinance (LMO). The report summarizes trends relating to traffic demand within the Town, includes analyses of all of the Town's signalized intersections and Sea Pines Circle relative to the Town's operational goals, and includes mitigation recommendations for those instances where intersections are found to be deficient relative to the goals. The intersections of William Hilton Parkway with Squire Pope Road/Chamberlin Drive and Sea Pines Circle were found to be operating out of compliance with the identified goals.

The report is based on traffic counts that are collected annually by the Engineering Division each June on a typical weekday that is intended to approximate the 45th-highest traffic volume day of the calendar year, the Town's benchmark for design purposes. The traffic counts collected annually and summarized herein also become the Town's background (or "existing") dataset for use by staff and consultants in preparing Traffic Impact Analysis Plan studies that are required as a result of development for submission to the Town in accordance with the LMO.

The only intersections found to be non-compliant with the Town's operational goals as outlined in the LMO in June of 2015 were the intersections of William Hilton Parkway / Squire Pope Road / Chamberlin Drive and Sea Pines Circle. The former may be mitigated with widening improvements to William Hilton Parkway to the west of the intersection that may extend as far west as Blue Heron Point Road. Beaufort County is also examining the feasibility of constructing widening improvements to US 278 in this vicinity, so coordination between the Town, County and State in both design and funding identification efforts will be imperative to operationally mitigate this area.

Major upgrades or revisions to the Sea Pines Circle roundabout are being examined by a private consultant under contract with the Town in association with the Town's Circle-to-Circle Committee charged with developing recommendations for review by Town Council. Several improvements that can be implemented on the approaches to and in the vicinity of Sea Pines Circle are outlined in Part seven of this report, including motorist guidance, signing, and marking improvements that can be implemented in the short term at relatively low cost.

In advance of or in lieu of a major geometric improvement to the Sea Pines Circle intersection, it is recommended that interim efforts focus on reducing traffic demand entering the intersection. Despite the analysis results indicating operational deficiencies on the Palmetto Bay Road approach to the circle, it is suggested that based on actual field conditions, operational problems on this approach are minor when compared with those that periodically develop on the William Hilton Parkway and Greenwood Drive approaches. Strategies to lessen traffic demand on the circle should focus on these approaches, and more specifically, left-turn movements from these approaches that have a greater tendency to generate vehicle conflicts and adversely impact overall operations.

Strategies that may be considered to reduce the left-turn demand on the William Hilton Parkway approach to the circle include the placement of signage serving on-island motorists in advance of the New Orleans Road signal directing motorists to Pope Avenue and "Beaches" via New Orleans Road.

Commissioner Hughes inquired about year to year comparisons and what is the standard deviation. Mr. Shoemaker replied that the methodology used has all volume data collected in 15 minute periods. Commission Hughes stated that there seems to be a dramatic increase on the south end. Mr. Shoemaker stated with the redevelopment of the Shelter Cove Centre there is more activity there.

Commissioner Kristian inquired as to the Town's obligation to bring failing intersections into compliance?

Mr. Shoemaker replied that he is obligated to report and make recommendations. The Town makes reasonable efforts to bring failing intersections into compliance, it is a goal on an ongoing basis but there is no legal obligation to address those deficiencies.

Chairman Brown asked how the level of standards is determined at a circle. How you develop that standard? Mr. Shoemaker stated that the Sea Pines Circle is analyzed as a generic roundabout. Chairman Brown suggested that Sea Pines Circle be listed comparing year to year. Chairman Brown asked if the 150 average delay number is acceptable. Mr. Shoemaker stated that motorists have a sense of what they will find tolerable. Commissioner Gant stated that a discussion has not been held as to whether the 150 number is too high or low; it is equivalent to the longest light at any of our stoplights.

Commissioner Theodore stated that there is a different level of delay in a circle since the driver is filtering in. Commissioner Theodore asked if the alternative routes to the beach will be able to take into account whether the intersection on Pope Avenue can handle the capacity. Mr. Shoemaker stated that there will be a new intersection on Pope Avenue and New Orleans expanding the approach from 3 lanes to 4 lanes. We expect that intersection to better handle the side approach.

Mr. Shoemaker stated that the signage near Driessen Beach have lost their reflectiveness and have become faded and shabby. He contacted SCDOT requesting more prominent signage for that area. He has not received a reply from SCDOT and therefore is moving ahead on his own to ensure new signage is placed near Driessen Beach.

Public Comment:

Mr. George Paleta complimented Mr. Shoemaker on his presentation and stated the importance of implementing new signage on Hilton Head Island. Mr. Paleta also praised Mr. Shoemaker on his determination and initiative to replace some worn signage on the island rather than waiting on SCDOT.

Ms. Kate Keep stated that she was at the Circle to Circle meeting when SRS delivered their report on state of the Sea Pines Circle. The Sea Pines Circle is getting worse and worse and as long as the Town keeps approving projects and more tourists continue to come here, it is going to get still worse. Ms. Keep asked the Commission to be careful that these significant failures do not get glossed over.

Dr. Karl Engelman stated that a delay time of 2.5 minutes has very different consequences on a busy road heading into the Sea Pines Circle. This back up of traffic blocks the intersection of Office Park Road and Greenwood Drive. Sea Pines Circle has failed and the Commissioners should live up to their obligation and cease new development such as the USCB project because Town staff gave false and misleading information.

Mr. Chester Williams stated that the perception of delay varies greatly from one driver to another. Mr. Williams stated that he travels through the Sea Pines Circle multiple times a day and rarely feels inordinately delayed going through the circle. Mr. Williams referred to the following paragraph on page 5 of the Annual Traffic Report:

The current version of the software package that performs the intersection analysis methodology as outlined in the Highway Capacity Manual produces average delay per vehicle quantifications but does not calculate intersection volume-to-capacity ratio. The steering committee that develops and periodically updates the Highway Capacity Manual no longer endorses the use of intersection v/c ratio as an operational measure of effectiveness. The current version of the manual itself continues to include instructions for calculating this ratio by hand, however, and this was done for all forty six signalized intersection analyses summarized in Tables Four and Five of this report on pages 11 and 12, respectively.

Mr. Williams asked Mr. Shoemaker if it is time for the Town to reconsider its traffic service level goals and how they are measured.

Mr. Shoemaker referred to a table in the Annual Traffic Report showing the intersection volume to capacity ratio. Mr. Shoemaker stated that you will not find intersection volume to capacity ratio on this output data summary sheet. The current (2010) edition of the Transportation Research Board's Highway Capacity no longer endorses intersection volume to capacity ratio as a true reliable measure of effectiveness and purposely deleted it from the software. This item must be calculated by hand on each analysis as a per lane capacity. Town staff feels it still holds value.

Chairman Brown stated that the level of standards pointed out different variables and asked if we are using the same "measuring stick" for the whole Island and has that level of standard been reviewed in the LMO lately? Chairman Brown suggested this Commission review the LMO and implement a level of standard by area on the Island.

After a brief discussion among the Commissioners, Commissioner Gant suggested that prior to this going to Town Council, the Planning Commissioners should write their comments down regarding this complicated topic and continue at the next Planning Commission meeting as Unfinished Business.

Chairman Brown asked the Commissioners to submit their comments to Mr. Colin and he will forward to Ms. Lopko so their comments can be compiled and presented at the next Planning Commission meeting.

Commissioner Gant made a **motion to table** the Annual Traffic Report until the next Planning Commission meeting as Unfinished Business in order for all the Commissioners to organize their comments on the traffic report and those comments can be compiled into one document and forwarded with their recommendation to Town Council. Commissioner Kristian **seconded** and the motion **passed** with a vote of 7-0.

10. Chairman's Report - None

11. Committee Report: Mr. Hughes reported that the Capital Improvements Program Committee will meet on Thursday, January 28, 2016 to finalize recommendations for Fiscal Year 2017.

12. Staff Reports - None

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Submitted By:

Approved By:

Eileen Wilson, Secretary

2/3/2016

Alex Brown, Chairman