

TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE

Date: February 22, 2016

Time: 10:00 A.M.

Members Present: Lee Edwards, Kim Likins, Tom Lennox

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Steve Riley, Scott Liggett, Jeff Buckalew, Darrin Shoemaker, Julian Walls, Shawn Colin, Charles Cousins, Brian Hulbert, Susan Simmons, Derrick Coaxum

Others Present: Gary Kubic, *Beaufort County Administrator*, Greg Wynn, *GW Services*, Ben Lewis, *HDR ICA, Inc.*, Frank Soule, *Island Recreation Association*

Media Present: Don McLoud, *The Island Packet*

1. Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m.

2. FOIA 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.

3. Committee Business:

Approval of Minutes: Mr. Lennox moved to approve the Minutes of December 15, 2015. Mrs. Likins seconded. The Minutes of December 15, 2015 were approved.

Mr. Lennox moved to approve the Minutes of January 25, 2016. Mrs. Likins seconded. The Minutes of January 25, 2016 were approved.

4. Unfinished Business:

None

5. New Business

1. Proposed Sale of Cordillo Courts

Steve Riley, Town Manager, stated staff recommends the Public Facilities Committee finalize a recommendation to Town Council for the disposition of the 1.42 acre Cordillo tennis parcel.

Staff recommends the following for consideration by the Committee:

- Sale of the 1.42 acres to the Cordillo Courts and Hedges Regimes.
- Sale price of \$265,000. Of this amount,
 - \$5,000 shall be payable at closing.
 - \$10,000 shall be in the form of a non-interest bearing note payable two years from closing.

- \$250,000 shall be in the form of a non-interest bearing note payable on demand.

The obligations of the Town prior to closing are:

- The Town will remove the four existing tennis courts, including the fencing, light poles and associated improvements. The Town will grade and seed the area. (Estimated cost \$10,000.)
- The Town will repair existing asphalt and curbing on the parcel. (Estimate cost: \$20,000.)
- Gross estimated expenditures by the Town prior to closing, \$30,000.

Mr. Riley concluded his remarks and asked if there were any questions from the Committee. Mrs. Likins asked based on your recommendations, are the Condo Associations in agreement to that? Mr. Riley said he just spoke to Mr. Wynn who does the property management for the Association and he said there are a few issues they would like to sit down and go over about the details of the transaction, but in general they like it. Mrs. Likins asked if they did any kind of cost estimate on what it would cost to irrigate and sod the play area. Mr. Riley said yes, and it would cost approximately \$22,000.

Mr. Edwards stated he would now like to hear from the different Property Owners Associations. Mr. Greg Wynn, GW Services stated they are the management agent for both Cordillo Courts and The Hedges. These are two complexes that consist of 136 units overall. As Mr. Riley explained, this sits in the front of their property at the entrance way. The courts obviously need a great deal of attention. It is not a viable use long term. We had a meeting early on at the request of the Mayor with Island Rec Center and NOC and representatives of the Regime. It was quite clear from that meeting that the recreational plans did not fit for the Town in terms of trying to make that a viable court option and with the plans for the park going forward. Both the regimes have a great interest in maintaining that because it is an intricate part of their property in terms of they can't gate it, they can't make a lot of improvements because it is all public access as it comes through. Both of our Boards have had an opportunity to review the proposal from the Town under date of February 8, 2016. We have a lot of questions, but what we would like to request is for representatives of the two Regimes to sit down with the Town – get some questions answered and try and come to terms with this. Both Regimes are very much interested in maintaining the continuity of the property to have control over it long term. If it was ever going to be redeveloped and there are no plans at this point, it would obviously be easier to redevelop if the two Regimes had title to it.

Several representatives of Neighborhood Outreach Connection (NOC) spoke to the committee stressing the importance of open space and recreation facilities within the community for the children as well as for the stability of the community. They also advised the Committee that more than 180 children live in the Cordillo Courts and Hedges. The children live in poverty and because of the low income and lack of transportation, their opportunity to use facilities outside their neighborhoods such as

the Rec Center are almost nil. The Town needs to ensure that these children have an open space and a playground to enjoy.

Frank Soule, Island Recreation Association stated they spoke about Mr. Riley's proposal at length at their last Board Meeting and believe he has put together a really good proposal. We are on the right track. It should be a neighborhood park, should be open space and a place where kids can play. We look forward to supporting this as we move forward. Mr. Edwards asked Mr. Soule if he believed this should continue to be a Town owned facility or do you think as in Steve's proposal go to the owners of the Hedges and Cordillo Courts. Mr. Soule said we cannot go through another summer with the way those courts are – whether it is a Town facility or owned by The Hedges and Cordillo Courts. It needs to be viable for the people in the community. The reality is it needs to be open space where people can go play and utilize it. Steve's proposal is the first proposal coming forward where we are actually going to try and rectify what is going on down there.

Mrs. Likins stated she agrees the children need a place to play. We have a lot of children there and they do not have the ability to have transportation to get to places like Island Rec or the Boys and Girls Club. To create open space opportunities I think is critical. My concern is that I don't know that we should create a full park because we are investing significantly in Coligny Park which is a public park which is in walkable distance. There are lots of other neighborhoods down there and we are not talking about going in and creating playgrounds in those neighborhoods. The best solution in my opinion would be to turn the property back over, take out the tennis courts and create green space. I would even support making sure we sod and irrigate so that it is viable long term. Take care of that and then allow the property owners with the residents figure out what they want to do with the space once they have it. If we determine that there needs to be a Town owned playground in that area then I think we have to look at the entire area and the Town land that is available and find out where is the best place for every child in that area.

Mr. Lennox said he agreed with everything Mrs. Likins said and stated the proposal that Mr. Riley offered gives due consideration, protection and control to all the parties to that agreement, specifically the Homeowners Associations in that area. I think it is fair and equitable to all. A public park inside this confined area does not make sense for the reasons Mrs. Likins mentioned. I would recommend we approve this as presented and use this as a starting point. This represents an offer to the Homeowners Association and if there is further discussion and a counter offer changing terms and conditions, that would be represented in the form of a counter offer and then would come back to this Committee.

Mr. Edwards stated he has gone back and forth with this quite a bit over the last few months and agrees with the folks from NOC – we need something there for those children and we need something for that neighborhood. However, I agree with Mrs. Likins, Mr. Lennox and Mr. Riley that we should not build a public park in what is essentially a private area. However, I would like to see us do more than we are talking about in this proposal. If we are going to do this proposal, I agree that we need to spend a little extra money on the sod and irrigation.

Mrs. Likins mentioned it might be a good idea for the Parks and Recreation Commission to have a look for the need in that area in general and look at the other complexes that are available in light of our Town land and let us know if there is a recommendation you want to make to better serve that section of our Community. Heather Rath, Chairman of the Parks and Recreation Commission stated the Commission would be happy to take this on.

Mrs. Likins moved to accept the recommendation presented by staff with the slight amendment of adding that we include we will irrigate and sod the green space. Mr. Lennox seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Recommendation for County's Jenkins Island US278 Access Management Transportation Project

Darrin Shoemaker, Traffic and Transportation Engineer stated it is staff's recommendation Town Council adopt a supportive position endorsing the County's recommended alternative solution (2-A, also known as the Restricted Crossing U-Turn or Super Street option) for transportation safety and access management improvements along US 278 on Jenkins Island. It is important that Town Council act on this item at the next available meeting (March 1) in order to precede the Town's presentation to the Beaufort County Sales Tax Commission on March 8. Staff further recommends that the Town's capital improvement project on US 278 from Squire Pope Road to Jenkins Island be coordinated with the County's project and expedited to the maximum extent practical based on funding strategies.

Beaufort County has undertaken an exhaustive engineering study of access management and safety improvements along the US 278 Jenkins Island corridor. The County and their engineering consultant both recommend alternative 2-A as the preferred alternative. The Windmill Harbour POA traffic committee also strongly supports Alternative 2-A, while the official reviews and position of the SCDOT are still pending at this time.

While both the frontage road and Super Street alternatives have merits, Alternative 2-A could be built much faster at much less cost and focuses on conveyance and safety improvements in the US 278 right of way. Engineering staff recommends the Town adopt a position supporting the County's preferred alternative based primarily on the safety and operational efficiencies, cost and time savings, and also due to the positive synergy it will provide towards other important transportation projects that are needed in this corridor. This project is proposed to be funded solely by the County, via the 2016 sales tax referendum or other means; however the Town will be asked to donate areas of right-of-way as required from the Jenkins Tract.

In 2012 Town Council acted to formally support the construction of the Bluffton Parkway Phase 5-A (Flyover) project on a condition that the State, County and Town make their best efforts to ensure that access management improvements to US 278 in the Windmill Harbour area be coordinated too as to be implemented at the same time the flyover project is completed. Interim improvements by the SCDOT were constructed this past fall. This County project would complete those improvements in the area.

Based on the latest annual Traffic Monitoring and Evaluation Report, the Town's top traffic deficiency is the US 278 – Squire Pope Road intersection. The solution to this problem entails improvements adding through lanes and auxiliary lanes to the US 278 corridor from this intersection west to Jenkins Island that would meet the end of the widening as proposed within the recommended Alternate 2-A project. This is a Town CIP project now being studied and shown as future construction with timing depending on funding. Once these projects are constructed, the bridges connecting the Island to the mainland would be the last remaining four-lane section from SC 170 to the Cross Island Parkway interchange. With the completed mainland widening of US 278, the Bluffton Parkway extension and now this project, more urgency by the SCDOT may be assigned to the advancement of a bridge replacement project. An endorsement of Alternative 2-A appears to be the optimal strategy toward the provision of a widened US 278 section on the Town's side of the bridges to the mainland in the near term.

The two signalized intersections proposed for Jenkins Island will reroute minor street left-turn movements to median U-Turn crossovers on a widened US 278, thereby providing major advantages, including reduced delay and congestion for through traffic on US 278 and reduced opportunities for collisions compared to conventional designs. Each would only stop traffic in one direction, so a motorist passing through the corridor in either direction would only encounter one traffic signal. The consultant's engineering study projects reduced travel times for eastbound and westbound US 278 during the morning and afternoon peak volume periods, respectively, in 2035 compared with existing conditions. Average total delay for US 278 through motorists at the two proposed signalized intersections is less than 13 seconds during the afternoon peak and less than 6 seconds during the morning peak, according to the study.

Preliminary drawings for Alternate 2-A, show a right-of-way requirement of approximately 0.77 acres of Town-owned land from the Jenkins Island tract on the northern side of US 278. This is compared with the approximate 3.00 acres required to build the frontage road proposed in Alternate 1 as outlined in the study. Alternate 2-A also has far less environmental impacts on Jenkins Island. Unlike Alternate 1, Alternate 2-A does not require the Windmill Harbour community to establish a second, full-time egress-only secured access, and avoids impacts in the vicinity of the Blue Heron Point community that have been opposed by some of its residents.

Mr. Shoemaker concluded his remarks stating that Mr. Ben Lewis, HDR ICA, Inc., Beaufort County's Consultant that developed the study, identified this as the recommended solution is joining us this morning and desires to make some remarks. Mr. Lewis gave a very detailed presentation on their study and their recommended solution.

Mrs. Likins said she was very concerned about the safety issue of putting a light that close to the bridge. Mr. Lewis said that the speeds on 278 and those on the bridge are excessive. One of our first recommendations is to actually reduce that speed limit to 45. There are ways to mitigate those rear end crashes. We could put and probably will put advance warning for signal and those flashing lights that state be prepared to stop when flashing. That is the best way to minimize rear end collisions.

Mr. Shoemaker stated staff's recommendation is given after much consideration. We are very concerned about the prospects on Jenkins Island as well, however, after much review we are convinced that the additional through put capacity provided by the widening six lane section will more than negate the adverse impacts of the signals placement of the very infrequent periodic stopping of traffic by the signals.

Mr. Lennox said he is sure there has been a lot of consideration given to what may happen to the bridge and whether the existing bridge is used or a new bridge is constructed and what you would have to do to align or configure these proposed changes to a new bridge. Mr. Shoemaker said part of the thought process that went into our staff recommendation was also a recognition of the fact that this will isolate the bridge as the last remaining unwidened segment with the completion of the widening of the mainland in 2005, the Bluffton Flyover Project that is currently under construction and you add this into the mix, we can certainly see the prioritization and need for a bridge replacement project heightening at the state level.

Mr. Edwards asked if there have been leisure pathways designed or budgeted into this. Mr. Lewis said that it actually has wide paved shoulders for bicycle access. Mr. Edwards asked if they were separated and Mr. Lewis responded, not separated. Mr. Edwards said in his opinion anytime we are looking at roads on Hilton Head Island I think that is something we need to consider and certainly that is one of the shortcomings of the current bridges now. There are no separated pathways for bicyclists. Mr. Edwards said he would not vote in favor of anything that does not have leisure pathways providing for the future. Whenever the bridge does get widened we need to have a pathway going over for bicycles.

Mrs. Likins asked about the one portion that is going to be funded by the County and will it be able to be built regardless of the sales tax or is their section also tied to the Sales Tax Referendum. Mr. Shoemaker said it is our intention to see this get built upon a positive recommendation by Town Council jointly with the County and the Town regardless of the funding source that is ultimately identified. Obviously in the event of a successful sale tax passage referendum these projects would be near the top of the list of Beaufort County as well as the Town.

Mr. Gary Kubic, Beaufort County Administrator stated this public safety project has to be implemented in some fashion. If it fails at the sales tax level and goes on general obligation, milage rates will go up to pay for this improvement because it will be on everyone's tax bill because it will appear as a debt on the County side of the equation. In terms of trying to come forward together as two communities to show that this improvement should be supported by all in the County for the safety innovation, we strongly recommend that this happen with the Town and the County together.

Mr. Edwards opened up the meeting to public comment. Citizens spoke out on a variety of concerns, including, the need for acceleration lanes in connection with the right in, and right out locations, relocating the eastern most U-turn signal and leaving the existing median open at Jenkins Island Road instead of closing it.

Mr. Lennox stated that the issue of safety in his mind trumps everything and in an effort to improve safety it is worth it. Mrs. Likins stated that based on some of the comments that were made if there are some things such as an acceleration lane that we take a look at that to see if it is feasible or not.

Mr. Edwards said this is not a plan that I love, but the problems there are real and immediate. The danger is very real and we cannot delay this. We need to move forward with it soon. It is not the ideal situation, but definitely improves it.

Mrs. Likins moved the Public Facilities Committee accept staff's recommendation with the caveat that we take a close look at the suggestions from the public to see if there could be any tweaks or modifications made. Mr. Lennox seconded. The motion unanimously passed.

6. **Adjournment**

Mrs. Likins moved to adjourn. Mr. Lennox seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 12:34 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Approved: May 23, 2016

Karen D. Knox
Senior Administrative Assistant