

TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND
Public Planning Committee
Minutes of the November 13, 2018 – 3:00 p.m. Special Meeting
Benjamin M. Racusin Council Chambers

Committee Members Present: Chairman David Ames, Kim Likins, Bill Harkins

Committee Members Absent: None

Town Council Present: Mayor David Bennett, Marc Grant, Tom Lennox, John McCann

Town Staff Present: Jeff Buckalew, Town Engineer; Shawn Colin, Deputy Director of Community Development; Charles Cousins, Director of Community Development; Anne Cyran, Senior Planner; Carolyn Grant, Communications Director; Josh Gruber, Assistant Town Manager; Brian Hulbert, Staff Attorney; Teri Lewis, LMO Official; Scott Liggett, Director of Public Projects & Facilities/Chief Engineer; Jennifer Ray, Planning & Special Projects Manager; Steve Riley, Town Manager; Darrin Shoemaker, Traffic & Transportation Engineer; Krista Wiedmeyer, Executive Assistant/Town Clerk; Teresa Haley, Senior Administrative Assistant

1. Call to Order

Chairman Ames called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

2. 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.

3. Approval of Agenda

The Public Planning Committee approved the agenda by general consent.

4. Unfinished Business – None

5. New Business – None

6. Committee Business

- a. US 278 Corridor Improvements Projects presented by the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT). *(For the entire presentation, please visit the Town's website: www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov)*

Chairman Ames presented opening statements and asked Craig Winn with the SCDOT to begin. Mr. Winn introduced himself and his team, and began his presentation on the US 278 Corridor Improvements, Project Schedule and Public Involvement Opportunities.

Mr. Winn presented an in-depth description of the general project development process for planning and building highways. The process generally includes the steps as follows:

Project Planning: identify purpose and need for the project

Collect Data: conduct surveys and environmental studies

Develop: conceptual road improvement alternatives

Public Meeting: public input on conceptual alternatives

Analyze Alternatives: and select preferred alternative that balances transportation benefits while minimizing impacts

Public Hearing: seek input on Preferred Alternative and Proposed Right of Way Impacts as required for projects being developed under an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement

Refine Alternative: address public concerns and minimize impact

Finalize Methods: to mitigate community and environmental impacts

Finalize Environmental: document and secure NEPA approval from FHWA

If Design Build Project Delivery is selected: award project to contractor

Final Design, ROW, and Environmental Permitting

Right of Way (ROW): preliminary contact with landowner and occupants by ROW agent for properties requiring new ROW acquisition

Real Estate Appraisal: of properties requiring new rights of way

Relocation Benefits Package to Displacees: ROW Agent makes a written offer and provides

Relocation Assistance

Negotiations and Settlement

Project Construction

The Technical Studies of the process include: Aerial Mapping and Field Surveys, Environmental Document and NEPA Compliance, Traffic Studies and Modeling, and Social and Economic (Community Impact Assessment, CIA). The Anticipated NEPA Schedule was shared.

The Public Involvement commenced on September 27, 2018 with the initial Public Information meeting to introduce the project. The Public Involvement Plan will be ongoing throughout the project. The initial site visit and community interviews to meet with local organizations, officials and informal leaders, LATS, City/County Planners are happening now. Monthly updates will be provided through the SCDOT designated website (www.scdot278corridor.com) and traditional media sources throughout the project. Information on social media pages and quarterly newsletter sign up is available on the website. Virtual public meetings, stakeholder meetings, community meetings, small business outreach will begin winter 2018 and continue throughout the project. Additional tools, such as educational videos, bus wraps or similar, and renderings will be provided as needed. Key Public Meetings include a 2nd Public Information Meeting in fall 2019 and a Public Hearing in fall 2020.

The initial list of identified stakeholders include:

Local Governments: Town of Hilton Head Island, Town of Bluffton, Beaufort County, Lowcountry Council of Governments, LATS

Communities: Stoney Community, Windmill Harbor, Moss Creek, Mariner's Cove Club, Hog Island, Daufuskie Island

Community Groups: HHI Bicycle Advisory Committee, Gullah Community, Greater Island Council, Etc.

Businesses on the Corridor: HHI-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce, Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce, Individual Businesses

Agencies: US Fish & Wildlife/Pinckney Island, US Coast Guard

Mr. Winn concluded his presentation and encouraged the public to visit the project website to find answers to questions about the project, provide comments about the project, sign up to receive project information, and/or contact him about the project.

The Committee made comments and inquiries regarding: examples of previous projects in other communities where this type of plan was successful; examples and currently ongoing projects are the Carolina Crossroads in the Columbia area and the 526 Corridor in the Charleston area; the extent of the Town's and the community's input during the planning process; balancing the community needs and the road needs; consideration of mass transit is not part of this project; the SCDOT cannot pay for aesthetics beyond their standards; impacts to the community and the environment will be explored; public transit plans as discussed in the recent LATS meeting will be taken into consideration; travel studies based on growth on and off island, tourism, trending ways in transportations, etc.; traffic signalization and demand have impacts; public involvement is continuous; the importance of the Town and the SCDOT communicating to the community, providing access to information and the ability to express opinions; SCDOT will discuss the stakeholder list with the Town and interested individuals or organizations can contact Mr. Winn; public involvement in this project is much more robust and similar to a \$500 million project; communicating not only "what" we are doing, but "why" we are doing this project; possible renderings would be created from public input deemed as viable alternatives and shared around the time of the public hearing targeted for fall 2020, so the public could weigh in and land upon a preferred alternative; study how the information is shared in the next public meeting; community expectations of the design process to be in keeping with Hilton Head Island aesthetics and architecture; SCDOT approach and consideration of new technologies and designing in anticipation of them, and self-driving cars; various aspects of the Ravenel Bridge in Charleston; and the importance of adapting the project to also meet the needs of the future.

The Committee thanked Mr. Winn and his team and look forward to working with them on this project to arrive at a design and concept that meets the needs of the community.

7. Appearance by Citizens

Town Councilman Marc Grant presented statements regarding the Town's commitment to continuous community involvement, process transparency, and accountability; and the Town Council approval of the US 278 Gateway Corridor Committee to represent the diversity of the community needs with the intent to partner with SCDOT on this project.

Steven Baer indicated the wording of the referendum and the corridor study stops at the Squire Pope Road intersection. He asked to what extent the Town will deal with solutions that require the study to continue at least to the Cross Island Parkway to avoid blockage and congestion coming into the Island.

Morris Campbell commended the Town their leadership on this project for the community, specifically the Stoney community, and on aesthetics and safety.

Larry Landry presented statements regarding the SCDOT process as a passive approach meeting minimum requirements and indicated they should embrace the newly approved US 278 Gateway Corridor Committee, along with transparency, accountability and citizen involvement.

Hannah Horne expressed the cooperation of the Chamber of Commerce and offered their resources to assist in this process.

Alex Brown expressed his concerns about the Native Island community and the community as a whole having a say in this project. He emphasized the uniqueness of the community, and the importance of communication and partnerships to be established early in the process.

Mary Amonitti expressed her confidence in the Town and the residents to have an impact on the project and for the SCDOT to listen to them. She expressed the Island residents should be considered first and communications is important.

Frank Babel requested bicycle and pedestrian facilities instead of just bike lanes. He emphasized the County should be involved in the design process.

County Councilman Stu Rodman presented comments regarding studying a build-out horizon rather than a 20-year horizon; coordinate this project with the Jenkins Island project; and resolve the bottleneck issues at the Squire Pope Road intersection as soon as possible prior to this project.

Risa Prince expressed the desire to see the SCDOT's definition of and criteria for successful public involvement. She asked to view quantified data of the SCDOT projects previously mentioned and national projects deemed successful for comparison.

Patsy Brison presented statements regarding calling upon the intellectual capital on the Island, particularly architects and designers to work as subcommittees of the US 278 Gateway Corridor Committee. She also asked about the SCDOT's standards or metrics for design, approach to complete streets principles, and the details of the rendering stages so that the Committee meetings can correspond with such dates to obtain community input.

Mr. Winn presented statements in response to public comments. He indicated that concerns and input given today will be considered as the process moves forward. The process is in the preliminary stages. He clarified that input will go into developing viable alternatives. Renderings of viable alternatives will be used as needed throughout the project. The community is top concern and the DOT will take input into their development and process. This public involvement process involves more than a standard project.

The Committee made additional comments and inquiries regarding how far out regionally the DOT goes to determine traffic models; encouraging the DOT to dissuade doubt in the community from the beginning; partnerships are important; waiting several years may not be optimal; and signal evaluation to improve traffic at problem intersections like Moss Creek and Squire Pope Road.

Larry Landry made an additional comments regarding certain American standards related to traffic service level that was adopted in the Town's LMO.

Mayor Bennett asked about the structural and soil studies which are anticipated to be completed in early to mid-spring 2019. The conclusions from those studies would look into full replacement or just repairs to the bridge in early spring to summer 2019.

Chester Williams commented that the Town did not adopt those certain traffic standards as indicated by Mr. Landry.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Submitted by: Teresa Haley, Senior Administrative Assistant

Approved: January 24, 2019

David Ames, Chairman