

Riberia Street Public Meeting

Tuesday March 24, 2009

Meeting Minutes

Start time: 7:10pm

Mrs. Graham started the meeting by welcoming everyone and introducing Bill Mendez, Engineering Manager, Jason Hall and Rob Mizell, England, Thims and Miller, Consulting Engineers, Commissioner Sikes-Kline, Commissioner Freeman, David Cobb & Rusty Russillo, FPL, and Ron Brown, City Attorney. After briefly discussing the objective of the meeting, Mrs. Graham invited Jason to begin his presentation.

Jason presented a PowerPoint slide show discussing the Riberia Street project, including the scope, phasing and costs associated with the construction. Attached is a copy of the presentation.

Mrs. Graham discussed the funding allocated to this project. Ms. Graham described that the Phase 1 will be funded with combination of CRA funds and Stormwater Funds. Grants had been submitted for CDBG Economic Development Grant, Stormwater 319 Grant and Economic Stimulus funding through the Transportation Planning Organization (TPO). The CDBG application scored low and not within the funding level and the TPO did not rank the project within funding level due to potential NEPA impacts because the project borders historical and archeological resources.

Question and Answer:

Why is phase 1 more expensive than the others?

Jason: the main reason is that Phase 1 has the longest drainage system, running from King Street to the outfall just north of Bridge Street. Also, Phase 1 has 3 lanes north of Cedar Street.

Why reconstruct the North End of Riberia Street and not start at the south end in the residential neighborhood?

Jason: The majority of the traffic is currently located at the northern end of Riberia and all the underground utilities are connecting to the utilities at King Street.

During the construction of Riberia which will take years, how will the residents be accommodated?

Jason: our plans will provide detours to maintain access during construction. It is anticipated that at the end of each working day the excavations will be covered and full access will be available.

What's the new speed limit? Will there be bicycle lanes?

Jason: speed limit will remain the same, 25mph. The available property is limited, so there is no room for any additional bike lanes.

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How did you determine the traffic build up on Riberia (phase 1 section)?

Jason: A traffic study was performed including traffic counts and turning movement counts at King Street, Sebastian Harbor Drive and Bridge Street.

Where are the phase break lines located?

Jason: The phase lines are located; (Phase 1) North of Bridge Street, (Phase 2) Between Moore and Pomar Streets, (Phase 3) South of Lincoln Street, and (Phase 4) Between Lovett Street and South Street.

How long will the construction of all phases take?

Jason: Phase 1 should take approximately 12 months, with the remaining phases taking between 9 and 12 months, if we are constructing each phase separately as funding become available.

How long will the construction of all phases take if done together?

Jason: 12 months for Phase 1 and 18-24 months for the remainder, if we constructing the remaining roadway as a single phase.

Why not use the existing funds towards the southern phase and pursue grants and fees from San Sebastian Harbor for the northern piece?

Mrs. Graham: The existing funds from the CRA can only be used within the CRA district which is between Bridge St and King Street. The CDBG grant application was discussed and the fact that the City scored low and did not make the funding cutoff; however there was a potential that additional funding may be allocated but would not know this until February 2010. The staff was concerned that waiting to find out about potential funding would significantly affect schedule.

Mrs. Graham was asked to explain where the grants are coming from and what they are approved for.

Ron mentioned that the grants are approved for specific improvement areas.

Where are the high points in the road?

Jason: The high points typically are located at the Phase Lines. In Phase 1 there are natural high points located at LaQuinta Place and North of Bridge Street.

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It is "offensive" and "wrong" to construct a section of Riberia if we don't have enough funding for the entire street. It is "prejudice".

Ms. Graham commented that it sounded like the community would rather not have the project at all, if it had to be completed in phases.

Additional comments from the public were made indicating that sometimes things had to be completed in phases due to finances, but the area was so long neglected there was frustration that funding has been put towards other things in the City and now the situation on Riberia St. was beyond bad; but, in summary, if there was no other way, then they would have to accept that the road was going to be built in phases.

Concerns were raised with speed, traffic calming (signals, roundabouts, speed humps, stop signs) crime, lighting, bike lanes? Was a traffic study performed, we would like to see a copy.

Jason: Yes there was a study performed, which including traffic counts and turning movement counts at King Street, Sebastian Harbor Drive and Bridge Street.

In addition, the study showed 6 accidents in two years

To address traffic calming, there is not enough ROW for roundabouts and no warrant for a signal. We will look into concerns regarding speeding and possible things that can be done to keep speeding to a minimum. The speed limit is and will stay the same at 25 mph and is subject to enforcement by the St. Augustine Police Department.

Why can't we widen the road?

Jason: There is no available ROW; some of the properties/building would be impacted in order to widen the road. In addition, direction had been given to avoid ROW purchase and adversely affecting buildings.

Why can't the overhead electric utilities be placed underground?

Jason: We are in discussions with FPL to install sleeves underground for road crossings to allow crossings of electric distribution lines. There is a significant cost to under ground the transmission lines as well as property requirements for easements and cost to property owners who will have to have their electric meter services converted from overhead to underground

Why can't a layer of asphalt be placed on top of the road? What are you using? How long will it last?

Jason: The current structure underneath the asphalt is inadequate and without a proper base the asphalt could last as little as a week.

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Comment: Present us a schedule along with the funding sources so we have better assurances that the project will be completed beyond Phase I and not forgotten about.

Comment: We have been made promises that have been broken and this project is way overdue.

Ms. Graham appreciated the comments made at the meeting would take them under consideration and suggested that if there were additional questions, the staff would stay and discuss them on an individual basis. She also reminded anyone wishing to receive minutes to be sure to sign in the attendance sheet with their email address. And assured the public every effort would be made to find funding for the remaining portions of the work.

Mrs. Graham ended the meeting at 8:20pm.