

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

City Commission Workshop Meeting
January 21, 2003

The City Commission met in a workshop session Tuesday, January 21, 2003, at 3:30 p.m. in The Alcazar Room at City Hall. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Gardner, and the following were present:

1. Roll Call:

George Gardner, Mayor/City Commissioner
Susan Burk, City Commissioner
William Lennon, City Commissioner
Errol D. Jones, City Commissioner
Donald A. Crichlow, City Commissioner

William B. Harriss, City Manager
Jack E. Cubbedge, Assistant City Manager
James P. Wilson, City Attorney
Martha V. (Nell) Porter, City Clerk
James Whitehouse, Staff Attorney
Timothy A. Burchfield, Director, General Services
Mark Knight, Director, Planning and Building Department
Mark Litzinger, Director, Financial Services
Paul Williamson, Director, Public Affairs
Orfeo Paolini, Sound Technician
Karen Rogers, Recording Secretary

2. Discussion concerning how to develop a plan to address the traffic and parking needs.

Mayor Gardner stated that he wanted to leave the workshop with specific first steps to be enacted during the subsequent Commission meeting. He explained that the public's opinion was important; however, workshops were not designed for public input, but the Commission could call on the public at their discretion.

Commissioner Crichlow agreed that the Commission needed to develop an overall concept along with the elements, but not the details. He noted that there was no one thing that could solve the parking problem, and he hoped the Commission

could reach agreement and begin implementation.

Commissioner Burk questioned whether the Commissioners had prepared their list of items to prioritize for the February workshop; however, they had not.

Richard Pinto, Chairman, Parking Committee, summarized that the visioning process had determined that automobiles should be removed from the historic core of the City; however, being a living City the logistics were quite difficult. He said that periphery parking had been considered, which led to the parking expansion at the VIC and redesigning the entrance corridor, while parking at the San Sebastian and behind the Lightner Museum were being further

considered, as the City owned the land. He noted that all the work at the VIC and Special Events Field had not created that much more parking, but did create a gridlock situation during events. He noted that the VIC had been the last major parking project by the City.

Mayor Gardner encouraged Mr. Pinto to be brief.

He said the City had devised a parking plan with a series of parking facilities behind the Lightner Museum, at the VIC, and on the San Sebastian property. He said the VIC was within walking distance of the downtown area as opposed to the San Sebastian.

Mayor Gardner interjected that the stack of reports at the table had been prepared during the past 10-years and questioned what, if any of those elements the Committee had concentrated on and interacted with the City about.

Mr. Pinto said the need for additional parking at the VIC, as the location did not require a transit system. He said that the San Sebastian was considered a good location for future use with a transit system, which could be an expensive process. He concluded that currently the Parking Committee recommended a parking facility at the VIC.

Mayor Gardner stated that he had reviewed the minutes of the Parking Committee since April 2000. He said that it was a dedicated committee with the City's best interest at heart, although its mission organization and communication of ideas were not well organized. He said that the committee did not seem to be certain whether it was a visioning committee or action specific. He said one member had commented

that the meeting was more like a coffee klatch than a working committee. He said that there was conflict on how the members reported to the Commission. He said that two female resident members had expressed opposition to the Lightner garage, whereupon one resigned and the other began missing meetings. He said that one member repeatedly requested an overall plan and method of communicating with the Commission.

Mayor Gardner said that he had attended the last Parking Committee meeting and outlined his plan for volunteers for the committee. He said that he had wanted to create a list for the Commission to consider for the existing Parking Committee and for sub-committees to handle research. He said it was his understanding that, depending on the Commission's wishes, sub-committees could be created adhoc or Parking Committee members could be given specific tasks, whereupon they could appoint their own volunteers for assistance. He thanked the committee for their work.

Commissioner Lennon suggested that Mayor Gardner had misunderstood the Parking Committee minutes. He noted that there had never been any argument that the Lightner Museum site was the wrong area for the garage. He agreed that there had been discussion and that not all members agreed with one another. He stated that the committee had direction and everyone had contributed. He said that he could not understand how the Mayor could interpret that the meetings were a coffee klatch, when they had contributed their time to the City and guided the Commission. He added that in his opinion the committee had done an excellent job. He suggested that

criticizing the committee as the Mayor had just done was totally uncalled for. He concluded that the Commission choosing two Parking Committee members composed a sufficient committee, as more members would not be needed.

Mayor Gardner cited incidences in the Parking Committee minutes rebutting Commissioner Lennon's suggestion that he had misunderstood the minutes.

Commissioner Burk interjected that Ms. Bevill had also resigned from the committee, and she had been remiss by not officially communicating the fact. She added that Ms. Bevill and Ms. Pines had expressed concern to her regarding the location of a parking garage behind the Lightner Museum.

Mr. Harriss stated that the situation had been examined from many different angles, and there would have to be some compromise. He pointed out that there were considerable legalities that would have to be addressed. He said that foremost any plan would require a payment plan, and it would be important to consider all cost associated with any project. He pointed out that if they used existing resources some other project would be affected. He said that for instance when considering raising the parking meter rates to increase revenue the cost associated had to be considered, as collecting the revenue would have to be bi-weekly rather than weekly. He offered technical assistance.

Mayor Gardner read the parking committee organization. He said that they could leave the membership in place or the Commissioners could make appointments from the current committee, the volunteer list of 29, or anyone of their choice. He said that they

could deal with the issue at that time or after further discussion.

Commissioner Crichlow suggested that they discuss the parking traffic situation first and determine how a committee could serve.

Commissioner Burk sought consensus that a parking committee was a good idea.

Commissioner Crichlow said that he believed they needed a parking committee in some form.

Commissioner Burk stated that she did not want the Commission to be micro managing the Parking Committee by setting up sub-committees. She suggested that the Commission did not need to decide exactly what a parking committee would be doing. She said that perhaps they would consider people, but not necessarily issues.

Commissioner Jones stated that out of due respect for the members of the current Parking Committee he recommended the all members submit their resignation, and if they were interested in continuing that they reapply. He said that he did not want to reflect negatively on the committee members that had worked for years for the City. He said that as the Commission spoke it appeared that they were pointing their finger at them. He stated that he wanted to remove them out of harms way. He said that the issue was not about individuals it was about a problem, and they would look to the citizens to help solve the problem. He said they needed a committee or advisory group to work with the Commission to solve the parking problem. He reiterated that at the subsequent meeting he would recommend that the Parking Committee

submit resignations and reapply if they were interested, whereupon the Commission could select a new committee. He emphasized that he would not like to have a committee of 20-25 people, and he agreed that the Commission did not need to micro manage the committee. He added that the meetings were open and any interested citizen could offer their input.

The Mayor offered his confidence and gratitude to all members of the Parking Committee. He said that in terms of micro managing the Commission would provide the committee with the elements of concern for their research.

Commissioner Crichlow suggested that the committee should be task oriented in order to define exactly what the Commission expected to get back.

Commissioner Jones suggested that they move forward and talk about parking.

Commissioner Lennon stated that he was not willing to give up the people that he had appointed to the Parking Committee. He said they had worked too hard and had too much expertise to ask for their resignation.

The Commissioners pointed out that he could reappoint them.

Mayor Gardner asked the Commissioners to consider their options for the subsequent meeting. He said they could vote to disband the committee, reorganize it, or remake the rules.

Commissioner Jones offered his suggestions as follows:

- Redesign the surface parking lot behind the Lightner Museum by deciding whether to tear down the old

fire station for better utilization of the existing parking lot

- Continue to encourage Flagler College to develop parking on their property
- Consider and research the San Sebastian property and/or the VIC for a multi-level parking facility

Mr. Harriss said there had been a layout plan for the VIC created for future development.

Mayor Gardner questioned whether that included a specific location on the lot.

Mr. Harriss replied that it was general enough to be set anywhere according to size.

Commissioner Jones suggested that they also research privately owned lots that were vacant on weekends and holidays for potential utilization, especially in the event of construction at the VIC, which would eliminate some parking space for the interim. He said that the school board parking lot was a possibility. He added that they also needed to address signage, because there was no signage for parking.

Mayor Gardner questioned whether the City currently used school parking.

Mr. Harriss replied that the City had an arrangement with the School Board relative to the area around 40 Orange Street during the summer, for special events, and some holidays. He explained that the City took a portion and put up a gate and used it for overflow parking. He noted that the arrangement was not on an ongoing basis. He noted that the high cost of liability insurance was the problem with using private parking lots.

Mayor Gardner questioned the cost of liability insurance.

Mr. Harriss said that the insurance for 40 Orange Street was easy for the City to absorb; however, using the Florida East Coast Railroad parking lot had prohibitive requirements.

Commissioner Crichlow's suggestions were as follows:

- A low rise parking garage at the VIC and expand the Visitor Information Center on the west side.

Commissioner Crichlow noted that all of his research had not revealed the number of vehicles the City had to accommodate to determine how large of a parking garage was necessary.

Mayor Gardner said that in the year 2000 the VIC parking lot had been full eighteen days, and the balance of the year the lot had been filled 68%. He suggested:

- A transport depot at the VIC for trolleys, horse drawn carriage, and shuttles
- Signage for parking at the VIC
- Disincentives to park downtown (increased parking rates in town or the parking fee at the VIC could include the cost of the shuttle)
- Work with Flagler College to eliminate student vehicles from the downtown area with satellite parking (Give residents back the town)
- Open restrictive parking lots for special events and weekends
- Redesign a landscaped parking lot behind the Lightner Museum
- Move the Casa Monica Hotel parking spaces to the Granada Street parking lots

Mayor Gardner questioned the number of reserved spaces the Casa Monica used.

Mr. Harriss replied that they had 35-40, but moving them to the Granada Street parking lots might not be acceptable under the terms of their lease.

Mr. Crichlow pointed out that there could be some adaptable uses for the old fire station, which they should examine. However, they should improve the aesthetics and increase parking spaces at the Lightner Parking lot.

Commissioner Lennon suggested that the Commission should have met with the Parking Committee instead of having a workshop, as the committee had all the information the Commissioners had been taking about. He added that the committee had created a map to direct people to overflow parking.

Mayor Gardner suggested leaving the matter of the parking lot behind the Lightner Museum until the February 5th workshop, as there had been quite a bit of discussion in the community about adaptive use of the old fire station.

Commissioner Burk said that she agreed with Commissioner Crichlow's suggestion; however, she was not comfortable with the suggestion to expand the VIC building. She said that she was resistant to a trolley system because of the cost involved, but it might be a necessary part of directing visitors. She said that if they did consider a transit system it should be included in the price of parking.

Commissioner Jones suggested that the existing trolleys might be interested in working with City on a transit system.

Commissioner Burk said the Sunshine Bus Co. might also be interested in working with the City. She suggested

that the tourist trains might not be able to work as a transit system, because of insurance and handicap regulations. She questioned whether the CRA money could be used for transportation

Mr. Harriss replied affirmatively. He said that currently the CRA was a small amount, but it would increase with time

Mayor Gardner questioned what the bond money could be used for.

Mr. Harriss replied that the bond money could be used for just about anything in the way of capital, but it could not be used for operational costs. He said that if they used the CRA for a non CRA project the City could not pay the debt on the bond with CRA revenue. He noted that they had tried to make the bond flexible.

Commissioner Lennon questioned whether the bond was scheduled for a project that would help pay for the bond.

Mr. Harriss responded that it was not that specific, as that way the City got a better interest rate. He said that if the bond was not used for the parking and traffic blight the debt would have to come out of ad valorem taxes. He said the Commission was the Community Redevelopment Agency, and it consisted of the commercial historic area that began at the San Sebastian, east on King Street ending at the VIC, but it did not include the residential area.

Commissioner Burk noted that in conjunction with the Transit Greenway Plan the Commission had created a series of loops for a potential transit system, and she suggested readdressing that information.

Mayor Gardner noted that large sums of money had been spent in researching the parking and traffic matter during the past 10-years, and now he would like to take some action.

Commissioner Burk pointed out that in reality the Commission was not going to please everyone and creating a committee or workshop would not change that. She said that sometimes the Commission had to make a decision that displeased some citizens.

Commissioner Crichlow said that the Commission had to listen and explain their decision then the citizens would understand the process.

Commissioner Lennon pointed out that the Commission did not seem to understand that the proposed garage behind the Lightner Museum was not designed for tourists. He said that the Commission had still not created a reasonable plan to stop the business employees from parking around the Plaza all day. He said the garage would have allowed the businessmen to have their employee's park there and allow local people to use those parking spaces. He said that he felt they needed to find parking spaces for employees.

Commissioner Burk said that was why she was beginning to suspect that a transit system was necessary, as employees could park at the VIC and use the system to get to work.

Mayor Gardner questioned why there was no metered parking around the Plaza.

Mr. Harriss stated that before he began working for the City the Commission had decided to recognize the Spanish tradition and not meter the Plaza. He

said the problem with the decal system was that it would be difficult to decal the state road system or someone else's property. He said the City could provide restriction but they would have to pertain to everyone in the State, therefore they might have to resort to meters. He added that they needed affirmation from legal counsel.

Commissioner Burk said the alternative to the intrusion of parking meters was a vending machine to dispense tickets for people to put on their windshield.

Mr. Harriss said those systems were relatively new, and he had not researched it, but he would.

Mayor Gardner's distributed a handout to the Commission that stated that he wished they could pick elements of solution to the City parking and traffic problems from a menu, choosing the more tasteful items and avoiding the less palatable. Unfortunately, an effective plan, based on a vision of how they wanted to manage traffic tomorrow and 10, 20 years from tomorrow, required both carrots and sticks. His suggestions were as follows: ¹

- Reduce travel lanes on the bayfront and create side lanes for carriages, tour trains, trolleys, bicycles
- Enhance Landscaping, add street furniture, benches, weather covers on downtown streets

Mayor Gardner listed the tools the City had in place and recommended the following immediate steps:

- Gravel or shell pave a temporary parking area at San Sebastian Harbor
- Begin an effective signage program to direct visitors to the VIC and San

¹ Distribution attached to original minutes

Sebastian Harbor parking areas from I-95, US 1 and US A1A outside City of St. Augustine

- Begin a trolley system to bring visitors from parking areas to and throughout the historic area both north and south of the Plaza, and bring day workers to and from their businesses
- Increase downtown meter rates to 50 cents for ½ hour
- Redesign existing lots for more efficient parking and attractive design
- Work with schools, churches, etc for parking lot use and shuttling for special events when the lots were not otherwise in use
- Prepare informative brochures and signage in-town to explain the parking and transit system

Mayor Gardner stated that any effective parking and transit program would require re-education of most motorists, who had grown to expect that their car would always be a few steps away. He suggested that visitors, residents and businesses would appreciate the effort and cooperate. He said that he had attached a summary from the Prosser, Hallock & Dristoff Parking Master plan, a proposal and list of elements of parking and traffic concerns for the Parking Committee, items from the Cape May NJ parking and traffic situation, and an operational funding plan from the Tampa Thin Line and Trolley System. He said that they were doable elements that they could move on beginning with the subsequent Commission meeting.

Commissioner Lennon questioned the Mayor's plan regarding graveling the San Sebastian property.

Mayor Gardner responded that he did not believe the City required any parking garage currently. He stated that they

had the VIC parking, the San Sebastian lot should be prepared to service overflow parking served by the King Street entrance corridor, and the signage should indicate so immediately. He said another alternative would be the signage directing people to the VIC with directional for overflow to the San Sebastian. He suggested that a small staffed booth could be installed for parking, but it would be an expense.

Commissioner Lennon noted that the San Sebastian property had been for sale for a long time and surface parking on sale property could discourage developers. He said that the original plan had been for a developer to build a garage at the San Sebastian, and the last plan had been for the City to build a surface parking lot there. He suggested that the signage direct people to the VIC with the attendant directing overflow elsewhere.

Commissioner Burk disagreed that the City did not currently need a parking garage. She said that disincentives would create a further need for one. She indicated that she liked the idea of a low-rise garage, but she was not certain that it would provide enough parking; however, perhaps it could be designed to add another level at a later date. She added that if they did not need a garage currently they would next year or the year after, and it took time to construct a garage. She said that it might be workable to have a temporary lot at the San Sebastian, as it might be good for the workers, but she would not want to spend much money on it.²

Mayor Gardner repeated that he did not believe they needed a garage at that time as capacities were not currently met. He noted that they needed to mesh a

number of things to make the situation work, one of which was the funds. He said that if they built a garage they would have to eliminate a transit system as there would not be enough capital.

Commissioner Burk suggested that to make the garage successful they required a simple transit system, and they might need only two trains or buses to accomplish the goal and funding could be from parking at the VIC. She noted that they did not fill the VIC currently, but if they moved vehicles there it would fill.

Commissioner Crichlow stated that if they did not let people drive downtown the VIC would overflow, but he did not believe there were enough parking spaces with the existing surface lot. He said that he liked the idea of another level at the VIC to give definition to the location. He said that currently there were approximately 490 parking spaces at the VIC and with another level it could be 900-1000.

Commissioner Lennon said that the maximum goal was 1,500.

Commissioner Crichlow said that it would be necessary to know the number of parking spaces to be able to design the parking garage.

A brief discussion resulted regarding the number of parking spaces.

Commissioner Crichlow stated that a surface lot at the San Sebastian would provide an employee/student relief. He suggested that Flagler College did not have the space to provide more dormitories and a student union combined with the necessary parking.

Mayor Gardner noted that he had not met with President Abare of Flagler

² End of audio tape one

College; however, in 1982-83 President Proctor said the college had 1,200 students and it would reach maximum with 1,600 students, but in 2001 there were 1,800 student and currently there were 2,000. He said that the college had the highest student density per acre in the state of Florida. He said the college had not been a good neighbor at all. He noted the parallel between Flagler College and the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind. He stated that the schools were invading the historic neighborhoods. He described a negative comparison of Flagler College to Bennington College in Vermont in terms of student density and tuition. He stated that for the 2000 students St. Augustine was a stopover on the road to life, but for the 13,000 residents it was home. He suggested that they address Flagler College on a straight out basis and stop cow-towing.

Commissioner Burk said well put. She pointed out that in addition to the 2000 students there were 300+ employees parking in the area.

Mayor Gardner stated that he was willing to stand up and say the emperor was not wearing fine clothes, the emperor was naked. He suggested that they summarize a plan of action to put into force during the subsequent meeting.

Commissioner Crichlow stated that the Commission required a parking advisory group to implement the issues they talked about. He said the emphasis should be on the VIC, and with 4.5 million dollars they could construct a low-rise garage, VIC expansion and a transit depot. He said that the San Sebastian should be used as a relief to the employee and student situation without much money put into it and not a place to direct visitors except for

special events. He said they needed to work on the disincentives, negotiate with Flagler, redesign the parking lot behind the Lightner Museum and create proper signage.

Mayor Gardner said the Presidio Commission was working on a plan to move buses to the short-time parking on the north side of the VIC. He said that would move the horse drawn carriages to the turn-around on the south side of the VIC.

Commissioner Lennon said there was already a plan to move the horse drawn carriages to the east end of Orange Street where there was plenty of drainage.

Mr. Harriss agreed they would have to add drainage at the south side of the VIC.

Commissioner Lennon suggested that it would not be good to mix the trains and horses.

Commissioner Burk stated that she wanted to readdress the matter of the horse drawn carriages. She suggested more restrictions such as functioning only during the evening hours.

Mayor Gardner noted that they would be adding parking meters as well as increasing the rates.

Commissioner Crichlow stated that the horse drawn carriages at the VIC were doable, although he was not certain that one location would fulfill the tourist's needs.

Commissioner Burk stated that they should not consider horse drawn carriages as transportation. Therefore they should not waste the City transportation area. It was agreed that

the horse drawn carriage business was a service.

Commissioner Burk suggested that public comment would be burdensome.

Commissioner Jones stated that he would like to hear public comment to provide him with thoughts for consideration. It was determined that the Commission would allow 20 minutes for public comments.³

Fred Harris 12 South Costillo Drive, said that he had been on the parking committee since its inception and participated in earlier studies regarding parking. He said the number one question he had heard for 27-years was, "Where do we park." He said that since the VIC had been revamped 12-years earlier nothing had been done about parking. He said that 90% of what had been discussed during that meeting had been discussed by the current Parking Committee. He said they needed signage to the VIC immediately to provide maximum parking at the VIC. He suggested that the existing tourist trains could provide public transportation, although there was a problem with insurance and the handicap regulations. He suggested that with the proper disincentives they could solve 75% of the parking issues in the next two years. He recommended that the City expand the VIC parking, develop and use the existing transportation systems, enhance the surface parking behind the Lightner Museum, and do something with the San Sebastian property.

Russell Thomas, 79 Cedar Street, applauded the Commission's concern regarding Flagler College parking.

³ A brief recess from 5:25 p.m. until 5:40 p.m.

Howard Davis, 252 St. George Street, stated that if they used the San Sebastian property just for Flagler College students and employees it would reduce a lot of the parking problems.

Commissioner Burk agreed that if they could get the college to cooperate the college could make it mandatory for the students to park at the San Sebastian.

Chad Smith, 56 Dufferin Street, suggested that they start by moving the City employee's vehicles off site.

Mayor Gardner stated that City employees were included with all day workers. He said that one would like to think that for the good of the community City employees would say it was reasonable to park up there instead of right in the middle of the downtown, but probably the stick was going to have to be used. He said that the plan included City workers and they were trying the carrot because they were the guys who filled the potholes when asked. He said the City manager was looking at reasonable ways that it could be done from the City Staff point of view, as each business in the community would have to look at it. He said the best parking spaces in the downtown core area were occupied by business owners who got to town early in the morning and walked 100-feet to their business. He said that the short trippers and personal business trippers walked about 250-300-feet and the visitors walked 500-feet while some clerk sat in a store reading a book or talking to a buddy on the phone, secure in the comfort that her/his car was only 100-feet away.

Mr. Smith suggested raising the monthly rate as a disincentive. He questioned how much the Casa Monica Hotel paid

for the leased parking spaces they had behind City Hall.

Mr. Harriss said that it was approximately \$30-\$35 a month per space.

Mayor Gardner stated that on the national scale the rate was \$80-\$85 and considered cheap.

Mr. Smith suggested that the City charge the Casa Monica Hotel \$100 a month per space. He suggested low cost or free satellite parking for anyone who was interested in walking into the City.

Commissioner Jones questioned the length of the lease with the Casa Monica Hotel.

Mr. Harriss replied that the lease was for 30-years with incremental increases.

Commissioner Lennon pointed out that the Casa Monica Hotel had brought in a whole class of people that spent considerable money in the community. He said the City was small and did not have the draw to increase the lease to \$100. Furthermore, he said they probably would not pay the increase and park the vehicles on the street.

Mr. Harriss pointed out that part of the requirements for renovating the old building for the Casa Monica Hotel was secured parking.

Commissioner Jones questioned what the lease parking was for.

Mr. Harriss said he thought it was for employees and overflow parking.

Commissioner Crichlow expressed concern, as he did not want the disincentives to affect residents.

Commissioner Burk suggested finding some form of identification for residents.

Commissioner Crichlow questioned whether the Commission should be prepared to appoint members to a new Parking Committee.

Mayor Gardner said that they would first have to decide what they would do with the existing committee.

Commissioner Burk suggested a straw vote.

Mr. Wilson suggested that the Commission find consensus in discussion.

Mayor Gardner said that no one would be short changed if they wanted to help with the process.

Commissioner Crichlow suggested adding the names of the existing Parking Committee members to the list.

Commission Jones noted that the Parking Committee still existed until the subsequent meeting, and based on the Commission's decision they would not establish another committee until the following meeting.

Mayor Gardner suggested that the Commissioners have two people in mind that could serve on the Parking Committee. He questioned whether the Commission wanted to nail down things they could act on at the subsequent meeting. He suggested that signage should be acted on immediately. He said the transit system could be left until they had more information. He asked that the City Manager provide information regarding parking meters.

Commissioner Crichlow suggested that staff provide the Commission with recommendations and information about the VIC if they were to double the parking.

A brief discussion followed regarding the effectiveness of enforcement for parking meters and about the car immobilizer known as the Denver Boot.

Commissioner Lennon said that he heard the Mayor wanted to start a 100-person parking committee. He cautioned that a 10 person committee was manageable; however, he suggested that those interested attend meetings as volunteers. He recommended that the Committee report to the Commission on a monthly basis. He assured the Mayor that a larger committee would prove to be a management problem. He recommended a committee of ten.

Mayor Gardner retorted that ideally 13,000 people should be involved with the process even if it took longer.

3. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:08 p.m. ⁴

MAYOR

CITY CLERK

⁴ Transcribed by Karen Rogers, Recording Secretary