

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA
Parking and Traffic Committee
May 26, 2005

The Parking and Traffic Committee met in formal session at 8:30 a.m., Thursday, May 26, 2005 in The Alcazar Conference Room at City Hall. The meeting was called to order by Chairman, Daniel Sullivan and the following were present:

1. ROLL CALL

Members: Daniel Sullivan
William Abare
Fred Harris
John Marples
Phillip Moan
Nancy Sikes-Kline
Richard Pinto
Les Thomas

Absent: Gerald Dixon
David Toner
Len Weeks

City Staff: John Regan, Chief Operations Officer
James Whitehouse, Staff Attorney
Karen Rogers, Recording Secretary

Also present: Dan Weathington, Perry-McCall Construction, Inc.
Carl Smith, Perry-McCall Construction, Inc.
Jeremy Fitch, Perry-McCall Construction, Inc.
Mike Starling, Perry-McCall Construction, Inc.
James Zimmerman, Resident
B.J. Kalaidi, Resident

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes from the April 28, 2005 meeting were approved as presented.

3. NEW BUSINESS

3.a Update by Perry-McCall Construction, Inc. on the VIC Multimodal Transportation Facility construction activities

Mr. Regan advised that the City was fortunate to have the construction team of Perry-McCall, who had been awarded the parking garage project. He noted

that the City had a citizen group which offered feedback on their concerns. He said field changes had been made and impacts had been felt by the community.¹

Carl Smith, Perry-McCall project manager, submitted documents to the committee which included company information. He noted that Wayne and Myron McCall, owners of the company were involved in every project they were awarded. He advised that the owners believed in hard work and customer

¹ William Abare arrived at 8:35 am.

satisfaction. He said they would be interested in any feedback that would better the project. He noted that the relocated trees had been placed at Francis Field and it appeared that they were surviving the move; although they had found that not enough room existed for all the trees; therefore, City staff found a location through the School Board for the balance of the relocated trees. He acknowledged that the project was running a little behind; however, it should be resolved quickly. He noted that a portion of Cordova Street had been closed and they would start the foundation of the garage the following week. He advised that the street would be reconfigured to install a new loop with bus lanes in order to help alleviate the transportation issue.

Dan Weathington, Perry-McCall Superintendent, advised that the bus lane and Orange Street would be newly paved the next week and new sidewalks installation from San Marco Avenue to Orange Street and Cordova Street to Orange Street with the sidewalk ending at the VIC to tie into the existing sidewalk. He noted that the shuttle bus drop-off area would have a new sidewalk that day and it would transition from the temporary parking lot to a level surface at the shuttle lane. He stated that twenty-four parking spaces would be added to the temporary parking lot. He acknowledged that Cordova Street had been closed by Swing Park, west to the existing bus loop in order to start working on the east School Board parking lot which would tie Cordova Street to the new Orange Street intersection. He advised that they planned to open the road up during the holiday weekend due to the heavy traffic expected; however, it would close again after the weekend. He said minimal lane closures would occur during the construction involving

Orange Street. He advised that FDOT permits had been obtained and they planned to minimize traffic issues for the community while the project continued.

Mr. Regan noted that the bus drop-off on Orange Street had been added as a new element to the project. He affirmed that a baseline study had been completed by the St. Augustine Police Department, who found that 85% of traffic on Orange Street exceeded the posted speed limit; although a school was located nearby. Therefore, he said they would reconfigure the bus entry system into the city for drop-off and exit through the new loop located on Cordova Street. He affirmed that the loop would be completed around July or August; therefore, traffic congestion in the school area would be reduced for the new school year. He noted that another traffic study would occur after the construction was completed.

Mr. Marples noted that pedestrian traffic had been noticed on Castillo Drive and San Marco Avenue; however, the sidewalk was blocked and the lane was fairly narrow.

Mr. Smith voiced that they had recognized that issue and developed a plan to place the sidewalk on the north side of the street.

Mr. Weathington noted that the existing sidewalk had been removed; however, a new sidewalk would be in placed by the next day with ADA compliant access and extended in order to reach the temporary parking lot. He noted that signage was in place for the road closure. He said they had completed a pedestrian traffic study and found that most pedestrian traffic generated from West Castillo Drive and Cordova Street at the temporary lot and continued either to Barnacle Bills or the trolley

ticket booth. He acknowledged that the majority of pedestrian traffic happened in the afternoon and traveled down Cordova Street by the School Board building, or toward downtown, or the VIC. He noted that, generally, people did not bother if a sidewalk or crosswalk was available but would walk where it suited them; however, they had attempted to minimize the impact by installing sidewalks and tying it into the temporary parking lot.

Mr. Smith noted that it was a pro-active move on their part to open that section by completing the necessary work. He expressed that they had recognized that the Cordova Street portion of the project needed to be completed while school was not in session. He added that sod would be installed at the Francis Field during the following week for the upcoming July 4th events. He introduced two more team members to the committee: Mike Starling and Jeremy Fitch.

Mr. Starling voiced that they were available to talk with if staff had any concerns about the project.

Mr. Smith affirmed that his team members were available, even during the weekends, if staff had problems or concerns that needed to be addressed.

Mr. Pinto voiced that business owners were concerned with the length of time of the construction and how it would affect their business. He suggested that it would be easy to strand businesses by the way barriers and other construction elements were setup by the construction company. He noted that from the middle of August to the end of October was fairly quiet and construction would not necessarily be a detriment to businesses in that general area; however, during the next six to eight weeks, every weekend was busy

and very important to the St. Augustine business community. He voiced that although he appreciated what the construction team had done thus far, business owners had a tendency to panic if not fully informed about each element of the project.

Mr. Weathington advised that he had spoken with several business owners located in the area of concern which was why they planned to open the road during the weekend and due to the local events. He explained that one reason for the new bus drop-off was because of the mass of tourists in that area. He noted that they had studied bus tourists and found that they generally went directly into the downtown area. He advised that a travel lane had been added to either allow shuttle buses for pickup/drop-off tourists or a regular bus to pass through. He noted that tour guides had expressed elation about the bus loop.

Mr. Smith assured the committee that they would schedule the work in a way that would not impede businesses or event traffic during holiday times.

Mr. Weathington noted that temporary lighting would be installed to assist the nighttime pedestrian traffic in the Cordova Street area.

Mr. Harris voiced that he appreciated the sincere effort and concern the construction team had displayed thus far. He noted that, originally, Cordova Street was to be closed; however, the project team had reviewed that situation and currently would allow Cordova Street to remain open during the holiday weekend. He expressed gratefulness that the project team was available and had listened to all concerns.

Mr. Weathington voiced that he was excited that they were building the project in St. Augustine.

Mr. Smith expressed that customer satisfaction was very important to the owners as well as each employee of the company.

Mr. Sullivan thanked the team members for attending the meeting that day and making the presentation to the committee.

Mr. Regan offered the following key points about the project to the committee:

- ◆ Bus drop-off at Orange Street was temporary and would be removed at the completion of the project
- ◆ Dust problems could be handled easily by watering
- ◆ The City had agreed to purchase materials for the project which helped save the sales tax from between \$300,000.00 to \$400,000.00
- ◆ A very extensive value-engineering process was completed and the control system had been modified which resulted in savings without compromising the quality of the architecture
- ◆ Current values of the project were approximately \$18.3 million dollars
- ◆ School Board administration parking lot would be shared during the week which helped to add to the 224 spaces at the temporary parking lot
- ◆ Very qualified sub-contractors had been brought in by Perry-McCall
- ◆ Charlotte Street from Treasury to Hypolita Street would be rebuilt and completed prior to the July 4th weekend
- ◆ Currently working with Perry-McCall to salvage granite material placed on the temporary lot which

could be used as a sub-base for construction of new brick streets

- ◆ Three companies had responded to the RFP the City created for the shuttle drop-off on West Castillo Drive

Mr. Zimmerman questioned whether any vehicular/pedestrian accidents had occurred at the site and whether the Police and Fire Departments were onboard with the current plans.

Mr. Weathington advised that he had met with both the Police and Fire Department personnel about road closures and future plans in the area and they were aware of the construction timeframe involving road closures and other construction details.

Mr. Smith added that they had also talked with the Planning and Building and Public Works Departments of the City.

Mr. Zimmerman voiced that it was nice to hear about the ongoing communications between everyone involved.

Mr. Starling advised that the company had specific plans to involve all emergency and City entities while construction was being completed.

Mr. Weathington affirmed that no vehicular or pedestrian accident had occurred thus far.

Mr. Sullivan thanked the project team for their presentation and asked that they periodically update the committee regarding the progress of the project. He noted that community citizens frequently asked him for updates on the project and he would like to be able to inform them on the continuing progress.

Mr. Harris asked the project team to explain the construction process of the garage.

Mr. Weathington explained that he and Mr. Smith had been working directly with the erector and the pre-cast company. He noted that the entire building was pre-cast with concrete and the job-site had been broken down into four quadrants with the first quadrant located at the southwest corner by Cordova Street, and quadrant B was located at the southeast corner by the VIC. He stated that all three floors would be created with pre-cast concrete and the sides of the building would be joined to the structure during the completion of each floor of the building. He noted that landscaping would be started at the same time as the building was being erected.

Mr. Regan advised that the large architectural renderings had been placed at the job site in order for the public to view.

4. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Sullivan directed attention to an e-mail he had received from a local citizen regarding City and private parking lots. He suggested that the issue should be discussed by the committee, and he asked staff to evaluate the matter and report back to the committee.

Ms. Sikes-Kline expressed that the shared parking with the School Board was a good step; however, liability was always an issue. She voiced that she was interested on how the shared parking lot had worked over time and eventually intended to propose a City wide shared parking program.

Mr. Regan advised that he had responded to the e-mail letter referenced by Mr. Sullivan. He

explained that work needed to be completed prior to evaluating the shared parking concept. He stated that the Police Department had issued parking tickets to approximately twenty very angry parents, who were visiting their kids during a sports event at Ketterlinus gym. He explained that the City and School Board had developed the shared parking lot concept in order for people to park while using the school gym. He noted that businesses currently using the parking lot were comfortable with using the space during restricted permit hours of between 7am – 4pm; although they were not allowed to park overnight. He said the City planned to repost the lot as restricted parking until early afternoon; thereby creating a parking lot for the demand time at the school gym. He advised that a lot-by-lot study would need to be completed prior to furthering the implementation of the shared parking lot concept. He stated that it would take staff at least two months to gather the information before they could return to the committee.

Mr. Sullivan voiced that one concern he had involved a company called Central Parking which appeared to have a monopoly within the City. He said tourists did not question the amount being charged for a parking space. He suggested that the committee should look at the bigger picture and the future and whether robotic parking would play a part in the City's future.

Mr. Pinto suggested that Bank of America's charge of \$6.00 to park was an attempt to control their parking facility for their customers but allow available spaces to be used by tourists. He said much pressure was felt for available parking spaces located in the downtown area; therefore, they could charge higher prices. He noted that on Saturdays he parked in the residential

neighborhood by his business because of the limited available parking spaces. He expressed that two kinds of customers existed, one being tourists and the other involved people visiting the downtown on a regular basis, who were discouraged to visit the downtown area due to the cost of a parking space.

Mr. Sullivan noted that Americans desired convenience which had been proven and was a fact of life. He voiced that he was concerned with the possibility of less funds for the City due to the monopoly by the one company he mentioned.

Mr. Harris noted that Bank of American validated customer tickets for free parking. He suggested that charging for parking was a deterrent to tourists; however, it was also at the expense of the customer. He stated that the Drugstore's parking lot held forty-five vehicles, and up until five years earlier there was no charge; however, he had started to charge and currently it was up to \$5.00 per day. He noted that the committee had supported raising on-street parking fees in order to force visitors to the VIC. He suggested that the e-mail letter received was well conceived but was not executed with full knowledge. He voiced that the School Board signage in the parking lot, which specified School Board employee parking, was only installed a few years earlier and the School Board was forced to enforce the parking 24/7, otherwise the parking spaces were taken by tourists or other employees in the area. He suggested that once the garage was up and running and Flagler College created more parking for their students, more parking would become available for everyone. He said he would not support staff conducting a major study at the present time.

Ms. Sikes-Kline voiced that Mr. Harris offered interesting information that she was not aware of. She suggested that it would not hurt if the City reviewed the shared parking lot concept. She noted that a good in-depth study had not been completed since the Prosser-Hallock report.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Harris, Mr. Regan advised that staff had made a map of all the parking in the City which included the number of spaces and whether the lot involved restricted, permitted or metered spaces. He suggested that staff could update the map and present it to the committee.

Ms. Sikes-Kline voiced that she would support that effort.

Mr. Harris agreed that a study was needed; however, at a later time and after the completion of the new parking garage.

Mr. Moan suggested that the study should be conducted due to the construction and loss of many parking spaces at the VIC.

Mr. Regan stated that the City's expert on parking lots was Sharon Langford. He suggested that Ms. Langford could make a presentation to the committee at the next meeting.

Dr. Abare noted that the college had offered a parking lot located behind Lewis Hall, especially at busy times of the year such as Christmas. He said it was rejected because it lacked a method to direct vehicular traffic to the location. He stated that the college had talked about installing meters behind the gym; however, the same issue regarding directional signage remained. He added that liability and identifying property owners also were issues. He

said he agreed that a small, quick study would be more appropriate and might generate creative ideas for additional parking.

Mr. Regan stated that the scope of what the City was doing to the six or seven City controlled lots was a starting point.

Mr. Pinto stated that he received many complaints from tourists about the lack of available parking due to the construction at the VIC. He suggested that due to the slow down with tourists, it might be an appropriate time to conduct a study. He noted that signage directing visitors to alternative parking would be helpful.

Mr. Marples agreed that signage was necessary and easy to handle. He suggested that the liability issue was a greater problem.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Marples, Dr. Abare noted that the college had parking signage which read "only authorized personnel"; therefore, an issue did not exist unless a person decided to violate that law. He stated that the issue of liability occurred while allowing clubs or other organizations to use their parking facility. He advised that the college had clear rules regarding use of the parking facility; although the college was required to obtain an insurance rider for extra coverage.

Ms. Sikes-Kline asked what the insurance cost would be and whether parking fees could absorb those costs.

Dr. Abare advised that it depended upon the insurer and on the character and blanket policy. He said it came down to how much the private owner wanted to risk and how to manage that risk. He noted that a business could be one percent negligent but held at

ninety-nine percent in terms of payout simply because of the amount of insurance they held.

Mr. Harris expressed that it was too large of a risk to take.

Ms. Sikes-Kline asked what the City's role would be in helping private owners to allow the public use of their parking facilities.

Dr. Abare voiced that the City could not indemnify; however, the owner might be able to handle the issue on their own through insurance and hiring security guards to oversee the parking facility which would offer something good for the community.

Mr. Whitehouse suggested that the issue was becoming clouded. He stated that the City could not be involved with regulating parking on private properties. He said the City could review their parking lots to see if more could be offered.

Mr. Marples questioned how the City could help with a parking lot liability concern for private owners. He asked if the City could reimburse private owners' the insurance rider cost.

Mr. Harris suggested that tax breaks or TDC funds could be offered.

Mr. Pinto suggested that not many parking spaces were being held by private owners; however, institutional parking spaces had a much greater count. He noted that small office businesses were part of a living city and did not offer many parking spaces to the public.

MOTION

Ms. Sikes-Kline moved to recommend that staff review City

owned parking lots and furnish an update to the committee. Dr. Abare seconded.

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Mr. Regan clarified that staff would review the 2,400 private parking spaces by identifying each lot and ownership. He said the lots would be ranked by size and involved the 80% / 20% issue. He advised that Ms. Langford would be asked to speak to the committee about the City controlled parking lots.

Mr. Sullivan noted that students from Notre Dame College were reviewing the parking issue and offering their thoughts and future vision on the issue. He said the group had included robotics with every garage in St. Augustine.

Ms. Sikes-Kline noted that the students' work had been placed on the City's website.

5. DISCUSSION OF TOPICS FOR THE FOLLOWING MEETING

None

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:56 a.m.²

² Transcribed by Pam Halterman, Recording Secretary