

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA
Parking and Traffic Committee
December 8, 2005

The Parking and Traffic Committee met in formal session at 8:30 a.m., Thursday, December 8, 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 Daniel Sullivan
William Abare¹
Gerald Dixon
John Marples
Phillip Moan
Nancy Sikes-Kline
Les Thomas
David Toner
Len Weeks

Excused: Richard Pinto

City Staff: John Regan, Chief Operations Officer
Timothy Burchfield, Chief Administrative Officer
James Whitehouse, Staff Attorney
Martha Porter, City Clerk

Also present: Kati Bexley, Reporter for The St. Augustine Record²
Pat Parets, Resident
Wayne Strickland, Florida National Guard

2. OLD BUSINESS

2.a Update on Parking and Traffic Masterplan elements including the VIC Transportation Facility, signage and parking policy implementation

Mr. Regan advised that the City was on-time and on-budget with the garage facility. He said they remain on track to open in June 2006 and was looking forward to seeing the facility in operation for the Fourth of July events.

Mr. Sullivan suggested that the committee members visit the area to view the progress.

Mr. Regan stated that the next major element of the project involved switching the VIC entrance to the rear of the building to

face the new parking garage facility. He explained that the City had been working on the design with Les Thomas as the lead architect. He described the design to the committee:

- An addition would be placed between the VIC and the new garage
- Several porches would be created for gathering places
- Archway system between buildings
- Mosaic of the historic walled City would be created on the ground
- Remodeled restrooms
- Open to the original truss system
- Renovations were currently underway
- Vendor and retail sales placed together

¹ Dr. Abare arrived at 8:39 am.

² Ms. Bexley arrived at 8:50 am.

- Construction contracts would be presented to the City Commission on December 12, 2005
- The VIC would be closed starting January 15, 2006 but the City would run a small VIC facility at the old dental building located near the temporary parking lot
- Completion was expected by June 2006

Mr. Regan advised that the City had planned to unveil the Residential Parking Program on Avenida Menendez during the previous week; however, the signage was too small and had to be removed. He noted that the City had planned to repaint the necessary elements on the roadway and install new, larger signage, but since the weather had not allowed that to occur, it would be completed on Monday. He admitted that the problem was a poor execution by staff which was his responsibility. He explained that only warning tickets would be issued during the first two weeks after the installation of the signage and road paint in order to phase-in the project and train the public. He advised that the City had sold seventeen decals thus far.

Signage:

Mr. Regan advised that a signage study had been completed several years earlier which included the review of all intersections entering the City. He said City staff had met with FDOT on the placement of signage on State roadways. He noted that the City had engaged a sign designer to assist the City with signage.

Mr. Regan noted that the San Sebastian public parking had always been an element of the Masterplan. He stated that construction of the San Sebastian project would begin the following week. He gave credit to Tim Burchfield, who had negotiated the parking element with the property owners. He explained that the garage would serve the development and would

include approximately one-hundred spaces for public parking at no cost to the City. He added that it would be a privatized operation but for public use. He noted that the public area would probably involve meters or pay-n-display operations. He said the completion of the project would probably take two years.

Lightner Parking Lot:

Mr. Regan advised that the main issue involved the renovation of the old fire station in order to house the Customer Service Center of the Water Department. He noted that the completion of the project was expected in June 2006. He said the lighting would be improved to match the fixtures in the downtown area.

Downtown Parking Policies:

Mr. Regan noted that the Committee had forwarded very specific recommendations to the City Commission. However, he advised that the City Commission had decided to charge \$1.50 per hour as a retail rate for on-street parking; although the Committee had suggested \$1.00 per hour. He affirmed that the City had received a negative reaction concerning the fee and concerns from downtown business owners had been voiced. He stated that staff was working with Walker Parking Consultants regarding meters, metering systems and signage which would be completed in February 2006.

Public Education and Website Development:

Mr. Regan advised that Ms. Sikes-Kline had approached staff about education and website development. He asked Ms. Kline to lead the discussion.

Ms. Sikes-Kline stated that she had reviewed the previous minutes concerning the in-depth discussion about a communication plan which was what the committee and City currently needed. She

suggested that communication and education should take place between that day and when the programs were implemented. She proposed that the committee review the original discussion and create a communication plan and decide how they should communicate the complicated message to the citizens and to complete the process with a recommendation to staff. She stated that she had completed research on the internet and found plenty of sites about parking plans. She offered the committee a brochure from Savannah, Georgia and said it was a particular good brochure with a letter from the Mayor on the back regarding the strategy they were attempting to implement. She said San Diego's plan was well executed and was very similar to St. Augustine and had used common transportation elements such as shuttles, on-street parking, resident permit programs and meters.

Mr. Marples noted that the City currently had one avenue of communication that had already been implemented which included information placed on the water bill and a brochure.

Ms. Sikes-Kline affirmed that was correct. She reiterated that the City needed a plan and to review how to accomplish the task by using a variety of media outlets. She noted that she had been part of a nice radio interview with a Jacksonville radio station concerning the residential permit program.

Mr. Sullivan thanked Ms. Sikes-Kline for taking the lead on the communication issue. He said it was a difficult issue to deal with but the swipe card element would be the best element. He stated that he had received many e-mails that expressed negativity with the \$1.50 hourly meter rate; although the Committee had recommended \$1.00 to the City Commission. He agreed that the Committee must find a serious approach in educating the public. Dr. Abare stated that the Committee was an advisory body to the City Commission. He

questioned what the committee could recommend. He noted that the City Commission had turned down their first recommendation, and he suggested that the City Commission, as the higher body, had not made their final decision yet on the matter.

Mr. Thomas said the City Commission, not the PAT Committee would be conducting the public hearings. He suggested that if the City Commission wanted \$1.50 per hour that should be the end of the matter for the Committee. He noted that the City needed to conduct public meetings in order to inform the citizens and ensure that the parking programs succeeded.

Ms. Sikes-Kline explained that she did not want to discuss the issue of pricing; however, she suggested that communication should be an element of the Masterplan. She stated that transportation was an integral element and pricing had already been addressed.

Mr. Weeks suggested that residents currently cared less about the Masterplan and were only focused on the \$1.50 per hour issue. He stated that the citizens needed to know about the \$.50 per hour rate and how to obtain that rate which would solve much of their concerns. He suggested that a person should be able to obtain the \$.50 rate over the telephone by credit card. He said it must be made convenient and be user friendly for citizens.

Mr. Marples stated that the City was growing and feeling growing pains. He suggested that the issue should be handled through a public information office. He said the information should be televised through Channel 3 on cable television.

Ms. Sikes-Kline noted that the parking information was not on the City's website.

Mr. Sullivan noted that the Committee agreed that information needed to be presented to the public. He questioned

whether a budget had been set aside for such an element.

Mr. Regan advised that a budget was available.

Mr. Whitehouse advised that the Committee's job was in an advisory position to recommend to the City Commission. He said advising staff how to move forward with notifying the public was not within the Committee's purview. He suggested that a committee member make a motion to recommend to the City Commission who they think should handle the public information issue.

Mr. Sullivan suggested that the recommendation should include the creation of a budget and advertising should be purchased in The Record Newspaper which involved local media. He said they should start with the \$.50 swipe card and not overload people with all parking information.

Mr. Thomas said the swipe card had not fully been decided upon. He stated that the Committee needed to depend on staff to handle the matter.

Mr. Moan suggested that it all boiled down to a lack of communication. He stated that people needed to be informed of their options or choices with parking. He noted that the paper had indicated that prices had been determined by the City Commission and only the options remained to be described.

Mr. Toner questioned whether staff had a plan on how the City would communicate the information to the public.

Mr. Regan affirmed that the City did; however, it would be driven somewhat by the committee and its recommendations to the City Commission. He explained that if the Committee felt the need for a more strategic communication plan it would be presented to the City Commission, who would probably concur with the Committee.

He noted that the first step should begin in January with a public relations firm, who handled public marketing involving parking issues. He affirmed that the City was not ready to communicate at a level necessary with much of the elements involved due to the lack of design. He suggested that March 2006 would be the time when many of the elements would come into focus regarding how the technology worked and what to expect around the bayfront and plaza. At that point, he said staff would engage the consultants to assist with the website, literature and other necessary tasks to improve communication and public education. He suggested that it was an important recommendation that the Committee could make because it would make staff's job easier to carve out funds from the overall Parking and Traffic Masterplan budget which was approximately twenty-three million dollars. He agreed that more emphasis on information and education was necessary.

Mr. Toner said he recalled that the focus during the discussion that took place in 2003 involved the need for public information during the implementation process of the Masterplan. He agreed with Mr. Regan that a motion was necessary to restate that public information was an important element of the plan.

Ms. Sikes-Kline expressed that she would like to take the issue a step further and make it part of the Masterplan.

Mr. Weeks voiced that the City had embarked on a mission to address parking blight. He suggested that they needed to move forward with a positive spin on the parking issue.

Mr. Whitehouse advised that the Committee could accomplish the goals voiced that day through a motion. He said they could recommend in the motion that the City Commission hire a consultant to handle the public information issue. He noted that the consultants could meet with the PAT

Committee in order to obtain the specifics necessary to forward the information to the public.

Mr. Toner suggested that an overall motion should handle the matter with the consultants coming before the committee to hear details at a later date.

Mr. Regan stated that an additional element added to the Masterplan would be appropriate and he would inform the City Commission at their next meeting.

MOTION

Ms. Sikes-Kline moved to recommend that the City Commission add an eighth plank to the Parking and Traffic Masterplan timeline to include a communication plan that would be ongoing. Mr. Toner seconded.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3. NEW BUSINESS

3.a. Presentation and discussion of transportation shuttle alternatives

Mr. Regan handed out a memo describing the transit loop route which started at Orange Street and Cordova Street intersection, then eastbound on Orange Street, right onto Castillo Drive, right onto Cathedral Place, and right on Cordova Street. He noted that four different classifications of shuttles existed which included buses, trolleys, trams and vans. He stated that the PAT Committee had expressed that the chosen system must operate in inclement weather and be handicap accessible. He explained that staff had brought in different types of vehicles in order to gain insight of what citizens wanted in a shuttle. He said the City had received a negative reaction from the Committee and the public about the bus type shuttle. He added that the use of vans had been eliminated because it did not appear inviting. He stated that the City had

brought in a high-end trolley to view; however, some people were not able to see it while it was in town. He noted that the trolley would cost approximately \$300,000.00. He advised that staff had felt that a tram style shuttle would be better for the City. He noted that trams were often used all over the country in tourism type environments. He said the shuttle loop was fairly short and how quickly one could get on and off the transit vehicle was an important factor. He stated that high-end trams cost approximately \$175,000.00 each with additional sections being added to the motorized section costing \$30,000.00 each. He noted that the vehicle would include roll-down panels for inclement weather and allowed for handicap ramping. He advised that trams were created to be able to use such fuels as propane, gasoline, electric or diesel. He explained that staff would move away from entertaining vehicle styles such as buses and vans. He affirmed that staff would recommend trams and felt that mode of transportation was appropriate for the City.

Mr. Toner noted that staff had listened to the Committee when they had voiced their concerns with vans and buses, and thought that a tram would work better. He said it sounded economically feasible and the tram capacity size could be increased by adding tram cars.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Weeks, Mr. Regan affirmed that the City could apply for Federal funding to assist in the purchase of trams. He noted that the City would possibly be working with the Council on Aging to operate the shuttle which would entail fifty cents on the dollar as far as operational costs were concerned.

Mr. Regan explained that the trams would be open-air vehicles with panels for inclement weather.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Moan, Mr. Regan said he could find out whether

the tram system was used in other cities in the country.

Mr. Moan noted that the current trams in St. Augustine had been grandfathered in for travel on the streets but a safety issue was involved.

Mr. Regan acknowledged that Mr. Moan had a good point which would be investigated.

Mr. Marples asked that emphasis be placed on alternative fuels and reduction of pollution.

MOTION

Mr. Toner moved to recommend that staff continue their pursuit of trams as the mode of shuttle transportation. Mr. Weeks seconded.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Mr. Toner questioned whether any citizen would be able to ride the trams.

Mr. Regan affirmed that to be correct. He noted that one stop would be placed at the top of St. George Street and also a stop at the Spanish Quarter. He asked what other stops the Committee might think would be appropriate.

Mr. Maples voiced that he had thought that the main location would be the plaza area but a stop at the Spanish Quarter would be okay. He suggested that if the trams stopped at other businesses, it would be showing favoritism and promoting privately owned businesses.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Regan, Mr. Marples affirmed that he would not advise having stops at both Avenida Menendez and Hypolita, and Avenida Menendez and Treasury Streets.

Mr. Thomas suggested that the City would want to distribute visitors over the entire

downtown. He stated that one stop needed to be approximately half way down Avenida Menendez to accommodate most everyone along the Bayfront.

Mr. Sullivan noted that the City should not overlook the southern part of downtown.

In response to an inquiry from Ms. Sikes-Kline, Mr. Regan stated that staff had reviewed different loops and directional routes; however, traffic issues existed on the Bayfront. He said many possibilities existed and involved the piloting of public transit in St. Augustine.

Dr. Abare suggested that a stop should be on both ends of Hypolita and St. George Streets.

Ms. Sikes-Kline noted that Hypolita Street at the Bayfront had a very narrow sidewalk that resulted in people walking in the roadway which was a dangerous situation.

Mr. Weeks suggested that the people riding the trams could depart from the vehicle further away from the intersection.

Mr. Toner stated that it would be easy to add stops, but safety and timeliness were main issues.

Mr. Regan asked if Treasury and Avenida Menendez would be a low priority stop. Most Committee members agreed that a stop at Treasury and Avenida Menendez could be eliminated.

Mr. Regan agreed that the City needed to find the right place for the stop on Avenida Menendez. He stated that the plan included two or three motorized vehicles; although the budget was approximately nine-hundred thousand dollars; therefore, they could easily afford four units. He stated that each complete shuttle trip would take under fifteen minutes. He noted that depending on the number of visitors, one or two trams might run at the same time. He expressed that the City had received much criticism

about late night restaurant workers and planned to work with local restaurants and their employees that parked at the new parking garage facility.

Mr. Marples noted that a study had been completed which indicated that people did not like to wait more than seven minutes for a shuttle.

Mr. Sullivan stated that the downtown was becoming busier in the evenings and on weekends.

Mr. Regan advised that European cities had on-demand shuttle service available to their visitors. He noted that the sky was the limit.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Toner, Mr. Regan said the capacity of each shuttle would range between thirty and forty people.³

Mr. Toner suggested that the idea of using Channel 3 on Time Warner Cable was a good idea which could be utilized soon.

Mr. Regan advised that the City had people taking photographs of the developing garage each week and aerial photographs each month. He suggested that a few Flagler College students might want to make a presentation for television.

Mr. Sullivan suggested that a ball could be held for the grand opening of the new parking facility which would allow all citizens and those involved in the development to join in the celebration.

Ms. Sikes-Kline stated that, through a generous offer from Mr. Toner, the next PAT Committee meeting could be held at the School Board building which would allow the Committee to view the development of the parking facility.

Mr. Toner offered to hold the meeting at the School Board building with a tour of the new

garage from City staff. He said the press could be asked to join the Committee.

Mr. Regan advised that staff was scheduled to be the speaker at lunch for the Attraction Association that day. He said they would discuss preservation funding and the Parking and Traffic Masterplan issues which would be part of the public education element. He stated that the big joke he had heard was that the City would never be able to fill the parking facility; however, many of the elements involved hurricane protection and the vehicles would not be seen due to the screening system. He noted that the structure could play a part in a hurricane preparedness plan with vehicle parking to eliminate flooded vehicles with street parking. He said that many suggestions had been voiced by citizens regarding the utilization of the new parking facility.

4. DISCUSSION OF TOPICS FOR THE FOLLOWING MEETING

None

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Pat Parets complemented Mr. Regan on the new Residential Parking Program signage. She suggested that other City programs would run smoother if public education and communication were involved.

6. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:58 a.m.⁴

³ Dr. Abare departed at 9:50 am.

⁴ Transcribed by Pam Halterman, Recording Secretary