

A special meeting of the Beaufort City Council was held on July 25, 2005 at 4:00 p.m. in The Friends Room of the Arsenal, 703 Craven Street. In attendance were Mayor Bill Rauch, Mayor Pro Tem Frank Glover, Council members Donnie Ann Beer, Gary B. Fordham, George H. O'Kelley, Jr., City Manager John F. McDonough. In accordance with South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, Section 30-4-80(d), as amended, all local media were duly notified of the time, date, place and agenda of this meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. for the purpose of discussing the Boundary Street traffic plan as it pertains to the proposed Municipal Complex.

The City Manager said the last time Council discussed this project as a group, there were questions regarding the building site, road closings and the impact of various options related to traffic flow. Staff was asked to work with the traffic engineers and the architect to address the traffic flow issues related to the construction of the new municipal complex. The City Manager, the Police Chief, and Councilman O'Kelley traveled to Charleston a week ago and met with Todd Salvagin from SRS Engineering who is the City's traffic engineer for the project. Mr. Salvagin shared the traffic counts that were performed approximately six weeks ago and then presented a traffic analysis of the various options of ways to access the site. The City Manager said Mr. Salvagin was asked to do several things to finalize the presentation in anticipation of this meeting and he has incorporated those suggestions into his presentation.

In reply to Councilman Fordham's inquiry regarding the DHEC findings on the property, the City Manager relayed the information he received from DHEC last week that the previous owner will be required to drill between 5 and 10 additional temporary wells to find out how far the plume has expanded on the site. The samples will be analyzed and then the temporary well sites will be closed.

Mr. Salvagin discussed the Ribaut Road extension at the intersection of Boundary Street and the impact of the proposed Municipal Center. A traffic count was conducted during the mornings and afternoons and the data collected on the roadways at the intersections of the County Complex/Ramada Inn, Ribaut Road/Boundary Street and Palmetto Street for a sixty minute interval during the peak hours. This information along with the proposed traffic generated by the Municipal Center during the peak hours, based on National Trip Standards, was placed in the network. A computer model of the proposed traffic was displayed showing traffic backed up. The major intersection of Ribaut Road and Boundary Street is referred to as a split phase signalized intersection which is a very ineffective way to carry traffic, according to Mr. Salvagin. Currently, Palmetto Street is rated a "C" which is a good level of service; however, adding the Municipal Center the traffic will increase approximately six times and the rating will change to a "D" or "E". They were asked to consider future planning and the extension of National Street and east/west connectivity from Palmetto Street to Marsh Gardens. He recommended Council consider providing that interconnectivity whether or not the extension is closed so traffic on the north side of Boundary Street does not have to come to Boundary to travel one block over. There is approximately a 400 ft. separation between Ribaut Rd. and Palmetto Street today with a lot of left turns. He suggested

turning Palmetto Street into a right turn in and right turn out to enhance the operations of the intersection and for safety. With the Ribaut Road extension closed, the computer model showed the traffic moving without stacking. By removing the split phase, the efficiency of the signal is increased and the rating changes to a “B”. The traffic count showed forty vehicles use the extension a day during a sixty minute period, he said. They also studied how to make the traffic flow if the extension is left open when the Municipal Center is built. One recommendation would be to widen the north bound Ribaut Road approach by the Piggly Wiggly where the problem is with the split phase to create three lanes instead of two. To do that, he said the landscaped median may have to be removed and/or the acquisition of property in the southeast lane from the Piggly Wiggly and the Bar-B-Q restaurant to add an additional lane. Signage can also be added to encourage people traveling west to use both lanes when making a left turn. Mr. Salvagin said Ribaut Road will eventually need to be widened to accommodate additional traffic. The road may function as it is for ten years whether Ribaut Road extension remains open or is closed and whether or not Ribaut Road is widened or not.

Councilman Glover said he has concerns about signage directing visitors to City Hall with no left turns. There is a lot of emphasis on using other people’s property and he doesn’t know the cost to condemn a portion of the Ramada Inn property. Also, the citizens who live in the Higgonsonville area are adamant about not closing the extension and he is not in favor of that either. Mr. Salvagin presented pros and cons and recommended providing interconnectivity to Marsh Gardens which could include condemnation. He said they are looking for direction on how to plan the site with or without the extension.

Jim Gay, Ladys Island resident, said he has investment property that will be affected. He asked if there is any way to prevent the stacking of traffic at the intersection of Boundary and Palmetto Streets which would allow for east bound traffic for Palmetto Street heading south to make a left turn out. Mr. Salvagin said a Do Not Block Intersection sign could be posted and the stacking occurring today is caused by vehicles turning in and out of the Piggly Wiggly, the Bar-B-Q restaurant, and Palmetto Street in the 400 ft. section in combination with left turns onto Ribaut Road. He added that they were asked whether or not Palmetto Street could be signalized but it can’t be done because it is too close to the other intersections and would be hard to justify a signal with a 400 ft. separation. That might work in a grid system but a 400 ft distance is closer than that.

Jason Ryan of the Beaufort Gazette asked what access points to the Complex are being recommended. Mr. Salvagin said the site borders Palmetto Street and Boundary Street and the purpose of the meeting today is to make that decision. He is recommending connectivity to Marsh Gardens through the Ramada Inn property via National Street.

David Tedder asked about the median on Boundary Street. Mr. Salvagin replied it is intended to be for left turns into and out of the Piggly Wiggly and is not intended to be a raised median. Also representing the owner of the Ramada Inn, Mr. Tedder said the last plan showed a road cutting through their property. He asked if the revised plan with the interconnectivity impacts the rear of the Ramada Inn property. The City Manager replied it does. Mr. Salvagin explained the alignment from the charettes that resulted in all the trip plans for Boundary Street was used. National Street was shown as coming across the marsh into Marsh Gardens. The City Manager pointed out that when the Transportation Impact Fee was approved a year ago, the concept was based on the 2002

Charette that both City and County Councils approved showing the connection from National Street across the back of the Ramada Inn property and into Marsh Gardens creating the northern connectivity so that people on the northern side of Boundary Street would have an alternate road to travel. He added that funding was set aside predicting a small bridge being built from National Street across the marsh and the north end of the Ramada. Councilman Fordham asked how the bridge and roadway are to be funded. The City Manager replied the funding of \$7.5 million would come from the Transportation Impact Fee Fund for Boundary Street improvements and a parallel road north.

Edie Rodgers inquired about the reason for the interconnectivity asking why close an entrance/exit that could be used by City employees. Councilman O'Kelley replied that the existing signal light at the Ramada Inn only allows two cars to get through and a third car could cause grid lock. Mr. Salvagin added the planning theory of connectivity is to allow users on one side of the road an alternate way to access stores, etc. without adding redundant traffic. Ms. Rodgers said she understood that but she agrees with Mr. Glover that it will be confusing to people trying to get to City Hall.

Chrissy Henson, resident of Higgonsonsville, said Lafayette Street is a dangerous alternative and she doesn't think that is a good option. Mr. Salvagin restated his suggestion to use National Street at a signal and make a left turn which would be safer than using Lafayette or Palmetto Streets today.

Thomas McTeer, Darby Drive, asked how much of the property is to be used for the proposed Municipal Complex and if the decision about Ribaut Road Extension has anything to do with condemning property. If so, are there any options to condemnation? The Mayor said that has not been confirmed as of yet; however, if the extension is left open, it would be necessary to condemn property for an additional lane by the Piggly Wiggly/Bar-B-Q. Councilman O'Kelley roughly sketched designs of how the roadway would appear if the extension were closed. The Mayor suggested Option # 1 be with the extension left open and Option # 2 with the extension closed and the pros and cons of each be discussed.

Chrissy Henson asked how this will be funded. The City Manager explained about a year ago, an Intergovernmental Agreement between the City and County was passed and in January of this year collection of the Transportation Impact Fees began. The total projects for Northern Beaufort County total \$17.5 million of which \$7.5 million is earmarked for the City and the Boundary Street Corridor, specifically for the National Street extension to create a second alternative road, or interconnectivity, on the north side of Boundary Street.

Councilwoman Beer moved to accept Option #2. Councilman O'Kelley seconded the motion. For clarity, Mr. Salvagin explained Alternative #2 is the removal of Ribaut Road Extension along with the provision of interconnectivity via National Street leaving Ribaut Road northbound as it is without widening that portion of the road. This option would provide longevity in roadway capacity, he said.

Councilman Fordham said it appears the problem of the intersection still needs to be addressed and he is against what is being proposed. Councilman Glover said he, too, is opposed. The City Manager addressing their concerns, stated this is also being required of private developers to ensure

there is interconnectivity and the City has conducted a transportation impact analysis which was explained earlier. Mr. Glover said, in his opinion, there is too much emphasis placed on an access that is too far removed from the site and is the wrong thing to do. Responding, Councilman O'Kelley said if the extension is left open, property will have to be taken from the bar-b-que restaurant and the Piggly Wiggly to create a turn lane. Based upon the studies, closing the Extension will free up the phasing of Ribaut Road and the traffic flow will be improved. Additionally, with the proper signage, he believes it will not be difficult to access City Hall.

Jim Gay asked the efficiency of a traffic circle compared to a four lane intersection. The Mayor replied a traffic circle is not as efficient.

Mr. Salvagin reported he presented the designs to Robert Clark, SCDOT District 6 Traffic Engineer, and he indicated acceptance of Option #2 because of the improvement to the Ribaut/Boundary intersection.

At the Mayor's request and to avoid confusion of the motion, Mr. Salvagin listed what Option #2 involves. The question of whether fire trucks could access the Higgonsonville neighborhood was also raised and Fire Chief Wendell Wilburn said closing the street would not pose a problem for the fire department.

Ms. Beer called the question. Council members O'Kelley, Beer, and Rauch voted in favor of the motion. Councilmen Fordham and Glover voted nay. The motion passed 3 to 2.

Councilman Fordham raised the question of whether this meeting was a workshop or a special meeting. The City Manager pointed out it was advertised as a special meeting. Mr. Fordham also inquired as to why this meeting was not incorporated in the regularly scheduled meeting to be held tomorrow night. The City Manager replied that due to the length of time required for this item, it was scheduled separately.

The next issue for review and discussion will be alternative site plans for the Municipal Complex and Council is to consider whether they could meet August 8, 9, or 10th for another special meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before Council, the meeting was adjourned at 6:03 p.m.

BILL RAUCH, MAYOR

COUNCILWOMAN DONNIE ANN BEER

COUNCILMAN FRANK GLOVER

COUNCILMAN GARY B. FORDHAM

COUNCILMAN GEORGE H. O'KELLEY, JR.

ATTEST:

BEVERLY W. GAY, CITY CLERK