

MINUTES
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS SPECIAL MEETING
HOOD ROOM, MATTHEWS TOWN HALL
JUNE 19, 2018 – 7:00 PM

PRESENT: Mayor Paul Bailey; Mayor Pro Tem John Higdon; Commissioners Barbara Dement, Jeff Miller, Kress Query and John Urban

ABSENT: Commissioner Chris Melton; Transportation Advisory Committee members Bill Stevens, and David Teixeira; citizens Renee Garner and Rob Jacik; Town Manager Hazen Blodgett

ALSO PRESENT: Facilitator Randy Mitchell; Transportation Advisory Committee member Vince Manno; citizens Larry Lester and Garry Smith; Assistant Town Manager Becky Hawke; Public Works Director CJ O'Neill; Town Engineer Susan Habina Woolard; Planning and Development Director Kathi Ingrish; Public Works Intern Josh Rosenstein; Deputy Town Clerk Shana Robertson

The meeting was called to order at 6:19 PM

Mayor Paul Bailey reviewed the safety procedures and informed the Committee members of information that he had received from Representative Bill Brawley. Mayor Bailey said that there had been a bill that passed in the Senate that included the transfer of money for US74, I-85, Weddington Road Interchange, and John Street road projects. This transfer would shift funding to pay off the contractor for the I-77 toll lanes to prevent them from being toll lanes. The amendment was introduced by Jeff Tarte and passed the Senate and continued to the House. Mayor Bailey said that the House and Senate could not come to agreement so the bill did not pass. Mayor Bailey said that he had added a Resolution to the June 25, 2018 Board of Commissioners meeting agenda to talk about requesting that the funding for the I-485 and Wedding Road interchange be released. He continued that releasing the funding would ensure their construction. Mayor Bailey said that the Council would then look into US-74 and what needed to be done to secure its future construction.

Commissioner John Higdon asked if that interchange was a priority and Mayor Bailey said that the Weddington interchange was part of the I-485 project. Mr. Higdon felt the biggest priority for the Matthews area is the completion of the US-74 project and the parallel collector roads.

Facilitator Randy Mitchell reviewed the agenda for the night's meeting, saying that they were going to break into small groups for a review of their John Street proposals that were worked on during the May 30, 2018 meeting before presenting the ideas to the group for commentary. After commentary the group would work on a consensus for a vision of the road design that could be presented to the NCDOT. Mr. Mitchell reminded the citizens that were in attendance that comments could be submitted on the Town's website and there would be a public input session scheduled in the future. Mr. Mitchell added that if time allowed they would discuss what the impact would be on the surrounding areas. Mr. Mitchell spoke about the limitations in thinking and encouraged the group to start thinking outside the box.

Mr. Mitchell released members to their small work groups at 6:37 PM to review, discuss, and ready their May 30, 2018 design ideas for larger group presentations.

Group One: Commissioners Barbara Dement & Jeff Miller, Mayor Pro Tem John Higdon

Group Two: Commissioner Kress Query and community member Larry Lester.

Group Three: Mayor Paul Bailey, Commissioner John Urban, Transportation Advisory Committee member Vince Manno and community member Garry Smith

Large group discussion resumed at 7:03 PM.

Mr. Mitchell called to begin the group design critiques. The first area of discussion included the neighborhood section of E. John Street that include the areas between I-485 and Charles Buckley Way.

Group One

Commissioner Jeff Miller presented group ones vision. Mr. Miller said their theme covered areas between Highway 51 and I-485. He said that current morning commutes traveling to Charlotte consisted of two lanes, one in each direction from Stallings. Group one's design would have the proposed four lanes, two in each direction, traveling from Stallings and return to two lanes, one in each direction, at I-485. He explained that this would create a decision tree allowing commuters to decide their route depending on the road congestion and thus divert traffic onto I-485. Mr. Miller continued that during the day and evening traffic traveling from Highway 51 towards Union County is currently a constant back-up. Group one's idea was to narrow the four lanes, two in each direction on Monroe Road to one in each direction after passing the Brusters Ice-cream shop creating another decision tree. This would allow commuters to make the decision to turn left or right on NC51 and take Fullwood Lane to the Weddington Road interchange or to Independence Boulevard. Mr. Miller said that their road design would include a large 23' sized median that if needed in the future could be expand to two travel lanes. Their goal was a look similar to what is in place on the Colony Road/ South Park area of Charlotte that included one lane in each direction with large planted median, which would include cut throughs. Mr. Higdon said that he believed Colony Road handled as much traffic as John Street and that they use sections of the median on Colony Road as a community park. Mr. Higdon added that this might be palatable to the DOT as the real estate would be available for future expansion.

Mayor Bailey asked what that design would look like at the intersection of Trade Street and John Street. Mr. Miller said there would be a straight through and left turn lane in each direction with a possible addition of right turn lanes. The median would get skinnier at the intersection but would provide pedestrian refuge. Mr. Higdon added that this would allow left hand turns onto John Street due to residents not having to cut across more than one lane of traffic.

Commissioner Kress Query asked if the design would take all of the homes. Mr. Mitchell reviewed group one's design from the May 30, 2018 meeting that included a 5' sidewalk on the north, a 10' multiuse path (MUP) on the south, and 4' planting strips on both sides of the street. The design also included an 11' travel lane in each direction that was separated by a 23' planted median. Town Engineer Susan Habina Woolard showed the group where the right of way lines were, putting the design over those lines.

Commissioner Barbara Dement said that this design would create a beautiful streetscape and would encourage traffic to bypass the downtown area.

Advisory Committee member Vince Manno said that group one's proposal was what was currently in place. He explained that coming out of Stallings was currently one lane and commuters were not turning off to use I-485 and backups were present in both directions. He added that the ability for commuters to make a decision based on the traffic congestion was in place but drivers were not making the decision to bypass. Mr. Manno continued that from the other direction on Monroe Road backups were occurring passed Family Doller. People will use the left lane on W. John Street and cut over. He stated that this was a proposal of what the Town already had. Mr. Manno said that the group one design was a pretty view but was not solving the problems. Mr. Miller said that group one felt that the backups mostly occurred in front of the El Valle restaurant and there was no other choice at that point but if the backup was visible from Highway 51 then maybe it would divert commuters to go around Matthews by the way of Fullwood Lane or Independence Boulevard. Mr. Miller added that it would create a better looking downtown and push traffic outside the area. Mr. Higdon added that Independence Boulevard had not yet been dramatically

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improved and once that occurred then people would use that direction verses sitting in traffic. Mr. Manno said that both projects were scheduled for the same timeframe.

Mr. Higdon said that currently drivers punch the gas in the left lane of W. John Street to cut over at the intersection of John Street and Trade Street. He did not want cars punching the gas through the historic downtown but wanted to slow the traffic down. Mr. Miller said that it also happens on E. John Street at the post office where another lane is introduced that sends cars speeding through the historic district.

Ms. Habina Woolard informed the committee members that staff had reached out to the NCDOT about getting counts and safety analysts for roads that were designed similar to what was being presented. She said they did not have information back from them but she had hopes to get that information to the committee to review soon.

Ms. Dement said that The Plaza was going to go from a four lane to a two lane with added bike lanes in each direction.

Group Two

Community member Larry Lester presented for group two and said they had a similar vision as group one. He said their vision was for a wider median, bike lanes, and planting strips along the sides. This gave a better look for the town and offered a long term element with a possibility of lanes being added in the future where the median saves the place. Mr. Lester said that with all the ancillary roads that were being built, it was their feeling that people would take shortest timed route once all the projects were completed. Mr. Lester said that with the 17' median, another lane could be added in the future if needed and it would not impact the homes as much as a larger median.

Mr. Mitchell summarized by saying that group two had envisioned a 17' median in the middle with one lane in each direction, and at key intersections the median would be interrupted for left turn lanes. Mr. Lester said the use of traffic lights at intersections was a mistake. Mr. Mitchell clarified that the group preferred few to no lights and more left turn lanes and Mr. Lester said that was correct.

Mr. Manno asked staff if Matthews, after the construction of the median, would be allowed to then change it into a lane since John Street is a state road. Public Works Director CJ O'Neill said that the Town would need to have the permission of the NCDOT. Mr. Manno asked what would happen after the DOT spends millions of dollars on this road project and the Town decides that they want another lane. Mr. O'Neill said that the Town had a good relationship with the NCDOT and they would take the Town's input into account. Mr. Lester said that group two's theory was to discourage people from cutting through Town.

Mr. Miller asked if bike lanes would be needed if there was a sidewalk and a multi-use path. Mr. Lester said that other metropolitan areas had bikes sharing the road and a multi-use path would only address one side of the road. Mr. Mitchell asked staff if there were standards for bike lanes and cyclists. Ms. Habina Woolard said that it would depend on the type of cyclist that you had in your community. She said that in Matthews she has witnessed more bikes on the sidewalks whereas in Charlotte many use their bikes for commuting. She added that from community engagement they know that multi-use paths are preferred.

Ms. Dement asked if a 23' median would be easier to persuade NCDOT to accept so that two 11' travel lanes could be added and the 17' median would only allow for one additional lane. Mr. O'Neill said that 23' would likely not be enough room for two 11' lanes since the NCDOT would also require a 4' median.

Mr. Higdon said that he respected cyclists but felt the need for a dedicated 5' bike lane is a luxury that the Town did not have room for. He said that on this small area, bikers can ride on the multi-use path.

Mr. Mitchell asked if the previous NCDOT plan had bike lanes south of Matthews or just a multi-use path. Ms. Habina Woolard said it was just planned with a multi-use path.

Ms. Habina Woolard said that she had a comment about the absence traffic signals. She stated that signals help to meter traffic, help with speed reduction, and pedestrian crossing. Ms. Habina Woolard added that majority, if not all pedestrians crossing at the intersection of Trade Street and John Street use the signal for safe crossing and she would not recommend their removal.

Group Three

Commissioner John Urban said that group three stood by the idea of two lanes, one in each direction, with parking on both sides, bulb outs to slow traffic, and not giving the DOT the ability to have a 23' median that could be later changed into travel lanes. Mr. Urban said he felt the NCDOT would say that none of the plans would advance the moving of traffic so he presented group three's alternative to bring traffic up to the future Greylock Ridge Road. He suggested that Greylock Ridge be converted to a four lane, two in each direction, boulevard. Mr. Urban said that this would take traffic over the railroad tracks and through the entertainment district to connect with Independence Pointe Parkway, a collector thoroughfare for Independence Boulevard. A street map was displayed and Mr. Urban routed the road path that would include a four lane cross section with a gateway.

Mr. Mitchell asked how this would offer any relief from what group one presented, to force traffic to Independence Boulevard or Fullwood Lane. Mr. Urban said that this would add another road network to the system and a bypass for downtown Matthews as well as bringing more connectivity. Mr. Higdon said that this road had not been built yet and it could be constructed correctly from the start. All of the committee members in attendance liked the alternate idea that group three presented.

Ms. Habina Woolard said that she could see this helping the west bound traffic and asked about the east bound traffic. Mr. Manno said that hopefully commuters would get used to that route and reverse it to take US-74 to Independence Pointe to Greylock Ridge to Monroe Road. Ms. Habina Woolard said that the construction of Independence Pointe Parkway is soon on the horizon. She added that Greylock Ridge was not on the federal aid system so she could not apply for state funds for its construction. Mr. O'Neill asked why people would take this proposed route rather than taking 1-485 to the widened US-74. Mr. Urban said that this bypass idea would supply more connectivity and make more use of Independence Pointe Parkway.

Mr. Mitchell summarized the designs for the neighbors section of John Street. Presented by all three groups were 23' and 17' medians, 10' multi-use path, a 5' sidewalk on opposite sides, a 4' planting strip between the roadway and sidewalk/multi-use path. Mr. Mitchell said that there was a good deal of consistency and asked Mayor Bailey if there was enough that could be taken to the NCDOT as an alternative. Mayor Bailey said that when the group comes to a consensus and present it to the State there will need to be room for negotiation as to what the Town can or cannot do. He added that the funding could also be an issue if the design does not accomplish the goals that DOT has set as part of the project. Mayor Bailey suggested that at the next meeting staff gather the design ideas and put some formality to them for review. He added that the discussions may focus on what can or cannot be done, what would meet the DOT's needs, what would meet the Town's needs, and if additional funds would be required from the Town.

Discussion ensued the US-74 road project. Planning and Development Director Kathi Ingrish explained that with Independence Pointe Parkway drivers could interchange with NC51 or with Sardis Road. Mr. Mitchell asked about the route of the future CATS Silver Line and Mr. O'Neill routed the path for the group. Mayor Bailey said that at the Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC) meeting they were talking about the path of the Silver Line and discussed a tunnel that would go under structures and roads.

Public Works Intern Josh Rosenstein presented the group with examples of different median styles, planting strips, multi-use paths and sidewalks. (Exhibit #1 hereby referenced and made a part of these minutes). Examples were shown of sidewalks with no planting strips, 4' and 8' planting strips with 5 foot sidewalks and 10' multi-use paths, and median widths from 4' to 23'. Discussion ensued on increasing the multi-use path to 12' in many areas.

Mr. O'Neil said that large maturing trees could be built in a 23' median or possibly behind the sidewalk and smaller decorative trees could be planted in the 17' median space.

Ms. Ingrish spoke about the Fullwood Lane sidewalk and how people liked that the path meandered through the existing trees and the distance that the sidewalk was setback from the street. She also spoke about other parts of the Charlotte area and the trends on pedestrian and bike travel and reminded the members of the group that things that we don't see today we may see in the not so distant future. Plans for development would need to include these possible changes of habits.

Mr. Mitchell asked if the visuals made an impact or changed anyone's thoughts on their design submission. Mr. Higdon said that he would prefer the 17' or 23' median. Mr. Lester said he liked the 17' or greater sized median. Mr. Manno said that he would like one that would least impact the land of residents on John Street, especially if a 10' multi-lane path was added and a 5' sidewalk. He said that as more elements get added, property owners are losing their yards and suggested cutting the median size down. Mr. Miller said that he would not want large trees in the center median for safety reasons. Mr. O'Neill said that the DOT had what was called a clear zone. This area allowed for correction if a driver were to run off the road based on speed. This is why large maturing trees could be planted in a 23' median and not in a 17' median. Mr. Mitchell said that he was hearing a consensus that median widths be 17' or greater depending on the location.

Mr. Higdon said that when thinking about a gateway into the Town, a crape myrtle was not a magnificent visual that had a wow factor such as that of Queens Road in Charlotte. He said he would like for some areas of the gateway to have large trees. Mr. Miller asked how close the multi-use path would be from a citizen's front door. Mr. Urban said that the gateway should be around Greylock Ridge so that when Wingate Commons, a multiple story, mixed-use, large scale development, is developed it would have the complete boulevard look. Mr. Urban suggested the larger tree in the center median as not to cause canopy problems in the future. Mr. Manno said that larger trees could cause issues with power lines.

Mr. Mitchell clarified that where the footprint allowed, 23' medians would be ideal especially at each end of John Street and 17' medians through the rest of the town. The group concurred.

Mr. Mitchell then turned the discussion over to the buffer planting strips and verified that the consensus was that they would be no narrower than 4' but the preference would 8' where possible on both sides.

Mr. Higdon said that an 8' planting strip would be nice but there was only room for a 4' strip. He did not like the idea of no planting strip and said he felt that would be dangerous to pedestrians. Mr. Higdon added that if there was real estate on the ends towards the gateway area then maybe 8' planting strips would be ok but a 4' was sufficient for the remainder of John Street. Mayor Bailey said that he would like for the group to consider a 5' area between the street and sidewalk or multi-use path. Visuals from Exhibit #1 were displayed again for the 4' and the 8' planting strip. Ms. Habina Woolard said that if they propose a 4' planting strip to the NCDOT then the Town would only get the 4' strips. She added that there could be other areas of John Street that could accommodate larger planting areas. Mr. Mitchell said that a compromise could be to have an 8' planting strip on the side that has the sidewalk and a smaller 4' planting strip on the side that the multi-use path was on.

Mr. Query said that everything being looked at was close to taking all of the residential front yards and everything seemed to get larger and larger. Mr. Higdon said no more was being taken than if four lanes and the 23' median that was proposed by the NCDOT was constructed. Mr. Query said that if these designs were placed onto a map that showed the right-of-way lines, they would all be outside of that area. Mr. O'Neill used an overhead projector to demonstrate the design consensus and the right of way lines (Exhibit #2 hereby referenced and made a part of these minutes). The design included a 10' multi-use path, 8' planting strip, two 11' travel lanes, 23' median, 8' planting strip, and 5' sidewalk. Mr. O'Neill showed that the two red lines depicted right of way and the green area

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depicted grading. Mr. Higdon said the plan was still doable but people may have a multi-use path in their front yard and felt that would be better than a road. Mr. Mitchell asked if it was a better plan than what was there today and many felt that because of the landscaping that it was. Mr. Higdon said that these should all be drawn up to visualize the actual impact. Ms. Habina Woolard said that they did not have the staffing capacity to have engineered drawings available but simpler images could be provided similar to what Mr. O'Neill had presented.

Ms. Hawke asked if the consensus is for the planting strip to be no narrower than a 4' and as wide as possible and Mr. Mitchell said yes.

Mr. Mitchell said that the group was in agreement for a 10' multi-use path but asked if there was a preference of the path being on the north or south side of John Street. Mr. Urban said that he felt the path should be on the north side as that was where the development was going to be. Mr. Mitchell said that the Stallings multi-use path and the greenway was on the south side.

Mr. Query asked how far the design would leave between the house and the street. Ms. Habina Woolard said the minimum distance allowed would be 20' from the building to the sidewalk. Mr. Manno said that for garbage roll out carts they would need to put carts on the planting strip. Mayor Bailey said that the trucks would cause a disturbance on the proposed designed areas. With the median there would not be away around the trucks during pick-up schedules.

Mayor Bailey asked if the impact had been narrowed from what was proposed from the NCDOT. The goal was to have neighbors stay in their homes and have the area be an acceptable environment. He added that long-term it would look nice but he did not think cars would be any further from their front door than what was proposed by the NCDOT. Mr. Higdon said that if he had to choose between having two lanes, one in each direction or four lanes, two in each direction he would choose the one lane in each direction as it was less impactful. Ms. Dement said that nice landscaped areas slow traffic and seem to feel safer.

Mayor Bailey asked if everyone was also in agreement to having the left turn cut-ins within the medians, and Mr. Higdon said that the reason the DOT was against the left turn was that people would be crossing multiple lanes of traffic. In the designs presented there was only one lane to cross fairly safely. Mr. Mitchell asked if there were limits to some left turns and Mr. Higdon said that he would limit the left turns onto the higher traffic roads. Mr. Miller said that those preferred roads had been identified as Greylock Ridge, Charles Buckley Way, and Clearbrook or Edgeland Drive. Mr. O'Neill added that the group did need to differentiate between left turns off of the corridor and left turns from a neighborhood, saying that it was much easier putting a left turn lane into a neighborhood than turning left lanes of traffic out of a neighborhood without signals. Mr. O'Neill said that Greylock Ridge, Charles Buckley Way would be signalized full access intersections that would allow left turns with the assistance of a traffic signal.

Mr. Mitchell reviewed the consensus that included:

- 23' medians at each end of John Street with 17' medians through the rest of the town
- Planting strips that were preferred to be 8' but no narrower than 4'
- A 10' multi use path
- Limited left turns
- Evaluate the vision of Greylock Ridge/Independence Point Parkway bypass
- One lane in each direction

Mr. Mitchell said that there was not a preference on which side of the road the multi-use path and the sidewalk were located. Mayor Bailey said that if the multi-use path is put onto the north side of John Street he would like something in place that allowed for safe pedestrian crossing at the greenway. Ms. Habina Woolard said that the Town has partnered with the County for a Four Mile Creek greenway study and she had requested that the best option for

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pedestrian crossing be looked into. She added that that information had not been received by the Town as of that meeting date. Ms. Habina Woolard said that when staff locates multi-use path, the origin and the destination are reviewed and downtown is a consistent destination for Matthews. The north side of John Street, closer to the historic side of downtown Matthews would be staff's recommendation as it would be less street crossing at the intersection of John Street and Trade Street. Mr. Higdon said that at first he did not have a preference but agreed with Ms. Habina Woolard that the path should be located on the north side of John Street and that Mayor Bailey's point about safe crossing from the greenway was important. Mr. Mitchell concluded that the multi-use path be placed on the north side of John Street with a connection to the Four Mile Creek greenway.

Mr. Mitchell asked if the group had reached a common consensus on the theme. Mr. Miller asked if it was implied that Greylock Ridge would be one in the same with Independence Pointe Parkway. Ms. Habina Woolard requested that this could be called a bypass as Greylock Ridge was a small piece. The group was in agreement that if they went to the NCDOT with just one lane in each direction on John Street the plan would not be accepted but to include the idea of a bypass would show an option to move traffic. Mr. Mitchell with the help of Ms. Habina Woolard summarized that the bypass would move traffic from Greylock Ridge onto Independence Pointe Parkway, Highway 51, Fullwood Lane, S. Trade, Pleasant Plains, and back to Monroe Road.

Mr. Query asked about the current proposed alignment of Independence Pointe Parkway and its construction. Ms. Ingrish explained that the gaps of Independence Pointe Parkway are part of the US-74 road project and the plan was to build Independence Pointe Parkway from Matthews-Mint Hill Road across I-485 and to CPCC. Connections and interchange discussions were had by the group about Independence Pointe Parkway and US-74. Mr. Mitchell said that this would be discussed further at later meetings.

Mr. Mitchell asked Mr. O'Neill and Ms. Habina Woolard if enough information was gathered to formulate something that could be presented to the NCDOT. Mayor Bailey said that it may be best to put something together and present it to the John Street committee before going to the NCDOT. Mayor Bailey said this would give an idea of what the project would look like and what the impacts would be. He suggested that at the next meeting talking about those impacts and the intersections at Fullwood and NC51. Mr. Mitchell asked if there was a timeline when this needed to be presented to the NCDOT. Ms. Habina Woolard said there was not at this time and the group all felt that the design should be presented as soon as possible.

Mr. Miller said that he liked the idea of the bump outs and on-street parking and felt that should be discussed further. Mr. Higdon said that it would be nice close to the greenway and would be better than the small strip that was currently in place. Mr. Urban said that parking was at a premium and many residents on John Street park in their yards with little to no visitor parking.

Mr. Mitchell said that because another meeting will be needed, street parking could be included in the agenda for that meeting.

Mr. Higdon said that he was aware of some Town residents getting letters from the NCDOT about grading studies for the John Street widening.

Mayor Bailey asked staff how long was needed to get designs together for review. Ms. Habina Woolard said that three weeks would be needed. Mr. Mitchell said that schedule request will be sent out for that time frame.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Shana Robertson
Senior Administrative Specialist/Deputy Town Clerk

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