

MINUTES
PARKING AND TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
WORK SESSION MEETING

9:00 A.M. – Tuesday, January 8, 2013
City Hall – Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Ken Smith called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

Councilor Ken Smith, Chair
John Bohenko, City Manager
Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director
Corey MacDonald, Deputy Police Chief
Ron Cypher, Member
Sheri Donnermeyer, Member
Ted Gray, Member
Harold Whitehouse, Member

Staff Advisors Present:

Tom Cocchiaro, Parking Operations Supervisor
Nick Cracknell, City Planner

III. Presentation on the Parking Garage Site Selection – Nick Cracknell, City Planner

City Planner Nick Cracknell gave a presentation summarizing the Parking Garage Site Selection Committee report as presented to the City Council on October 15, 2012. He stated that the Parking Garage Site Selection Committee recommended a Short-List of Sites for further review and evaluation which included Bridge Street, Masonic Lot, Deer Street, Parrott Avenue, McIntyre Lot, Worth Lot and Court Street Lot. He further reviewed the Methodology and Approach to evaluating the various sites beginning with Key Goals and Objectives. These included Walkability distance to the core site of Market Square, visual impact, active street-level uses, leverage into larger revitalization effort, flexibility for multiple sites, multi-modal facility, public-private partnerships and minimize construction costs. He continued reviewing the pros and cons of each selected site stating that three sites were ranked the best possibilities with Deer Street being third, Worth Lot the second choice and McIntyre Lot being first in the ranking. He stated at this point, as anticipated, the 205 space Portwalk parking lot was closed in December as site construction began on the mixed-use multi-story building and the High-Hanover parking garage was at full capacity 122 times, a 100% increase over 2011.

IV. Discussion and Questions

Ms. Donnermeyer stated it was her understanding that the owners of the Worth Lot had been consulted regarding this issue but that the owners of the Deer Street Lot had not been approached. City Manager Bohenko clarified that he has consulted with them and they are looking at other development options so they can't say yes or no either way. He stated at this point, he has made contact with all property owners that may have been affected.

Ms. Donnermeyer stated she has heard that Senator Shaheen has announced that the new Social Security Office building will be breaking ground at the Pease tradeport in the Spring of 2013 and that the McIntyre building would be available in 2014. City Manager Bohenko stated he had heard this same thing in 2010 and it didn't happen so he is cautious about planning until actual ground is broken. He stated we have money set aside for planning when it does occur and it will be the decision of the Council as to how or if the building will be reused or if it will be removed entirely. He stated public input will be sought as well, but not until the time is right.

Mr. Gray asked about the possibility of installing vehicle elevators to save space. City Manager Bohenko stated that they have looked at these elevators and they are very expensive and more suitable to big cities.

City Manager Bohenko stated that he is looking at what the next steps should be for the committee.

Mr. Whitehouse stated he would like to have a work session that allows the public to ask questions of the professionals and get direct answers to their questions. He stated it should be held in a coffee shop or outside function room on a Saturday so that people are comfortable and able to speak freely without it being televised.

Chairman Smith stated he is planning to hold an informal session to gather input from the public. City Manager Bohenko clarified that if a quorum of members attends the informal session it will be considered a meeting and will need to be posted accordingly.

Ms. Donnerymeyer stated that she also understood that there were other options that have not yet been discussed. City Manager Bohenko stated that over the past 10 years the Economic Development Commission has been working on getting another parking garage in the City as they knew that we would have a critical mass situation. He continued that we had the opportunity to utilize the Portwalk spaces, but we knew they would go away when construction began and the same issue would occur if a garage was built on the Worth Lot. He stated these spaces need to be made up in some way but we never really got started with looking for alternatives. He stated that Ms. Donnermeyer indicated to him prior to the meeting that the Chamber of Commerce was conducting a survey and would like to suggest that we work with them on this survey as there has already been a lot of work done towards that by Nick Cracknell.

Ms. Donnermeyer clarified that the Chamber is surveying its members and is ready to be sent today. City Manager Bohenko stated that they should go ahead with that survey and when a site is recommended, then we can do another survey.

Mr. Cypher stated that the McIntyre Building could be handed over to us in 20 months time and if the construction of a new garage is expected to take 18 months then perhaps we should wait for that to become available so that the other spaces aren't taken away during construction.

City Manager Bohenko stated he would like to clarify that a parking garage isn't going to be the primary use of the McIntyre site and feels that other uses will be the focus and a parking garage would serve those uses with some of the spaces available for public

parking. He stated there are some restrictions on the property, but this will be the largest redevelopment in the central business district in 100 years and will get the property back on the tax rolls.

Chairman Smith stated that turnover needs to be accounted for as well regarding business parking during the day and residential during the evening etc. He asked what the post office plans will be when this happens.

City Manager Bohenko stated it will be up to the post office. He stated there is also a provision to provide some public open space. He stated he agrees with the double usage of the spaces, but also doesn't want so many spaces that it cause traffic congestion in that area. He stated this will be a positive addition to the city, but it will not be driven by a parking garage.

Chairman Smith stated that we will not solve all of the parking issues and he has been working on this for 25 years. He stated when the parking garage was added 15 years ago it was supposed to solve the problem but it has not. He stated this will be a continuing issue and feels that this lot will put parking in an area where there is no parking and can be accessed from 4 streets. He stated the next steps will be to digest the information that has been presented. He stated he will hold an informal information gathering for citizens and will bring those concerns back to the Committee. He thanked Nick Cracknell for his work on this issue thus far. He stated the next meeting is scheduled for February 14th and a date to hold another work session can be scheduled at that point.

V. Adjournment

Mr. Gray moved to adjourn at 10:10 a.m., seconded and passed unanimously.

Informational Attachment:

A. Correspondence – Islington Creek Neighborhood Re: Worth Lot Comments