



Highway 93S Corridor Steering Committee

Meeting #18 Minutes

January 21, 2020

2:30 pm, 2nd Floor City Hall, Council Chambers Conference room

In Attendance:

Committee Members: Mark Pascoli, John Muhlfeld, John Middleton, Roger Sherman, June Hanson, Marilyn Nelson, Steve Kane (Justin Lawrence and Ryan Hennen absent)

Staff: Dave Taylor, Hilary Lindh, Angie Jacobs

Public: Rhonda Fitzgerald, Amy Erickson, Randy Cogdill

A. Meeting called to order at 2:32 pm

B. Approval of December 16, 2019 meeting minutes

C. Review Revised Segment A Goals and Objectives and Draft Future Land Use Map

H. Lindh summarized the types of revisions made to the goals and objectives for segments A and B since the committee last saw them April – July. She then went through the goals and objectives for Segment A and a draft future land use map.

Public Comment and Committee Discussion on Segment A

R. Fitzgerald commented that she thought the language used in Transportation Goal 2 in Segment B (regarding value of bike and pedestrian facilities as valid transportation modes) was more robust and better than what was used in Segment A and suggested using that same language. Mayor Muhlfeld agreed.

She also asked that an example or definition of drought resistant species be included in the pertinent Environment and Open Space goal.

Regarding the draft future land use map that would change the land use where the Whitefish Motel is located on Kalispell Avenue from urban to general commercial to make zoning and future land use consistent, R. Fitzgerald would not formalize the exception of the motel with WB-2 SC (special conditions) zoning. M. Nelson agreed and believed it could open the door for more properties along Kalispell Avenue to transition to commercial. Mayor Muhlfeld also agreed the land use designation for the motel property should not be changed.

M. Nelson stated that she likes the concept of the bridges as gateways to downtown Whitefish and the emphasis on trail connectivity, trees, etc.

D. Review Revised Segment B Goals and Objectives and Draft Future Land Use Map

The committee reviewed the revised Segment B goals and objectives and draft future land use map. There was a discussion of retail in downtown versus what's allowed in the WB-2. Preserving the vitality of downtown may be a worthwhile narrative to include in the plan. M. Pascoli agreed that the downtown should remain the primary commercial center of Whitefish, but had concerns about outright rejecting the idea of expanding retail uses outside of downtown. He believed more mixed-use

development in the corridor, including some retail, would be a good direction to go. He noted downtown spaces are increasingly catering to visitors and if we hope to see Whitefish develop into a thriving year-round community serving both locals and tourists, we shouldn't limit our opportunities.

The committee also discussed the economic development goals including whether the WB-2 zoning district could be marketed to tech businesses as an attractive location. One of the economic development goals includes an objective to permit light manufacturing and assembly in the WB-2, where it is currently a conditional use. S. Kane noted if that change were made it would be important to develop appropriate development standards to ensure no impacts to adjacent uses. Mayor Muhlfeld is comfortable with the change if the committee could review those development standards as part of its work. M. Nelson doesn't see how the available large lots in the corridor could be economical for smaller businesses given the costs of the property. J. Middleton responded that if it isn't economical that's fine the market would dictate it but having the option would be good. A discussion of the conditional use permit (CUP) process followed, including the benefits to businesses if they don't need one. These include avoiding the time and fees associated with the CUP process, as well as the uncertainty of approval. M. Nelson noted that since we can't anticipate every possible proposed light manufacturing or assembly use, it would be safer to maintain the requirement for a CUP.

The Transportation goal regarding assessing the feasibility of a roundabout at the Highway 40 intersection was discussed. Traffic simulations run as part of the corridor plan demonstrated a roundabout could be very effective at the intersection. While many in the community have expressed dislike of this type of intersection in the survey, having a goal to consider the feasibility at some point in the future would keep more options open.

Regarding whether drought resistant species be required or recommended, M. Nelson believes there are other considerations in selecting species such as colors and timing of blooms, variety in size and shape, etc. An owner should have some flexibility in meeting landscaping requirements, and she suggested that either drought resistant species be recommended rather than required, or they be required for some percentage of, but not all, landscaping. She acknowledged that increasing irrigation water fees will also encourage use of drought resistant species.

The draft future land use map for Segment B was presented. R. Sherman noted that the residents of Great Northern Heights are very uneasy with the concept of extending Baker Avenue south to JP Road. They are concerned that southbound drivers would choose to drive through the neighborhood rather than enter the highway using the signal at JP Road. He suggested that if the conceptual road alignment could be shown curving further east as it approaches JP Road it might help to ensure southbound drivers turn left to the highway.

Public Comment on Segment B

R. Fitzgerald had several comments including the following:

- Revise Land Use Goal 1 second bullet to clarify
- The Downtown Master Plan calls for the architectural standards to be updated so she was pleased to hear that is happening
- Land Use Goal 4 Objective 1 – She did not agree that the CUP process is onerous or a deterrent. The process helps an applicant understand the development standards and produce better



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outcomes. She agreed with M. Nelson that we can't anticipate all possible uses that would be permitted, so keeping the CUP is safer.

- In favor of intermittent raised medians
- Transportation goals – she doesn't see mention of the backage road concept previously discussed and asks that it be included
- In favor of roundabouts
- 10th Street easement – the road used to be the main entrance to downtown before the Spokane bridge was constructed. City should reclaim and use it.
- Environment and Open Space Goal 1, Objective 3, Landscape fingers are also recommended in the Downtown Master Plan to help interrupt the strip view, concept should have more emphasis

E. Next Meeting – scheduled for February 18, 2020

F. Adjournment – 4:55pm