



Highway 93S Corridor Steering Committee

Meeting #24 Minutes

February 11, 2021

2:00 pm, WebEx Virtual Meeting

In Attendance:

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

Rhonda Fitzgerald, Mayre Flowers also present

Staff: Dave Taylor, Hilary Lindh

A. Meeting called to order at 2:10 pm

B. Approved January 4, 2021 meeting minutes

C. Committee Review of Draft Chapter 7 with Public Comment

Steve Kane was unable to attend the meeting but provided comments via email to be shared with the committee (appended to these minutes).

Intro and City Actions

Hilary discussed the intent and organization of the chapter.

Marilyn had a question about revising the architectural review standards for multi-tenant buildings. She did not want the plan to imply these spaces are for small retail and she asked whether multi-tenant buildings are currently allowed in the WB-2. Staff stated the code does not restrict the number of tenants in a commercial building and gave examples of existing multi-tenant buildings in the corridor. All mention of multi-tenant buildings in earlier chapters have been revised to clarify that these types of buildings may only contain uses currently permitted in the WB-2, and no new uses are proposed.

Marilyn also asked, as did Steve, about the Special Provisions to Lots. Hilary explained this would apply to existing businesses where the buildings are setback far from the highway and there is an overlay large parking lot in front. There is potential that a second, smaller building, or what is called a "liner" building, could be constructed along the highway frontage to break up the view of the parking lot. The revisions to the regulation would make this an administrative rather than a regular conditional use to encourage and provide incentives for these additions to break up the strip like feel of the WB-2.

John asked whether the number of actions that staff would be committing to over the next 20 years to implement this plan is realistic. Dave and Hilary said the near-term (1-2 years after plan adoption) City actions, of which there are eight, can be realistically completed as suggested. Actions that involve other agencies will take longer and depend on City staff as well as those agencies.

Mark asked, as did Steve, if it would be possible to add estimated costs for each of the actions. Staff responded that many of the City actions are administrative and the cost is only the time allocated for staff to complete them. There may be cost estimates available for some of the Whitefish River trail connections that are included in the Connect Whitefish Plan, which the Parks Department is implementing. If available, those costs could be added, although some of those improvements might be funded by adjacent land developers. City costs for MDT projects would be very difficult to estimate since we do not know when they will be constructed, which federal or state funds would be used, or what proportion of that the City would need to match. Marilyn noted that a high-cost project might be an

excuse not to pursue the community vision and she was okay with not including estimates. The committee generally agreed that adding cost estimates for MDT projects is not necessary. John then requested more of a description of what amending the annexation policy would involve. Hilary and Dave explained how, if City policy regarding the location of the urban growth boundary ever changes, the annexation policy would encourage petitioners for annexation of commercial property to either use the PUD process or propose conditional zoning consistent with the transitional nature of the corridor south of Highway 40 and the community vision for the area.

Public Comment

Rhonda asked about the revisions to parking standards and asked that the concept of parking behind buildings be included. Hilary noted that the mixed-use and non-residential (i.e., commercial) development standards were recently adopted, and they do require parking behind or to the side of the building but have not been in place long enough yet to see any results. Rhonda was concerned that the architectural review standards for multi-tenant buildings will be a back door for small retail to be introduced to the corridor. She stated that the new transitional zone or district for Segment A should be developed in tandem with a downtown-wide overlay (not just an overlay for the WR-4), as was described in the Downtown Master Plan. She was not in favor of changing the Special Provisions for Lots to require an administrative rather than regular CUP. She thought the landscaping setback for the WB-2 should be greater than the proposed 25-feet. For the Canoe Park improvements, she did not think those should be tied to the Spokane River bridge project. And finally, she asked about the order the actions are presented and thought they might better reflect the timing of the actions.

Mayre suggested an appendix with a timeline of implementing the three corridor plans be included. She also asked about whether and how a PUD would trigger the Legacy Homes Program requirements for affordable housing.

City-County Actions

June asked if the relationship has improved at all over the past two years, and John replied that, if anything, it has gotten worse since Whitefish no longer has a Commissioner representing it at the County.

Marilyn asked Mayre if she had any relevant information about the County. Mayre described some of the current state legislation being considered and noted it would be good for the City to collaborate with the County on some of the issues. She thought it would be good for the City to comment on more of the rezoning applications in the County. John also noted some proposed legislation that would place a time limit on interlocal agreements.

Marilyn liked the idea of fostering dialogue with the County by working with the other cities in the valley.

Public Comment

Rhonda also liked the idea of fostering dialogue by working with the other cities in the valley. She thinks the idea of a zoning compliance permit for the County should be a City action, rather than City-County. Marilyn believed the timeline for a zoning compliance permit should be shortened, and the City could speed the process by providing the County with some draft language to be used. June agreed with the suggestion.

City-MDT Actions



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Marilyn asked about including a road extension from Flathead Avenue/18th Street to Karrow Avenue. Hilary noted that is beyond the corridor study area.

June asked about the timing of the Spokane Avenue improvements considering the City's needs to replace a water main. Hilary explained the timeline in the context of MDT processes.

Public Comment

Rhonda said that since the plan mentions extension of Greenwood Drive east of the corridor study area, it could also mention an extension of 13th/Flathead to Karrow Avenue. She wanted the timing of the Baker Avenue improvements, including designating it as a truck route, to occur simultaneously or before the Spokane Avenue project. They are included in other adopted plans and should be moved up in priority.

Public-Private Partnership Actions

No committee comments.

Public Comment

Rhonda stated a tourist trolley is undesirable. John did not think the language used (hop on/hop off service) indicated a trolley and said the Council has no interest in trolleys; he was not concerned about that possible interpretation.

D. Features to be Included in New Segment A Rendering

Hilary shared a drone photo of the river crossing and explained why that perspective could show all of the features the committee has indicated are important in Chapters 5 and 6 of the plan. The committee favored an image with the river centered rather than off to the side. Marilyn suggested zooming in on the crossing and showing a "before" image with the "after" image since it is a perspective no one ever sees. The committee discussed using a perspective that everyone is more familiar with but decided fewer features would be visible.

Public Comment

Rhonda stated the furnishings should be consistent with other Whitefish/downtown furnishings.

E. Next Meeting

The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for the end of March, contingent on when a full draft of the plan is available for committee review. Staff will aim to provide up to a month for review. The revised rendering may not be available in that time frame and would be included in the next draft.

F. Adjournment – 3:50 pm