



Town of Vienna

Charles A. Robinson Jr.
Town Hall
127 Center Street South
Vienna VA, 22180

Meeting Minutes Town Council Work Session

Monday, January 13, 2020

7:30 PM

Charles A. Robinson, Jr. Town Hall, 127
Center Street, South

Work Session

1 Regular Business

Councilmembers Present:

Councilmember Linda Colbert

Councilmember Pasha Majdi

Councilmember Douglas Noble

Councilmember Nisha Patel

Councilmember Steve Potter

Councilmember Howard J. Springsteen

Mayor Laurie DiRocco

Staff Present:

Steve Briglia, Town Attorney

Mike D'Orazio, Deputy Director of Planning and Zoning

Mike Gallagher, Director of Public Works

Andrew Jenks, Transportation Engineer

Shelley Kozlowski, Deputy Town Clerk

Mercury Payton, Town Manager

Cindy Petkac, Director of Planning and Zoning

Marion Serfass, Director of Finance

Town Manager Mercury Payton called the work session to order at 7:30 PM noting two items on the agenda.

A. [20-1554](#)

Staff recommendations for projects from the Maple Avenue Multimodal Study

Town Manager Payton introduced Mike Gallagher, Director of Public Works and Andrew Jenks, Transportation Engineer.

Director Michael Gallagher reviewed the proposal and timeline for the Multi Modal Transportation and Land Use Study followed by a list of staff recommendations for resulting near term projects. He noted that of the seven recommended items, six were identified as near term projects that would potentially have immediate impact. Two items (Church and Mill Street slip lane and W&OD Trail signage) will be funded through the CIP while the remaining five projects (Leading Pedestrian Intervals, Local Circulator -Micro-Transit, Capital Bikeshare, and Filling Vital Sidewalk Gaps) will be funded through a variety of sources, such as general or local funds, NVTa or general grants.

Mayor DiRocco called for questions from the Council.

Councilmember Springsteen remarked that while the list was informative he remains concerned that without the full report he has no feel for the numbers involved.

Councilmember Noble noted that the report makes no reference to the new traffic adaptation signal system or how the system will be integrated into these new projects. A \$2.1 M regional grant was received to implement this system and the benefits will prove significant in terms of traffic stops and delays. He stressed that this effort must be included in the final report, as a project in process. Regarding the W&OD Trail Director Gallagher confirmed that the estimated cost does include any necessary infrastructure changes. Director Gallagher also explained that the \$15,000 proposed for Leading Pedestrian Intervals would be utilized to fund an immediate test of this process. If positive, then it will be integrated into the traffic adaptation signal system. Referencing a local circulator, Councilmember Noble stressed economic development considerations, urging inclusion of those circulators that have routes which include Tyson's and the Vienna Metro. Finally, Director Gallagher assured Councilman Noble that the sidewalk gap project is ongoing and will include all of Vienna in order to provide citizens with a connected pedestrian walkway.

Councilmember Majdi voiced concern regarding numbers in the study that suggested cut through traffic at various intersections and wondered if this was the result of MAC developments in those locations. He warned that excessive wait times will compel motorists to cut through neighborhoods.

In response to Councilmember Colbert, Director Gallagher emphasized that removing the slip lane at Church and Mill streets will not impact level of service, rather it will help the flow of traffic through the intersection and slightly improve delay time. Councilmember Colbert also expressed support for the W&OD Trail signage, offering that consideration should be given to including Park Street in this project. With regard to a local circulator she noted that NVTC could be a funding source but only with an implementation commitment by the Town. Referencing item 5 she highlighted the sidewalk gap at Church and Park Street. Finally, Councilmember Colbert requested clarification on the Park St. and Maple Ave. signal replacement. Mr. Gallagher explained that the project is a continuation of the Center St. Maple Ave., Lawyers Rd. project where two signal poles are replaced with four signal poles.

Councilmember Potter reiterated his ongoing concern regarding sidewalk gaps and walkability throughout the Town. He stressed the need to highlight those particular sidewalks that fit into Town priority, notably those leading to Maple Avenue. He further emphasized the critical need for parking, lamenting that this project was placed last (2023) on the priority list. Director Gallagher noted that the year 2023 was a guess because parking solutions may depend upon property acquisitions and, as such, are difficult to determine time out.

Councilmember Patel asserted that optimizing traffic signals was critical to the continued implementation of the plan for Vienna. She supported the W&OD Trail signal project as well as the Church and Mill street improvement project. In answer to her question of whether removal of the slip lane would allow for widening of the street, Director Gallagher pointed out that the intersection is a four way stop and not intended for dual movement.

Mayor DiRocco agreed with Councilmember Noble that the traffic adaptation signal system must be addressed in the final report. Computerization of the system, allowing for real-time signal adjustments, will potentially make a marked difference in traffic congestion. Adding Leading Pedestrian Intervals to this work project will

allow for completion of both by early 2021. She emphasized that the Church and Mill street effort must be considered with pedestrian safety as the priority. She further noted the historical significance of the location suggesting that some type of accommodation be made when the slip lane is removed. Expressing her support for the W&OD Trail signage and the circular, she also urged continuation and completion of the sidewalk system. Monies for 3.3 miles of sidewalk has recently been received from the Maud Ferris Robinson Charitable Trust. Finally, Mayor DiRocco questioned long term prioritization of the Locust street trail improvement extension which would provide a marked enhancement for both bikers and walkers. In response Director Gallagher replied that as this project requires property acquisition no timeline could be gauged.

Councilmember Noble, in referencing the Streetscape Master Plan and Design Guidelines, cautioned against duplication of effort with the development of the Maple Avenue design guidelines, which is already underway. Director Gallagher envisioned using the MAC guidelines as a base and building on top of that to create a full streetscape master plan. Councilmember Noble suggested coordination with Director Petkac on these projects.

Councilmember Majdi questioned whether road (Maple Avenue) capacity should provide the standard for this study, rather than level of service for an intersection, and questioned the difference between level of service and arterial capacity. Director Gallagher pointed out that capacity figures were not typically utilized in this type of study. Several operational challenges effect level of service (peak and off hours, entrances and exits, truck and bicycle presence, etc.). Capacity is a variable that depends upon these factors. The challenge exists in the limits of control, not only locally but throughout the Metropolitan area. The locale can only control what happens within their own borders. He further commented, in response to a question from Mayor DiRocco, that Vienna will be able to control some of these issues with the addition of light synchronization. Ultimately, this begs the question, what do the residents wish Maple Avenue to be; a corridor, or a means to encourage internal use and multimodal transportation. Councilmember Noble reiterated that discussion of capacity misses the point of this entire effort.

When questioned about the intersection of Beulah Rd., Branch Ave., and Maple Ave., Director Gallagher agreed that it represents a significant factor in traffic back up but noted that improvement will require additional property acquisition.

Councilmember Potter suggested that as the emphasis is on encouraging alternate modes of transportation, the failure to include bus stop improvement (shelter, seating, etc.) as a short term plan is lamentable. He and Councilmember Colbert urged the inclusion of this item on the priority list.

Director Gallagher explained that with regard to level of service his first step would involve conversations with VDOT and the County of Fairfax including an explanation that Vienna would like to include this aspect in the comprehensive plan. Mayor DiRocco pointed out that when discussing level of service, the emphasis cannot be on delay, it must include a discussion of level of service in relation to pedestrian use; the Town supports pedestrian and bicycle use. Councilmember Majdi replied that while he agrees with this statement, he continues to support the idea that level of service figures should be a component of the comprehensive plan for the Town.

Following a back and forth discussion regarding Councilmember Majdi's request

for real time traffic counts at the thirteen site samples, the discussion moved on to future development sites and the need to include solutions to safety issues in the final report.

Town Manager Payton thanked Director Gallagher and the Public Works staff for their work to date on the project. The next step will include a final presentation of results to the Town Council on a date yet to be determined.

B. [20-1570](#)

Discussion of Town Council Comments on Draft Scope of Services to Reorganize and Update Subdivision and Zoning Ordinances

Town Manager Payton introduced Cindy Petkac, Director of Planning and Zoning and Mike D'Orazio, Deputy Director of Planning and Zoning, for the Town of Vienna. Director Petkac presented a seven-page draft scope of services for a land use planning consulting firm or team to reorganize and update the Town's subdivision and zoning ordinances, Chapters 17 and 18 of the Town Code.

In response to Councilmember Colbert, Director Petkac noted that the Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2010 and reviewed in 2015. The current document was adopted by the Town Council in May of 2016. The current plan is to initiate a review and identify items for updating in 2021. She pointed out that the State Code specifically states that a comprehensive plan should be general in nature and provide for guidance with regard to subdivisions and zoning. Councilmember Springsteen questioned whether the MAC should be mentioned in the Comprehensive Plan to which Director Petkac replied that the Comprehensive Plan should be viewed as a general future oriented document. Nothing in such plan precludes an assessment of business development along Maple Avenue. She further noted, in response to comments by Councilmember Majdi and Mayor DiRocco, that all pertinent work accomplished to date will be provided to the consultant. Mayor DiRocco added that she felt no need to make amendments to the Comprehensive Plan prior to completing the work of updating the code. Councilmember Noble urged inclusion of the Strategic Plan, public input and best practices to provide direction.

A discussion regarding process followed with several councilmembers suggesting that as changes are being made to the code it would be wise to make corresponding changes to the Comprehensive Plan. Councilmember Majdi urged that if the processes are completed simultaneously, it is critical that residents be made aware of the magnitude of this effort. Councilmember Noble reminded Council that the current document under review is only a statement of work for the selection of a consultant.

Councilmember Patel pointed out that stating a hard budget would encourage the consultant to stay within that figure. Other Councilmembers commented that stating any figure could encourage padding of the budget.

Expressing concern that language stating "no significant changes are intended" for the other zoning districts, especially the single-family detached residential zoning districts, makes a value judgement, Councilmember Noble suggested a statement that reads "focus will be primarily on commercial." Residents must not be made to feel that this effort will somehow affect single family homes and the consultant must not be limited such that he or she is unable to consider changes to industrial zones. Following much back and forth, the Council agreed to defer to staff for appropriate wording.

Further discussion ensued over various word inclusions, with Mayor DiRocco emphasizing the need to include “sustainability” as part of the language. Councilmember Noble addressed the issue of collaboration within the governmental body. He stressed that Town Council serving as the designated primary advisory board may be unrealistic. The process should be a collaboration between Council, stakeholders, Planning and the consultant, with Planning as the primary advisory board. Attorney Briglia pointed out that the Town Council must first refer the document to the Planning Board; the Planning Board will hold public hearings, review the documents, and make recommendations back to the Council. Town Manager Payton clarified that the Town Council has the latitude to work with Planning in any way they choose. He further added that administratively Council has the authority to approve, while Planning is responsible for recommending and advising. Councilmember Noble reminded the Council that this document is a statement of work and that the respondent will inform the method for disseminating information.

Councilmember Majdi voiced his concern that Council has yet to express a vision for the Town and noted competing visions which may affect this effort.

Council provided numerous language suggestions for the six project tasks, notably the use of the terminology “best practices”. Director Petkac pointed out that the trend is not to specify when related to uses because of the ever changing landscape within towns and communities. Councilmember Majdi noted that MAC was an application of “best practices” and that in the end it didn’t matter because the residents rejected it. He is concerned that this effort will be a repetition of the same mistake; asking a consultant to apply best practices when “we haven’t come up with what we want as a vision for our own town”. A missing piece to assure a valid project outcome is a document that assesses what went wrong with the MAC, what lessons were learned from the effort, and what is the vision for the Town of Vienna.

Councilmember Noble stressed the value of an independent outside evaluation, noting that any internal assessment is inherently biased. He advocates using an outside consultant with an independent perspective. Councilmember Potter, in stating his agreement with this idea, noted the value of a fresh perspective. Best practices are “things that are being done successfully”; to rely on staff opinion is too insular. Councilmember Colbert pointed out that any lessons learned should be “what we’ve learned from our residents”, while Mayor DiRocco emphasized that information regarding lessons learned will be provided to the consultant as part of the overall package. The consultant can provide a path forward to make necessary changes and address concerns.

Councilmember Majdi raised the question of how ongoing transportation planning fits into the current updating of the code. He stressed that as yet, there exists no transportation plan for the Town. Councilmember Patel agreed, expressing concern that the code update project will displace the transportation effort. She urged that the work be done simultaneously as any outcomes of the proposed code update will ultimately effect transportation. Mayor DiRocco stressed that the Multi Modal Transportation Study will provide ideas for improving the network regardless of any code changes. Should code revisions impact transportation than that must also be addressed. Councilmember Noble remarked that the opening paragraph of the scope of services calls for respondents to possess “expertise in transportation, planning and parking”. Councilmember Majdi added that the Council has a plan for a walkable, mixed use Maple Avenue questioning if that is the primary goal, with a secondary plan for addressing the resulting traffic. Or is it flipped? This effort

should answer that fundamental question.

Director Petkac responded that this effort is designed to update Chapters 17 and 18 of the Town Code. If there is a process proposed in the MAC where it is a development not by-right, then a traffic update can be requested.

With no further questions or comments, Town Manager Payton closed the work session. Director Petkac and her team will send the RFP within the week.

2 Meeting Adjournment

The Work Session concluded at 11:38PM.

THE TOWN OF VIENNA IS COMMITTED TO FULL COMPLIANCE WITH THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT STANDARDS. TRANSLATION SERVICES, ASSISTANCE OR ACCOMMODATION REQUESTS FROM PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ARE TO BE REQUESTED NOT LESS THAN 3 WORKING DAYS BEFORE THE DAY OF THE EVENT. PLEASE CALL (703) 255-6304, OR 711 VIRGINIA RELAY SERVICE FOR THE HEARING IMPAIRED.