

CITY OF THE DALLES PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
Joint Work Session with City of The Dalles City Council

Thursday, September 3, 2009

City Hall Council Chambers

313 Court Street

The Dalles, OR 97058

Conducted in a handicap accessible room

CALL TO ORDER:

Planning Commission Chair Lavier called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

BOARD

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bruce Lavier
Mark Poppoff
Dean Wilcox (6:33 pm)
Benjamin Hoey

BOARD

MEMBERS ABSENT: Chris Zukin
Ron Ahlberg

COUNCIL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Nikki Lesich
Carolyn Wood
Jim Wilcox (6:13 pm)
Bill Dick
Dan Spatz

COUNCIL

MEMBERS ABSENT: Brian Ahier

STAFF PRESENT:

City Manager Nolan Young
City Attorney Gene Parker
Community Development Department Director Dan Durow
City Engineer Dale McCabe
Senior Planner Richard Gassman
Administrative Secretary Brenda Green

There was an introduction to the other interested parties in attendance, which included; Mark Radabaugh DLCD, Brad Dehart ODOT, Marc Butorac Kittelson and Associates, Susan Wright Kittelson and Associates.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Chair Lavier asked if there were any changes to the agenda, hearing none, the agenda was approved by mutual consent.

PUBLIC COMMENT (non agenda items): none

STAFF REPORT: Senior Planner Gassman gave a brief explanation of the process that would be followed regarding decisions on the Interchange Area Management Plan (IAMP). He stated that the current meeting was a work session only. Gassman assured the public in attendance that they would have time to present comments at three different public hearings. Those hearings will include; one before the Planning Commission scheduled for September 17th, one before the City Council on October 12th and a final hearing to discuss the System Development Charges which will be scheduled after a plan is adopted.

Senior Planner Gassman then presented the Staff Report, explaining that it was very basic because the meeting was mostly about the presentation by the consultant. Gassman noted that after the City completes their approval and adoption process the plan will still need to be adopted by the County Planning Commission, the County Court and by the ODOT Commission.

PRESENTATION: Marc Butorac with Kittelson & Associates, Inc supplied a basic introduction of the presentation and explained that if a plan is adopted it will create an amendment to the City of the Dalles Transportation Plan. Butorac summarized the study document Kittelson & Associates had prepared by stating that the two most important chapters are number seven which explains the plan and chapter eight which explains how the plan would be implemented.

Susie Wright, Kittelson & Associates gave a presentation on the IAMP. She distributed a hand out entitled "I-84 Chenoweth Interchange Area Management Plan (IAMP) Joint Work Session". Wright explained who they were hired by and then summarized the history of the process to date as well as the reasons for adopting a transportation plan. She pointed out that the plan being proposed has flexibility. She also assured everyone that the decisions on how to fund the plan can be decided on at future work sessions. She then commented that based on questions and suggestions made at previous work sessions and public meetings, several additional alternatives were evaluated, which led to the modified IAMP currently being presented. Wright went over the proposed alternatives, specifically explaining each one's cost, property impacts, Chenoweth Interchange traffic impacts and Webber Interchange traffic impacts. Considering all those aspects, she stated that Kittelson & Associates is recommending the Hostetler Street Underpass as the preferred crossing plan.

Ms. Wright spoke on the aspects of the railroad crossing, pointing out that there was a potential to utilize the "at grade" crossing at least temporarily. Councilor Wilcox asked who the crossing license was granted to. Marc Butorac responded that the permission is granted to the tax lot. Director Durow added that it is granted on an annual renewal.

In regards to the costs expected for each option, Councilor Spatz asked for clarification of private funds. Ms. Wright explained those were the improvements that an applicant puts in as part of a condition of approval. Spatz asked if the amounts were represented in current dollars. Wright responded yes, they are in today's dollar; the amounts will be adjusted each year and will be tied to the Construction Cost Index. She added that the amounts will be periodically reviewed and adjusted as necessary.

Mr. Butorac summarized the presentation by explaining that it is a dynamic plan which can be adjusted based on development. He explained that most of the improvements suggested are quite a ways in the future. Butorac shared the benefits to a community if they have a transportation agreement including; the benefits to a big company looking to come to The Dalles, the benefits of shovel ready projects, and

the idea of a fairness doctrine in which every developer coming in pays into the pot rather than waiting until the scale is tipped and then the next developer gets hit with most of it.

COMMISSIONER & COUNCILOR COMMENTS:

Councilor Wilcox asked about the division of private and public funds and how it would fit under the Davis Bacon Act. Mr. Butorac explained the Davis Bacon Act, and which improvements would come under the act. City Manager Nolan compared the projects to a subdivision where some of the development will be done on the public side, and some might be done on the private side. Butorac shared that costs were figured on Davis Bacon amounts; consequently if some projects are done privately the projects could possibly cost less.

Councilor Spatz asked for an explanation of level of service at an intersection. Ms. Wright shared the ODOT formula that is used as well as the different levels of service. She stated that the proposed plan is built around a “D” level of service. Spatz asked what a lower level of service does. Wright explained that overall it increases the amount of queuing.

Councilor Dick asked a question in regards to the focus on improving 6th Street. He questioned why it was not being discussed to build more roads on the East side of the freeway where the development is occurring. Mr. Butorac responded that the studies found the roads were adequate and that they had plenty of capacity going North and South; the problem areas were the intersections. Dick suggested adding bigger roads on the East side where there are currently only country roads, and where construction is trying to be maximized, then redirecting traffic to those roads. Butorac and Wright responded with an explanation and demonstration of the driving assumptions that were made, and the interplay of traffic. They summarized that residential and commercial needs are what generate the traffic patterns. There was a general discussion about where different councilors and commissioners lived, the routes they choose to take, and improvements that could be done on those roads.

Councilor Wilcox spoke in regards to the intersection at Hostetler and 6th Street. He asked if he understood correctly that additional right of way would need to be acquisitioned. Senior Planner Gassman replied that the ROW in that area is already dedicated.

Councilor Dick commended the job the city did on filling the potholes on Pomona Street.

Councilor Wilcox felt that “the rubber will meet the road” when the funding and SDCs are discussed; he felt the true decisions will be if the business coming in or those that are already there will be making the payments. Wilcox added that if Oregon does not fix its tax structure, companies will not relocate to The Dalles anyway, so the financial discussions would be a mute point.

Councilor Dick expressed that the concerns he has heard from citizens are that development will happen faster than what is being predicted, and that property owners who are already in The Dalles will be negatively impacted. He expressed his displeasure that the proposed box store was not asked to contribute more. Dick would like to see a set plan for how the current property owners who have been paying into the community will be taken care of.

Mayor Lesich stated that she did not want to overlook the businesses that are already established; first do no harm. She added that they are second and third generation businesses whom have been in those locations for decades. Lesich would like them to know that The City is doing what it can to protect

them, and that they will be taken care of.

Councilor Wilcox agreed that the four properties which could potentially be rendered useless because of access need to be dealt with fairly. Councilors Wilcox and Dick both agreed that just talking about the future possibility of no access had already put a cloud over those properties values.

Councilor Spatz asked staff what the capacity was for city staff to monitor the trigger points on their own without adopting an IAMP. Director Durow explained that if a plan is not adopted then it would be hard to know what to monitor. Spatz asked about the possibility of The City developing a plan on its own. Durow responded that although the City could potentially complete their own plan they would still need to hire traffic specialists and other consultants to do the studies that City staff is not trained in. Spatz acknowledged that the longer a plan is delayed, and the longer the city waits to collect SDCs from incoming businesses, the less money will be available to complete the projects. City Manager Young acknowledged that the City had the potential ability to monitor a plan. Young explained how much time and money had already been invested by the City and ODOT on consultants for both the Periodic Review and the development of the IAMP. Young also stated that if an IAMP is not adopted there will be restrictions set by ODOT on how future development can take place.

Councilor Dick spoke in regards to the agreement with ODOT that stated the city would work towards adopting an IAMP. He pointed out that it did not specify what the terms of the IAMP would be, nor did it provide for what would happen if the City wanted to enter into an IAMP that was a different version of the one that ODOT or the county wanted. Dick wondered if The City could go on record as yes, they want to enter into an IAMP, but one that is in variance with ODOT or the consultants. Dick stated that if an agreement is reached he would like to feel it was the best plan that could be done under the circumstances and that all questions had been answered. Dick stated that he did not feel that it was the best that could be done and that there were still questions that had not been answered.

City Manager Young suggested compiling everyone's questions/concerns so that answers could be identified.

Councilor Wilcox felt that an IAMP was necessary especially due to the request the City is making in regards to the Urban Growth Boundary, as well as the need to have a plan in place so that when businesses look into The Dalles, there are direct answers as to what will be expected of them. Wilcox felt that one question that should be on the list is the mitigation of the businesses that would be affected by a Hostetler under crossing.

Councilor Dick asked if there were other options that could perhaps be engineered better. He suggested that although it might take more money to do something completely different, the end result could possibly be better. He stated that he understood that the Hostetler crossing was the best choice according to the consultants, but what if something else could be done. Dick called attention to what was done in Pendleton to make their streets and intersections easier to navigate.

Councilor Spatz pointed out that solutions were being based around Chenowith only. He felt that there were other options; like improvements to Webber and to Second Street.

Chair Lavier suggested the question of creating a road equivalent to Second Street on the other side of the railroad track. There was a general discussion that the overall need is more and/or better ways to

cross the railroad tracks.

Councilor Wood sympathized with people traveling on Sixth Street and the troubles with limiting access points. She referenced Hwy 97 in Bend, sharing that the trouble there was all of the access points. Wood stated that she liked some of the aspects of the proposed IAMP; such as trying to limit access points. She also liked that the plan wouldn't affect properties or property owners until major changes were made to those properties.

Chair Lavier asked who could initiate a review of the plan, and what the process would be. Mr. Butorac responded that any of the parties could ask for a review, he then explained the process and added that periodic reviews were built into the plan.

Commissioner Poppoff questioned the proposed plan to make Sixth Street a five lane road between Hostetler and River Road. He suggested the possibility of keeping Sixth a three lane road and adding a separate two lane road just for access to the businesses. Mr. Butorac responded that they had looked at that possibility, then explained the reasons it was deemed as not a workable option. Butorac also gave details of the current number of cars per minute on Second Street and the future forecast.

Councilor Wood inquired about the proposed Walmart and where that project would put the city in relation to the proposed IAMP. Mr. Butorac replied that it would jump the city into about the mid-term of the plan.

City Manager Young summarized the essence of the questions that he heard and came up with the following list of items for staff and consultants to look into.

Is there a better way to get "it" done, and before you can decide if there is a better way to get "it" done you need to figure out what "it" is. Young heard "it" defined as:

- Allow the development to take place with low negative impact on current businesses.
- Achieve strong job creation and economic activity development of vacant land without a loss of effectiveness of the traffic system, which was defined as a drop in service level such as longer delays, congestion, safety loss, etc.

Ideas that City Council and the Planning Commission would like looked at in order to come up with a better "it".

- Could some traffic be captured on the East side, like perhaps a mirror of Second Street on the other side of the railroad tracks?
- Could Second Street be improved to take some of the pressure off of Sixth Street?
- Are there other alternatives that even though may cost more, would have less negative impact on current businesses and the community?
- A mitigation plan for the four businesses that would be impacted by a Hostetler underpass, if indeed that is the best direction to go.

Councilor Wood inquired if the property had not been rezoned to commercial, would the requirement of creating this IAMP have been triggered. City Manager Young replied no, however, The City would have more industrial land and less commercial, which would equal less economic activity.

Community Development Department Director Durow explained the history of the aluminum plant land and the struggles to figure out how to develop the land and especially the infrastructure. He described how the land could be utilized at maximum efficiency by creating a master plan. Durow also explained the need to show DLCDC and the Gorge Commission that the land was being utilized at maximum efficiency. Durow emphasized the benefits of an adopted plan when The City is talking to potential developers. He also pointed out that although this plan looks expensive, not having a plan would be even more expensive.

Councilor Wilcox confirmed that when companies come to look at an area they want to know what the traffic is going to be and what will be required of them.

Mayor Lesich summarized the work session by stating that everyone had their own priorities and expectations based on their job, their constituents or their personal feelings. She explained to the consultants that they appreciated the work and the plan that had been put together; the questions and concerns were coming from each person's personal experience and the desire to know that they are providing the best option possible.

Councilor Wilcox stated that the bottom line is that if West Sixth has more traffic on it, then there will be more business on West Sixth for every business owner there.

Mayor Lesich pointed out that although the Councilors and Commissioners know that any decision that is made will have reactions, the goal is to try to minimize as many of the negative reactions as possible.

NEXT MEETING: The next scheduled meeting of the Planning Commission is September 17, 2009.

ADJOURNMENT: The Planning Commission / City Council joint work session was adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

Submitted by
Brenda Green, Administrative Secretary