SAFETY ADVISORY AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

The Safety Advisory and Transportation Committee Meeting was held on July 27, 2015, 2015 at 4:00 p.m. with Chairman Hosfelt presiding. Members present were Mr. Hutchison, Mr. Sudler (arrived at 4:01 p.m.), Mr. Keller, and Mr. Shelton. Members of Council present were Mr. Cole (arrived at 4:01 p.m.) and Mr. Slavin (departed at 4:02 p.m. and returned at 4:03 p.m). Mayor Christiansen was also present (departed at 4:02 p.m. and returned at 4:10 p.m.).

AGENDA ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

Mr. Hutchison moved for approval of the agenda, seconded by Mr. Keller and unanimously carried.

Proposed 15 MPH Speed Limits for Alley Ways

During the Safety Advisory and Transportation Committee meeting of June 22, 2015, members considered 15-mph speed limits for alley ways and recommended referring this matter to Staff for review and recommendation to be followed up at the Committee's next monthly meeting. This recommendation was approved by Council during their Regular Meeting of July 13, 2015.

During the Safety Advisory and Transportation Committee meeting of July 27, 2015, Police Chief Paul Bernat advised members that a metro count survey had been conducted from June 29, 2015 through July 6, 2015 for the alley way between North State and North Bradford Streets, including the area from William Street to Columbia Street. He stated that the survey showed that 62 vehicles used the alley during that time, the highest recorded speed was 24 miles per hour, and the average speed was 12 mph. Chief Bernat stated that the Police Department believed that there was no need for a speed limit sign at this location. He indicated that if a driver was going faster than 25 mph, police officers would probably not be present when this occurred. Chief Bernat indicated that extra patrols could be done; however, he questioned whether or not there was a true speeding problem, stating that according to the data there was not.

Mr. Hutchison asked how a 15-mph speed limit would be enforced if it were implemented. Responding, Chief Bernat stated that, given that only 62 vehicles traveled this alley in a week compared to approximately 40,000 vehicles that travel on North State Street in a week, the alley would be less of a priority in terms of enforcement. However, he noted that putting up a 15-mph sign would create an awareness of the need to travel slower than the normal 25 mph.

In response to Mr. Keller, Chief Bernat stated that it was possible there would be more traffic in the alley during the school year.

Overview - Loockerman Street/Forest Street Improvements (Roundabout)

Mr. Scott Koenig, City Manager, reviewed the conceptual drawings for Loockerman Street and Forest Street Intersection Improvements. He advised members that this project was in the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) six (6) year plan, explaining that the City wished to make sure that it continued to be in this time frame since the City had received Downtown Development District (DDD) designation. Mr. Koenig stated that Staff believed that improving this corridor would be a benefit to the DDD and to the downtown area overall. He indicated that Century Engineering had prepared the conceptual drawings in approximately 2009 or 2010. Mr. Koenig advised that the intent was to potentially install a traffic circle at the intersection of South Kirkwood

Street, Loockerman Street, Forest Street, and New Jerusalem Way to better manage that intersection and install plantings and landscaping along the corridor. He stated that this would improve access to various business and residential driveways progressing toward Route 8. Mr. Koenig noted that some of the improvements had been accomplished over the last few years, for example, a light had been installed at the intersection of Loockerman and Division Streets.

Mr. Koenig stated that Staff believed that the City should pursue the aesthetic improvements of the proposed project, noting that overhead wires would be dropped underground and the project would also potentially include tying in the Clarence Street Extension to this corridor. He explained that a couple of public workshops had been conducted in connection with the project and the general consensus of those along the corridor was that this would be an improvement; however, there was also a desire that the project not affect businesses negatively. Mr. Koenig stated that DelDOT took comments as part of the public workshops; however, these comments were not reflected in the conceptual drawings.

Mr. Koenig stated that Staff's standpoint was that this is a project that the City should support as one of its higher priority projects when the annual transportation prioritization list is sent to the State, since this improvement would enhance the downtown area and help to continue to expand the downtown footprint into a few areas where it is currently under-marketed.

In response to Mr. Hosfelt regarding the time frame for the project, if approved, Mr. Koenig estimated that the project would take three (3) to six (6) years to complete because of the DelDOT planning process and the need to move the project through the capital plan. He reiterated that some of the improvements had been constructed, such as sidewalks on West Street with the redevelopment of the NAPA Auto Parts store and improvements at the Inner City Cultural League location. Mr. Koenig indicated that Staff would prefer that the installation of the traffic circle, landscaping in the area, and moving of the overhead wiring to underground be done all at once to reduce disruptions.

Mr. Vic Giangrant, owner and operator of Westside Car Wash, 805 Forest Street, stated that he thought the project would be a great improvement; however, he expressed the need to be aware of the traffic problem that Westside Car Wash creates on Forest Street. He explained that in the wintertime, when roads are salted, the car wash becomes very busy. Mr. Giangrant advised members that the traffic pattern for his business is mostly on the shoulder of Forest Street where there is parking. He noted that some of the conceptual drawings show "bump outs" into the street with trees, which he felt might present a traffic problem. Other than this feature, Mr. Giangrant felt that the project was a great idea. He indicated his desire not to make his customers angry or be a burden on the City of Dover Police Department, noting that traffic from his business can back up halfway to the railroad tracks. Mr. Giangrant explained that he employs approximately 40-45 people who work as fast as they can. He asked that this be taken into consideration and suggested starting the bump outs perhaps 50-60 yards past the car wash.

In response to Mr. Sudler regarding whether Mr. Giangrant's suggestion had been thought about in the development process, Mr. Koenig stated that he did not think it unreasonable to adhere to Mr. Giangrant's requests. Mr. Koenig advised members that Mr. Giangrant had attended one (1) of the workshops and had made similar comments at that time; however, these conceptual plans were first iteration plans and were not reflective of those comments. Mr. Koenig stated the desire to improve the corridor, but not at the expense at losing businesses. He felt that moving or omitting trees would be a minor component of the improvements, and Staff would be happy to accommodate that request since the benefits of having the business there and functioning far outweighed one (1) tree in the corridor.

Mr. Hutchison stated that he liked the idea of the roundabout, but was also very interested in protecting the width of the roadway so that it would not impede or interfere with the operation of the Westside Car Wash or any other business.

Mr. Koenig stated that if the project moves forward into design, all of those things would be taken into consideration in the final concept drawings. It was his belief that these drawings would have to go out for public review, which would provide an opportunity to comment again in the future.

Mr. Keller concurred that the drawings would probably be brought up two (2) or three (3) times at a public hearing, noting that there is always room for change.

Mayor Christiansen advised members that he belongs to the Dover-Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization and indicated that the project would have to be approved by the MPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and other groups before it comes to final fruition and comments would be taken by the MPO TAC.

Update - Ambulance Service Statistics

Mr. Scott Koenig, City Manager, advised members that Staff receives a monthly update from PrimeCare, LLC, the City's vendor for medical transport. He stated that these statistics would be included in the City Manager's report in the future. Mr. Koenig reviewed the information for June 2015. He stated that for more than a decade, discussions had been held about growth and annexation in the City and Staff was caught off guard, from a service delivery and service impact standpoint, by the number of ambulance calls, noting that they had probably doubled in number. Over the last two (2) or three (3) years calls had flattened out somewhat, but there was a steady increase in calls in the decade prior. Mr. Koenig explained that PrimeCare's services are supplemented by the volunteer services of the Camden-Wyoming and Cheswold Ambulance Services. The City makes donations to these organizations at the end of the fiscal year, and the amount of the donation is calculated based on the number of calls that they assisted the City with and is included in the budget. The donation basically reimburses these non-profit organizations for providing service in the City and had totaled roughly $15,000 per year over the last few years. Mr. Koenig informed members that the cost of the PrimeCare contract runs about $20,000 a month, noting that their activity is critical to the function of the City.

Briefing on Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) Projects

Mrs. Ann Marie Townshend, Director of Planning and Community Development, advised members that updates were requested from the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) for projects that were put forward as transportation priorities in regard to the Capital Transportation Plan (CTP). She provided updates on these projects, as follows:

Garrison Oak Connector Road

No funding was proposed in the FY16 to FY21 CTP for this project which would connect White Oak Road to Route 8 to allow easy passage to the Route 1 on-ramp.

College Road Corridor Upgrades

No funding was being proposed in the FY16 to FY21 CTP for this project.

Construction of Sidewalks Within the Walk Zone Of The New Dover High School

DelDOT's sidewalk project at this location is complete; however, DelDOT would continue to work with the City and the Dover/Kent Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to identify small improvements. Mrs. Townshend explained that there was a need for sidewalks along the south side of Route 8, and this had been brought up in the City's annual transportation prioritization listing to the State and had also been brought up through the MPO. Although sidewalks had been installed on the north side of Route 8, there was a lot of foot traffic from Dover High School to the McDonald's and the Wawa on Route 8. Mrs. Townshend advised members that many students walk along the shoulder and the travel lane or in residents' yards. Although DelDOT had indicated that their project was complete, Mrs. Townshend stated that the City was still trying to ensure that the south side of Route 8 is not forgotten.

Route 8 / Hazlettville Road Connector

No funding was proposed in the FY16 to FY21 CTP for this project.

US Route 13 Sidewalk Construction

The sidewalk connections on US Route 13 from South Court Street to Loockerman Street will be added to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Program and should be complete in the next few years. No other capital projects are planned in this area.

Crawford Carroll Avenue Extension

This project would connect Crawford Carroll Avenue from its current ending point, just north of the Lowe's Home Improvements on north Route 13, to the Delaware State Campus. Funding for preliminary engineering was shown in FY 16 and FY 17 in the current CTP, funding for right-of-way acquisition was shown in FY 18 and FY 19, and funding for construction was shown in FY 20 and FY 21.

Kenton Road Corridor Upgrades
Funding for preliminary engineering was shown in FY 16 and FY 17 in the current CTP. Funding for right-of-way acquisition was shown in FY 18 and FY 19. Funding for construction was shown in FY 20.

Kings Highway / Route 13 Intersection Improvements
No funding was being proposed in the FY16 to FY21 CTP for this project.

Loockerman Street /Forest Street Improvements (Roundabout)
Noting that this item was discussed by Mr. Scott Koenig, City Manager, earlier in the meeting during consideration of Item #2 - Overview - Loockerman Street/Forest Street Improvement (Roundabout), Mrs. Townshend advised members that funding for preliminary engineering was shown in FY 17 and FY 18, funding for right-of-way acquisition was shown in FY19, and funding for construction was shown in FY 20 and FY 21.

US Route 13 Service Road Corridor
No funding was being proposed in the FY16 to FY21 CTP for this project.

Transportation Improvement District
Mrs. Townshend noted that DelDOT and City Staff had been working together and meeting on a regular basis to develop land use scenarios related to the Transportation Improvement District (TID). She explained that a traffic study was being done with respect to the TID for the Route 13 and Bay Road corridor through the entire City. It was planned that improvements could be done at once, rather than each developer having to study large segments of the roadway over and over again, and potentially being responsible for improvements that would be well beyond the scope of their individual project. Mrs. Townshend advised that a fee would be associated with any projects in this area and would contribute toward these improvements. She stated that once the TID plan is complete, the improvements identified in the plan would be prioritized for the Capital Transportation Plan. Mrs. Townshend noted that modeling for the project was getting closer to completion.

Traffic Calming - North State Street / Traffic Calming - Independence Boulevard
Mrs. Townshend indicated that a meeting was held at the end of June to discuss traffic calming in the areas of North State Street and Independence Boulevard. She noted that the meeting included the Mayor, the Chief of Police, other City officials, and representatives from DelDOT. Mrs. Townshend stated that DelDOT had funding available for the planning, outreach, and design aspects of traffic calming in these two areas. She indicated that the City was in the process of providing members for a working group that would work on this project. Mrs. Townshend stated that this item was added to the agenda so that the Committee could have the opportunity to discuss how members wanted to proceed in terms of representation in the working group.

Mr. Slavin stated that word was put out to the North State Street and Independence Boulevard community groups, respectively, to present the names of three (3) potential members who would be part of the working group, and the idea was to bring this to the Committee. He indicated that the working groups were different in nature than the Safety Advisory and Transportation Committee.

Mr. Shelton asked if funding had been put aside from DelDOT for the College Road corridor between McKee and Kenton Roads. He noted there are no sidewalks on that road, which has a lot of activity, with runners, bikes, and children. Responding, Mrs. Townshend indicated that the City had listed this area as one (1) of its transportation priorities with the State; however, DelDOT had indicated that they do not have funding allocated. She expressed her opinion that the City should keep pressing for this.

In response to Mr. Sudler, Mrs. Townshend stated that she was not aware of any other sources of income or funding to speed up transportation priorities. She indicated that all federal transportation funds that come to Delaware come through the Department of Transportation and projects are funded with both state and federal funds.

Mr. Sudler asked if Staff had thought about asking Senator Brian Bushweller and Rep. Sean Lynn for assistance. Responding, Mrs. Townshend stated that the State Bond Bill Committee and DelDOT spent a significant effort during this past legislative session looking at ways to fund transportation improvements, noting that available funding was limited and they were doing the best they can with what they have.

In response to Mr. Hosfelt's request for clarification regarding the sidewalks around Dover High School, Mrs. Townshend explained that originally there was no money for any of the sidewalk construction around the school, until approximately 12 months before it opened. Through the efforts of Senator Bushweller; Governor Markell; Anne Visalli, Director of the Office of Management and Budget; and DelDOT staff, approximately $700,000 was found to acquire easements and install sidewalks on the north side of Route 8. Without that, students from Cranberry Run, Heatherfield, Heatherfield East, and Marsh Creek would all have had to be bused to school, because there would have been no safe way for them to walk. DelDOT paid for the design, acquisition cost, and the construction of that sidewalk, as well as the construction of the HAWK signal so that the students could cross the road. Mrs. Townshend advised that a sidewalk gap study was done by the Dover/Kent County MPO which identified all the gaps, including those on the south side of Route 8. It was determined that the north side was the higher priority, because if there were sidewalks on the south side of the road, there would still be a need to bus the students across the street; therefore, the north side was done, and the south side was not. She stated that Mifflin Road was also identified as an important gap as many kids walk from the high school to the Pitts Center to play basketball and there are no sidewalks on this road. Mrs. Townshend informed members that the City had continued to emphasize that the project is not complete just because there are sidewalks on the north side. She indicated that she, along with the MPO staff, participated in a bicycle and pedestrian assessment of Route 8 with the Federal Highway Administration (FHA) more than six (6) weeks ago, and members observed students leaving the school, walking on the south side of the road, and crossing at locations other than the HAWK signal. It was her belief that the FHA would be making a report back to DelDOT about the need to improve safety in that area.

In response to Mr. Sudler regarding the cost of the improvements needed at College Road, Mrs. Townshend advised that the project had not gotten to the point of an estimate. She indicated that a study conducted several years ago examined what needed to be done in a general way but never got to any type of a design, noting the difficulty of obtaining a cost estimate without a design.

Responding to Mr. Sudler as to whether consideration had been given to reaching out to the Delaware State University board of trustees to see if they would be willing to donate financial resources to help initiate this exterior infrastructure improvement, Mrs. Townshend indicated that this had not been done, noting that this is a DelDOT road and this would be DelDOT's decision. She stated that Staff could certainly make that connection and start those discussions. Mrs. Townshend noted the possibility; however, she stated that Staff's experience had typically been that unless these types of projects are required as part of transportation improvements through a development project, the landowners prefer not to contribute.

Mr. Hutchison asked if a letter had been written, signed by the Mayor and Council President, outlining the City's concerns pertaining to the sidewalk on the south side of Route 8. Responding, Mrs. Townshend stated that a transportation prioritization memo was sent to the Secretary of Transportation last year and this project was detailed in the text of the memo. It was her recollection that she sent an email to the Secretary recently, but had not heard anything back, other than the previous report that DelDOT had given the City that the project was complete. Mrs. Townshend reiterated that the most recent report stated that the project on the north side was complete and DelDOT will continue to work with the City and the MPO on the other necessary fixes. She stated her belief that DelDOT realizes that while a portion is complete, the entire job is not done.

Mr. Richard Hudson, 23 Freedom Drive, Bicentennial Village, expressed his concern, with respect to traffic calming at Independence Boulevard, that a few individuals were pushing for this street calming and stated the need to look at safety on that street. He indicated that there were no speed limit signs on Independence Boulevard between Forrest Avenue and Walker Road but there was a 25 mph speed limit sign coming off Walker Road. Mr. Hudson stated that, coming off Forrest Avenue, there are commercial properties on the right and left and behind that an open retention pond, noting that there is almost 1,300 feet before there is a stop sign and there are two (2) houses with small children. Mr. Hudson stated he would like to see some stop signs, perhaps children playing signs, or temporary radar signs put up before trying to block off the street. He stated that this is an arterial street with an 80-foot right-of-way, so it appeared to be a wide open street and suggested that warnings be put there.

Mr. Hudson expressed his concern that the names of those put forward for the working group were three (3) individuals of a minority group and were not representative of the whole. He stated that a petition was circulated which indicated that people did not want the street blocked off. He requested that members look at the concerns of all residents, not just a select few.

For clarification, Mr. Slavin stated that the calming that was being considered was exactly what Mr. Hudson had talked about and would consist of a series of signs or other measures, other than closing the road. Mr. Slavin did not believe that closing the road was being looked at, noting that DelDOT has a catalog of options to calm traffic.

In response to Mr. Sudler, Mr. Hudson stated that he was in favor of putting up signs and warnings and against blocking the road off. He indicated that the minority group that he mentioned previously wanted to block off the road, similarly to what was done in the area of the Camden Wal-Mart. Mr. Hudson indicated that at a recent meeting, the vast majority did not want the road closed off.

Mr. Hutchison moved for adjournment, seconded by Mr. Keller and unanimously carried.

Meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

James E. Hosfelt, Jr.
Chairman

JEH/TM/js/dd
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