

Session 13-03, a Regular Meeting of the Transportation Advisory Committee was called to order at 5:32 p.m. on August 20, 2013 by Chair Francie Roberts at the Homer City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

PRESENT: COMMITTEEMEMBERS HIGHLAND, ROBERTS, SMITH, VENUTI, WALKER

STAFF: DEPUTY CITY CLERK KRAUSE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Roberts requested for a motion to approve the agenda.

HIGHLAND/SMITH – SO MOVED.

There was no discussion.

The agenda was approved by consensus of the Committee.

PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

J.C. Miller, non-resident, but visits Ms. Tornes frequently, commented on the need for traffic calming and protection for pedestrians and children on Mattox Street. She expressed concern regarding the traffic speeds along the roadway. Pointing out that there are numerous children and disabled persons who live on or near that street and since there is no sidewalk or shoulder to accommodate pedestrians are forced to walk in the street. She encouraged the committee to support the recommendations.

Gary Syth, resident, has two young children and pets, commented that the road is very wide and straight down a fairly steep hill, there are motorcyclists that traverse that hill at a high rate a speed sometimes changing gears as many as four times. He compared Mattox Street to a runaway. There are apartments and a trailer park also and many residents walk.

Ginger Tornes, resident, has been working to make the street safe for some time. Nothing has been addressed and it has gotten worse. Residents have even witnessed vehicles racing each other, side by side, up Mattox. She was advocating that the committee support the submitted recommendations and recommend to Council they be implemented.

Keri Syth, resident and PE teacher at Paul Banks and West Homer, applauded how Homer takes care of its kids; they have great schools, great teachers, great parks however there is no safe spot for kids on Mattox Street. There are no sidewalks but the traffic hazards call out for a safe other place for kids at minimal costs to the city, plus she advocated for a sheltered bus stop that would provide some form of safety for the children. There are a large number of kids who take the bus to school and when it gets dark then there are kids waiting in the dark on a dangerous road.

RECONSIDERATION

None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting Synopsis of May 21, 2013

HIGHLAND/WALKER – SO MOVED.

There was a brief discussion.

The minutes were approved by consensus of the committee.

VISITORS

A. Ginger Tornes, Mattox Street Neighborhood Association Presentation

Chair Roberts introduced the item in to the record and confirmed that all members on the committee knew the location of the street in question.

Ms. Tornes thanked the members of the committee for their service to the community. She thanked all the contribution of the members of the neighborhood has helped make their neighborhood more livable.

Mr. Tornes stated that in 2008 they were fortunate to have the services of Bob Kneifel, a now retired, traffic engineer from Anchorage and was involved in implementing the Complete Street program there. She noted that the City Manager, former council member Dennis Novak and Shannon McBride, Dan Thorington and a few more members of the community met with Mr. Kneifel and discussed various speed calming measures such as speed bumps, reverse speed bumps, chicanes. Mr. Kneifel expressed that the best solution for all concerned were measures such as what they are recommending tonight.

1. Install a "Gateway Treatment" installed at the head of the Mattox Street and East End Road. This feature would draw attention that their neighborhood is a special place, provide for a bus shelter and facilitate the curb extension for appropriate parking along the road behind it. This could be constructed by local high school shop class and or local welders.

2. Road Narrowing or Chokers could be installed every 200 feet down Mattox Street. This would be a narrowing of the roadway to accommodate two vehicles but would force them to slow down due to the narrowing with planters installed.

3. Traffic Circles - In the intersection of Mattox Street and Aurora has been the site of quite a few accidents and they are recommending installing a traffic circle. This would still allow a large vehicle access by putting one wheel on the apron.

Mr. Smith commented that everything shown so far included concrete curb and gutter and sidewalk and inquired what Mr. Kneifel recommended about that.

Ms. Tornes stated that the plan would be pavement ready. She responded that if there is not enough funding for sidewalks then at minimum a path could be constructed.

Mr. Smith commented on the funding mechanism for a project such as this would require total reconstruction and drainage and then it is more of a LID or HART project. He suggested that the group form an LID and then suggested they could assist with the design process.

Ms. Townes responded that Mr. Kneifel recommended getting on the CIP listing.

There was a brief discussion on the benefits and costs to start an LID for a project such as this and also the input on the design from the group to install the other traffic calming measures. It was noted that the best avenue to get the project completed would be for the neighborhood to apply for a LID. Mr. Smith briefly outlined the process for Ms. Tornes.

Further discussion and comments were made on the following:

- Requirements of the design criteria manual
- Approval of the presented plan
- The amount of work performed by neighborhood group
- The time expended on solving the problem
- using possible grant monies to fund the project
- The city improving streets every year
- The right of way depth is adequate
- If the road narrowing would be allowed as designed

- Conflicts could be supported by the committee to support the project if it went against the design criteria manual.
- The city would pay the bulk of the costs associated with the improvement project and it would be an example to other neighborhoods

Chair Roberts stated that the committee is only advisory to Council and they cannot take action tonight since it is not on the agenda as a discussion item. She noted that the road is not paved and some ideas in the design may not be appropriate but as several members of the committee did point out there are avenues that may help the group. She noted that there is currently adequate funding in the HART fund and it is a good opportunity if that is what citizens want to do. This is a process that definitely helps neighborhoods.

Ms. Tornes stated that there are many benefits and pluses to Homer as a small town, people are friendly, but the streets are not in concert with the rest of the ethic of Homer as they seem mean or hostile. She reiterated that with those recommended improvements it would make life much better.

Mr. Tornes thanked them for their time tonight.

STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOROUGH REPORTS

There were no staff reports.

Chair Roberts reported that City Council participated in a worksession this past weekend and council discussed extensively what projects would be placed on their list. There will only be five projects placed on their list this year. The Council is leaning towards Public Safety projects and one Transportation related project which would be the continuation of the east-west corridor or Greatland Street Completion. This committee did not get to weigh in on the CIP list this year since they did not meet and Council addressed the CIP earlier this year also.

PUBLIC HEARING

There are no items for public hearing.

PENDING BUSINESS

A. Non-Motorized Transportation and Trails Plan

Chair Roberts asked for comments or changes from the committee.

Discussion was entertained on adding crosswalks at Adams Road, removing the crosswalk at Rochelle on East End Road; adding a crosswalk on Ocean Drive where the Bike lane ended; and Kachemak Drive/Spit Road intersection, plus Mariner Park/Spit Road entrance. Additional signage was recommended for the crosswalk at Poopdeck Street and the Sterling Highway.

SMITH/HIGHLAND - MOVED TO RECOMMEND THE ADDITION OF CROSS WALKS AT ADAMS/EAST END ROAD, KACHEMAK DRIVE/OCEAN DRIVE, MARINER PARK ENTRANCE AND SPIT ROAD AND BELUGA/OCEAN DRIVE.

Brief discussion ensued on refining the locations for crosswalk locations.

Mr. Smith moved to amend his motion to remove the Mariner Park crossing since it was agreed by consensus not to be as detrimental if a crosswalk was put at the Kachemak Drive intersection.

VOTE. YES. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

Chair Roberts noted that this would be included in a memorandum to Council.

Discussion then focused on the recommendation in the manual on page 44, Policy 2.3 Establish and Fill a Non-motorized Trail and Transportation Coordinator staff position. Question was raised by the committee on why this was not implemented and seems to have just fallen into oblivion. It was noted that no new city staff positions have been funded in many years due to what was surely budget constraints and other budget priorities. Question was raised why these duties could not be added to existing staff when comment was added that planning, public works staff probably took on some of these duties already.

VENUTI/HIGHLAND – MOVED TO INCLUDE A RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL IN THE MEMORANDUM TO REVISIT IMPLEMENTATION OF A FULL TIME CITY STAFF POSITION FOR A NON-MOTORIZED TRAIL AND TRANSPORTATION COORDINATOR AS OUTLINED IN POLICY 2.3 OF THE NON-MOTORIZED TRAILS AND TRANSPORTATION PLAN OR THE COMMITTEE ALSO SUPPORTS ADDING THE DUTIES TO EXISTING STAFF.

Discussion included the following: that there would be enough for a fulltime staff person to do; budgeting for a full time staff position; the availability of guidance from staff for groups such as the Mattox Street group; Parks and Recreation has been the push behind trails.

VOTE. YES. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

Chair Roberts then brought forward the recommendation to forward a request to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission to review the Homer Non-motorized Trails and Transportation Plan.

Chair Roberts requested confirmation from Ms. Krause that they could informally ask the Commission to review the manual and check it out.

The next issue addressed was page 43 of the manual, Policy 2.2, Establish a volunteer organization of non-motorized transportation and trail advocates. It was noted that the recently established Homer Area Trails group would fit this role and Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission could work with this group on the trails.

Chair Roberts encouraged all members to have a copy of this plan and to review and study it.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Greatland Street Right of Way Development

Chair Roberts noted the email and the request from a resident to review Greatland Street.

Chair Roberts then verbally described the proposed construction as discussed by Council to tie Greatland Street to Main Street. The committee reviewed a map produced by Ms. Highland.

Discussion continued on the direction and purpose of the construction; approval of the construction; ridding the area as a hangout for inebriates; the committee has supported this extension before and there was no action required of the committee other than expressing further support and encouraging the implementation of this proposed extension.

There was no further discussion.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

A. AKDOT Project Fact Sheets from the August 5th Open House

B. Resolution 13-078(S)(A), Directing the City manager to Propose Projects that Utilize the Funds in Excess of \$3 million in the HART Fund and Funds in Excess of \$3 million in the HAWSP Fund for Consideration of the Homer City Council

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

Joanna Tornes, resident, commented in support of the proposed traffic calming measures presented for Mattox Street, on the proposed Greatland Street connection and the recommendations on crosswalks she commented that they need to be made more visible so cars will stop.

Keri Syth, resident, commented on crossing the highway quite often with a class of kids and that it was very difficult since traffic did not always stop; she next stated that the Homestead Trail was a beautiful \$100,000 trail that ended in a mess and it was sad to see the area trails not taken care of better; She commented on the importance of accessing the trails to improve the health and fitness of the town. Ms. Syth agreed that the roads seemed fairly hostile to cyclists and pedestrians.

Ginger Tornes, resident, commented on the proposed update to the Homer Non-Motorized Trail and Transportation Plan; Ms. Tornes reading from the handout, Complete Streets: Best Policy and Implementation Practices, page 50, starting at the second paragraph, "One of the most helpful tools PennDOT uses to take a proactive approach to complete streets is its Bicycle and Pedestrian Checklist. The checklist is used throughout PennDOT's project planning and programming, scoping, and final design processes, and it ensures that bike and pedestrian accommodations are considered from the very beginning of a project. According to Danielle Spila, director of PennDOT's Policy Office, the checklist is just one of various complete streets-type policies in place throughout PennDOT under the umbrella of its Smart Transportation policy. She stated that maybe they could submit a recommendation to Council who could forward a resolution of support for the State of Alaska to implement a Complete Streets program. She commented that this would provide communities with better tools.

COMMENTS OF THE STAFF

Ms. Krause commented on the initial steps required to start a Special Assessment District (SAD) and recommended that Ms. Tornes visit the City Clerk's Office to discuss establishing a SAD.

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER

None.

COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Ms. Roberts stated that first she is always impressed with this committee there are people who have a lot of diverse talent on this committee who bring a lot of skills to the committee so when they have discussion they have a lot of good input and knowledge, historical knowledge or jobs they have done that brings information to the table, it is a great committee; second someone mentioned they like the committee and impressed on what is going on – there are a lot of committees and commissions that have vacancies – there are many ways to contribute to the community.

Ms. Roberts requested to have review of the Design Criteria Manual on the agenda in regards to how it would affect the issues with Mattox Street as suggested by Mr. Smith. Also the Complete Streets: Best Policy and Implementation Practices document for discussion and review; and the Mattox Street Neighborhood – Recommendation for Traffic Calming Measures. Ms. Roberts also noted that they need to finish review of the HART Manual review which was postponed to the November meeting.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMITTEE

Ms. Venuti commented it was a really interesting meeting, appreciated the comments as they must consider the circumstances of all residents whether rich or poor, to make sure they are aware of all things such as trails and parks. She has run across kids who were not aware a trail was there, so she appreciated the public for coming to the meeting and thanked Francie for her help.

Mr. Walker thanked the public present also; he was very surprised that this committee did not have any input on the CIP; he suggested that it would be good to schedule a meeting in the summer so they can

have input for transportation projects. Mr. Walker would have liked to have a bit more information on how the group's project with Old Town got started, it is great to see a project like that come about; talking about tunnels, Mr. Walker mentioned the one planned for under the highway at Diamond Creek, he noted that it is possible and that would be a good option to put at the corner of Saw & Cycle on Ocean Drive, then the cyclists would not have to stop they could keep right on going. The Non-Motorized Trails and Transportation Plan shows a trail around Beluga Lake he wondered if the Mattox neighborhood had public access to that – they responded from the audience that it was all marshland; he also noted that sawhorses make good traffic calming devices; the HAT organization is looking for people to help with trails and he will be available after the meeting if you are interested in any additional information. They are looking for people to help with trail work and; he is also on the Board for the Kachemak Nordic Ski Club, starting to mow the trails so they can be used sooner and if you are interested in helping and learning how to use the new ATV with tracks see him after the meeting.

Mr. Smith commented that looking back to see why they are where they are with roads in this community, it was very expensive to import frost proof road materials and they did not do that; the LID process was actually implemented back in the 1980s and that did bring about a lot of the improved roads that we now have; before that there was no road improvement projects for more than 15 years. Then it was only Pioneer Avenue to East End Road. Mr. Smith commented that Homer has a long history of not having or being focused on sidewalks and pedestrian and transportation issues. Not too much you can do about that now; something he also pointed out was to remember was that this issue is political as well. Mr. Smith stated that with the current governor it will be nearly impossible to get a trail/road project approved it was not like that under Governor Knowles who demanded a separated trail on all projects. It's very political on how money is spent. Mr. Smith was sure Ms. Roberts could testify to this fact. There are not the funding to do want ever you want and no mechanisms in the budget to do a lot of these projects that people want to get done and that explains the need for a strong volunteer effort to get a trail completed. But he commented that with the advent with the recently passed ordinance the City Manager could approve spending money on projects like this and recommended coordinating with the City Manager to fund trail projects such as that; Ms. Roberts interjected that currently the Trails Fund had only a couple of hundred thousand dollars and there has to be in excess of \$3 million dollars in those funds before projects could be recommended.

Ms. Highland queried how much was in the fund in regards to funding the Mattox Street project; Ms. Roberts responded that there was approximately \$6 million; Ms. Highland continued her comment that now is the time to approach Public Works or the City Manager to get help with their projects. She then commented that the Homestead Trail is actually state and totally done by volunteers and volunteerism is getting to be more the way to go as things get tighter and tighter. It was a very good meeting, thank you everyone.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Committee Chair Roberts adjourned the meeting at 7:16 p.m. Next regular meeting is scheduled for November 19, 2013 at 5:30 p.m. in the Homer City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

RENEE KRAUSE, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK I

Approved: _____