

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ZONE COMMITTEE (EDZC) MINUTES  
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2022 9:30 A.M.  
CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, VERO BEACH, FLORIDA**

**PRESENT:** Joseph Cataldo, Chairman; Terry Torres, Vice Chairman; Members: Bob DelVecchio, Sheila Schweitzer and William Watkins **Also Present:** Jenny Flanigan, Assistant City Attorney; Jason Jeffries, Planning and Development Director; Matt Mitts, Public Works Director and Tammy Bursick, City Clerk

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A) January 24, 2022**

**Mr. DelVecchio made a motion to approve the January 24, 2022 minutes. Mr. Watkins seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

**3. NEW BUSINESS**

**4. OLD BUSINESS**

**A) Twin Pairs**

Mr. Matt Mitts, Public Works Director, gave an update on the Twin Pairs project. He said that the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is doing a 3R resurfacing project on State Road 60/Downtown Twin Pairs. He said that the work has not been officially scheduled by FDOT at this point. He assumed at this point that this will be placed on the five (5) year work program for construction in fiscal years 2027-2028. He said that FDOT has reached out to the City of Vero Beach asking them what they want included in the project. He said the City has asked for a complete streets analysis of the Twin Pairs. He asked FDOT for an update (not confirmed) on some of the topics that they are looking at, which are the block crossings at 12<sup>th</sup> Court, American Icon Brewery, and the County Courthouse. The City has asked FDOT for a speed limit reduction, radar speed detection feedback signs, pedestrian crossing and signal timing improvements, narrow the travel lanes, and extend the dedicated right turn lane on the northern most lane on State Road 60 (approaching St. Helen Church) further east. He said that these are the items that the City has asked for and are waiting for FDOT's input on the traffic analysis study.

Mr. Cataldo asked if the complete street analysis will include any beautification.

Mr. Mitts said FDOT would need to comment on that, but typically he would say no.

Mr. Cataldo commented that his understanding of the complete streets was that some of it was beautification, bike lanes, wider sidewalks and things that make it pedestrian friendly.

Mr. DelVecchio commented that when they looked at this before they were told by FDOT that they would be responsible for that.

Mr. Cataldo continued and stated that might be a good place for this Committee to spend some money on. He wants to keep pushing forward on this with the FDOT even if they don't fund the actual improvements. He spoke with Mr. Larry Reisman, from the Press Journal, after the last meeting where Mr. Reisman felt that he was being picked on for his position in the past about how the Twin Pairs are not a problem. He said his argument was if there was no traffic then there wasn't a problem and they don't need four (4) lanes. Mr. Reisman felt that going to three (3) lanes was probably rational and people would be on board with doing that. Then gaining that extra lane back would give them the opportunity to do some things to really enhance the walkability and the esthetics value of downtown. He said if they could focus on one (1) block they could get this moving and hopefully get the City behind them. He said in the past the City Council has not been in favor of doing anything with the Twin Pairs and now he is hoping they have a shot at making some changes.

Mr. Mitts mentioned that FDOT is in the process of scoping this independent of complete streets. He said one (1) of the items they did say they were going to do at the intersection was either add lighting or improve the existing lighting at the intersections.

#### **B) Update on the Lighting Project**

Mrs. Danessa Chambers, Assistant City Engineer, gave an update on the lighting project. She said the work order has been executed and field work starts this week to do some surveying on what the existing lighting situations are. The three (3) locations that they will be looking at are Old Dixie Highway between eastbound 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 18<sup>th</sup> Street; 21<sup>st</sup> Street from US Hwy 1 to 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue from 21<sup>st</sup> Street to 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. She said once they get a handle on what the existing conditions are they will meet with the company next month to discuss the best options for moving forward and what their recommendations will be to do an actual design for those projects. She said the goal is to have the design work done by the end of this year. She would provide the Committee with the diagram that she has for the project.

#### **5. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Councilmember Honey Minuse reported that she is in the process of working on the proposed project for the Jimmy Graves field. She said this property is part of the High School and they are looking to develop it. There will be a historical walking trail, which is internal to the site and they are also planning and working with MainStreet to have a historic arts walk starting at Jimmy Graves field to the downtown area. She is happy to be working with MainStreet on this project. She has had a preliminary conversation with the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and she received some positive comments about funding for this project being available. She will keep the Committee updated on the project.

Mayor Robbie Brackett was hesitant to speak with two (2) other Councilmembers in the Council Chambers. Both Councilmembers left the meeting while Mayor Brackett was speaking. He said because this meeting is being taped he needs to be very careful when it comes to the Sunshine Law. He said obviously whatever happens at this meeting could also come before the Council for a vote. He encouraged the Committee to continue doing what they were doing. He said they were here for a reason, which is to advise the City Council. He said that if any Committee member wants to meet with him one on one at any time he would be happy to do so.

Mr. Torres asked Mayor Brackett for his position on the Twin Pairs.

Mayor Brackett commented that was an item that will probably come to the Council for a vote so he would be happy to meet with any Committee member and speak with them individually. He wants to make sure that he complies with the Sunshine Law.

Mrs. Susan Groomis, Executive Director of MainStreet Vero Beach, spoke to the Committee. She said it was nice to be at their meeting. She reported that MainStreet recently did a survey asking visitors to the area, business owners, vendors from a cross section and people from around the City what they like best about downtown and the challenges that they feel occur in downtown and what the projects could look like in coming years. She said the three (3) things that seem to be on everyone's minds who come to downtown are traffic, parking and speeding. Following that the other things that came up were no walkability, lighting and needing more green space. She made it clear that MainStreet did not lead the people taking the survey in any way on these questions. She said this is what they are saying that they want. She said once they have all the information together they will be presenting it to City Council and to the Committee.

Ms. Schweitzer asked who made the decision to do the lighting at 21<sup>st</sup> Street to 23<sup>rd</sup> Street.

Mrs. Chambers explained those locations were selected by this Committee.

Mr. Cataldo commented on the lighting in this area. He said that getting to Pocahontas Park can be scary at night and is a dead zone, but still part of downtown. They want to enhance the downtown area and encourage activity. He said there are some concerns about this one (1) block that they could talk about. He has heard that there are some matching grants to enhance the property that they could look into. The City always has concerns with on-going maintenance and utilities cost. He said maybe the property owners in the area would help out also. He doesn't see the lighting in this area as a concern.

Ms. Schweitzer said there was no doubt that Pocahontas Park needs lighting. She asked when the Committee made this recommendation.

Mr. Cataldo said it was about four (4) years ago.

Mr. Jason Jeffries, Planning and Development Director, added that the lighting was a part of the budgeting process. He said he usually comes to the Committee in May to start talking about what projects they are interested in doing so that it can be discussed when the Council holds their budget hearings in July.

Mr. Cataldo asked Mr. Jeffries if there were any potential development projects going on in the downtown area that would help enhance downtown.

Mr. Jeffries expressed that he has received some inquiries about people asking what the potential uses would be along 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the downtown area. He said nothing is public because he has not received any applications back.

Mr. Torres asked about the status of the Downtown Post Office building.

Mr. Jeffries explained that the City does not own the Post Office building anymore so they would have to address their questions to Mr. Michael Rector who now owns that building.

Mr. Cataldo commented that there is a need for more parking downtown. He said it would be great if the City would acquire the parking lot behind Wheeler Insurance. He asked if that was something that this Committee should be involved in.

Mr. Jeffries said he would need to check to see if tiff dollars could be used for that. He mentioned that the Committee is only generating around \$100,000 a year and will sunset soon. He doesn't think that they would have enough money in the account to purchase the parking lot. He would go back and look at the scope of what they are allowed to spend tiff money on, but he doesn't think land acquisition is a part of it.

## **6. ADJOURNMENT**

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

/tb