

**STEERING COMMITTEE MINUTES
FRIDAY, JULY 31, 2020 10:30 A.M.
CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, VERO BEACH, FLORIDA**

PRESENT: Vicky Gould, Chairman; Robbie Brackett, Vice Chairman; Tony Young, Mayor; Laura Moss, Vice Mayor; Joe Graves, Councilmember; Rey Neville, Councilmember; Linda Moore, Member; Mike Johannsen, Member; John Cotugno, Member and Harry Howle, Member **Also Present:** Monte Falls, City Manager; John Turner, City Attorney; Jason Jeffries, Planning and Development Director and Tammy Bursick, City Clerk

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called the meeting to order and the City Clerk performed the roll call.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A) June 16, 2020

The minutes were approved unanimously.

3. ITEM FOR DISCUSSION:

Mr. Jason Jeffries, Planning and Development Director, explained to the Steering Committee that when the plan that they proposed went before the City Council on July 20, 2020, their consultant offered to supply a new plan because of the Coronavirus. The new plan is before the Steering Committee today for their review.

A) Proposed Post Pandemic Scenario and Consider Including in Proposed Report

Mr. Andres Duany, Principal Consultant from DPZ CoDesign, presented the Steering Committee with Three Corners, Vero Beach Scenario Five “Plan B” (A Post-Pandemic Design). He said the plan changed from what the Steering Committee was given to them in their backup material. He explained that Scenario Five used to be called the consultant’s plan – Plan B. He explained that this plan is somewhat involved and is a very conservative plan. It is a redesign of Scenario 5 taking into account the consequences of the pandemic, both positive and negative. The positive consequences are that outdoor lite, sunlight, breezes, and large open spaces are considered the greatest assets to health. The large Three Corners site and the Florida weather easily provide ideal conditions for communal activities in the post pandemic period. The negative consequences of the pandemic are that large projects and large buildings, especially those associated with restaurants, lodging, and enclosed gathering spaces are unlikely to go ahead for a very long time. The resulting reduction of tax revenue for the City forces the Three Corners facility to be more fiscally responsible and revenue neutral than before. The Scenario 5 program of the Economically Feasible Plan is replicated in Plan B, but delivered via a series of lighter, smaller building types and landscaping that may be built incrementally, avoiding expensive indoor spaces as much as possible. He said that this site is perfect for this proposed plan because it is a large site. The hotel that was previously multi-story with a very long corridor has now been replaced by independent cottages, with an exact plan of a standard mid-level hotel. These are modular units that may be later replaced by a conventional hotel, as originally designed in the event that the market changes. The number of rooms is approximately half of what was originally proposed and it is possible that these may be two-story cottages, easily doubling from 80 to 160

rooms. The lobby has been relocated to the south at the request of the neighbors to the north who did not want to hear the activity. The north canal is buggered by a restored native forest. The open market buildings are each now equipped with one air-conditioned area, which increases flexibility during the weekdays. These enclosed buildings could be reserved for shared-interest social gatherings, such as parent groups that might seek to organize one-room schoolhouses or local “circles of trust” clubs. The Chapel pavilion for weddings, dances, and meetings of the prior plan remains in this scheme. The significant change is that it now features a wrap-around porch to allow the doors surrounding the ballroom-sized interior to be maintained open, even during rainfall. The covered spaces of this hall’s porch and the open market sheds should be available to nearby diners during moments of inclement weather. The chapel was an income producer, but it is more than that it is going to be an excellent meeting room for the City Council. The Community Center could move to the Chapel and have their programs there. The area of waterfront dining is the same as before. However, in this plan the roofed area of each restaurant is now minimized to contain only kitchens and bars in non-air-conditioned spaces. Table seating is all outdoors under umbrellas, spaced on a grid of shade trees and palms. The number of sand volleyball courts along the waterfront has been increased and may be replaced by other forms of outdoor recreation. There is infrastructure for six (6) to 10 food trucks that would also use the outdoor seating. The kitchens should operate as culinary incubators to encourage new food entrepreneurs, offer classes and perhaps welcome visiting high-profile chefs. These could be rotated among the existing indoor downtown restaurants. There would be no enclosed dining space. The docking and fishing pier has not changed. The cabin feels safe and cross ventilating. He said why wait 10 years for a new hotel when this could get done right away. There will still be a rooftop restaurant, but it will be feasible and inexpensive. He showed the cottages for the long term rentals. He showed what the view will look like from the waterfront. The conference center is open air. He showed what the landscaping will look like, which is beautiful. He showed the glamping tents and said that this is a very conservative and incredibly attractive plan.

Mrs. Linda Moore felt that this was a beautiful plan, she imagined the little hotel cottages would be owned by the hotel that takes over the conference center. She said it seems like they would be selling more property and she has some concerns with the zoning codes.

Mr. Duany said that the footprint is similar to the prior plan. He did not think that they needed to sell the property. They could lease the property with a condition that it be a 15 to 20 year lease with a sunset clause.

Vice Mayor Moss liked the function of the water retention pond. She said with item #14 (referring to the plan) open sheds for the Farmer’s Market appeared to be contiguous with the conference center and she liked that idea. She said wouldn’t that be great as a walkway from the conference center.

Mr. Duany explained that the walkway is on the inside and the outside is park and service.

Vice Mayor Moss referred to item #33, long term rental cabins and asked what is the intent here.

Mr. Duany said he did not have an intent. He said they needed people and a wall to create space. He keeps going back to something that he heard in the charrette and that is that school teachers don’t have places to live, but it was not well received in the charrettes. If the referendum gets turned down they could still have an arts colony. This plan takes it into account if they lose the vote.

Vice Mayor Moss continued by saying with the water tanks not using internal space she thought was a good idea. The preserved water storage tanks are not envisioned as internal spaces to be renovated, but as a structural system providing a roof and stage for concerts and performances, as well as the wall project screens for videos and digital art projects. She gave an idea of an art museum that could go there with temporary walls, but in a spiral shape. Mr. Duany agreed with that concept. He said that in the charrette nothing that he proposed in the inside of those tanks was favorable. He liked Vice Mayor Moss's idea, but thought it would cause a bit of a problem.

Mr. Mike Johannsen commented that it seems as an organization they are not qualified to do any of this development that they are talking about. He suggested taking a step back to proceed forward. He said that they have a valuable piece of land being developed with no budget. He proposed the following: form a Task Force to go out and go to the major industries and see if there is any interest in a proposition that says they are going to lease this entire property to manage in accordance with this plan given to them the first three (3) years charge at zero charge and then after building the project the City could charge a fixed rate or earnings before income tax deductions. The hotel industry will manage rents, dockage, etc., and will not be able to sublease and are subject to conditions. He thinks they can move forward immediately. They need to find out if the industry is out there.

Mr. Duany commented that with the industry out there it will be in a disarray for the next few months. By the time they vote on the referendum what happens with the industry may be open to these kind of ideas. He said that they need to make leases that increase over time and not paying while the building is empty, but share income when the time comes to do things. Inflation is happening and people will want to invest on real estate and most real estate is dead. But, this plan is not dead because it is a niche unlike anything else. He agreed with Mr. Johannsen's comments, but thought that it would take someone with more enthusiasm to sell the idea. He said if he went out by himself that it would not work.

Mr. Robbie Brackett stated that they are tasked with picking a plan. He does not support residential on these sites and made that clear when he ran for office. They would be renting out housing and that is not their business. He does not see where the income comes from doing this. It will compete with the arts village, and museum and they need to be careful about that. Mothballing the whole south side except for Youth Sailing was great. He liked Mr. Johannsen's idea of having someone go out and talk to the industry. He wants to move on this project and recommended that they go back to the original project that the Steering Committee approved. He said that the hotels on the beachside are pretty full now. Unfortunately, they don't have a crystal ball on what will happen six (6) months from now.

Mr. Harry Howle agreed with Mr. Brackett. They have a lovely plan before them, but he said looking back to history of the world there have been all kinds of flu viruses. He tends to like the old plan better and believes the spark for this property is gravitating businesses, such as restaurants that need to get it going.

Vice Mayor Moss agreed with not having residential on the property. However, she likes this plan. The hotel cottages have a limited life span. She is in agreement with the pandemic mentality and this proposed plan.

Mr. Duany commented that the 1918 pandemic had tremendous repercussions. He can't say that they will not have effects of this pandemic because the effect of that pandemic was permanent. He said that there are things that could happen in the future and nothing about this plan is punitive. They are not

punishing someone because of the pandemic. What this did was recalibrated him as a designer to Florida, which includes open space, no air conditioning, etc.

Mr. Brackett stated as someone who owns buildings and has them built to last for 50-years it is not cost effective to build something that is only going to last 15 or 20 years.

Mr. Duany said that would depend on the depreciation schedule. He said hotels need to be renovated every 10 to 15 years and if they are not then you are in trouble.

Mrs. Moore commented that people are never going to get tired of air conditioning (referring to the restaurants). Her restaurant is always full because it is hot outside and people want to come inside to cool off.

Mr. Duany said there are places that operate beautifully without air conditioning such as outdoor cafes in Miami and Europe. Having restaurants not like the typical restaurant might actually be welcome.

Mr. Howle commented that the heat index today is showing that it is 101 degrees. He said this would be fantastic in the winter months, but it won't work in the summer.

Mr. John Cotugno commented that they have been provided with a series of plans. He brought up the referendum and wondered if they needed to be specific. He asked if the wording reflects the design that is being shown. He said the next step is the verbiage for the referendum and finding which plan is economically feasible for their City and how long will it take to develop this. They need to take this to referendum and get it approved and then decide what design will make sense for them in the future.

Vice Mayor Moss disagreed. She said that the public has the right to know what their intentions are. If they are asking the public to vote then they have to say what the plan is going to be. She said they can't have a bait and switch two (2) years from now.

Mr. Cotugno explained that it is not a bait and switch. The zoning work by the Planning Department has to be done. How they develop the plan that will not cost them any money, but if they are trying to meet a deadline and go to specific and can't find a developer that will do the plan and a changes have to be made then there is another issue and then they will have to go back to referendum.

Mr. Johannsen questioned why this matter had to go on this Election ballot while there is a Presidential Election taking place. It is doing a disservice to the whole subject. They could always have a referendum question on the ballot later on.

Mr. Brackett said because they will get the biggest voter turnout in November.

Ms. Vicky Gould mentioned that Mr. Duany did not think that the item would go on this November ballot. Mr. Duany said that he did not think that it would. Ms. Gould continued by saying that she loves this plan and how much green space there is now. There were elements voted on before in the other plan that she also liked. Mr. Duany wanted to know what she liked about the other plan as opposed to this one because he could hardly see the difference. Ms. Gould said that she liked the hotel design better in the other plan. She was so happy that Mr. Duany presented them with this plan today. She said that we don't know what mindset will be changed because of the pandemic. She said her sons who are younger are not worried. Mr. Duany said that he was able to release some tired old ideas. He said that with the new plan it is a much better place to be.

Vice Mayor Moss expressed that she also liked the plan. They need to be clear going in to the referendum how do they plan to use that piece of land. She read Section 5.05 from the City Charter. She did not think that there would be a crisis if this item did not make the November ballot.

Ms. Gould asked if they knew what the Charter question is going to say.

Mr. Jeffries reminded the Committee that their purpose is to recommend a plan to the City Council. He said that based on their recommendations from their June 15th meeting he put together a plan to be adopted and a proposed Ordinance was put forth to Council to adopt on first reading at their July 20th meeting and hold a public hearing on August 18th. He said as it still stands today with their recommended plan the only thing that requires a Charter amendment is for the Power Plant site.

Mr. Cotugno said then it makes no difference which plan they approve because the verbiage remains the same.

Mr. Jeffries said that they must recommend a plan to the City Council.

Vice Mayor Moss recommended this plan as long as they mothball the south side of the property.

Mr. Jeffries said that determining what plan they recommend would determine if any of the language in the Ordinance will need to be changed.

Mr. Joe Graves stated that much like other issues that they face like trying to predict what will happen in the pandemic world while it is constantly changing is impossible. They need to think about what they are talking about. The voters need to know what they are voting on. He likes what their consultant is showing them. They don't know who will come in and finance this and who wants to be a part of it. They do know the plan needs restaurants and meeting spaces. Maybe they should work on a zoning change for the waterfront dining and leave the rest of it alone for now.

Mr. Richard Baker stated that he likes the openness of this plan and the ability to get out to the Lagoon. Some of this could be started today and it isn't going to cost anything. He said they need to start building slowly. He wants to see people get outdoors. He said some of the decisions did not have to be made today. Just let the public know that they are moving ahead. The idea of getting people outdoors is the most important thing in Vero Beach. There is unlimited boat space. He thought it was too early to take this to a referendum.

Mr. Brackett said that the language in the referendum is limited to 75 words and would fit either plan.

Mr. Jeffries agreed with that comment.

Mr. Rey Neville made it clear that this plan was not much different than the plan that they previously voted on. He said that ultimately they would be sending out an RFQ and when they get the RFQ's back then they will have more answers to some of these questions. He said to promise a specific plan to their community is an incorrect way to move forward. He said both plans will work. He likes the cottages. He recalled the ocean villas, which were small cottages when he was a kid and he loved that place. He finds the cottages quite appealing.

The Committee agreed that the south side needed to be mothballed except for the Youth Sailing Foundation.

Mr. Graves expressed that the plan that they show the public needs to be the one that the project is going to look like. He thought that the cottages were very desirable. He said in this world trying to predict what there is going to be a need for in the future is hard.

Ms. Gould brought up the Charter and said that the power would go to future City Councils.

Mr. Brackett said that some commercial use will be allowed on the property.

Vice Mayor Moss expressed how careful they need to be. She referred back to the Tourist Tax dollars and when that matter went to referendum in 1980 it was only for beach restoration. She said now that money is taken from the City and spent on everything else except beach restoration. She does not want to see this done again.

Mr. Howle commented on doing something while there is still an interest. He said if they wait too long they will end up with a situation like Dodgertown. He said that they need to come up with a plan and move forward with the referendum.

Mr. Duany expressed that developers don't like vague plans. They want to know what is going to happen. Citizens are afraid of bait and switch. Sometimes hotels are overbuilt. They have to confront the future. Hotels are being turned into condos in Miami and West Palm Beach. He said lets talk about the future and let's not talk about the past.

Mr. Monte Falls, City Manager, stated that what they can't do is be perceived as doing a bait and switch. They need to decide which plan they are going to go with. If they intend to go to referendum in November then they have to decide now.

Mr. Graves made a motion to go with Plan B with the exception of mothballing the south side. Mr. Neville seconded the motion.

Ms. Gould recalled that when they first started this process they were using SpeakUpVeroBeach and asked if the public has seen this plan.

Mr. Graves commented that they have spent a lot of money to hire a consultant to come up with a design and to disregard his opinion is not the right thing to do.

Miss Sidney O'Haire said if you pull this now they are going to break a lot of hearts in this town. She said that Mr. Duany is ahead of his time and he can look at the future. Society is different from now on. They need to look at this as an opportunity. She reiterated that if they pulled it now it would cause a lot of upset in this community. The citizens of this community are looking forward to this. She asked them to pick a plan and vote on it. She said with the internet everyone will know what is happening.

Ms. Gould said that she would like to see this go to referendum in November.

Miss O'Haire agreed. She was asked what her preference was in the plans. She said that she liked the one before the post pandemic plan, but she does like the plan that was presented today a lot. It makes sense to go with what people are going to feel the most comfortable with. She understands not wanting residential units on the south side, but hopes that they don't mothball the whole thing.

Ms. Amy Gello said that this plan to her is brilliant. She reviews plans for neighborhood developments, etc., and this plan is top notch. She said taking the steps to have cottages there is brilliant. She reiterated

that she really loves this plan. She loves the southside also and understands why they would want it mothballed. She thought the whole plan was great.

The City Clerk read the public comments that the Steering Committee received via email.

Mayor Young commented on the importance of having consensus in the plan that they choose and seeking to have the general composition for the north side with commercial activity and the core of what they are looking at for November if they want to have a referendum. This is a concept plan and if they mothball the south side with the exception of Youth Sailing it adheres to the desire to the community. At a point down the road if a developer comes to the City and wants to relook at the idea and make modifications, is there a mechanism to do that.

Mr. Falls said if they are going to draft language around the plan that they are going to adopt then there may be some problems if they don't do something similar to that.

Mr. John Turner, City Attorney, explained to the Steering Committee and Council that this is a general master concept plan. He said if there were big changes made it would necessitate a revote. They want to keep it as open and transparent as much as possible so there will be some changes.

Mr. Cotugno agreed that this plan that they have been discussing today is a good plan, but it is obvious that they cannot predict the future. He said looking back six (6) months ago no one could have ever believed that they would be going through this pandemic. There is no way that they can predict what is going to occur five (5) years from now.

Mr. Graves agreed that no one can predict the future. He said the person they hired to predict the future is Mr. Duany. It is impossible to know what is going to happen five (5) years from now. He likes this new plan better than the other plan, especially because it has so much open space and he loves that concept.

Vice Mayor Moss said that she also likes this plan better.

Mr. Brackett did not disagree with the comments being made today, but asked who will pay for this project. They are talking tens of millions of dollars, which the City does not have to spend on a project like this one.

Mr. Cotugno said that this new plan is what he envisioned in their charrette planning. He asked if going through the zoning changes they would be okay in doing this plan.

Mr. Falls explained that it is up to the Steering Committee to recommend a plan and formulate that plan.

Mr. Jeffries stated that based on the motion the Steering Committee is recommending (Plan B) that is being proposed today by Mr. Duany. They may want to talk through what this recommended plan entails.

Mr. Graves commented that they have paid money for an expert (Mr. Duany) and this is the plan that he is recommending, as well as letting the Steering Committee know that there is no appetite for developers right now.

Mrs. Moore asked if the developer would have the say so in hotel guests only.

Mr. Brackett explained that there would be restrictions on the agreement that they have in place. He called the question on the motion.

Mr. Ken Daige agreed that this was not a bad plan and it has more open green space. At the last City Council meeting they looked at the Charter referendum question and it is vague. This plan is a concept and once the Power Plant property is out of the Charter it is out of the people's hand as far as the Charter goes.

Mr. Jeffries made it clear that they are only leasing the property where the Power Plant sits and not selling the property. The way the Charter is listed (b) they are not selling any of those properties, but it allows the City to lease the property for purposes like the museum, theater, and adding (c), which is outlined in the Ordinance it has specific language on whatever plan is adopted by Council, which is why this needs to be clear. They get the referendum passed first, then they do the Comprehensive Plan amendments and then the rezoning. However, they will need to be consistent with the language that is in the Charter.

Mr. Graves repeated the motion and it was seconded. On a roll call vote the motion passed 10-1 with Mr. Brackett voting no. Ms. Gould voted for the motion, but said that she did not like mothballing the south side.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

This item was heard earlier in the meeting.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 12:41 p.m.

/tb