



MEETING MINUTES

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING NO. 8

Date: May 2, 2020

Time: 10:00 am – 12:07 pm

Location: Adobe Connect Virtual Meeting

Project Name: I-526 Lowcountry Corridor WEST

Attendees

Larenda Baxley, Ferndale
Tina A. Baxley, Ferndale
Gilbert Reeves, Ferndale
Rev. David L. Johnson, Ferndale
Angela Anderson, Russelldale
Ruth Mae Whitney, Highland Terrace
Jeanaris Bannister, Liberty Park
Carolyn Varner, Liberty Park
Doris Twiggs, Liberty Park
Prayonda Cooper, Joppa Way
Earl Muhammad, Muhammad Mosque
Rick Day, Stantec
Amy Sackaroff, Stantec

LaTonya Derrick, Stantec
Ryan White, Stantec
Horrace Tobin, Stantec Community Office
Joy Riley, SCDOT (Project Manager)
Chad Long, SCDOT
David Kelly, SCDOT
Pamela Foster, FHWA
Yolonda Jordan, FHWA
Maxine Smith, Maximum Consulting
Mattese Lecque, Maximum Consulting
Carolyn Lecque, Maximum Consulting
Clay Middleton, Maximum Consulting
Janelle Ellis, Empowerment Strategies

Participant Summary:

Total participants: 26

Ferndale: 4

Highland Terrace: 1

Liberty Park: 3

Russelldale: 1

Adjacent/affected communities/agencies: 2

SCDOT: 3

FHWA: 2

Community Liaisons: 4

Community Office: 1

Stantec: 4

Facilitator: 1

Meeting Summary

Welcome and Introductions

- Roll call
- Welcome and reminder that the meeting would be recorded for accuracy of meeting minutes

Administrative Items

- Overview of Adobe Connect features and meeting logistics
- Virtual meeting etiquette review
- Host provided instructions for any technical issues during the meeting

- CAC Meeting #7 minutes approved
- An overview of the agenda was provided:
 - Review of administrative items
 - Open Mic session
 - Potential Site Layout for Replacement Community Facilities
 - Replacement Community Facilities: Potential Functions and Services
 - Community Mitigation Plan Development: Coordination with Local Organizations
 - Outreach Plans for 2020
 - Outreach Update
 - Summary & Next Steps

Open Mic

- The floor was open for discussion.
- CAC members were acknowledged for their continued participation in the I-526 West LCC project in the midst of the pandemic.
- A general overview was provided of the steps the CAC has taken to date:
 - Meetings one through five included brainstorming sessions.
 - Meetings six and seven allowed CAC members to focus on specific community needs.
- Although the project team and CAC have not developed a draft mitigation plan, discussions and resulting documents are beginning to lay the groundwork for potential mitigation plans related to the four pillars identified in the Mitigation Work Session (CAC Meeting #6) including:
 - Community Cohesion
 - Community Enhancement
 - Community Preservation
 - Community Revitalization
- The CAC will begin to move from meetings that are solely devoted to brainstorming into discussions about the potential actions required to put plans into action.

Potential Site Layout for Replacement Community Facilities

- Potential site layouts for the replacement community center were reviewed.
- Layouts were conceptual drawings to give the CAC an opportunity to provide feedback on improving the plans.
- Project design team considerations:
 - Focus potentially on a single, larger community center
 - The project team will need to identify multiple adjacent parcels that can accommodate a larger facility based in Liberty Park.
 - Designed to meet the CAC's request for a facility that would provide meeting spaces for various programs
 - Focus on children in the community to ensure they have a safe place to congregate and play with constructive activities
 - Landscaping and common areas for neighbors to safely congregate and host a variety of community events
 - Open space because it creates opportunities for community cohesion
 - Small parcel, pocket park proposed for the Russelldale community

- Filbin Creek Community Center
 - City of North Charleston is proposing a greenway along Filbin Creek which will provide a direct connection to various areas of Liberty Park. Other features include:
 - Parking along Dorothy Williams Boulevard
 - Parking at the main facility with access from Elder Avenue
 - There is a separate parcel south of Filbin Creek with the potential for additional parking on the creek side of the property
 - Parking and accessibility from various parts of the community were considered in the design
 - Walkability between various greenways and amenities within the facility
 - The main facility includes a gym, classrooms, and office space in an effort to provide residents with a multipurpose facility that will also accommodate the elderly and children
 - Pollinator loop and birdboxes to enhance the wildlife element of the park
 - Space for a community garden, educational wetlands
 - Playgrounds, pavilions, picnic areas
 - A multi-use sports field
 - A pedestrian bridge over Filbin bridge to provide connectivity to the north and south sides of the park and community
 - A turf amphitheater

- Program Manager: This is the first round of conceptual drawings.
- SCDOT is talking to property owners. Some of the proposed lots are owned by the City of North Charleston. Some are not.
- Conceptual models were developed for two purposes:
 - To start the conversation with the CAC about what they want in the space
 - To show to property owners as a visual representation of the proposed property use
- Program Manager stated that the layout represents a conservative model of what the layout may look like. SCDOT would like to purchase more land than what is displayed on the layout.
- SCDOT could spread out the design if more land can be acquired.

- CAC Member: Will Filbin Creek Community Center serve all represented communities (Liberty Park, Highland Terrace, Russelldale, Joppa Way, and Ferndale)?
 - The proposed facility will serve the broader community.
 - SCDOT is asking North Charleston to enhance services (activities and programs) and to provide staff and a daily operations budget
 - If three facilities are built, the City is much less likely to provide the same level or quality of services than with a single facility.

- CAC Member: How do we prevent repeating past practices in which community center activities are not tailored to community members/residents? How do we ensure the community center remains for the community so that we maintain access and do not lose the community “feel?”
 - An Intergovernmental Agreement will be developed between SCDOT and the City of North Charleston to specify what the community center will include.

- They will have to have some flexibility because they have to engineer and build the facility and be able to make it work, from a permitting and programming perspective.
 - SCDOT will give the City the funds to do that, as well as initial funds to start specific programs the CAC is asking the City to set up in the agreement.
 - The City will commit to establishing programs and operating and maintaining them throughout the life of the community center.
 - The CAC can stipulate some requirements, but they must be negotiated with the City.
 - The CAC must first develop a list of requests, after which SCDOT will negotiate with the City.
 - SCDOT will meet with the CAC and with the City to prepare for constituent meetings.
 - The CAC has a powerful voice in making decisions in the communities that affect them.
 - CAC members were encouraged to provide feedback from both a personal perspective, as well as from perspective of the broader needs of the communities.
- Highland Terrace Community Pocket Park
 - The proposed improvements to I-26 were taken into consideration for the Highland Terrace Pocket Park (HTPP) design.
 - Based on interchange modifications, additional lanes will be added to I-26 which will require Taylor Street to be realigned.
 - As a result, the project team has a smaller footprint (a smaller amount of land) to design the pocket park, while trying to maintain as many of the original intended features as possible:
 - On-street parking and sidewalks on Taylor Street. The project team will continue to evaluate the sidewalks and mid-block crossing based on the location of the current crossing near Taylor Street.
 - Basketballs courts
 - Open air pavilion and benches, picnic tables and playground
 - The primary original feature discussed by the CAC team (not included in the conceptual drawing) was a multipurpose building. However, the need in this area for a multipurpose building is intended to be filled by a larger Filbin Creek Community Center.
 - It was reiterated that this design was based on the available property that will remain after the I-26 widening.
- CAC Member supported the idea of having activities, such as basketball courts, on the back end of the property as opposed to its current location on the front end, where traffic is higher.
 - Is it possible to use meeting spaces at the Russelldale Community Center since the HTPP will not have a meeting space?
 - CAC members were reminded that the existing community center (at Russelldale) will be impacted by the I-526 improvements.
 - That facility will no longer exist, but that is why the design of the larger, Filbin Creek Community Center is so important.
 - The project team has an opportunity to redesign the current layout to include more open space.
 - The conceptual layout presented to the CAC had the same number of basketball courts as the current Russelldale facility, but more open space can be incorporated into the design if there is a need.
 - Both pocket parks have open air pavilions with benches or picnic tables for outdoor type events.
 - What is the primary concern from CAC members regarding the lack of enclosed space or open space.

- If there is a concern with open space the design team can review the plan to identify more open space for activities.
 - If there is a concern at this particular location because you are looking for an enclosed building, the project team will revisit the design.
- CAC Member had two concerns:
 - to have a recreational space for the children
 - for an enclosed space for the entire community to use, specifically seniors
- If Filbin Creek Community Center fills those needs, CAC member accepts closed spaces only at the Filbin Creek Community Center.
 - CAC members were asked which proposed amenities they would remove from the pocket park design if they had to sacrifice a feature .
 - In order to provide a closed-space facility, what amenities would the CAC be willing to give up in the current proposal?
 - CAC member asked the project team to consider challenges for seniors at open-air facilities in warmer months.
 - CAC member indicated they do not want to sacrifice facilities and activities by having pocket parks that do not provide ample space.
 - CAC member asked the project team to bring back options for the CAC to review.
 - One of the concerns discussed in previous meetings was ease of travel for seniors.
 - It would be more convenient for seniors to have a path to community centers if they do not have to travel across railroad tracks or highways.
 - Seniors should have priority in being able to access the Filbin Creek Community Center, particularly if they demonstrate they are members of the community.
 - Regarding the HTLP pocket park, CAC member suggests thinking about an indoor/enclosed facility.
 - If there is no way to construct an indoor site at HTPP, the community should have full access to the Filbin Creek Community Center.
 - Inquiry about the distance between the Filbin Creek, Russelldale, and Highland Terrace sites
 - If the Filbin Creek site is within walking distance of the pocket parks, there may be no need for enclosed structures at the pocket parks.
 - During the day it may be difficult to find personnel to staff an indoor facility at a HTLP pocket park based on typical City funds.
 - CAC members may want to think about Filbin Creek Community Center as the center for all of their activities and pocket parks used for outdoor activities as opposed to having a building that will be closed most of the time.
 - It is less than one-half mile between the proposed Highland Terrace pocket part and the Filbin Creek locations.
 - From one parcel to the next is less than one-third mile.
 - Access is important because of how the interstate bisects the neighborhoods and there is a considerable population on both sides.
 - A mitigation monitoring plan should be developed once the City assumes operations.
- Russelldale Community Pocket Park
 - Located at the corner of Rockingham Street and Rebecca Street

- There is limited space at this location which both limits amenities, but also helps determine which amenities may be included at a site. The design team has a goal to incorporate as much open space as possible
- Park benches, pavilion, 2,500 square foot playground, shrubs, public art
- There is an L-shaped drive that wraps around the park which connects Rebecca Street and Rockingham Street
 - Current layout has more open space; but if CAC members think there should be another basketball court at this location, the design team will include it.
 - As with the Highland Terrace Pocket Park, if a feature like basketball courts is included in the design, there will be a tradeoff.
 - CAC member will have to decide what is more important for this location
 - Open space
 - Basketball courts
 - Combined open space and basketball courts
 - CAC member expressed concern that Russelldale is getting the short end of the deal because they are losing a whole community center, basketball courts. The neighborhood children will have to walk to HTLP pocket part if they want to play basketball. This is a safety issue.
 - Russelldale should at least get a half court for the children who live in that community.
- The project team will work on finding a balance between basketball courts and open spaces and provide an updated concept.
- What is the distance between Russelldale and Filbin Creek? This is important because Russelldale has many residents who don't have cars and primarily walk most places.
 - The walking/driving distance between the existing Highland Terrace Community Center and the Elder Avenue entrance to the Filbin Creek Community Center is 0.4-mile.
 - The walking/driving distance between the existing Russelldale Community Center and the April Avenue/Flora Street entrance to the Filbin Creek Community Center (at #8 on the site plan) is 0.4-mile.
 - The walking/driving distance from the existing Russelldale Community Center to the Elder Avenue entrance of the Filbin Creek Community Center via Dorothy Williams Boulevard and James Bell Drive would be 0.7-mile.
- The design team will focus on adding a basketball court, maximizing open space so that it is a multi-use park, while maintaining the playground.

Replacement Community Facilities: Potential Functions and Services

- Discussion about the importance of prioritizing functions and services at the various community centers for residents based on CAC recommendations from previous meetings. This will help prioritize the CAC's list of requests when they meet with the city of North Charleston.

Community Mitigation Plan Development: Coordination with Local Organizers

- Clay Middleton was introduced as a new member of the Maximum Consulting team who was charged with leading the discussion on coordination with local organizations

- Maximum Consulting will identify potential courses of action to transition the CAC from an advisory council to an oversight committee.
- Issues the CAC can begin to address immediately:
 - Removing barriers to residents ability to 'age in place'
 - Preference for small businesses vested in the community
 - Potential partnerships with local college nursing programs to develop health and wellness programs for senior residents
- Identify homes in which residents are homebound and have food insecurities to help Maximum better strategize how organizations may meet individual needs.
 - USDA food programs
 - Tri-County Black Nurses Association
 - City of North Charleston's CDBG programs
- Maximum Consulting is prepared to move forward immediately with helping CAC members make connections with any of the organizations discussed.
- Block grants discussion
 - CDBG is typically a year-long process
- Concern about the negative impacts of the pandemic on City of North Charleston funding.
 - How do we ensure that funds are not diverted from community needs (related to the use of the community center) and that the City will not start renting out the new community center to outside parties to adjust for current economic losses?
 - Do not want community needs to be put on the backburner
 - Concerned communities will experience a repeat of what is currently happening with many residents being denied access
Maximum: Because of COVID-19, there will be federal resources provided to the City of North Charleston to assist after the recovery period.
- CAC Member: There are homeless veterans in our communities who have medical problems. Do we have a relationship with the veteran's administration downtown Charleston?
 - Trident Technical College has a veterans upward bound
 - The Veterans Affairs (VA) center in North Charleston can visit the Office or conduct events to review available services, such as getting access to health care or helping people with their claims.
 - There is an annual VA event that focuses on homelessness and getting veterans who are not a part of the VA into the system so they can receive wrap-around services.
 - Maximum can sponsor a workshop focused on veterans
- CAC Member: We need to have organizations that can work with people from different ethnicities on health issues.
 - Maximum: All service providers will provide printed materials in Spanish and will be able to speak Spanish as well as to make sure you can mitigate effectively
- There are several organizations that can be contacted now in order to initiate services for the community.
- CAC member asked Maximum to keep the group abreast of available services to support their efforts.
- Maximum: Emphasized taking an assessment of the impacted communities

- By having an itemized list of needs, the CAC can approach planning holistically. Maximum Consulting will begin assisting families in the Liberty Park community when the designated CAC member provides a list of residents in need.
- Maximum Consulting's purpose is to provide the CAC with points of contact. The CAC is the voice for the community.
- Program Manager clarified that the two primary goals of this project include focus on developing the mitigation plan and on conducting outreach in the community.
- Minority-owned businesses in North Charleston
 - There are a number of locally owned businesses that we can go to that would provide sponsorship and lend their expertise through workshops or services that support the needs of the community.
- Potential partnerships with local college nursing programs
 - These programs can come to the community or to the community office to provide health programs.
 - May consider establishing a relationship with MUSC to do mobile health care units throughout the neighborhood
- Charleston County and MUSC have recently partnered to provide mobile health care services.

Outreach plans for 2020

- CAC was asked to prioritize community events for EJ outreach in 2020
- Planning for outreach will resume contingent upon SCDHEC and the CDC regarding when group events may be held. Maximum will discuss how they will combine events if they are unable to host the originally-scheduled seven events.
- We will need residents from communities to help with those events because people want to see familiar faces, so volunteers will need to come from the neighborhoods, contingent upon reopening plans.
- Maximum provided an overview of the seven proposed events identified by the CAC as the top three EJ outreach events:
 - Care packages for seniors
 - Summer learning activities
 - Back to school supply fair
- The CAC will be contacted to determine how they would like to proceed with planning these events.
- CAC Member feedback:
 - Supports moving forward with EJ outreach events. Committed to being engaged after reopening.
 - Support rotating outreach EJ events throughout the represented communities on some frequency.
 - Expressed concerns about identifying a realistic way of getting neighbors to participate in neighborhood council meetings. It is important that neighborhoods work together to effect the change that we want to see. Neighborhood councils are not easy, but CAC members must not give up.
 - Suggested inviting kids and seniors
- The CAC vote on the top three preferences and provide additional suggestions in the recommendation section of the poll.
- Suggestions may also be provided to anonymously to the project team.

Outreach Update

- Provided by Horrace Tobin
 - Community Office update for April 1-24, 2020
 - Received 2 incoming calls
 - Placed 8 outgoing calls
 - Responded to 4 voice messages
 - COVID
 - The Office is closed to visitors, but the Office Manager is on site daily to address concerns and request received by email, postal mail and phone.
 - Right-of-way Liaisons are not currently scheduling face to face appointments but are handling related requests received in the community office by phone.
 - Status update on events postponed due to COVID
 - Black Expo has been rescheduled for June 20th at the North Charleston Coliseum from 10:00 AM until 5:00 PM. Confirmation of this event will be shared with the project team for distribution.

Summary and Next Steps

- Topics for CAC Meeting #9 will include a discussion of outcomes from an upcoming meeting scheduled with the City of North Charleston in which the CAC will provide feedback from the mitigation workshop.
 - Project team will relay outcomes from that meeting back to the CAC on June 6th.
 - Focus on transition from CAC to the project oversight committee.
 - Potential housing mitigation update
- Supplemental information from today's meeting will be provided with the invitation and materials for meeting #9.
 - If maps or other information is requested by community members, please have them call the Office and Mr. Tobin will coordinate delivery of requested materials.
- SCDOT thanked CAC for their time, input, and participation
- FHWA thanked everyone for their time and active participation.

CAC meeting #9 is scheduled for June 6, 2020 beginning at 10:00 AM until 11:30 AM. The project team will provide updates on regarding the meeting platform that will be used for this meeting.