

CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
City Hall, Municipal Court Room
333 Broadalbin Street SW
Monday, February 21, 2011
4:00 p.m.

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Sharon Konopa called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Councilors present: Councilors Dick Olsen, Bill Coburn, Bessie Johnson, Ralph Reid, Jr., and Jeff Christman

Councilors absent: Councilor Floyd Collins

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

There was no business from the public.

MUNICIPAL COURT ANNUAL REPORT, REVIEW JUDGE'S CONTRACT

Municipal Court Judge Robert Scott said that the number of cases is down again this year. He said that this year's numbers closely match those of the 1997 statistics. There was a dramatic increase in 2007 and 2008. In the past three or four years electronic ticketing was brought in by Albany Police Department (APD). Everything is running smoothly between Municipal Court staff and APD staff. He said that although revenue is down, more revenue is received than expended.

City Manager Wes Hare said that this reflects the fact that tickets are not used as a revenue source, and that our goal is to keep the city safe. He said that there is no quota system and he believes the data is a good indicator of that. Councilor Bill Coburn asked why the number of contempt cases has increased. Scott said that contempt can be used to enforce people to pay their fines, and is also used in minor-in-possession cases if a person is not following through with the requirements.

Councilor Ralph Reid said that he commends Scott for reducing the backlog. Scott said that he couldn't do it without his staff; they are great and he appreciates all that they do.

Konopa said that this item is scheduled for Wednesday's City Council Meeting.

CAROUSEL BUILDING PLANS

Dr. Gary Goby handed out photos and drawings of the plans for the carousel (see agenda file). He said that parking would be a bit different and would include diagonal parking spaces. Goby said that the existing building is an old warehouse from the 1930s and behind it is the railroad property. He said that the proposed building on that site is two stories; the basement and the main floor. The main floor will house the carousel in a 90-foot dodecagon which will be glass fronted for high visibility and will include a carving/painting area, museum, gift shop, concession area, and entertainment/arcade party area. The basement will house a larger carving area. There will be a structural roof with a membrane roof over the top of it. He said that it will be highly visible and people would be able to see it from the bridge.

Goby said that they have met with the Landmarks Advisory Commission and they offered some suggestions for how store fronts might look. If the railroad vacates that area they would like to put in a bicycle storage area, access to the basement, and signage. Goby said that the average carving time for one animal is two years.

Jack Burrell, K&D Engineering, Inc., said that this is an exciting project. He said that the concept of turning the street into a one-way street instead of a two-way street is a good plan and will add more parking to downtown. It is going to require some of the right-of-way to make the carousel fit. Their preference is to bump out the carousel and acquire the right-of-way or have it vacated. He said that they are looking for direction from the City Council.

Reid asked how far from the structure the awning would hang. Burrell said that they are projecting four feet. Councilor Bessie Johnson said that there will be quite an addition of parking spaces. Councilor Jeff Christman asked Transportation Systems Analyst Ron Irish if this project is in the Transportation System Plan (TSP). Irish said that it is and involves adding more parking and converting the Washington Street, First Avenue, and Second Avenue intersections to an all-way stop. It is in the TSP as a short-term project.

Coburn said that diagonal parking can be dangerous when backing out of a parking space. He would like to see it moved as far south as possible. It would be great to have a three-way stop at that intersection. Johnson said that diagonal parking is easier for many people compared to parallel parking. She said that it will add so many more parking spaces compared to parallel parking.

Reid asked what the input has been from the US Postal Service (USPS), the Senior Center, and the Chamber of Commerce regarding the noise coming from the outside speakers. Goby has not talked to these groups yet.

Christman asked what the timeframe is for this project. Goby said their goal is for the building to be ready by 2013, depending upon fundraising.

Johnson asked if the building is in the historic district. Goby said that it is not in the historic district, but they are working to complement the historic design of the buildings.

Konopa asked if staff needs any direction on this project. Irish said that staff had suggested the group make a presentation because the design concept hinged on the Council's willingness at some point to consider a vacation of part of the right-of-way.

Kate Foster, 2815 Marion Street SE, said that diagonal parking is best when there are two lanes for traffic flow. She said that it is a bad idea to go out into the street and interrupt the flow of traffic. Two lanes of traffic are needed. She loves the project, but she doesn't like the traffic interruption. The carousel group should alter their plans to work within the existing space.

Camron Settlemier, 230 Seventh Avenue, said that he loves the idea of the carousel project, but he has some concerns with this project. He said that this building will be inconsistent with the historic look and feel of Downtown Albany. The visual look will be a distraction and will not be good for the downtown area.

Konopa asked if staff could bring back a report on traffic patterns for First Avenue. Christman said that he would feel more comfortable with the project concept if there was a defined timeframe. Goby said that the problem is that the group won't have a firm date until a footprint of the building has been decided. Konopa said that George Crandall should look at the design. Goby said that Crandall has reviewed the plans and is behind this project. Konopa also suggested having Rob Dortignacq review the plans. She said this will give the Council assurance regarding the project.

Hare said that City Council can approve the conceptual portion of this project and that is what the folks are looking for tonight. The project will be required to go through the regular site-plan review process and there will be opportunities for public input. Coburn doesn't have a problem conceptually with the project and he is in favor of moving to the next step.

Councilor Dick Olsen asked if there are any objections to closing the street. Irish said that USPS has a semi-truck that backs up opposite to the carousel, so it would be difficult for them to have the street closed. Olsen said that he thinks the project is a good idea and would like them to have more space instead of less.

TAKENA STREET PARKING UPDATE

Irish said that the residents on Takena Street have been invited to attend the Wednesday meeting. The residents originally came to the City about parking concerns because several residents have received parking tickets for parking on the shoulder of the sidewalks. He said that the road is only 27 feet wide. He said that the neighborhood participated in coming up with design options. The school zone has been extended, and the parking restriction signs have been removed temporarily. Irish said that the signs were removed to see what the demand of West Albany High School parking is since they now have more parking available at the school. The shoulder varies from two to three feet and drivers would block the sidewalks when parking on the shoulder. This could become an American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) issue. The other problem is emergency vehicle access because there are no gaps for emergency vehicles.

Irish said, the residents like two of the plans. The first option is to do something to the shoulder areas to better delineate that it is a shoulder area. Irish suggested a difference in color or texture. The other option is to remove parking from one side of the road for the length of the street. He said that this would provide seven feet for parking and 20 feet for vehicle travel widths. The neighborhood only liked this option if it came with the offer to widen on-site driveways.

Irish said that the residents did not like option to do nothing because they are worried about getting citations and meeting ADA requirements. He said that the least appealing choice is to rebuild the street and that would also be the most expensive option. He said that the street couldn't be widened consistently for the length of the street.

Johnson asked what residents are going to do if they have two cars and parking is restricted on one side of the street. Irish said that they will have their driveway widened to accommodate their vehicles. Coburn doesn't understand how the driveways would be widened. Irish said that most will still have the same curb cut but the driveway concrete pad would be widened. Coburn is surprised that they would choose to eliminate street parking. He asked if this type of street is unique to Albany. Irish said that there are few others, mostly off of Queen Avenue. Hare said that this is an old neighborhood and that these people have been dealing with this for awhile. He said that talking to the residents and finding out what they want matters most. Irish said that there is a four-person neighborhood design team.

Johnson asked, why the City is going to foot the bill on this and what if we start receiving similar requests from other neighborhoods? Irish said that one of the options to pay for the street is to designate it as a bike boulevard. Public Works Director Diane Taniguchi-Dennis said that it is hard to charge the citizens for something that they are being encumbered for, and it would add insult to injury.

Olsen said that he feels like we are beating a dead horse. He suggested asking police officers to not give parking tickets on this street. Hare said that the problem is that the sidewalks are being blocked and that could become an ADA issue and emergency vehicle access is another problem. Irish said that the ADA issue could be resolved by not allowing vehicles to park on the shoulder, but that won't resolve the issues for the residents.

Reid asked how long the street is. Irish said that it is 1,300 feet. Konopa said that she is concerned that we will be setting a precedent for other streets. Irish said that this street is unique because it can be designated a bike boulevard and would qualify for System Development Charges (SDC) dollars that the other streets are not eligible for. Taniguchi-Dennis said that option A-2, restricting parking along one side of the street and prohibit "shoulder" parking, is the cheapest.

DISCUSSION OF KNOX BUTTE ROAD LIGHTING

Airport & Transit Manager Chris Bailey, said that Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) is installing light poles around the I-5 interchange at Knox Butte Road and there are a few of them at the eastern end of their project that are in-line with the north end of the runway. She said that several of the Airport Advisory Commissioners (AAC) raised some concerns about the impact of the light poles. ODOT staff received Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approval for the project. ODOT could shorten the poles to 25-feet but the extra cost would need to be paid for by the City. She said that the AAC recommends not putting in the eight light poles because they would present a risk to flight safety and would affect a runway extension. If the runway is extended in the future, any pole would intrude into the airspace.

Bailey said that staff is asking for direction from the City Council. The options are to: continue with the project knowing that they are a threat to air safety; ask ODOT to not install four to eight of the poles; or ask ODOT to install shorter poles. She said that in any case, the poles will interfere with keeping clear airspace in the area.

Bailey said that work has been temporarily stopped by ODOT because some of the AAC members have called their local representatives. Taniguchi-Dennis said that the irony of this is that ODOT had been asked to install lighting on several occasions previously, but said that they didn't have the funding to do it. Konopa said that she has heard from people that it is very dark in that area. She asked why they can't use shorter poles or some sort of reflector markers. Coburn said that the interchange design is supposed to happen within the next ten years.

Jerry Wilken said that the FAA doesn't really understand what they are looking at. He said that ODOT should have gone through the state first. He has used that intersection often and it is very dangerous to turn left off the freeway and the lighting will cause more accidents.

Christman asked if there were four lights at the intersection. He said that if they get rid of the four to the west end then there would be area to land if a pilot is having engine problems. Bailey said that any vertical structure right at the end of the runway is dangerous. Wilken said that if we asked them not to put them in, there won't be any cost to the City. Konopa said that there are other alternatives and it is too bad that ODOT is not looking at other options.

Johnson asked if any of the pilots have had to make an emergency landing and wonders how often it happens. Ron Terhaar said that he only knew of one and it was when a plane caught a wheel in the wire to the south of the runway.

MOTION: Reid made a motion to request that ODOT not put the light poles in and Olsen seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0.

Christman said that the conflict regarding traffic flow on Knox Butte and the Airport remains. He said that there are still issues and there needs to be a discussion.

COUNCILOR COMMENTS

Christman said that when they meet with the Linn County Commissioners he would like to discuss Goldfish Farm Road between Santiam Highway and Dogwood Street.

Coburn suggested having traffic count done on First Avenue where the proposed carousel is going to be. He doesn't think that there is very much traffic that travels that way. He doesn't want the carousel to blend in and match the buildings and houses. Taniguchi-Dennis said that one of the problems for the group is that they need off-site parking. Olsen agrees with Coburn, but would like to see something other than shiny aluminum used for the carousel.

Konopa said that Senator Jeff Merkley was in Albany yesterday and she showed him the carousel and plans for it. She said that Merkley said that the downtown area is looking really nice and talked about how much it has improved.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

Hare said that he helped the city of Astoria with their goal session. He said that it was interesting to get a different perspective on issues within another city. They have an old hotel that has been converted into a low-income housing development, and it is not contributing to the downtown area. There is also a boutique hotel and the area around it is flourishing.

Taniguchi-Dennis said that there was one response from the Request for Proposals for a Fixed Base Operator at the Airport and it has been rejected because it didn't include a business plan.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Work Session adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Reviewed by,

Diana Eilers
Administrative Assistant I

Stewart Taylor
Finance Director