

DECEMBER 11, 2018
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
GOVT. CTR. – RM. 100

PRESENT: Mayor Dorothy Hubbard
Mayor Pro Tem Bob Langstaff, Jr.
City Commissioners: Jon Howard, Matt Fuller, BJ Fletcher (arrived at 9:08 a.m.), and
Roger Marietta
Asst. City Manager: Phil Roberson
City Attorney: C. Nathan Davis

Mayor Hubbard called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m., and discussed the process to be followed for the public hearing (copy on file).

PUBLIC HEARING RE: 3RD & 7TH AVE RAILROAD CROSSING

Will Miller, Norfolk Southern (NS) – Atlanta office, discussed information regarding the closing of railroad crossings at 3rd and 7th Avenue. He explained the reason for the proposed closure stating that it is a public safety hazard, adding that the request is to close the crossing and that the petition is part of state law which is why they are here today. He said he is here to answer questions.

Commissioner Marietta asked the number of houses/business that depend on the two crossing to access their houses/businesses. Mr. Miller stated that he had no information on this, however he said he had never noted businesses that would be affected by the closure, there are other ways to access and closing the crossing will not present any ingress/egress conflict.

Bruce Maples, Director of Engineering used a power point (copy on file) and discussed ingress/egress on 7th Ave., other concerns of the potential closure and the type of detours that will be required which is .04 miles of travel time for Public Safety to respond to any kind of safety issue at that intersection. Regarding 3rd Ave., he advised that a person will have to go to Society and Front Street, etc., to access. He noted the concerns of one-way movement which goes into a two-way movement and explained that if the proposed crossings are to be closed, right-a-ways will be acquired and cul de sacs be built in the outlined areas to accommodate movement in those areas to keep vehicles from backing out. He commented on a commercial property on 3rd Ave. that would be affected, adding that the cost estimates are approximately \$256,000 to add cul de sacs.

Mayor Hubbard clarified the \$256,000 amount with Mr. Maples agreeing.

In reply to Commissioner Marietta, Mr. Maples stated that the \$256,000 is for a total of four cul de sacs.

In reply to Commissioner Howard, in regards to Oxford Construction, Mr. Maples commented on the challenge for trucks to get to properties as noted on the map. Commissioner Howard asked if it was a SPLOST VI item to re-configure Jefferson Street. Mr. Maples replied in the negative, and explained that GDOT worked with them on that project and the traffic signal improvement project and at that point, there was no funds available.

Commissioner Marietta asked about accidents in the rail yards on 3rd and 7th with Mr. Maples stating that they looked at the matrix during the last five years with no accidents being reported; however, he

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explained that there have been accidents going back to 1976's and four at 3rd Ave. from the 1970's – 80; 7th Ave., with 2012 being the most recent.

Sam Allen, Director of Dougherty County EMS discussed challenges of closing either of the proposed crossing to get to anyone injured in those areas, and, leaving as is, helps with response time. He said medical response is the concern.

AFD Chief Cedric Scott stated that Deputy Chief Sebon Burns will discuss the challenges fire personnel will encounter if an alternate route is chosen. Deputy Chief Burns commented on current response time which averages 4 min or less and advised that any closures will affect response time, specifically on Palmyra Road, etc., areas which will add 2-3 minutes' response time.

APD Chief Michael Persley also commented on the response time, adding that traffic backs up in early morning hours and rush hour traffic in the afternoons. If there is an emergency response issue, it will create more response time to get to certain areas. He said he traveled the areas recently and suggested that there is a gravel trail that could be used, however, it is not a safe route especially if speed is involved. He mentioned a trailer park near the Flea Market and that from a public safety standpoint, he reiterated that closing the areas will reduce response time.

There were no further comments from city staff.

Mayor Hubbard stated that the public hearing is open for citizen comments as follows:

3RD AVENUE

Jeff Hoops, 825 5th Ave., (Rawson Circle Area) spoke in opposition to the 3rd Ave., closure adding that they have no sidewalks and walking is difficult in the area. He commented on the three current access for pedestrians and suggested that if 3rd Ave., is closed, it will affect those walking. He also stated his concerns and asked if the railroad crossings are closed how citizens will access the River Trail.

Ron Smith, 912 N. Van Buren, spoke in opposition of the closure especially on 3rd Ave., and gave concerns of emergency response, suggesting that a ramp could be built to give access to the public and pedestrians. He also spoke of issues bikers and walkers in the area would have if the crossing is closed.

Bruce Melton stated that he signed both forms to speak but that he will withhold his comments until the 7th Ave. crossing is discussed.

7TH AVENUE

Robert Lane, 213 7th Ave., owns wrecking company on 7th Ave., spoke in opposition to the crossing and said response time will be reduced when responding to wrecks.

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William Wright – spoke in opposition to the 3rd and 7th Ave., closure, adding that there was little information given regarding the need to close the crossings. He asked what will be done in lieu of, and what does the public gain from the closures or, will the gain be only for Norfolk Southern. He said he grew up near 7th Ave., and asked to consider the alternatives especially as it pertains to public safety as was discussed. He also asked if Norfolk Southern could come up with alternatives to closing the crossings and spoke to disparity if this is done. He stated that a viaduct could also be looked at as an alternative adding that he speaks for both 3rd and 7th Ave. In closing he asked again that Norfolk Southern be asked what alternative can be done.

Jim Fuller, 100 7th Ave., spoke in opposition to the closure for tenants not having access.

Paul Jorner with Sasco, 100 7th Ave., spoke in opposition and stated that the closure will affect employees working onsite with safety being a concern as it relates to first responders and commercial trucks that also use the crossing approximately 20-25 times per day which is an inconvenience.

Richard Barnhill, 1701 N. Washington spoke in opposition to the closure adding that the alternative will inhibit left/right hand turns on Jefferson in the area. If this happens, he said they would ask that the area have left/right hand turns onto Jefferson.

Mayor Hubbard stated that announcements were done regarding this hearing including signage to make the public aware which followed the rules. Mr. Davis agreed.

Bruce Melton, representing Oxford Construction near the 7th Ave., crossing, spoke in opposition to the closure since they are close to access to the bypass, however southbound traffic areas is problematic. He said 200 tons/10,000 truckloads are hauled from the area turning south on 7th Avenue onto the bypass and reiterated that closure of the 7th Ave., crossing would be an inconvenience.

Commissioner Howard asked Mr. Miller about the pros and cons on closure which benefits Norfolk Southern and asked about maintenance and upkeep of property in the area. Mr. Miller said this is not a single main-line track in the areas but are 10 tracks and if it were single or double track crossing, it would not be an impact. He advised that he covers 10 states for Norfolk Southern crossings and Albany's is the worse at this time and is not a good area for that crossing. He spoke to being neighbors and working with people who live and work in the areas, adding that they try to be open to suggestions and that a phone call would assist in partnering [communicating] with the City. He mentioned Mr. Maple's comments on incidents that have occurred and said there have been incidents in the area and it is not a place for people other than rail employees, adding that he is not belittling any comments that were received, and that NS is listening to the concerns and comments. Most of what was discussed is theoretical and the answer to the question on what NS will gain, is that the only gain is to use their property/crossings [NS] that they already own at its full capacity. He restated his concerns for public safety including going over 10 tracks not being wise in this day and time.

Commissioner Marietta mentioned having traffic bridges over the railyards and asked if this is a consideration with Mr. Miller stating that they run trains and does not build roads and bridges. Commissioner Marietta stated that the city has cooperated with various railroads regarding citywide railroad crossing and asked if cooperation can be considered and taken back to corporate leadership

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as a compromise solution. Mr. Miller said they maintain railroad crossing and work with the city to do some resurfacing in areas of town, but away from the crossings, the roads falls back to the authorizing city/county or state entity. Commissioner Marietta asked if there are traffic signals/warning devices in the 3rd and 7th Ave., with Mr. Miller replying in the affirmative.

In closing, Mayor Hubbard asked to have a partnership with NS regarding continuing railroad crossings to improve the city. She thanked all for attending the public hearing and giving comments regarding the closures as noted and said the City will review the information in accordance with the outline provided by State Law.

At 9:21 a.m., Mayor Hubbard declared the public hearing to be adjourned.

APPOINTMENTS

The Clerk read the following and there were no questions/comments on this item.

1. One appointment to ADICA to fill an unexpired term ending January, 2020
2. One appointment to the Albany/Dougherty Board of Registrations and Elections for two year term ending December 31, 2020
3. One appointment to the Community Development Council for unexpired term ending June, 2019

TRAVEL

Commissioner Marietta moved to approve the following, seconded by Commissioner Fuller, the motion unanimously carried.

1. Commissioner J. Howard; NLC 2018 City Summit Conference/Training; Los Angeles, CA; November 6-10, 2018; \$2,640.16

COMMISSION FIRST QUARTER EXPENSE REPORT

The Clerk advised that the report was put in the back of all notebooks. There were no questions/comments on this item.

FREEMPORT EXEMPTION

Mr. Davis discussed information as noted (copy on file) regarding the Freeport Exemption that was approved on the November 6 ballot. There were no questions/comments on this item.

SPEAKER APPEARANCE

Ken Bevel, Rep Albany Relief and Recovery asked the volunteers present to stand (approx. 13 stood) and proceeded to show a power point (copy on file) regarding the City of Albany Disaster Recovery. He noted the partners, reviewed the mission statement, initial actions, long term recovery, work-

orders, priority for assistance, four steps of the process and five critical needs. In closing he asked that prayers continue on behalf of those in need.

Mayor Hubbard stated that the City of Albany appreciates all that have been done to assist the citizens of Albany and asked Samaritan's Purse Reps to come forward. At this time, she presented them with a plaque in appreciation for their services. She then asked for World Vision Reps to come forward and presented them a plaque in appreciation for their services.

PUBLIC WORKS MATTERS

WHISPERING PINES RD., ALLEY R-O-W DEDICATION

Bruce Maples, Managing Director of Engineering and Planning discussed information as noted (copy on file) regarding the request to accept an existing paved 15' wide strip of property on the south side of Whispering Pines Road just west of N. Slappey Boulevard as a City of Albany alley R-O-W.

In reply to Mayor Pro Tem Langstaff, Mr. Maples stated that Michel Holmes is the person making the request.

Commissioner Marietta noted the location where a Chevron Station eyesore is located (Slappey and Whispering Pines Rd.) with Mr. Maples agreeing.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE MATTERS

PURCHASE:

Joshua Williams, Buyer discussed the following (copy on file): (There were no questions/comments on this item)

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| 1. | Laptops and Mounting Hardware – Dell | |
| | Total exp. | \$122,409.00 |

CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE

Mr. Roberson gave an update of the December 1st storm and commented on the amount of flooding of the holding ponds, etc. He advised that with another rain expected on Friday, all equipment will be kept in place. Regarding Hurricane Michael, he explained that debris is continuing to be picked up by the Corps of Engineers who have begun the second round of debris pickup. He stated that UMCORP will start back on round two of pick up on Dec 15, adding that the River stations repairs are ongoing near the ASU/East Campus. He advised that upcoming projects scheduled to be on future agendas are: Alley list of crush asphalt with Mayor/Commissioners being provided a list in January,

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the 2nd phase of street resurfacing, and alley paving project per ward. He announced that the Legislative meeting with State Delegates is at noon on Thursday in the 3rd floor conference room at the Central Square Building; the Christmas Parade will be Saturday 12/13 and a Special Called meeting is scheduled for Friday at 10:30 a.m., regarding AMI.

OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA

Commissioner Fletcher asked that in the future people who are traveling give a report on what was learned that can be brought back to assist the City. She also asked for the attendance records of appointed boards.

The consensus was to have the Special Called meeting at 10:30 on Friday. Commissioner Marietta stated that he is not available to attend on Friday.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:53 a.m.

SONJA TOLBERT
CITY CLERK