

Charlottesville Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

February 4, 2021

5:00 PM - 6:00 PM

This meeting was held virtually via Zoom

Meeting Participants

Carl Schwarz

Peter Ohlms

Navarre Bartz

Max Gruenig

Lena Seville

Frank Deviney

Erin Ryan

Jessica Hersch-Ballering

Kyle Rodland

Peter Krebs

Amanda Poncy

Action Items:

Carl to draft a memo to Council regarding the West Main Street Project. Use the memos Peter forwarded from past letters. We want to work with Council.

Navarre to share previous emails to Council/Planning Commission about the proposed parking garage on Market Street

Meeting Summary

The committee welcomed a new member, Max Gruenig, who lives north of downtown off of Park Street.

The main discussion item for this meeting was the West Main project and how it relates to the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) budget.

Peter Krebs and Carl Schwarz summarized the Value Engineering staff report to Council on 2/1 and the issues surrounding the CIP budget development.

According to Peter K., staff recommends keeping phase 1 and removing phase 2 from the project.

Peter K. offered a proposal to move forward with the existing funding for phase 1 and phase 3 and rethink phases 2 and 4 to avoid a local match. It's unclear if council wants the \$13 million from phase 1 to remain or go away. Peter emphasized that it is important to keep some funding to make sure we can address the deferred maintenance. He also noted that there hasn't been good communication about why this project is important (among this Council).

Below is a summary of questions that were raised by the committee:

- How do we keep the project coherent if one or two of the phases is not implemented?
- If the money is removed, how do we guarantee that the status quo safety issues don't get worse?
- Will the trees be maintained when they die in the future?
- What do we as a Committee push for?

- Is West Main the right place to spend this much money or do we have other areas where the money would be better spent?
- Can the City implement a lower cost improvement that keeps the spirit of the West Main Master Plan with temporary materials – paint, bollards, planters, etc?
- Do we need to underground overhead utilities?
- Will this project gentrify the neighborhood?
- Once they start tearing up the road for necessary water, sewer upgrades, and the trees die, what will W. Main look like?

The committee discussed a few potential options for advocacy:

1. Build the entirety of the West Main Street project
2. Build Phases 1 and 3 and find ways to fully fund phases 2 and 4 (less local money needed).
3. Identify how much is needed for all necessary maintenance items (signal replacement, ADA improvements, repaving, utility improvements, etc) and ensure funding is available for those in the CIP.

Lena suggested that it will be politically dangerous to ask Council to fund the whole project. Max suggested that the committee argue for lower cost, improvised infrastructure that could be implemented if the project gets canceled. He also suggested that there might be some federal infrastructure funding that could be available for shovel ready projects that address climate change/environmental impact. Burying power lines is a climate change adaptation and would be eligible for funding. Frank expressed concerns that if there is money to be spent on improvements, is this the right place to spend that valuable capital? Could that money be distributed to other projects – for example, if money is going to school reconfiguration, could some portion of the funding be directed towards Safe Routes to School improvements that would make bike/walk travel to/from school safer.

There was a not a consensus around the options discussed, but the group agreed that it is important to emphasize comfort and safety for people biking and walking. Amanda Poncy relayed VDOT safety data showing that West Main is in the top .1% statewide for needing pedestrian safety improvements.

The group also agreed that the community is missing important information and it wouldn't be wise to make a decision without all of the information – specifically, how much is it going to cost if the City does not move forward with this project? Additional questions for consideration include:

- How much will West Main cost to maintain if they don't do the project as currently designed?
- When will that money need to be spent?
- What will happen with maintenance?
- Will the status quo be maintained?
- Can we discuss less expensive improvements involving paint?
- How much money will go to removing light poles?
- What's required for ADA improvements?

Carl agreed to compose a draft letter to be sent to Council and will send to BPAC for review and comment.

Other items:

New sidewalks are not currently funded in the proposed CIP. Given the current funding allocations it is difficult to make progress on the approved Sidewalk Priority List. Also, Amanda expressed concern about the overall budget and whether or not the proposed allocations for bicycle improvements would continue to be funded as the budget moves through the approval process.

The proposed Market Street parking garage is moving forward quickly with an RFP for design/build services based on the MOU with Albemarle County. Now would be an important time to make a statement about what BPAC would like to see in terms of project development. Navarre will forward notes to possibly be incorporated.

As discussed in previous meetings, project updates were sent via email in advance of this meeting. The project updates are provided as an attachment to this summary.

2021 BPAC Meetings

March 4

April 1

May 6

June 3

July 1

August 5

September 2

October 7

November 4

December 2

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