

Infrastructure Committee

August 20, 2012

ATTENDEES

Councilors:

Patricia Blanchette
Cary Weston

Nelson Durgin
James Gallant

Benjamin Sprague
Charles Longo

Joseph Baldacci

Staff:

Art Morgan, City Engineer

Bob Farrar, Assistant City
Manager

Guests:

Meeting convened at 5:00 p.m.

1. Accepting City Street: Extension of Hogan Road

Arthur Morgan explained the extension of Hogan Road was built to accommodate the new Walmart. Without further explanation or discussion, Councilor Baldacci moved and Councilor Durgin seconded to approve.

Vote: Unanimous Approval

2. Accepting City Street: Deer Pond Lane

Art explained Deer Pond Lane was a nine lot subdivision by Forrest Grant, located off Kenduskeag Avenue.

Councilor Longo stated that though the subdivision was built by Mike Longo, he didn't believe he was relation and there would not be a conflict.

It was moved to approve by Councilor Durgin and seconded by Councilor Baldacci.

Further discussion was a question from Councilor Gratwic via proxy. Councilor Baldacci asked if the width of the road on Deer Pond Lane was wider than Kenduskeag Avenue and could it be narrowed. He was concerned about the extra funds for City services to maintain the road.

Art stated the road was 25-26 foot wide and built to the lowest standard for a subdivision. He explained that the typical standard was 30 feet on a thru road and 25 feet on a dead end or cul-de-sac. It was possible for the road to be wider than Kenduskeag Avenue, as Kenduskeag Avenue was not very wide.

Councilor Sprague stated he was contacted by a citizen just moments before the meeting and wanted time to research for the citizen. At that moment, he saw no reason to oppose the acceptance.

Councilor Gallant asked if the stripping paint was correctly done on the street. Art responded though he had been out there one or two times to check on the location for another engineer, he had not been there recently.

Councilor Blanchette asked that Art swing out there before the next Council meeting and look at it to avoid delay at Council.

Councilor Longo asked about a policy for new roads regarding naming the streets/roads after fallen heros.

Art stated that it was at the discretion of the developer to name the road and it was a long standing policy that the City did not name the roads.

Councilor Blanchette addressed the concern about confusion for the fire department, with roads being named the same or similar. The City needed communication with emergency response and expressed concern for public safety. She noted she had public complaints and wanted to “close the gate” before something happened.

Art’s response was that Bangor was part of the E-911 system and the City submits the names of the streets to E-911, at that point, they verify the name in their catalogs of that area. If similar, the City Engineer would contact the developer to choose another name. He stated that recently there was just such a situation where there was a request for Cardinal Way, however, it already existed and had to ask that developer to choose another name.

Councilor Durgin asked about the two lots in the subdivision that were over 10,000 square feet, between lots one and four, if there was a right-of-way giving access to the back lots.

Art responded that he believed that was a right-of-way to flag lots. Those lots were private driveways and not to be maintained by the City.

Vote: Unanimous Approval

3. Updates from Director of Public Services, Arthur Morgan:

a. Closure of the Joshua Chamberlain Bridge and Detours

Art explained the Joshua Chamberlain Bridge needed to be painted to prohibit further rust. There was more rust than paint on the bridge. The State had approached the City regarding painting the rail and support beams and their intention was to start in March 2013 and continue work until October 2013. They were exploring areas where they could store large equipment and materials for the project. The proposal was to close one lane of the bridge for the duration of the project. Morning peak traffic analysis indicated that traffic volume was heavier coming from Brewer to Bangor and traffic would be maintained. The State proposed six alternate routes to detour traffic. The least objectionable was for the traffic to move south from Washington Street toward Railroad and Main Streets and Cross Insurance Center. Northbound traffic on Main Street would divert traffic from Main Street onto Water Street, and take Broad Street to Washington Street. His concern from the initial analysis was the negative impact at Main and Union Street. Buses and trucks would not be able to make the left turn, light phasing which would create delays. He met with the Maine Department of Transportation traffic engineer and walked the six alternate proposed detours. Proposed changes during the project would include

prohibiting parking in front of the Zen Restaurant, extending the right turn lane up to Union Street. After Summer Street section of the bridge was complete, they'd start under the bridge at U-Haul and work toward Broad Street. It was anticipated to completely contain work above the street, closing a section at a time for no more than four days each section, between the pillars to construct staging and build the containment system. Next to the Sea Dog, along the Twin Rivers Park area, there would be limited parking. After completing that section they would move to barges in the river to continue work on the underside. He would keep the Committee and public updated.

Councilor Weston asked if the bridge was being closed because it was deemed necessary for storage of equipment and not because of the work.

Art explained they would be performing work on top of the bridge and pulling the materials as they worked.

Councilor Weston asked if the lanes would remain open if not being used for storage.

Art stated no, some portion would have to be closed.

Councilor Weston stated there would be a significant economic impact. He suggested utilizing Front and Railroad Streets for storage and work off a stop/start traffic management system rather than rerouting and causing significant harm to a number of merchants and the hassle of navigating downtown.

Art responded that the duration of the project would be extending and it would not be practical, creating a bottleneck at some portion of the project with only one lane.

Councilor Weston requested clarification between bottlenecking created by a stop and go sign, that's dismissed at the end of the day, and a one lane bottleneck created by this plan.

Art said the stop and go could not be dismissed at the end of the day, and that equipment would need to be maintained and not removed. To move it would be cost prohibitive.

Councilor Weston stated this topic was introduced as - after an exhausted study of Bangor and Brewer sides, it was deemed the bridge was the best location for storage of the equipment. So the question was whether the bridge was the best location for storage irregardless of the exhaustive study.

Art stated there would be benefits there as it wouldn't disrupt the Waterfront Concert Series and the Folk Festival as Front and Railroad Streets would.

Councilor Weston deferred to another Councilor, as he was still not clear regarding the detour route described.

Councilor Baldacci asked about the structural soundness and if they would be working on it.

Art stated they did some inspected last week and would be back first week in September to inspect the railing and columns to determine what repairs, if needed, had to be done.

Councilor Baldacci asked if structural repairs were needed, would it be during the project timeframe. He expressed that it wasn't just a cosmetic issue with paint, that the bridge should be sound.

Art said that work would need to be done before the painting and would need to prepare bid documents to include various quantities, welding, replacement, sand blasting, and painting. It would be a separate timeframe.

Councilor Baldacci stated that the structure was more important than the painting and asked when would there be word from the inspection and what would it intale.

Art responded that they could complete the inspection in one day.

Councilor Baldacci noted they wouldn't know until September what the recommendations of the inspection were and asked what would happen next.

Art explained they would incorporate it into the bid package.

Councilor Baldacci asked when the improvements would be made to the structure.

Art responded it would be part of the March 2013 to October 2013 project.

Councilor Baldacci asked that all the Councilors be notified once the State had a recommendation regarding the structure and soundness of the bridge and requested to know as soon as was possible and Art agreed.

Councilor Durgin asked if the traffic from Hampden would remain a two way and Art responded it would.

Councilor Durgin asked why bring people down Main Street and turn them onto Water Street when there's a possibility of going under the bridge. He suggested the continued use of Cedar and down under the bridge rather than take Water Street and make that turn.

Art stated that traffic flow would be maintained when not working on that portion of the bridge on Summer Street for approximately one and a half months.

Councilor Durgin asked that Water Street be considered a temporary route as well, to which Art responded certainly.

Councilor Durgin also asked about the no left turn onto Main Street from the bridge coming from Brewer, what direction would they go.

Art spoke about the setup of the location with the traffic controller delay and the setup for large radius truck traffic turning at the intersection of Main and Union Streets.

Councilor Longo asked if they would be working on the Penobscot bridge in conjunction, and Art responded they wouldn't be. But work was expected on the Union Street bridge over I-95 after the completion of this project.

Councilor Longo asked if that project would be reduced to one lane as well. He noted that Bangor was bearing the weight of the project, but Brewer was receiving the benefits. He was concerned about Brewer's contribution.

Art explained there was less work on the Brewer side because of the earthen embankment, businesses were not located under the bridge, the nature of the work wouldn't impact Brewer side with the wideness of the road because a toll plaza used to sit there. The only exception would be Getchell and the area businesses while the rail was being painted.

Councilor Gallant suggested closing the bridge to get it done quicker and stated that this was a mess and a nightmare. To deal with it in a three to four month timeframe as opposed to nine months.

Councilor Blanchette believed a mountain was made from a mole hill, that if they could use a light controlling traffic at Bar Harbor and Mount Desert Island, they should be able to use one in Bangor. She stated this was a crazy plan and it would cause inconvenience to citizens coming into Bangor. She stated she could do a better job of moving traffic.

Councilor Weston asked why the traffic couldn't be diverted by telling them with a sign to take the previous bridge or say the bridge is closed, direct them where to go. If coming down Cedar or Union Streets direct them to take the other bridge.

Councilor Sprague stated the State wanted the project to take a long time.

Art said people were slow to change their driving patterns and for citizens, truckers, visitors to the concert series, their hands needed to be held.

Councilor Weston suggested placing signs directing them.

Councilor Weston noted Art was making his point, that if they're not familiar with the system, tell them where to go. Reroute outbound traffic. Also, if coming from Hampden tell them if they are going to Brewer, turn here.

Art concurred.

Councilor Gallant asked why they couldn't divert traffic to I-395 too.

Art stated they couldn't have too much information on a sign and needed to provide the most direct route.

Councilor Weston felt the continued conversation would be better served off mic.

Councilor Durgin stated the Veterans Memorial Bridge was built for multi-million dollars to expedite traffic across the Penobscot and had exits telling people how to get to Orono, Hampden, downtown, UofME. People from MDI use this way, the south Brewer side uses the Veterans Memorial Bridge, and the north Brewer side uses the Penobscot River Bridge to go to the east side. He felt the Joshua Chamberlain Bridge was in the wrong place and should be closed for three months. He suggested using signage. Current process would drive citizens crazy.

Councilor Blanchette asked Art what he needed from this Committee.

Art stated this was to educate the Committee and the citizens.

Councilor Blanchette asked about public meetings being held and Art responded there were two already in this Council Chamber with three attendees.

Councilor Blanchette stated if there were a vote, she would vote no if closing the lane.

b. Status of the Left-Turn Prohibition at I-95 Exit 186 onto Stillwater

Art explained the request to lift the left turn prohibition was first submitted to the Transportation Commissioner, David Cole in October 2010 by Jim Ring. He stated he submitted another request and which was then sent to the state's traffic engineers. He would call and set a meeting with the State. He stated federal funds were used for the off ramp and public meetings would need to be conducted. East side citizens expressed concern about additional traffic in the tree streets connecting with State Street.

Councilor Blanchette explained that then they didn't want a left turn, the Council decided no more commercial development and created an Ordinance. Later, the same people who owned property and wanted business investment, wanted the Ordinance changed, now there's a vacant parking lot.

Art explained if there was opposition to lifting the ban, then the ban would not be lifted and it would remain a no left turn off the interstate. There would need to be documentation provided to the east side residents that there would not be an increase in traffic if the prohibition was lifted and hoped to eliminate opposition.

c. Unscheduled Topic: Public Safety Concerning Citizens in Median Strips

Bob stated the following topic would be explained by Councilor Weston and would bring to the full Council.

Councilor Weston stated the topic was referred by Bob and Norm (City Solicitor) and he would introduce and it would move to a single item council workshop. When the Mayor's Coalition was first formed they looked at public safety of people standing on median strips in cities. Because of safety concerns would like to discuss an ordinance to prohibit,

Councilor Blanchette asked if there was a draft ordinance.

Bob stated Norm would be gathering information to prepare and bring to a full Council Workshop. They anticipated a couple of weeks it would be ready.

Councilor Blanchette expressed safety concerns and safety hazards associated with a well organized group of panhandlers. And when they solicit visitors to concerts, etc., they should not be harassed. She felt the police didn't have the "teeth" to remove these people and medians weren't designed for that.

Councilor Longo concurred with Councilor Blanchette. He cautioned to be careful of a possible constitution issue. He also suggested banning solicitation of any kind at bus stations and atm machines within a certain radius, where people were vulnerable.

Councilor Blanchette suggested this topic be on the next Infrastructure Committee Meeting Agenda.

Councilor Baldacci stated he didn't think it was necessarily a constitutional issue, but rather a time place manner and safety issue. Couldn't ban solicitation in general but could ban when it was a safety issue in the middle of a highway. He stated this was a good idea.

Meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:05 p.m.