

CITY OF MUSCATINE
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MINUTES
Council Chambers – 5:50 p.m. – March 22, 2018

Mayor Broderson called the Special City Council meeting for Thursday, March 22, 2018, to order at 5:30 p.m. Councilmembers present were Spread, Harvey, Brockert, Brackett, Fitzgerald and Malcolm.

Mayor Broderson stated this special meeting was to discuss the Mississippi Drive Corridor Project. She then turned the meeting over to City Engineer, Jim Edgmond.

Mr. Edgmond stated the meeting would start with the history of the project and a review of data received from past public meetings.

Jim Harbaugh, Project Manager for Bolten & Menk, came forward to present a power point presentation on the overview of the Mississippi Drive Corridor Project. He stated that this project was a financial partnership between the City of Muscatine, Canadian Pacific Railroad and Muscatine Power & Water.

Mr. Harbaugh stated the project goals consisted of Modernizing Mississippi Drive based on its changed role, to incorporate complete street design principles, to provide a safe and attractive environment for all users, to enhance the overall aesthetics of the corridor, and to implement a community supported and technical sound project with extensive public input.

Mr. Harbaugh presented the results of past polls regarding what the public favored for the corridor project. He stated that 63% favored changing 2nd street to a two-way street, 70% favored a roundabout at Carver Corner, 67% favored back in parking, 76% favored landscaping in the medians and 79% favored a roundabout at 2nd and Mulberry Ave.

At this time Joe Spradley, HDR subconsultant for Bolten & Menk, came forward to discuss in further detail how the design is to operate in each section. Mr. Spradley discussed how the corridor project was broken down into four sections and explained the design and reasoning for each section. He stated that throughout the project all medians will have a six-inch curb to deter distracted drivers, guide plowing operations and to provide for future maintenance overlays. These curbs will all be mountable to allow for emergency vehicle access should it be necessary. He then discussed several options on how emergency vehicles could use the mountable curb to go around traffic in different situations. He also shared photos of other cities that had similar design as ours.

Mr. Harbaugh addressed the Merrill Hotel entrance and stated that there was work being done to correct several issues. The medium in front of the hotel was being reconfigured, new signage was being used and there would be additional road striping to help direct traffic in the proper directions.

Mr. Harbaugh stated that in regards to the issues of traffic being blocked at Cedar Street due to drivers waiting on trains, there is a slip lane currently and later when the transmission lines are moved the slip lane can be extended allowing more room for turning vehicles.

Mr. Harbaugh asked the public to remember this is a work in progress and it will improve when fully complete and functional. He stated that it has been done in phases to allow the streets to stay as open as possible while still working on project.

Mayor Broderson stated she had questions from the public regarding where Bolten & Menk collected their data for the community input that was discussed.

Mr. Harbaugh stated that the public had been invited to several open houses and meetings where they were given the opportunity to give input on different options.

Mayor Broderson stated she had received complaints regarding the back-in parking in which the vehicle behind the vehicle parking pulled up directly behind them making it difficult to back in. She asked if there was a way to avoid this.

Mr. Harbaugh stated that it will take drivers time and education to adapt to the change. He stated it is very similar to learning to parallel park.

Councilmember Brockert stated she had received complaints from the public stating when parking in front of Contrary Brewing and wanting to leave going back towards Mulberry Street they would have to go to Green Street and turn around.

City Administrator Gregg Mandsager suggested they use the side street parking or utilize the parking on the riverfront to solve that issue.

Councilmember Spread stated a U-turn could be made at Broadway to turn around and head back towards Mulberry Ave.

Councilmember Malcolm asked if we gained parking by using back in parking spaces.

Mr. Harbaugh stated, yes, by taking out parallel parking and using back in parking we did gain spaces.

City Administrator Gregg Mandsager asked Mr. Harbaugh to discuss the safety factors of using back in parking.

Mr. Harbaugh stated that when using pull in parking you back into traffic with a blind spot and cannot see traffic coming down the street. When you back in you are able to look down street before you pull out forward into traffic. He also explained how you can more safely load purchased into your trunk from the sidewalk as opposed to having to load from the street side of your vehicle.

Mayor Broderson stated that she had received complaints from handicapped persons that had to walk into the street to get around their vehicle to the handicap ramp on the sidewalk.

Mr. Harbaugh stated the handicap spots are designed for van accessibility so the ramp is on the passenger side of the vehicle.

Councilmember Brackett asked if the plans could be posted on the City Website.

City Administrator Mandsager stated the full set of plans are on the City Website.

Councilmember Brackett asked if the medians would be level or raised when finished because at this time if you mount the median your will bottom out.

Mr. Harbaugh commented that once the plantings are in, it will be slightly raised alleviating that problem.

Councilmember Brackett questioned how far apart the trees and lights on the median are and if there is room for a firetruck to pass a car on the median without hitting a tree or light pole.

Mr. Harbaugh stated the trees are centered to give ample room for pulling over. The lights are only in the median in the bluff area and are also spaced with enough distance for emergency access if needed.

Councilmember Brackett stated that the signage on the medians made it difficult for large trucks to turn without hitting the signs.

City Engineer Jim Edgmond stated that the City realized soon after putting up the signs that they needed to be moved and they are working on getting that taken care of.

Mayor Broderson asked if the grasses planted in the medians are going to be ruined every time a vehicle drives across them and would the City have to replace them each time.

Mr. Harbaugh stated the grasses that are to be used are very hardy and can withstand a lot. He stated there could be some damage but most likely if damaged they would be able to be cut back and would regrow the next season. He then stated that if certain areas become problem areas, changes could be made to concrete in that area.

Councilmember Malcolm questioned what will happen when there is a train causing vehicles turning into riverside park to back up and block traffic.

City Administrator Mandsager stated that Cedar Street would be the Access point for boaters and there would be a turn lane at that intersection to accommodate vehicles waiting on trains.

Councilmember Malcolm asked what will happen when a vehicle breaks down on Mississippi Drive blocking traffic.

Mr. Harbaugh stated there are plenty of turns off Mississippi Drive that could be used to reroute traffic temporarily.

Councilmember Harvey Stated the light poles should not have been placed in the median of the bluff area because there isn't enough room for emergency vehicles to pass between them.

Mr. Harbaugh stated because of the bluff's soil erosion, digging on the bluff side of the street could not have been done without disrupting the integrity of the bluff. He stated that the opposite side of the street currently has a retaining wall and MPW lines.

Councilmember Brockert asked if the light poles were break away poles.

Mr. Harbaugh stated that the light poles are breakaway poles.

Carrie Barons, 608 Cedar Street, apt #1, came forward to state that she feels the center median makes it unsafe for emergency vehicles to travel on Mississippi Drive and would like the City to take out the plants and make an emergency lane only down the center.

Joe Byron, Nutrition Outlet, 402 W. Mississippi Drive came forward and stated that his customers are not happy with Mississippi Drive Changes. He stated that because of the median, customers cannot get to his business from the South end without having to drive past and then turn around and come back down the other side of street. He also stated there are no handicapped parking spaces in front of his business and he has lost parking because of the Mississippi Drive Corridor Project. Mr. Byron stated that before this project he had a parking lot for his business.

Jeff Osborne, 970 Lucas, came forward and stated he understands that the Mulberry and 2nd roundabout is approved and would like to know what the status at Carver Corner is. He also stated that he

feels that the back in parking is much easier than parallel parking and drivers need to use their signals, stop early and back in.

Mr. Harbaugh stated that in regards to the handicapped parking spot they were dispersed throughout the project and the city could accommodate more handicapped if necessary.

Mr. Harbaugh stated in regards to the back in parking, it is a learning curve and drivers need to give it a chance, use signals and it isn't that different than parallel parking.

Mr. Harbaugh stated that regarding the roundabouts, they had been pulled from the original project because of environmental issues and the buildings being affected. He stated that the planning of Mulberry and 2nd Street is being done now and hopefully construction will get started this summer. He stated that for Carver corner they are still looking at several different options.

Councilmember Brackett asked when the final design for 2nd and Mulberry would be available.

City Administrator Mandsager stated that there would be a public meeting to discuss the design of 2nd and Mulberry.

Councilmember Malcolm asked how it was decided where to put the handicapped spots and how many to make.

Mr. Harbaugh stated they used the Americans with Disabilities Act for guidelines and then exceeded that number of one per twenty-five spaces.

Councilmember Malcolm stated it is difficult for mature residence to use the back in parking and could we turn it into pull in parking,

Mayor Broderson asked if there could be a handicapped ramp at each parking spot.

Mr. Harbaugh stated it would be very difficult to meet all the guidelines that would have to followed to do that.

Mr. Fitzgerald stated that housing codes state that steps are seven and one-half inches high and that the curb height is lower than that.

Councilmember Brackett stated that back in parking was much safer and encouraged residents to be patient.

Mayor Broderson stated that as a council we don't mind the changes, that we are only bringing up questions that the public has brought to us.

Councilmember Malcolm asked if Fire Chief Jerry Ewers could answer what his reaction to the construction was and how it has affected the fire department.

Fire Chief Ewers stated that he regularly advises staff where construction is and where barriers are so they are prepared and aware. He stated that Mississippi Drive is no different than any other construction zone and that his staff is trained to drive in all types of situations. He assured citizens that the fire department would be able to get to them if they were in need.

Police Chief Talkington stated that he has seen some challenges but only because the project is not complete. He stated that he had mounted the curb and it was rough but understood that once completed it would work.

The meeting be adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

Gregg Mandsager, City Administrator