



**MINUTES
SPECIAL WORKSHOP
PENMAN ROAD SPECIAL WORKSHOP
TUESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2024, 6:00 P.M.
NEPTUNE BEACH CITY HALL
116 FIRST STREET
NEPTUNE BEACH, FLORIDA 32266**

Pursuant to proper notice, a Special Workshop Meeting of the City Council of the City of Neptune Beach was held on Tuesday, January 16, 2024, at 6:00 p.m., at Neptune Beach City Hall, 116 First Street, Neptune Beach, Florida 32266.

Attendance:**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mayor Elaine Brown
Vice Mayor Kerry Chin
Councilor Lauren Key
Councilor Nia Livingston
Councilor Josh Messinger

STAFF:

City Attorney Zachary Roth
City Manager Richard Pike
Community Development Director Heather Whitmore
Public Works Director Deryle Calhoun
Sergeant Liam Toal
Parks and Sustainability Director Colin Moore
City Clerk Catherine Ponson

Prior to the Special Workshop, an Open House was held beginning at 5:00 p.m. City of Jacksonville (COJ) staff and consultants heard comments and answered questions from residents.

**Call to Order/Roll
Call/Pledge**

Mayor Brown called the Penman Road workshop to order at 6:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**City of
Jacksonville
Presentation**

Robin Smith, P.E., City Engineer/Chief of Engineering and Construction with COJ, stated that in April, 2019, the Jacksonville Beach and Neptune Beach passed resolutions and wrote a letter to COJ requesting a Complete Streets project for Penman Road. COJ looked at the Penman Road corridor, hired a traffic engineer and created a concept plan. There have been meetings and comments. There will be more revisions to come. After hearing from Neptune Beach, he wants to make sure that they move forward with a project everyone wants.

Mayor Brown pointed out that nothing has been decided. This is the concept plan and looking at making Penman Road a safer and more beautiful road is what everyone has in mind.

Mr. Smith emphasized that this is a concept plan. There is a lot of room to go before construction. His projections are that construction is two and one-half to three years from now. He reported that at the Jacksonville Beach meeting in August 2023, he committed to bringing the project back a minimum of three times before going to construction. This could also come back to Neptune Beach again. The purpose is to improve the beaches road. Penman Road is a unique road in that it is a former county road. During the consolidation of Duval County and COJ in 1968, county roads became COJ roads.

Mr. Smith reviewed what a Complete Street is and pointed out that the goal is to promote safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities.

Mr. Smith stated that Penman Road is a good candidate because it has different users and different land uses. He reminded everyone that the road was designed in a different era which prioritized moving vehicles as fast as possible.

Mr. Smith gave a brief history of the project. He presented a traffic analysis that had been performed. He reviewed some of the concepts included in the project which include a single-lane roundabout at Penman Road and Florida Boulevard; landscape medians, which are recommended to reduce crashes and slow traffic, and a 12-foot shared-use path on the west side and six-foot sidewalk on the east side.

Council
Questions/
Discussion

Vice Mayor Chin commented that there were concerns that this was a done deal. He added that it is good to let everyone know that this an initial concept to get the discussion flowing. He stated that there has not been a house-by-house analysis done. The unrelieved median strip would start to have refinement or openings to allow traffic through when that is done. He is concerned that forcing too many people to make a right turn to make a u-turn would tie up at those points. He is interested to see what the refinement would be. He requested also having meetings like Jacksonville Beach throughout the process.

Councilor Key requested a comparison between 3rd Street(A1A) and Penman Road prior to this project and then a comparison after this project. This would be beneficial to have a better understanding of the purpose of Penman Road being more pedestrian friendly.

Mr. Smith stated that the primary focus of A1A through FDOT is to move vehicles quickly. There are too many cars to do a project like this. If traffic can be slowed at conflict points, it is easier to avoid accidents.

Councilor Key pointed out that her most important question is what does this look like now and in the future for our children as they are crossing Penman Road and Florida Boulevard in terms of safety? She also asked why they chose 2045 as the year of the traffic plan.

Mr. Smith responded that today if a signal is pushed at the five-way intersection, every single car has to stop. Cars do not have to stop in this project. Through this project, it will be impossible to go 45 m.p.h. through the intersection. You will have to slow down to go through the roundabout. They are also introducing more crossings through the corridor.

Mike Derbaum, P.E., COJ Public Works Department, reported that the year 2045 was used by the North Florida Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) command model.

Councilor Livingston stated that she has concerns regarding the roundabout. She understands the idea is to push the vehicles through. At the same time, it is pushing more vehicles through the residential areas quickly. She requested more information on the medians and how it would put more pressure points on where the U-turns are being made. She also requested more meetings before it is final.

Mr. Smith conveyed that the study had not gone that far down the side roads. They could look at what would happen if you move traffic around.

Councilor Messinger expressed that a huge driver for him is making Penman Road a quality residential corridor. It is now a high-speed cut-through. He would also like to see the meetings take place as the project progresses. Prioritizing the residents and quality of life is the most important aspect.

Mr. Smith advised that they are getting guidelines at this point. There have been no surveys or drainage design. He added that this will not be successful if they do not come back at the different stages.

Mayor Brown commented that Penman Road needs a lot of improvement. She added that people would be going faster to get away from the roundabout. She would like to see the model on what would happen to Florida Boulevard. She also asked when someone pushes the crosswalk button, what does that do to the traffic? How safe is it going to be?

Mr. Smith explained there are several ways it could be done. Each segment could be its own crosswalk. He pointed out that with the roundabout, when the person crosses, you can go and not sit at a red light.

Vice Mayor Chin questioned what the downside to feeder traffic coming from behind someone stopped for a pedestrian in the walkway?

Mr. Smith responded this issue could be added to items to be looked at during the process.

Councilor Key ventured to say that most people would agree that something needs to change on Penman Road and it is not working as it is now. She does not know that anyone knows to say exactly what that is at this moment in time. She asked what the timeline look like from this meeting to the time when we have to move forward with an idea or a plan?

Mr. Smith noted that one big thing he would like to hear, after some consideration, is does Neptune Beach want to move forward with the design of the roundabout? It is a long process. He does not want to go far in one direction. Construction is estimated to begin in early 2027.

Councilor Key expressed her support of the future meetings with Jacksonville Beach. She is in support of moving forward and seeing what this project looks like.

Councilor Livingston reiterated that she still does not see how pedestrians would be safer crossing the roundabout. She agrees something needs to be done. She would like to see the other options presented at one of the next meetings.

Councilor Messinger stated that the effect on Florida Boulevard had not been modeled. He also added that the animation did not show pedestrian safety. He would like to see if there is a roundabout, show how pedestrians cross safely. Those are important aspects.

Chris LeDew, P.E., Chief of Traffic Engineering, COJ, explained that a roundabout reduces the conflict points to one decision at a time. This makes things incredibly safe. The slow speed of the vehicles at 15-20 m.p.h. in the circulating island makes it easier to see the pedestrians and come to a stop. A roundabout reduces serious injuries by reducing speeds and reducing kinetic energy making it safer for pedestrians. The roundabout accomplishes what is trying to be done with this project which is making Penman Road a Complete Street.

Mayor Brown announced that the public comment period would begin. Citizens would have three minutes. The most important takeaway from this meeting is that no decision would be made. Council wants to hear comments. Any questions would be answered by the experts.

Mr. Smith added that questions could be submitted through email and an answer would be provided.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Public Comments	<p>Brent Rogers, 1932 Strickland Drive, Neptune Beach, stated the study does not have field review at Fletcher during the mornings. He also stated that medians would worsen traffic and make it harder for garbage and delivery trucks. He requested multiple options to be considered and make an informed decision.</p> <p>Julie Anderson, 1637 Arrowhead Trail, Neptune Beach, commented that she is concerned for pedestrian safety at the five-way intersection. She sees cars running the red lights every day. She is also concerned with the length of construction. She wondered if we could enforce the existing speed limit.</p> <p>Christine Arab, 1521 Penman Road, Neptune Beach, stated she moved to Penman Road right after the center lane had just been put in. Neighbors mentioned it had slowed traffic. The traffic has increased yet the center lane still works. She would like to see other options for the five-way intersection. She also is opposed to medians.</p> <p>Claudette Faulkenbury, 2016 Shadow Lane, Neptune Beach, stated her opposition to the medians. She commented that she is concerned about emergency vehicles being able to get through.</p> <p>Miranda Powell, 1049 Florida Boulevard, Neptune Beach, commented that the reason for the pushback on this project is the medians. She proposed keeping the center lane and adding the roundabouts.</p> <p>Tracy Parsons, 731 Camellia Terrace Court S, Neptune Beach, stated that the roundabout would slow traffic. However, it would move the chokepoint to Beach Boulevard, Atlantic Boulevard or Florida Boulevard. He added that we need to slow traffic on the west side of Florida Boulevard and Penman.</p> <p>Ginny Thurson, 1200 7th Street, Neptune Beach, commented that no one had mentioned golf carts and e-bikes and will they try to use the path. The 12-foot path seems massive.</p> <p>Howard McMinn, 1116 Cedar Street, Neptune Beach, stated public safety is a concern. He does not like the idea of medians. The center lane works.</p> <p>Pat Hazouri, 207 Florida Boulevard, Neptune Beach, commented that our voice is important and to keep speaking out. She stated this is all about providing the infrastructure for increased development for a barrier island.</p> <p>Jim Anderson, 218 Oak Street, Neptune Beach, encouraged Council to look at the analysis planning guidelines and if they need to explore Florida Boulevard and 3rd Street. If you handle pedestrian safety properly, you don't necessarily have to slow traffic.</p> <p>Steve Miller, 806 Cherry Street, Neptune Beach, stated there are only two accesses to his neighborhood, Bay Street and Cedar Street. If Cedar Street has no left lane, the response time would change for emergency vehicles. He added if big changes are made, it is going to impact everyone, whether they live on Penman Road or not.</p>
Conclusion	<p>Mayor Brown closed the public comment period. She stated that the City Attorney would put together a resolution after he received Council input. She reiterated there is still time for public comments and suggestions.</p>

Councilor Key stated her concern is pedestrian safety if we don't have the medians. She also asked how the medians would affect first responders.

Mr. Smith advised that the roundabouts are there to make somewhere for vehicles to turn around. Without the medians, there is no practical need for the roundabout. He stated that medians could help people drive slower. He reported that they have communicated with first responders and a project would not be moved forward if it would make it harder to respond to emergencies. He added they would work to make the medians work block by block and house by house.

Mayor Brown thanked COJ staff and consultants for attending the meeting. There would be more to be talked about as we start working towards a resolution to be adopted.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the Special Workshop Meeting adjourned at 7:48 p.m.


Elaine Brown, Mayor

ATTEST:


Catherine Ponson, CMC
City Clerk



Approved: 02-05-2024