



City of Lambertville
WORK SESSION
MONDAY, JULY 8, 2019, 7:00 PM
PHILLIP L. PITTORE JUSTICE CENTER
25 SOUTH UNION STREET
MINUTES

COMPLIANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

Mayor Fahl called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. and asked the City Clerk to read the statement of compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act into the record.

The City Clerk read the following statement:

"Adequate notice of this special session held on July 8, 2019, has been provided by emailing notice to the Hunterdon County Democrat and the Trenton Times and to various individuals on the list serve, and by posting the meeting agenda on the city's website and on the bulletin board at City Hall in accordance with Section 13 of the Open Public Meetings Act."

ROLL CALL

The City Clerk called the roll as follows:

Present: Councilman Sanders, Councilwoman Taylor, Councilwoman Warner, Council President Asaro, Mayor Fahl.

Absent: None.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Fahl led the public in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

The City Clerk led the public in a moment of silence in honor of those serving in the United States Armed Forces in Country and Abroad.

NEW BUSINESS/CONSTITUENT CONCERNS

Route 29 Road Improvements

Mayor Fahl thanked everyone for attending the meeting on a Monday after a holiday weekend. This is an important project and we are hoping to keep this to a short meeting. The goal is to give context and history for this project and the work of Council to get us where we are now. She reviewed the timeline with the members of the public. Route 29 is a dangerous road and the vein of our town. Lambertville is a drive to not a drive through City.

Timeline:

In 2001, the City requested NJDOT to reduce the speed limit – it was denied.

In the following years, money was allotted for a major improvement project and the City, along with volunteers, including Gary Toth created a grand plan to slow traffic, with roundabouts, led by a Constituent of the City that failed. Then there was nothing for a long time, and it continued to be unsafe.

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In 2018, 15 years later, Lambertville again asked to have Route 29 slowed.

This isn't the project that everyone wants, but is a project that is going to Make Lambertville a safer City. The goal tonight is to hear concerns, answer questions, deputize you as ambassadors to talk to neighbors and give you a time line on when shovels are going in the ground (paint rollers on the street).

Mayor Fahl introduced Patrick Gallo of T and M Associates, the City Engineering firm, who reviewed the project with the members of the public. He started at Swan Street running south on Route 29, and said the goal was to narrow down to one lane in and one lane out, with additional striping and paint. The entrance from Main Street will control the flow of traffic. The visual impacts are to encourage drivers to slow down. Most of the road will be no parking lanes, however, there will be additional parking spaces, with an overall gain of approximately 50 spaces, with a left turn lane leading into Weeden Street and a U-turn at the same location. At the end of the divided highway, it will maintain the same layout all along, parking where it is safe.

Mayor Fahl asked that he do the same thing running North on Route 29. Mr. Gallo informed the members of the public present that Route 29 becomes divided, going north bound, additional parking created along Route 29, no parking zone by left turn lane at Weeden Street.

Mayor Fahl commented that it will allow for access to the business district in that area as well as an opportunity to turn around from River Walk, if they want to go north when they are heading south.

Kim Gaglio of York Street commented that she frequents Bucks County Fencing which is a little more north. The driveway is used daily and it is very difficult to see traffic coming out of Lambertville. She asked to limit the parking on the corner. Mayor Fahl informed the members of the public that these plans cannot be changed. Traffic will be much slower. Ms. Gaglio commented that when she comes out of the driveway, she uses the turn around. Mayor Fahl stated that this is no longer a turn around.

Andy Heinrich, the traffic engineer, commented that of the four median breaks that exist, three will be closed. The only one open is at Weeden Street. You will either use Weeden Street or go to the south end and loop around the end.

A member of the public asked if this was a legal turn. Mr. Heinrich responded that there is no illegal U-turn. There will two lanes of traffic, you can turn around and get up to the black line. There will be additional room down at the end.

Mayor Fahl commented that the goal is to lower the speed limit. The traffic engineer, Mr. Heinrich, commented that the lowest speed will be 25 mph, once completed, DOT has to do studies to see what the limit can be.

Ron Wootters expressed concern for accidents. Mr. Heinrich responded that there is adequate distance and the idea is to get everyone to slow down.

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Kim Gaglio expressed concern for the backup of vehicles when you are turning. Mr. Heinrich reviewed the plans with the members of the public. He showed that there was adequate space on the southbound side. Concern was expressed for the U-turns and stacking of traffic when making the U-turn.

Mayor Fahl commented that this is a reasonable concern. There are going to be lots of reasonable concerns. This is a major shift in the traffic pattern, the largest in the city. We will go back to our DOT rep with our engineer, the goal is not to walk through and add in left hand turns, but to hear out the reasonable concerns. The calculus that we need to make is weighing the dangerous road that effects the way the people live on both sides of the road and if there is something that can't be done, causes a clog, but can't be done, this is the way we weight; traffic jams verses fewer collisions.

Syed, the representative from NJDOT commented that the point was well taken. He said he looked at the plans and checked the striping and they can restripe the piece to provide a left turn lane and the parking will go away. They will shift the road to allow for the turn around. We will see how much room we have to restripe this and to make sure we have a turning radius.

Mayor Fahl commented that this was an 18-year long project and we are at the one-yard line. If there is a question of adding an amenity verses getting this done, we need to get this done.

A member of public asked about changing the speed limit. Mayor Fahl addressed the question and said that you have to do the striping and painting first. Then NJDOT will take six months to evaluate what the new experience of the road is. People will still drive 50 miles, but they will do a speed study and then DOT will issue us new speed signage. This will naturally slow traffic.

Lou Toboz commented that this is a great idea. It sets the town when you enter the town. He would like this to become a street and not a highway. He expressed concern for the existing conditions which force people to park on the sidewalk.

Mayor Fahl responded that this plan does provide dedicated parking for people who live on Route 29. Its increased parking by approximately 50 spaces. This will solve the problem of people parking on the sidewalk and will remove the guardrail along this side of the road. DOT, even though this changes the scope of the project, has agreed to remove the guardrails.

Lauren Braun-Strumfels asked how this would improve the safety for the children walking to school? Mayor Fahl responded that simply slowing traffic will make this more pedestrian friendly. They are working the NJDOT and hope to have this finished by the time school starts. There are an incredible number of families that should be in a walking district. This does not add additional crosswalks but makes the existing crosswalks safer.

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Mr. Heinrich, the traffic engineer, commented that traffic is moving and will be away from the curbs, he pointed out the existing dash lines and said that when the project is done, we will look at how to get pedestrians across the road.

Mayor Fahl commented that when the striping is finished, it doesn't mean our job is done. This is phase 1 in an effort to make Lambertville walkable and bikeable. She is working with NJDOT to slow down the traffic.

A resident of 220 South Main commented that he walks his dog and every day they take their lives in their hands when crossing 29.

A resident of 60 South Main Street commented that their driveway backs into Route 29. They back into it at night and leave in the am. They cross two lanes going north and he asked if there would dividers to prohibit this. The traffic engineer, Mr. Heinrich commented that this was a low budget project and they would not be installing concrete dividers.

A member of the public asked if they would be marking parking spaces. Mayor Fahl said they would not be marking parking spaces. It is up for future debate but there is a disagreement on if it provides more or less parking by marking the spaces.

Helen Pettit asked if what they see as yellow is what will be painted and if there will be vegetative strips. Mayor Fahl said the vegetative strips are part of phase 2, 3 or possibly 4. The next capital project is in 2025.

Sherry Kracos asked if there was consideration for a left-hand turn onto Swan Street when going North. The traffic engineer, Mr. Heinrich responded that we are trying to keep this to a reasonable project so that we can get this done this year. It does not go that far north.

A member of the public asked about the timeline. Mayor Fahl responded that it was requested to be completed before school starts. It's an aggressive timeline, secondary for a walkable school day in October. The next step is for T and M Associates, the City Engineer, to submit final plans to NJDOT. NJDOT will then give us a date for when we will have paint on the roads.

A member of the public asked about garbage pick-up, will cars be able to pass them? Mayor Fahl responded that you would not be able to pass a garbage truck.

Zanya commented that this is a very dangerous road, why didn't you add another turn around before Mount Hope Street? It could create a big traffic jam. Mayor Fahl responded that it was addressed on Weeden Street before the businesses.

Bill Robbins commented that this was a terrific thing for us to build on. On the corner of Mount Hope and South Main, the stop signs – one of his concern is for people traveling north that want to turn onto Mount Hope Street. Will they stop on the median? Move across South Main? Can sometimes trap a car across the two lanes. The traffic engineer

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responded that it isn't in the context/scope of this project. Perhaps in the future it will be refigured into a different design.

Councilwoman Taylor asked if the yield sign that exist from Mount Hope Street onto South Main would be changing to a stop sign and asked why it was so far back. The traffic engineer, Mr. Heinrich commented that it is the only place to put it. The stop signs are on both sides of the road, and it has to go on the nose of the median. Traffic needs to come to a full stop and wait for a gap in traffic before proceeding.

Councilman Sanders asked if the northbound traffic would be two lanes. The traffic engineer, Mr. Heinrich commented that it is not part of this project.

A member of the public asked if the speed would be lowered to 25 mph throughout town. Mayor Fahl commented that that is too much to ask but will do traffic calming measures on the city side as well, but for people who use Route 29 as a commute, the police will be visible. Syed from NJDOT responded that once we change the whole geometry, you tend to slow traffic by five to ten mph.

Questions from the public included:

Can we have speed humps? The traffic engineer said one speed hump would be ineffective.

Can they paint the lines in 3D? The traffic engineer explained that the state would not allow it.

During the winter, the plows move snow into the cars. Mayor Fahl explained that the city didn't plow that portion of the road.

Scott McNeil asked about the budget to paint the lines. Mayor Fahl explained that the State of New Jersey will be paying for the painting of the lines. The City paid for engineering.

The Business Administrator, Alex Torpey added his perspective. He said driving into Lambertville with no history, on Route 29 North, two lanes to four lanes, people hit the gas. A big part of the project is the cumulative effect over time. The culture of 29, when you pull onto it is that it is turning into a highway. Over time, the activity on the road will be slowing everyone every day and create a culture that it's a road where people live, walk to school and park cars. He echo's the Mayor's sentiments as this is the first step in a major plan to start slowing down traffic and becoming a pedestrian friendly road and community.

A member of the public asked if there would be signage noting the change in traffic pattern. Syed from NJDOT said he would work something out with the maintenance department.

Members of the community thanked Mayor Fahl for her ongoing support of this project.

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Mayor Fahl thanked the Bike/Ped Group formed in 2001, the Governing Body and the members of the public for their input and support of this project. She asked that everyone spread the word about this important infrastructure change.

Syed from NJDOT said he would take the U-turn at the south end of the project to their designer first thing in the am.

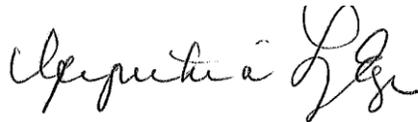
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:03 p.m. with a motion made by Council President Asaro and seconded by Councilwoman Warner. An affirmative voice vote was taken in favor of the motion by all members present. MOTION CARRIED.

Respectfully submitted,



Cynthia L. Ege, City Clerk



The July 8, 2019 special session minutes were approved at the July 18, 2019 voting session.