

Advisory Council Meeting Notes

Date: April 11, 2018, 4 P.M.
Location: Main Library
101 East Franklin Street, Richmond, VA
23219
Notes Date: May 1, 2018



Members Present: Mr. Rodney Poole, Chair
Mr. Max Hepp-Buchanan, Vice-Chair
Mr. Burt Pinnock, Vice-Chair
Ms. Latoya Gray
Mr. Bernard Harkless
Ms. Ashley Hawkins
Ms. Elyana Javaheri
Ms. Joyce Knight
Mr. T. Preston Lloyd
Ms. Louise Lockett
Ms. Monica Lozano
Mr. Jer'Mykeal McCoy
Ms. Kendra Norrell
Ms. Gray O'Dwyer
Mr. Damian Pitt
Mr. Ted Ukrop
Ms. Meredith Weiss
Ms. Olivya Wilson

Members Absent: Mr. Jonathan Bibbs
Ms. Jennifer Mullen

Staff Present: Ms. Tasha Chambers, Justice and Sustainability Associates (JSA)
Mr. Don Edwards, JSA
Mr. William Palmquist, Planning and Development Review (PDR)
Ms. Maritza Pechin, AECOM/PDR
Ms. Marianne Pitts, PDR
Ms. Yessenia Revilla, PDR

Staff Absent: Mr. Mark Olinger, PDR

Call to Order

Mr. Poole called the meeting to order at 4 p.m.

Mr. Edwards welcomed and introduced council and public gallery. Mr. Edwards explained that his role is to be the facilitator of the meeting and will keep the meeting moving. He stated that from the May meeting moving forward, the Advisory Council (AC) will be meeting from 4pm to 6pm. He stated that the ground rules for the AC are to speak honestly, listen closely with patience, and come to the meeting having done the homework.

Mr. Poole informed the group that the library would be permanent location of the AC meetings.

Mr. Edwards requested that the AC review the Communications & Engagement plan (CECP) developed in consultation with JSA and PDR. The AC has one week to review the CECP.

Mr. Edwards alerted the public that they will have an agenda and one shared binder to review at each meeting.

Mr. Edwards welcomed the AC to join the larger group at Wong Gonzalez following the meeting.

Mr. Edwards asked the AC to review the minutes and notes.

Ms. Wilson asked about the anti-poverty report that was discussed at the last meeting and if it had been sent to the AC and posted on the site. Ms. Pechin stated that it had not but agreed to disseminate the report to the larger group. Ms. Pechin also stated additional reports, along with anti-poverty report, will be uploaded to the site soon.

The AC approved the March meeting notes.

Mr. Pitt asked about an extension on providing comments on the Insights Report. Ms. Pechin stated that April 18th will be the final date to email comments to PDR staff.

Director's Report

Richmond 300 Binders

Ms. Pechin showed the group the content of the binders. (Each AC member received binders to hold meeting and process materials.) Ms. Pechin informed the group that they may receive only one binder but feel free to add content to an additional binder or toss items away.

Insights Report and Map Booklet

Ms. Pechin thanked the group for their comments on the Insight Reports and noted that Mr. Palmquist and Ms. Pechin are updating the report. Ms. Pechin said that the map booklet will be available at the next meeting.

Parking Study

Ms. Pechin updated the group on the parking study. The parking consultant, DESMAN, completed the parking capacity study. Ms. Pechin stated that the consultants are scheduled to begin the parking count to determine the actual parking use next week utilizing drone photography. Ms. Pechin stated that she will be contacting VCU as well to assist with the process. Spots will be counted twice during the weekday and twice on Saturday.

Parking Study meeting announcements will come in the next few weeks. Parking studies will take place in seven neighborhoods.

Ms. Knight asked what the goal of the parking study is. Ms. Pechin answered that its purpose is to get real info/data on parking challenges. Ms. Pechin stated that they are working in problematic parking areas.

Ms. Javaheri wanted to know more about the goals and vision of the entire Master Plan and how can we use this information (parking study and Insights Report) to communicate a vision? Ms. Pechin responded that there is not a formal vision for this plan just yet, but the group will get there further along in the process. Ms. Pechin informed the group that the data provided in the Insights Report is needed to establish a vision and then make informed recommendations.

Ms. Javaheri stated that she understood that but was still unclear because there is no vision. Ms. Javaheri asked when the AC would get to the visioning portion.

Ms. Hawkins added that the data was important to the entire group in making recommendations about a proposed vision.

Ms. Pechin reiterated that most processes should start with data/baseline information to establish a vision and then make recommendations.

Ms. Crump added that as we do the visioning, the data process should not stop. She added that more items may needed further study. Ms. Pechin agreed that we will continue the data process and in fact more data may result in more studies.

Ms. Hawkins followed up by saying that the Insights Report will be helpful in recommendations.

Ms. Pechin added that in response to Ms. Wilson's comment, it is important for us to have city-wide reports on the website.

Ms. Lozano asked about the city-wide parking study in 2009 and noted that the study was discovered that it was a perception problem a not a real problem. Ms. Pechin added that the 2009 plan was only Downtown and now additional areas are being added. Also, she stated that since 2009 the downtown area population has grown by 10,000 people and requires additional studies.

Presentations & Discussion

I. *Advisory Council Bylaws*

Mr. Edwards acknowledged that everyone should have read the AC by-laws by this time.

Mr. Edwards stated that 21 people is a large group for a council, but all were selected because of their own successes. He encouraged the group to pay close attention to the ground rules and to speak their voices and maintain their voice.

Mr. Edwards stated that he encourages this group not to have majority v. minority report. Mr. Edwards stated that he would like the group to build consensus. He stated that he would like the group to have as much agreeability without voting. He does not want anyone to feel like they are losing. His goal is to eliminate winners v. losers from the group.

Ms. Hawkins said she trusted Mr. Edwards. Mr. Pinnock stated it is worth a try.

Mr. McCoy asked about ways to build consensus during heated discussions.

Mr. Edwards reiterated the importance of data as the foundation to building consensus. Also, to trust the technical unit that PDR has established. The AC should ground their policy thinking into items that are actionable for the city. Facts and honesty are important. Mr. Edwards stated that the AC must create something that is actionable for the city that we can move forward through Planning Commission and City Council.

Mr. McCoy asked what are the top 3 issues in groups such as this. Mr. Edwards answered transportation, urban design, and the implications of zoning.

Mr. Poole added that when Mr. McCoy turned to Omari (public participant from last meeting) and asked and what is your issue, it helped the AC understand Omari's issue better.

Mr. Pitts added that zoning is an area that could become contentious.

Mr. Edwards transitioned into homework item on the agenda. He asked:

What is your experience in consensus-based decision-making?

What is the comfort level for speaking in a public setting?

Mr. Edwards stated that each of the AC members will be on the record; this is a serious civic responsibility. Mr. Edwards added that by-laws can be amended as well to help with challenges.

Mr. Poole added that the homework should be completed by April 18.

II. *Master Plan Update Process*

Ms. Pechin presented the Richmond 300 work plan. In addition, she shared the video of DC's One City Summit Hour - a sample of what Richmond's Community Consultation event could look like.

Mr. Edwards posed the idea of one meeting for the Community Consultation phase. The thought is to have all of Richmond under one roof -- lots of people at small tables.

Ms. Pechin informed the group about the Ambassador process and how it is important that the AC assists with this process.

Ms. Pechin shared with the AC how the AC would help create the content for the Community Consultation.

Ms. Pechin walked the AC through this plan and asked for feedback from the group.

Ms. Lockett asked what is the role of the ambassador. Mr. Edwards answered that the ambassadors are on-the-ground volunteers. He stated that the ambassadors should not sell the policy but ask for participation.

Mr. Edwards discussed the engagement quadrant from the CECP with the AC.

Ms. Lockett asked if it would be helpful to ask who those ambassadors are and what groups do they represent. Mr. Edwards reiterated that there will be training for these ambassadors.

Ms. Hawkins asked if the AC should attend those training sessions. Mr. Edwards replied that the AC should attend everything.

Ms. Crump wanted to know if there is a work schedule for the AC. Mr. Edwards stated that this has not yet been developed. Ms. Pechin stated that there will be a working plan for the group but first needed to get consensus from the AC for moving forward on the idea of 1 Community Consultation.

Mr. Lloyd asked what the goals for each individual Advisory Council meeting were but also what is the goal for the entire planning process. Mr. Lloyd asked that the necessary components of a master plan be shared with the AC. Ms. Pechin said that there are items by law that are required to be in a master plan that we can share with the AC.

Mr. Pitt asked if we are locked into the first meeting being in July. He stated that July is not a good time for this a Community Consultation. He recommended September. Mr. Pitt would also like to see a longer working group process – start sooner.

Mr. Hepp-Buchanan asked for clarification about the three consulting meetings and the dates. He asked if we expected if all of these meetings are to be “big” meetings. Also, he asked if each community consultation has a goal.

Mr. Edwards answered the goals of the meetings are 1. visioning, 2. review of draft recommendations, and 3. review of the draft plan.

Ms. Hawkins asked if this feels like adequate time to prepare for a meeting in July.

Mr. Poole asked the entire AC how they felt about the concept of just 3 meetings.

Mr. Pinnock commented that Richmond under one roof sounds great, but there should be options to participate in meetings based on specific topics – housing, transportation, etc.

Mr. Edwards said that it is possible to have more meetings and mentioned the open houses. Mr. Edwards wants feedback.

Mr. Pinnock liked the idea of one meeting but stated it was ambitious.

Ms. Knight stated that July will not be a good time.

Mr. McCoy asked if the last master plan operated under this process.

Mr. Poole answered no and that we need more preparation and it needs to be farther along down the road.

Mr. Ukrop stated that we need more time to prepare because the AC hardly understands what its tasks are.

Ms. Lozano added that she is used to working with groups on a much smaller scale. She expressed concern that we will not be able to capture groups who are typically not as engaged. She personally enjoys the personal touch of small group facilitation.

Ms. O'Dwyer expressed that DC is not the same as Richmond. She noted that not everyone has the same transportation and if we want an inclusive group, this may not reflect it.

Mr. Hepp-Buchanan added that there may be transit issues with Pulse opening during the time of the proposed July date.

Ms. Pechin transitioned into a reminder about homework. Homework should include:

- Anything missing from the notes
- Insights Report feedback
- Reading of the bylaws
- Master Plan process including engagement – thoughts on the process; can you help us identify education partners; etc.

Ms. Pechin will send homework in writing tomorrow morning to all AC members.

Ms. Javaheri stressed the importance of community meetings in the community because if groups do not know what is going on, how will they engage in this process.

Public Comment

Mr. Steve Hammond, a 30-year resident asked if the AC can give some thought to those Richmonders who may not feel empowered to speak and asked that they consider what are some methods to do that.

Ms. Giles Harnsberger spoke of health and well-being for Richmonders (children). She noted that it is harder to feel safe, happy and healthy now than it was when she was a child. She stated that the Science Museum of VA and Groundwork RVA are jointly working to address the heat island effect. She noted that trees are not distributed equitably, which is destroying neighborhoods and results in very hot neighborhoods. She offered that Dr. Hoffman of SMVA can present on this topic. Ms. Harnsberger suggested that we look at community-based development instead of how we have developed historically.

Mr. Greg Lucyk is concerned about the Grove/Libbie/Patterson area. He stated that the focus area for the parking study is not large enough and should expand to the east to include the Seneca Road. He stated that the parking lots for the Westhampton Theater are now closed and were used by many people who work in that area. He noted that now those peoples are parking in the surrounding residential areas. He stated that GRTC just announced that they are adding a new bus route from Willow Lawn to UR and now it will cross the area. He inquired about the loss of parking due to new bus stops and that by doing the study now, the impact of the bus stops will not be reflected in the plan. Mr. Lucyk would like to see a formal traffic study completed as well as a parking study.

Mr. Edwards asked if would email his comments.

Ms. Martha Broughton who is a Church Hill resident state she does not want to lose the historic views from the neighborhood.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:43. The next meeting will be held on May 9 at the Main Library on Franklin Street from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Attachment: Mr. Lucyk's Email

Mr. Lucyk requested that his email be included in the meeting notes. His email is provided below.

From: Greg Lucyk [mailto:gglucy@comcast.net]

Sent: Sunday, April 15, 2018 11:52 PM

To: Pechin, Maritza - PDR

Cc: Addison, Andreas D. - City Council; Olinger, Mark A. - PDR; Rodney@thewiltonco.com; Richmond300

Subject: Richmond 300 Parking Study - Comments from April 11th Advisory Council Meeting

Dear Ms. Pechin,

I attended the Richmond 300 Advisory Council meeting last Wednesday and offered comments during the Public Comment portion of the meeting. You may recall I was asked by the facilitator also to submit my comments in writing to ensure they were documented in the record. My comments addressed two separate subjects as follows.

First, I expressed concern about the Parking Study Area for the Libbie/Grove/Patterson corridor. I understand the purpose of the parking study is to collect data on the availability and demand for parking in the seven areas in the City in which the study is being conducted. My concern, in examining the map outlining the boundaries of the areas being studied, is that the eastern boundary of the Libbie/Grove study area stops at Granite Avenue. By cutting off the study area at Granite, the study will fail to collect significant amounts of data concerning the very high demand for parking in the commercial district. There are many vehicles that park every day on both sides of Grove Avenue east of Granite, and also in the adjacent neighborhood side streets, including Westview Avenue and Seneca Road. Many, if not all of these vehicles, belong to employees or patrons of the existing stores, restaurants and other businesses in the commercial area. They began parking there when the 150 space parking lot behind the Westhampton Theater (a de-facto public parking lot) was closed by Westhampton LLC for construction of the theater property development. Virtually all of these folks parked in that theater lot. The situation will not change when the construction is completed, as the Westhampton LLC parking lot will be a gated, private facility limited to parking only to the customers, employees and residents of the LLC's tenants, and the lot itself will be reduced from 150 to 104 total spaces. Attached is a photo I took on Friday, April 13th at 1:30 pm. The photo was taken from a spot on Westview Avenue, looking west up Grove. It clearly shows many cars parked on Westview, and with vehicles parked bumper to bumper on Grove from Granite down to Westview. What the photo does not show is many more vehicles parked on both sides of Grove heading east all the way down to Seneca, and even beyond Seneca toward Wilton on the south side of Grove. In all, I counted 37 cars parked at that time on Grove Avenue and the side streets east of Granite. It is like that every day during business hours and well into the late evening when even more customers come for the restaurant night life. In sum, if the parking study is based on the current boundaries, the parking demand for the Grove/Libbie/Patterson area will be greatly undercounted, and the study will be misleading and ineffectual.

In addition to accuracy concerning parking demand for the area, I also mentioned my concerns about ensuring complete data analysis regarding parking availability. I mentioned the new GRTC bus routes that soon will be running north and south on Libbie Avenue, and the fact that some six new bus stops, north and south, will diminish available on street parking on Libbie Avenue by 18 to 24 spaces. You indicated you already had this information

and had passed it on to the parking study folks. Further, as noted above, the Westhampton LLC parking lot will be a private, gated facility and not available to the general public. A recent article in Richmond Bizsense reveals that the LLC has signed leases with a number of retail, commercial and restaurant businesses that will very likely overwhelm the reduced parking facility planned for the project (formerly 150 spaces reduced to 104 spaces). This diminished availability, coupled with an even greater demand for on-street parking from the incoming new businesses, must be taken into account in any parking study for the Grove/Libbie/Patterson corridor. (Link to Bizsense article here: <https://richmondbizsense.com/2018/04/12/bank-vc-firm-sign-westhampton-development/>).

Second, I renewed my request for a comprehensive traffic study for this area before any action on the Master Plan, and indeed, before any new rezoning or Special Use Permit requests are taken up by the Planning Commission or Council. Mr. Olinger dismissed my request at the previous meeting by stating he had heard a lot of concerns about parking but very little about traffic. That may be the case for the other areas in the City under study, but that is clearly not the case for the Grove/Libbie corridor. Traffic is overwhelming and chaotic, and is bleeding into the adjacent residential neighborhoods creating serious safety issues. This is due in many respects to the unique nature of this area. Our commercial district and residential neighborhoods to the south and west are “landlocked” by Three Chopt and Cary Street Road. There are three schools in this area producing prodigious vehicle and pedestrian traffic throughout the day. Streets are old and narrow. There is no room to “widen” the streets to accommodate additional traffic. Libbie, for instance is six lanes at Patterson (with curbside lanes on each side designated for parking), but heading south it narrows to four lanes at Guthrie (again with curbside lanes devoted to parking). This creates a serious bottleneck at the intersection of Grove and Libbie, and on most days now anyone turning left on to Grove from Libbie will have to wait two to three cycles of the traffic light to make the turn. This prompts motorists to avoid Libbie at all costs, and to seek passage from Grove to Patterson, and vice versa, through the north/south streets in the adjacent neighborhoods. This entire situation will only become more congested when the GRTC busses start running. Further, the Westhampton LLC private, gated parking lot is designed as “one way,” so that once construction is complete, all vehicles entering the lot will enter from Granite Avenue, and all vehicles exiting will leave from York to Libbie. This traffic pattern is calculated to create backups on Granite, especially during rush hour when vehicles are entering the lot, and will create a constant flow of excess traffic onto Libbie from York – already a dangerous stretch for pedestrians. In sum, we need a full traffic study to be conducted by an independent expert with “thinking outside the box” to address these traffic issues. Perhaps certain streets should be designated one way (e.g., Granite from Grove to Patterson; York from Libbie to Maple). The bottom line is that independent traffic engineers and experts should be commissioned to look at this chaotic situation and recommend solutions to address these traffic issues. And this should be done before any further master plan amendments, zoning changes or special use developments are approved in this area.

These are the comments I presented at the meeting last Wednesday, all of which I believe should be included in the record of the Advisory Council proceedings. Accordingly, I request that you include these written comments as part of the minutes from the April 11th meeting to be distributed to the full membership of the Council. Thank you for your attention to this request. Please let me know if you have questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,

Gregory E. Lucyk
Attorney at Law
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gglucy@comcast.net