

Committee of the Whole Minutes - Final MAYOR AND COUNCIL



Derek Norton, Mayor
Tim Gould, Mayor Pro Tem (Ward 6)
Glenn Pickens (Ward 1)
Latonia P. Hines (Ward 2)
Travis Lindley (Ward 3)
Charles "Corkey" Welch (Ward 4)
Susan Wilkinson (Ward 5)
Rickey N. Oglesby, Jr. (Ward 7)

A. Max Bacon City Hall
Human Resources Training Room
2800 King Street SE
Smyrna, GA 30080

City Attorney Scott Cochran
City Administrator Joseph Bennett
City Clerk Heather K. Peacon-Corn

**March 21, 2024
6:30 PM**

1. Roll Call

Present: 8 – Mayor Derek Norton, Councilmember Glenn Pickens, Councilmember Latonia P. Hines, Councilmember Travis Lindley, Councilmember Charles Welch, Councilmember Susan Wilkinson, Mayor Pro Tem / Councilmember Tim Gould, and Councilmember Rickey N. Oglesby, Jr.

Also Present: 1 – Scott Cochran

Staff: 13 – Jennifer Bennett, Joe Bennett, Richard Garland, H. Houze, Eddie Matano, Russell Martin, Paul Osburn, Heather Peacon-Corn, Eric Randall, Kristin Robinson, Joey Staubes, Andrea Worthly, and Ashley Youmans

Call to Order

Mayor Derek Norton called to order the March 21, 2024 Committee of the Whole meeting held at A. Max Bacon City Hall in the HR Training Room at 6:30 PM.

2. Staff M&C Agenda Items to Review

- Eric Randall, Public Works Director, discussed item ATH2024-050. This item authorizes the payment of Smyrna's SPLOST funds to Cobb County for Cobb County to act as the local project administrator for the preliminary engineering phase of the South Cobb Improvement Project.

- Keith Zgonc, Police Chief, discussed item ATH2024-011. This is an intergovernmental agreement with the City of Austell for the purposes of data entry into the Georgia Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS). It is similar to the agreement with the City of Powder Springs.

3. Formal Business and Presentations

A. COW2024-013 Presentation of the Branding Process – Chandlerthinks

Andrea Worthy, Economic Development Director, introduced Greg Fuson of Chandlerthinks. He is the Director of Research & Community Engagement.

- Branding is more than a logo
- Branding is an orchestration of all that Smyrna does
- Accentuate the positives, overcome the negatives
- Branding is a team effort
- Smyrna benefits from tourist destinations that are not within city limits – ex. The Battery
- Place Branding Wheel: Business, Tourism, Arts & Entertainment, Heritage, Education, Civic Leadership, People, Natural Resources = Identity
- Facebook page – Branding Smyrna, Ga already has 450 members
- Will come back in mid-May: what is the foundation? Brand pillars will be developed – brand truths, strategies to build community, brand story, seal preservation and management
- Do not consider an unveiling because the only focus is the logo

B. COW2024-014 Update on Cumberland Transit Center planning – Cobb DOT

Andrea Worthy, Economic Development Director, introduced the team from Cobb DOT.

Scott Brown, Cobb County DOT, Planning Division, presented the following from the **Cumberland Transit Center Site Feasibility Study**.

Challenges – Existing Cumberland Transfer Center

- Bus bays at capacity
- No parking for riders
- No drop-off / kiss and ride
- Difficult access
- No internal bus circulation (buses must turn in mall lot)
- Inadequate bus shelter sizes
- Too narrow for buses
- Multimodal access challenges
- Not central to some activity centers

CobbForward CTP / Mobility SPLOST Program

- Arterial Rapid Transit (ART) – non-dedicated lanes, 60 ft. buses
- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) – dedicated lanes, 60 ft. buses
- Commuter Service
- Regional BRT along GDOT's New Express Lanes
- Local Service

Proposed Major Multimodal Projects

- Akers Mill Rd North Express Lanes Access
- Proposes Cumberland Sweep
- Proposed US 41 Pedestrian Bridge
- I-285 Top End Express Lanes
- Cumberland Blvd (East Facing Ramps)
- Mt. Wilkinson Pkwy (West Facing Ramps)

Site Evaluation Process - Phase 1 Study (Completed Spring '23: Site Needs Assessment)

- Pre-Screening – Identify all parcels within the study areas that meet the pre-screening criteria for siting the new transit center → Top 10 to 11 sites

- The Pre-Screening was largely GIS-based and considered geography, community resources, environmental features, development/redevelopment potential, and land use.
- Screen 1 Evaluation – Rank the remaining parcels to identify the top three (3) to four (4) sites → Top 3 to 4 sites
 - Screen 1 involved a more detailed screening and prioritization process. Sixteen (16) criteria in four (4) categories were used to score the 11 sites. The Project Team also considered a handful of additional considerations including adjacency to other planned or proposed transportation improvements, survey results, and transit propensity.
- Screen 2 Evaluation – Further rank the top sites identified in Screen 1 to determine the preferred transit site → Top Site

Steve Cote, RS&H, presented the following:

Site Selection Study – Finding Balance

- Transit Operations – Transit Ridership, Space Requirements
- Connectivity – Walkability & Proximity to Centers & Attractions, Land Availability / Costs, Land Development

Screen 1 & 2 Evaluation Criteria Groups

- Transportation & System Operations/ Capacity
- Locational Suitability Considerations
- Environmental / Site Costs & Risks
- Land Use Costs & Opportunities

Site A – Factors

- Closest site to The Battery / Truist Park
- Farthest site from Cumberland Mall, Galleria, and Cobb Energy Center
- Does not have direct interstate access
- Challenge to accommodate required number of bus bays (14)
- Two points of entry/exit: one signalized, one right-in/right-out
- Moderate anticipated site development costs
- Requires most modifications to existing and planned transit routes

Site D – Factors

- Moderate distance to The Battery / Truist Park
- Able to accommodate required number of bus bays (14)
- Direct access to interstate and GDOT express / manage lanes
- Proximity to GDOT planned Top End Express Lanes
- Significant grade / elevation change challenges
- One point of entry / exit at signalized intersection
- Close to Cumberland Mall and existing transfer center
- High anticipated site development costs

Site E – Factors

- Able to accommodate required number of bus bays (14)
- Adjacent to Cumberland Mall
- Able to utilize/re-purpose existing transfer center bays/facilities
- Within close proximity to Cobb Galleria
- Tied for farthest site from The Battery / Truist Park (with Site H)
- Existing parking garage on adjacent property
- Direct access to interstate and GDOT express / managed lane
- Lowest Anticipated site development costs

Site H – Factors

- Able to accommodate required number of bus bays (14)

- Adjacent to planned Cumberland Sweep multimodal path
- Proximity to the Cumberland Mall, existing transfer center, Galleria, and Cobb Energy Center
- Tied to farthest site from The Battery / Truist Park (with Site E)
- Within close proximity to I-75
- Moderate anticipated site development costs

Next Steps

Overall Timeline – Approximate *Anticipated completion date of Spring 2024*

- Funded – Select Locally Preferred Site and initiate Environmental Document
- 18-24 Months – Funded – Finalize Environmental Document and Design
- 24-36 Months – Not Funded – Land Acquisition, Construction, and Open Center

Immediate Next Steps

- Complete Screen 2 Evaluation
- Select Preferred Site
- Conceptual Design, Cost Estimates
- Complete Initial NEPA Documentation
- Develop Implementation Plan

Mobility SPLOST

Cobb Department of Transportation City of Smyrna Update

Morgan Simmons, Deputy Director, Cobb DOT, presented the following:

Presentation Overview

- Vision
- Goals
- Background and Outreach
- Key Connections
- Program of Projects
- Additional Considerations
- Next Steps

Cobb County Mobility SPLOST Vision – Building connectivity to promote a thriving community for all.

Goals

- Enhanced mobility options
- Connectivity to jobs and housing choices
- Lower transportation costs for households
- Innovative solutions for safe and efficient travel
- Support a thriving future for Cobb County

Key Connections

- Three MARTA Stations (Dunwoody, Arts Center, HE Holmes)
- Fourteen countrywide microtransit zones
- All seven cities within Cobb County
- All three Community Improvement Districts
- Centralized employment and healthcare centers
- Battery Atlanta
- Higher education institutions
- Bicycle and pedestrian accessibility

- Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport
- Program of Projects
 - 41% – High-Capacity Transit
 - 19% – Transit Operations
 - 14% Transit Vehicles, Facilities, and Amenities
 - 14% – Microtransit
 - 4% – Transit Supportive Projects: Access Improvements
 - 3% – Transit Supportive: Operational Improvements
 - 3% – Operating Reserves / State of Good Repair
 - 2% Transit Technology
- High-Capacity Transit
 - Rail-like Operations
 - High Frequency Service (15 to 20-minute frequency)
 - Fast and Competitive Trip Times
 - Increased Reliability and Accessibility
 - Dedicated Transit Lanes
 - Innovative and Specialized Vehicles
 - Off-Board Fare Collection
 - Intelligent Transportation Systems
- Microtransit Service
 - Countywide Coverage
 - On-demand Scheduling
 - Curb-to-curb shared service within service area
 - Connections to community resources and transit network
 - Connections outside service area through fixed routes
 - Response times less than 30-minutes
- Local, Rapid, and Other Service Enhancements
 - Expanded operating area
 - Higher frequency service (15 to 30-minute frequent)
 - Expanded paratransit service
 - Streamlines fare collection
 - Daily service
 - 7-days per week
 - Expanded operating hours
 - Technology Enhancements
 - Transit Center, Updated Facilities
- Vehicles, Facilities, and Amenities
 - Technology enhancements
 - Landscaping and hardscaping
 - Upgraded transit facilities
 - Walkable and bikeable access
 - Integrated smartphone apps
 - Wi-Fi Availability
 - Alternative fuel vehicles
 - Bus shelter and lighting upgrades
 - Security enhancements
- Transit Technology
 - Traffic signal coordination
 - Automated vehicle connectivity
 - Autonomous mobility
 - Smartphone integrations

- Passenger and vehicle safety features
- Passenger information systems
- Departure and arrival times
- Fare collection enhancements

Transit Supportive Projects

- \$1B (YOE) Over the Life of the Plan
- \$500M to Transit Access Projects
 - Trails, Bridges, Bike/Ped Improvements
- \$500M to Transit Operations Projects
 - Capacity Improvements, New Connections, Grade Separations, Intersections, and Roadway Operational Enhancements
- Funding Distributed to Cities Based on Population Proportions
- \$600M (2024) in Identified Eligible Projects

Transit Supportive Projects, Operational – Smyrna

\$73M (YOE) Allocated to Smyrna For Transit Supportive Projects – Eligible Operational Projects

1. Capacity - Windy Hill Road Widening
2. Capacity - East-West Connector Widening
3. Capacity - S. Cobb Drive (SR 280) Widening
4. Grade Separation - Atlanta Road at Windy Hill Grade Separation
5. Grade Separation - Windy Hill at South Cobb Drive Grade Separation
6. Grade Separation - S. Cobb Drive (SR280) at East-West Connector Grade Separation
7. Intersection - Highlands Ridge Road at E-W Conn Intersection Improvements
8. Intersection - Gaylor Street at East-West Conn Intersection Improvements
9. Intersection - SR 3 (Cobb Parkway) at Circle 75 Parkway Intersection Improvements
10. Intersection - East-West Connector at Fontaine Road SE Intersection Improvements
11. Intersection - East-West Connector at Copper Lake Road Intersection Improvements
12. Operational-Corridor - South Cobb Drive Improvements
13. Operational-Corridor - Veterans Memorial Highway Southeast Improvements
14. Operational-Corridor - Atlanta Road Southeast Improvements

Transit Supportive Projects, Access – Smyrna

\$73M (YOE) Allocated to Smyrna for Transit Supportive Projects – Eligible Operational Projects

1. Trail - Chattahoochee River Trail (US-78 Veterans Memorial to I-285) – Trail
2. Trail - South Cobb Drive Trail
3. Trail - Cobb Parkway Trail (central) Part A
4. Trail - Cobb Parkway Windy Hill Connector Trail
5. Trail - Windy Hill Trail Part A
6. Trail - Windy Hill Trail Part B
7. Trail - Cumberland Boulevard Trail
8. Trail - Poplar Creek Trail Extension
9. Trail - Roswell Street Trail
10. Trail - Church Street Trail
11. Trail - Fontaine Road Trail Part A
12. Trail - Veterans Memorial Trail
13. Trail - Cooper Lake Road Bike/Ped Improvements

Summary

- 100% transit coverage to access jobs Cobb County

- 100% coverage of vulnerable populations (disabled, poverty, zero-vehicle and 65+)
- Reduce demand for parking in business districts
- Provides alternative to traffic congestion
- Meeting the needs of a growing Cobb County
- Provides opportunity to leverage federal infrastructure investments
- MSPLOST would transfer transit funding from property tax (residents) to sales tax (residents and visitors)

City Requests

- Percentage of Transit Supportive
- City coverage of high-quality, local bus service
- Microtransit implementation
- Bikeshare implementation
- Discounted fares

Next Steps

Completed

- BOC requesting ATL update ARTP

In Progress

- ATL updating ARTP (expected April 4)
- Public education

Futures Tasks

- Meeting with qualified municipalities
 - April 8, 2024 at 1:00 PM: Cobb County Public Safety Police Academy
- Authorization to hold referendum

4. Review of Current M&C Agenda

A. COW2024-015 Review of the March 25, 2024 Mayor and Council Meeting Agenda

Mayor Norton reviewed the March 25, 2024 Mayor and Council meeting agenda.

- Russell Martin, Community Development Director, provided the following brief background for item Z24-002:

Since the last Mayor and Council meeting, Mr. Martin and City Engineer Mark Wolff have met with representatives from Amana Academy. The City Engineer has reviewed the proposed rezoning with respect to transportation, stormwater management and stream buffer issues. The subject property will utilize a full access drive on Lake Park Drive. The applicant will make improvements for internal circulation for AM drop-off and PM pick up by adding an extension in the parking lot that the applicant has demonstrated is feasible. Also, the traffic study provided by the applicant indicates that improvements for the access drive at Lake Park Drive are recommended by the time of full enrollment. The improvements include a second entrance lane, and the ability to turn right or left in the exit lane at the full access driveway on Lake Park Drive. The study also recommends traffic control by a police officer during the peak AM and PM hours. The applicant has demonstrated the improvements are feasible. However, the city may require a deceleration lane at the entrance at the time of land disturbance plan review. The signalized intersections studied in the report will continue to operate at satisfactory level of service at the school AM and PM peak hours at the proposed full enrollment year of 2031.

Community Development has also added new stipulations as follows:

15. The internal circulation improvement shall be installed prior to issuance of the certificate of occupancy.

16. The school shall require a police officer to direct traffic during the 7:45 AM – 8:45 AM school arrival and 3:00 PM – 3:45 PM school dismissal peak hours.

17. The developer shall be responsible for the installation of the deceleration lane, and lane striping improvements at the Lake Park access drive in substantial compliance with the site plan submitted on March 15, 2024, prior to December 31, 2025.

Anre Washington, attorney for Amana Academy, explained that the deceleration lane is a preventative measure if they meet full capacity, but not a necessity for the status quo.

- Paul Osburn, Asst. Public Works Director, discussed item ATH2024-048. This is a request for authorization to approve the following to be paid out of 2022 SPLOST Sidewalks/ Trails/ Greenways/ Beautification line item.

- The current coverage amount of beautification in an amount not to exceed \$60,193.00. After contract execution, we identified additional items that need to be added to our existing Russell Landscape, LLC contract that will add approximately \$60,193.00 to the previously approved contract.
- Requesting to pay \$292,654.00 initial cost of the phase I landscape improvements (completed) for Market Village, City Hall, Library, Community Center, Wolfe Center, Police Department. We had previously amended the contract to add these additional areas into the annual contract and made a budget amendment to the General Fund Facilities departmental budget to cover these improvements. We are reversing that budget amendment in another agenda item to decrease the departmental budget since we are asking to utilize 2022 SPLOST project funds.
- Requesting to move forward with the Phase II request for Fire Stations 1- 5, Police Department – Side, Road Frontage, Rays Garden, City Hall – Back, and Library – Back areas at a cost not to exceed \$326,830.00.

These are all 1-time requests to be paid from 2022 SPLOST. The general ongoing maintenance will be added to B&G operational budget.

- Ashley Youmans, Special Projects Manager, discussed item CON2024-002.

The artist has requested a second amendment to the Public Art Agreement to allow additional time to complete the Fanny Williams Legacy Project and to revise the payment schedule. The requested amended term end date is September 30, 2024 to complete the project. Details of the revised payment schedule along with deliverables required to issue payments are attached to the amendment.

Mayor Pro Tem Gould explained that the ground will be ready in just a matter of a few weeks, and the arm that fabricates is a single robot, and Smyrna's project had not been placed in the queue for it, thus, creating the delay.

- Kristin Robinson, Deputy City Administrator/CFO, explained item ATH2024-054. This position has been vacant since December 2023. A current employee will be moving into this role for a couple years and train the new person that will be onboarded to fill his current position. For item ATH2024-056, if Mrs. Robinson were to leave the City, her

position would not be filled as it is, so they are going to remove it from the classification and pay system.

5. Other Business / Staff Comment

Joe Bennett, City Administrator, updated the Mayor and Council on the following:

- Met with the Cobb County about the 489 process.
- The cities had requested they extend the current contract. Cobb County did not agree initially.
- After meeting yesterday, Cobb County has now agreed to extend the current contract.
- The cities collectively have now said they want to extend the contract with base payments to be increased from \$5M to \$10M.
- 4 cities are in agreement, 2 are not (Marietta and Acworth).
- Current escalator is \$100K each year. Will go back to discuss escalator for the future.

Scott Cochran, city attorney, updated Mayor and Council on a couple of lawsuits.

Mayor Norton stated he had a conversation with Pastor Pennington, and they have agreed to the contract. This item needs to be added to the agenda. He also mentioned that 1,000 kids participated in the Smyrna Little League parade.

Councilmember Oglesby thanked staff for taking care of the potholes in the Arby's parking lot. He expressed appreciation for the police department for handling a sensitive suicide case near his home.

Councilmember Welch stated he will miss the next two Committee of the Whole meetings, April 4 and April 17.

Mayor Pro Tem Gould stated that he and Richard Garland met with some residents about Creatwood Park and improvements for it.

6. Executive Session (As Needed)

7. Adjournment

Mayor Derek Norton adjourned the March 21, 2024 Committee of the Whole meeting at 8:33 PM.

Facilities are provided throughout City Hall for the convenience of persons with disabilities.

THIS MEETING WAS PROPERLY NOTICED AND POSTED AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE NOTICING STANDARDS AS OUTLINED IN O.C.G.A. 50-14-3:
The City of Smyrna website – www.smyrnaga.gov
City Hall, 2800 King Street SE, Notice Boards