

**STREETS AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
CITY OF REHOBOTH BEACH**

March 1, 2011

The Streets and Transportation Committee Meeting of the City of Rehoboth Beach was called to order at 10:04 a.m. by Co-Chair Pat Coluzzi on Tuesday, February 8, 2011 in the Commissioners Room in City Hall, 229 Rehoboth Avenue, Rehoboth Beach, DE.

ROLL CALL

Present: Co-Chair Dennis Barbour, Co-Chair Pat Coluzzi, Kathy Osterholm, Jim Ellison, Dennis Diehl

Absent: Cindy Lovett, Lorraine Zellers, John Gauger

Audience: Richard Kirchoff, David Hastings, Nick of Coast Press,

REVIEW OF AGENDA

There were no additions to the Agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes of the February 8, 2011 Streets and Transportation Committee Meeting were distributed prior to the meeting.

Dennis Diehl made a motion, seconded by Jim Ellison, to approve the February 8, 2011 Streets and Transportation Committee minutes as written. Motion carried unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was none.

Update on State grant for bicycle/pedestrian study.

Co-Chair Pat Coluzzi informed the Committee members that the signed contract has not be received. Jim Ellison had been contacted by John Connor of JMT regarding the State grant and was informed that JMT is associated with a national complete streets organization which provides information sharing, fresh ideas, best practices, etc.

Presentation by Sposato regarding circle landscaping, followed by discussion.

Marcus Richardson, Landscape Designer of Sposato Landscape has looked at issues regarding the traffic circle relating to the line of sight, visibility and pedestrian safety as well as aesthetically enhancing the location to be more visibly pleasing and tying it into the natural aesthetics of the City. Sketched ideas were shown to the Committee members that basically focused on the line of sight and making the changes which had been called out in the Committee's document. Naturalizing the space was proposed which would include eliminating the wall, keeping the raised effect and bringing the landscaping closer towards the lighthouse. Most historical lighthouses incorporate a buffer which includes boulders, manmade concrete and white picket fencing; but this is not common to Rehoboth. Instead of having walls as a deterrent, it was suggested to use a white picket fence. The second option was for the appearance of the circle to be asymmetrical with resin or natural boulders to be located where the wall currently exists, incorporate plant material that is currently used in order to bring color back into the space and the use of ornamental grasses on one side of the lighthouse. There would be a natural slope up to the lighthouse, and the boulders would be laid over where the top of the existing wall is located. Marcus proposed using a type of grass in the contained space that basically maintains itself and would almost eliminate grass cutting in the circle itself. Also suggested was using various ornamental grasses throughout the space so it would look like a dune more so than an area of constructed walls, etc. The third option was to play with the topography of the space and eliminate the wall, incorporate a few boulders, and a few grasses, and make it a larger grass mound in general. The land could be moved and bermed in a wave-type motion, and dune grass could be used to imply the color of the ocean. Layers of bands of annuals could also be used to imply a wave-type motion. The cost for removing the wall can only be answered after looking at the original blueprints, if any, on how the wall was constructed. Sposato maintains the irrigation at the circle but it has issues with watering the turf the same as the flower beds because the irrigation requirements are completely different from one another. Rick Lawson of Sposato Landscape said that they would be able to take down the wall, and they are willing to provide a cost estimate for removing it. The only issue would

be if there are City utilities underground or near the space. The estimated timeframe for the project at the circle would be two weeks, and there would be a lifetime warranty on plant material. One of the questions addressed to Greg Ferrese in coming up with a new suggestion for the annual rotation for the circle, was whether to rotate the roses or at least diminish them so there would only be a single row at the foundation of the wall. Marcus had assumed that the roses were becoming a sight issue. One thing the roses do, when entering the circle, is give a person pause for caution in a greater sense than if the roses were not there. The tendency when there is a lower sight line is to perceive that there is more time to enter the circle than there actually is.

Kathy Osterholm thought it would be a nice contrast for the space to incorporate some rocks or boulders. The aesthetics are more important than considering barriers. She did not see the wall as a vision problem when driving in the circle. The plants are a vision problem when they are overgrown. Kathy's biggest concern was what the cost of removing the wall would be. She would rather stay with what currently exists instead of adding an expense to something that is already in place and is relatively new. A significant barrier is needed in the circle, and drivers coming into the City know the wall is a barrier for them to slow down. The entrances to the circle seem to be the problem, not the center of the circle; and the entrance to the City has its own set of problems before getting to the lighthouse.

Jim liked the randomness and the naturalness of the original scheme, but he was not sure about using a fence because of the smallness of the space; and it would look fake rather than natural. The all grass scheme might look to some like it is unkempt as opposed to something that is carefully designed and put in place. He would like to see the fairly structured but randomly placed boulders, stones and plantings. Natural rocks should be used because there is not a weight issue, etc. and especially if the cost of the natural rocks is comparable to the resin rocks. The sub-committee's study called for rotating the knockout roses because they are planted in the line of sight. Removing the wall will allow lower plantings to be placed beyond where the sub-committee had considered keeping the line of sight open. With the original scheme, the roses can be planted at points where they will not affect the lines of sight. The study was also aimed in part at pedestrians trying to cross Rehoboth Avenue on both sides of the circle. It would be helpful if Marcus and Rick would come back to the Committee with a scheme that shows the Committee what the sight lines are so it can be certain that the proposed plan meets the basic safety requirement. Another treacherous situation where there is no visibility is turning onto Grove Street from Columbia Avenue after entering the circle when coming into the City because of the growth of the plants and trees.

Pat like the first design but without the fence. The fence could be replaced with stone or pavers. The Committee needs to determine if the wall has actually been an issue in terms of line of sight and safety. The circle is the focal point of the City. She does not like the wall and does not know why it is necessary to have the wall. By removing the wall and lowering the land, there will be much better visibility, and it will be more pleasing aesthetically. Once the Committee decides what it would like to recommend to the Board of Commissioners, they will look at it and make a decision on it. Pat suggested that when Marcus does the sight line analysis, the other areas in the medians surrounding the circle can be included.

Dennis Barbour agreed with the first design, and he liked the aesthetics of the fence as long as it would not be extensive or too high. Streetscape was over-engineered, and there is too much cement and not enough natural elements. Visually and aesthetically, it was a mistake to put the wall there. The near misses are the problem at the circle as opposed to the accidents, and part of the near misses has to do with the existing wall and the line of sight issue. Dennis noted that Police Chief Keith Banks has said there are very few accidents at the circle. The plantings at the circle should be indigenous to the area to the extent that a native species can be used which is not invasive.

Richard Kirchhoff, 34 Sixth Street, said that the bigger problem than what is actually in the circle is the mound of plantings when exiting the City on the eastern side of the circle. The holly tree, etc. completely blocks the view of any incoming traffic.

Marcus will return to the Committee with a plan that incorporates all of the issues presented and cost estimates for removing the wall and other items which are not incorporated into the current contract. Dennis Barbour will contact the members of the Committee and Marcus and Rick of Sposato with a future meeting date and time.

Discussion of speed warning signs on Columbia Avenue and other streets.

Dennis Barbour said that Columbia Avenue is the longest unobstructed street in the City which is also a state road. It has become a major thoroughfare for beach and heavy truck traffic. There is one stop sign on the mile long length of Columbia Avenue at First Street. This has resulted in a lot of vehicles speeding. In the summer, there are a lot of pedestrians, bicyclists, etc. who use Columbia Avenue, and safety is an issue. One of the concerns is who

has jurisdiction regarding Columbia Avenue. Dennis has spoken with the State and Greg Ferrese on this matter. He also has a copy of the contract between the City and State determining which entity rules what. The City has full authority to put signs up on Columbia Avenue and does not need permission from the State. There are four speed limit signs on Columbia Avenue going east, one of which is located behind a tree; and there are five speed limit signs going west. Dennis recommended the following: 1. Put yellow signs up that would go below the existing speed limit signs indicating a residential area. 2. Change the ordinance to include a heavier fine for speeding on Columbia Avenue. 3. Additional speed limit signs. Greg Ferrese had indicated that there is money in the budget for this proposed project. The threshold issue is putting the yellow signs on the existing four speed limit signs at a minimum.

Kathy suggested using solar powered speed indicator signs on Columbia Avenue because they are effective in reminding people of what their speed is. She requested a cost of these signs. In addition, these signs could also be placed on First Street and King Charles Avenue. It would be worth trying these signs in a couple of City locations to see what effect they will have on traffic because they are solar powered, and there is almost no maintenance to them. Kathy did not think that the City would be able to charge people an additional fine in one part of the City and not in the other.

Jim noted that the mobile speed indicating cart that is randomly placed at Columbia and Henlopen Avenues essentially does the same thing as the solar powered speed indicating signs and causes him to think about his speed while driving. There had also been discussion about using rumble strips to slow down traffic approaching the circle, and he had suggested putting in a rumble strip for westbound traffic on Columbia Avenue from Grove Street to the circle to slow down traffic as it approaches the circle.

Dennis Barbour said that the problem with the cart is that there is only one in the City which is randomly positioned all over, and he did not think it is effective on Columbia Avenue. What is probably effective is frequently parking a police car on Columbia Avenue. The police should be asked to monitor the proposed solar powered speed indicating sign on Columbia Avenue because there has to be an evaluation mechanism.

Pat liked the idea of the solar powered speed indicating sign, and the City should start with trying one to see how it works on Columbia Avenue after coming out of the circle. She would not be opposed to starting with replacing the speed limit sign at the western end of Columbia Avenue going east with the solar powered speed indicating sign, and then put the yellow residential signs under the three speed limit signs going east. Dennis noted that the State will not allow rumble strips on a state road because it needs to have the road open in the event of an emergency. The City can put in rumble strips on a municipal street. He liked the idea of putting in rumble strips where the roadway becomes a municipal street such as at Grove Street and at the circle. Dennis will research where the rumble strips can be placed.

Dennis Diehl made a motion, seconded by Jim Ellison that recommendations be made to the Board of Commissioners for a new yellow sign indicating a residential neighborhood to be placed below the speed limit signs on Columbia Avenue, for the speed limit signs to be moved to where they are most effective, to place a solar powered blinking radar sign eastbound on Columbia Avenue, and that the police need to monitor the effectiveness of the new solar powered sign. Motion carried unanimously.

Dennis Barbour will make a presentation at the next meeting of the Board of Commissioners. He will also report at the next Committee meeting on what can or cannot be done in regard to rumble strips at the circle and on Columbia Avenue, and what the options are.

Discussion of bump-out at Sussex Street and Columbia Avenue, and recommendation to City Commissioners.

Dennis Barbour noted that traffic which includes a lot of trucks comes from the circle and goes down Columbia Avenue onto Sussex Street. The residents on Sussex Street have been very concerned about safety where Sussex Street meets Columbia Avenue. A meeting was held a year ago at this intersection with the State, City Engineer, Greg Ferrese, Mayor Cooper, Pat Coluzzi and Dennis Barbour, etc. A test was performed with orange rubber cones sticking out. The information Dennis has received from the residents on Sussex Street is that they are thrilled and think this is working very well to curb the speed of vehicles. The idea at the time was for this to be temporary and a test with the notion that long term there would be a curb bump-out with a tree possibly planted in that area. Dennis has spoken with the State since then. The State has to approve a curb bump-out because Sussex Street abuts Columbia Avenue. The City Engineer has to look at the area and come up with a plan. A meeting is scheduled for March 7, 2011 in regard to this matter. The residents of Sussex Street have asked for a recommendation that this goes forward based upon their positive support for it.

Jim Ellison made a motion, seconded by Kathy Osterholm that the Committee endorses proceeding with construction of the final curb bump-out at Sussex Street and Columbia Avenue. Motion carried unanimously.

Other Business

Dennis Barbour noted that credit has not been given to who has paid for the Boardwalk. The idea is to have a sign saying that this was provided for by stimulus funds.

Set next meeting.

The next meeting has been scheduled for March 18, 2011. The time of the meeting will be determined, and all members will be notified.

There being no further business, Co-Chair Pat Coluzzi declared the meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

(Ann M. Womack, City Secretary)

**MINUTES APPROVED ON
APRIL 11, 2011**

(Dennis Barbour, Co-Chair)

(Pat Coluzzi, Co-Chair)