

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING

November 1, 2021

MONTGOMERY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

CALL TO ORDER

President Rebecca Huss called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

Present: Rebecca Huss – President
 Carol Langley – Treasurer
 Ryan Londeen – Secretary
 Jeff Angelo – Board Member
 Byron Sanford – Board Member
 Dan Walker – Board Member

Absent: Arnette Easley – Vice-President

Also Present: Richard Tramm – City Administrator
 Julie Davis – City Council
 Sara Countryman - City Mayor
 Lori Sanguedolce – Gunda Corporation
 Kyle Bertrand – Gunda Corporation
 Jim Patterson – White Oak Studios
 Katherine Vu – WGA Consulting Engineers

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment

CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

1. Consideration and possible action to accept the Downtown Design Master Plan.

Agenda Item presented by Richard Tramm.

Huss noted that there is a quorum of City Council with Ms. Davis in the audience. Tramm noted the meeting notice mentioned the potential of a quorum of City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Jim Patterson with White Oak Studios and Lori Sanguedolce with Gunda Corporation presented the Downtown Design Master Plan.

Liberty Street Intersection

Huss mentioned that the changes on 149 made by TxDOT are going to happen whether the City wants them or not. This plan is to make sure the City gets what it wants and make it work with the TxDOT improvements. Patterson agreed.

FM-149

Sanford asked about the purpose of the parallel parking spots located along FM-149. Patterson said they explored various parking options along FM-149 and given the limited ROW there is not enough room to do both extensive on street parking and pedestrian walkways. It was a balancing act of on street parking and pedestrian enhancements. TxDOT was also concerned about pull in and back in parking spaces from both a safety and congestion perspective. They tried to strategically place the parallel parking spots for very short term pick up and drop off. Sanford reiterated that it's trying to keep traffic flow easier and increase safety. In an uber world it may make sense to have a few drive-in spots. Londeen reminded everyone that the parallel spots was kind of a compromise to leave some on stream parking for those businesses that have on street parking now. Gunda added that during detailed design, the scope of the parking can change, but they wanted to at least have the idea in the plan so that it can be considered in the future.

Londeen asked why the plan shows overhead electric. Was it a part of the plan to put the electric underground? Patterson said it proved problematic from a cost perspective and it might preempt some of the more impactful things you could do. They did not want to present it as a pre-requisite to having a beautiful venue. Kyle Bertrand with Gunda Corporation said it could be upwards of a \$1,000 a foot to do that. Patterson said there are other things that can be done such as making the poles higher and more uniform and burying the lines in the future is still a possibility.

Huss asked if lights could be strung across 149 if higher polls are put in place. Bertrand said it would have to be approved by TxDOT.

Londeen asked if there is an option for decorative polls. Patterson said there are the standard polls (level 1) and there are upgraded polls (level 2). The City will have to pay the difference for level 2 polls but TxDOT will still manage them. The City could do an even nicer version. The City could get some nicely painted and uniform polls if it is not happy with the current polls.

Bertrand said it comes down to who is going to maintain them. If the City is going to maintain them then they usually require the municipality to have one or two in stock. Huss said the City doesn't have the equipment or personnel to manage the upgraded polls. So, the level 2 seems to be the most feasible. Huss asked the cost for level 2 polls. Bertrand said decorative polls in the City of Huntsville cost 5k a piece. He said they are decorative and any decorative polls will not be maintained by TxDOT. Huss asked if the City could hire a third party to management them. Bertrand said yes.

Q&A

Angelo asked how TxDOT plays a part in this plan and can they reject the City's plans. Sanguedolce said they can reject the plans but they generally don't. They like working with the municipalities to foster good working relationships. They do typically say you have to pony up. Angelo asked if they are slow to react. Sanguedolce said it depends on the project and their priority on it. Angelo asked how you they are ready go. Sanguedolce said TxDOT puts out a plan that lists which road projects are coming up. Bertrand said they met with the director of planning and design when putting together the plan and also coordinated with the local area engineer. They liked what they saw. When Houston Galveston Area Council (HGAC) does a call for projects, the City already has a plan that has been vetted by TxDOT.

Angelo and Huss asked how long it took the City of Tomball plan to get implemented from planning phase to construction. Bertrand said 6 years. The City of Tomball showed really good faith in going through the planning process, developing a plan, and begin implementing the plan. Doing coordination up front and getting buy in really helps.

Angelo asked who oversees the process. Bertrand said usually when a call for projects is done in this area it is through HGAC. There is an application process with a number of documents including objective and cost. That goes through a committee and they sort them out.

Angelo asked what the short-term impacts on the businesses will be when installing things like utilities and drainage. Sanguedolce said it depends on the condition of the utility but contractors can usually go in and make the utility connections while keeping the impact to businesses minimal. Angelo asked what the typical timeline is for making the streetscape improvements. Sanguedolce said there are things that can be done to minimize impacts and ensuring they maintain access to their business. It just requires coordination. Bertrand said some things that can be done include evening pours, coordinating businesses hours, boardwalks, etc. Tramm added that there are improvements that will need to be made to some of the utilities no matter what. He said the improvements will be coordinated so that improvements are made just one time. Huss added that is why she has been opposed to making improvements to McCown because you know that it is rotten underneath and it'd be waste to put new pavement over top the pipes that are leaking. It should be done all at once and at the highest quality.

Angelo asked if there are any creative solutions to parking since that is the biggest problem for Montgomery. Bertrand said going vertical with parking is exponentially more expensive so finding surface solutions is going to be the best option. Londeen added the parking issues is more about event parking which is a different problem than day-to-day parking. Patterson said it is not best to size your parking for your two or three days of highest use. He said the City

probably has move parking capacity downtown right now than you know about and reiterated the public-private partnership with parking. For large events, the City could try to use parking outside of downtown that do not have high loads during those days.

Angelo asked if any thought has been given to a trolley system. Huss said municipal public transport said its too big of a money sink (a public policy disaster). Angelo asked about a 3rd party trolley system. Huss said something like duck tours would be more doable for events. Angelo said that parking will be more and more of an issue as more events happen. It's already a nuisance and will be a greater nuisance. Londeen agreed. Huss said close to downtown is Lincoln Elementary, Montgomery Elementary, etc. could be used for offsite parking. Patterson said that during special events, people are more willing to do different type of parking. Londeen said that a budgeted expense could be added to each event to include shuttling. Huss said some events do have offsite parking but it is not marketed too much. Mapme could be used for showing parking areas specific to each event.

Angelo asked why is McCown first. Sanguedolce said it was identified by staff and the public as being a main corridor for the City. Also, the other improvements like Liberty Street, would take longer. Tramm said the City has complete control of the McCown ROW and so it can be started sooner rather than later.

Londeen said he thinks everyone wants to get started on the Clepper project but the ROW acquisition would delay it for several years. Huss said she doesn't think it will require ROW acquisition. Londeen was curious if just the sidewalk could be done. Huss said the street and sidewalk need to be done together due to grade change issues. Patterson said the crux is drainage because the roadside ditches have to be converted to underground storm. Huss thinks you can maybe do one side of sidewalks without doing the entire project. Sanguedolce advised that everything be designed as a whole and then phase construction. Huss agreed that sidewalks along Clepper is a good project that should get started. Bertrand stressed the need to take a look at the utility plan and the drainage plan. You don't want to find out that you have to make significant drainage improvements to convert the road to underground storm sewer.

Londeen asked if the round-a-bout is a benefit to TxDOT as well as the City, then what does the City have to pitch in for? Sanguedolce said if they want a round-a-bout, then City would just be responsible for the beautification part. Londeen asked if the City is at the mercy of their timeline if the City wants TxDOT to pay for their desired improvements. Bertrand TxDOT will be doing a call for projects soon with a significant budget next year. Huss asked what else could be done other than the plan to get a better standing to get selected for funding. Bertrand said having a plan in place helps a lot. Huss added that moving forward on some of the projects will show the City is serious. Sanguedolce agreed. Bertrand said they can take whatever is approved and review it with TxDOT. Patterson said that just having TxDOT aware of what the City is doing will be beneficial. TxDOT staff seemed receptive to the plan. Huss said the last time they met with TxDOT they were less than enthusiastic.

Londeen asked if TxDOT was okay with all the improvements at 149 and 105. Patterson said yes.

Motion to accept the Downtown Design Master Plan and present to City Council was made by Byron Sanford and seconded by Jeff Angelo. All in favor. (6-0)

2. Consideration and possible action to move forward with elements contained in the Downtown Master Design Plan.

Huss said this is a continuation of the discussion from the previous agenda item.

Huss brought up the Clepper Drive sidewalk improvements on the south side of the road and perhaps grading down the road. Tramm said that includes the City's sidewalk grant application that includes a sidewalk from 149 to Bessie Price Owens and north to past the library. The City has still not heard back on that application. Huss asked where the on-street parking would go along the community center parking. Tramm said he thinks the plan is to put the sidewalk on the north side of Clepper in that area then crossing over to the south side east of the Community Center. Patterson said that is consistent with their conclusions. Huss asked if the project could be completed and under construction by September or August. Tramm said it depends on the scope that the MEDC is participating in and how the project will be funded (grants, 100% by MEDC, etc.). Tramm said staff should have a better answer to the question in the coming weeks once they hear about the status of the application. Everyone agreed the Clepper Sidewalk project is a good idea.

Huss asked if the City is going to go forward on the utility master plan. Tramm said that is part of what is currently being done. The CIP has to be reviewed every five years. Huss asked if it included a catalogue of age and condition of pipes. Tramm said it was pipe sizing. Huss asked if that could be put in the scope of work. Tramm said he thinks that might be possible. WGA indicated yes. Londeen asked to clarify that the utility plan includes size, age, type of pipes. WGA said City Council authorized the sanitary sewer televising which includes the downtown area. This study will include the material, size, and condition of the sanitary sewer lines. As far as water lines in the downtown area, it is truly unknown when the lines were installed. The City has little records of when they were installed other than the size of the lines. When determining where water lines need to be repaired or replaced, they look at where the common leaks are happening or where repetitive repairs are occurring. For determining what lines to increase they look at where growth is happening and projected to be and finding the most efficient route for water line upsizing to meet the demand. Londeen asked if the MEDC moves forward with the McCown Street improvements, could it depend on their recommendation for utility improvements based on the sewer study and their general knowledge of water line condition. Vu said yes.

Sanford said he would like to move forward on the McCown improvements assuming the MEDC could get matching block grants to help fund it and the City would be doing the best it can to help the businesses with implementation. It makes to start on McCown because it's the area that gets the most foot traffic and business during festivals and is the center of town. Tramm said this is one large plan, but it will be attacked in pieces. Things will be done over time and by parcel. It will be done with an eye on how to work with the businesses and with an eye on how to maximize benefit and minimize cost. It will also be implemented in a way that keeps in mind the overall interest of the City.

Sanford said we need to be realistic about the size of automobiles. City residents drive large trucks and SUVs. The radiuses at some of the intersections, such as at the Jacobs property, needs to consider the type of automobile that will be regularly using them. Tramm agreed, not everyone is driving an economy car. It depends on what standard you use and what your roadway width it. You also have to account for everything that is going on at the intersection, not just one-way vehicular traffic.

Huss asked what the first step with reconstruction of McCown Street would be. For instance, it may need to come after the Jacob’s lot—or the Jacobs lot at least considered—because it is at a different elevation. Tramm said there needs to be further discussion internally with staff and the consultants to adequately answer this question.

Huss suggested tabling this item and bringing it up at the next MEDC meeting.

Motion to table this item to the next MEDC meeting was made by Byron Sanford and seconded by Dan Walker. All in favor. (6-0)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON ITEMS FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION.

BOARD INQUIRY

Huss asked about the board inquiry item from last meeting regarding the partnership initiative. Sanford said he and Angelo still need to mee on it. It can be discussed at the next meeting.

Walker mentioned that getting McCown street improvements implemented will garner more interest and participation from the local businesses. And the City does own most of that ROW so it wont require land acquisition. Huss agreed. She noted that the new owner of the steakhouse may be wanting to make improvements to this parking area. The City should coordinate with him before he spends money on improvements or is in sync with the plan.

ACTION ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

<i>ACTION ITEM</i>	<i>ASSIGNEE</i>	<i>DUE DATE</i>
Present update on the partnership initiative	Jeff Angelo Byron Sanford	Next MEDC meeting

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Jeff Angelo and seconded by Ryan Londeen to adjourn the meeting at 7:16 p.m. All in favor. (6-0)

Submitted by: _____ Date Approved: _____

Richard Tramm, City Administrator

Rebecca Huss, MEDC President