

MINUTES OF ANNUAL AND REGULAR MEETING

August 21, 2023

MONTGOMERY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Jeff Angelo called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

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

Absent: Wade Nelson – Board Member

Also Present: Dave McCorquodale, Assistant City Administrator
Diana Cooley, Deputy City Secretary

CALL TO ORDER

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were made.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

2. Update presentation of the McCown Streetscape Improvements Project.

Mr. Jim Patterson gave his presentation on the McCown Streetscape Improvements Project. Mr. Patterson showed a visual piece of the recommendation of the north portion. Mr. Patterson said they looked at maintaining full time access through McCown Street going northbound only and using Maiden Lane as a one-way southbound street. Mr. Patterson said one way to visualize it is to compare it to a city center in Houston where there is a pedestrian and car environment with nice paving and no curbs along the side with the main street running north/south through the city center which serves as a temporary pedestrian space but also accommodates cars going at a slow speed with a raised traffic table in place which presents itself as more of a parking lot environment than a street. Mr. Patterson showed where McCown Street would be a two-way street including improvements along private property as a preliminary design to see how it could all work someday and how it could all function as a pedestrian, festival space. Mr. Patterson said within the right of way and a little on the private property, this would accommodate what would be a raised deck including ramps and steps. Mr. Patterson said the raised deck is basically a raised platform. Mr. Patterson said there needs to be some type of traffic control and the traffic engineers looked at the plan and although they have not yet done detail design, they feel it is a viable approach especially at low speeds.

Mr. Patterson said they felt the advantages would be it maintains a simpler and easier to understand roadway pattern where people can continue to go northbound on McCown and have a one-way southbound on Maiden since it is a narrow street.

Ryan Londeen said the original scope was no one-way traffic along McCown Street as it was just for emergency vehicles only. Ryan Londeen asked if the one-way street from McCown Street up to Liberty Street was an add on that they had to account for the traffic flow or will that always be needed there. Mr. Patterson said no it would have a turnaround spot. Ryan Londeen said he liked the raised traffic table but there could be a safety conflict with the vehicles and pedestrians. Ryan Londeen asked how does one make sure kids are not playing in the street and a vehicle drives on it because he knows it is a street. Mr. Patterson said there are several ways to create awareness. Mr. Patterson said one way would be to create a change in the pavement and add elements such as planters and flowers along the way or maybe even adding railings. Byron Sanford said there are some cities at particular times of the day that close the area completely off and have their night time activities. Ryan Londeen said maybe it is something they close off unless the property owners are being difficult. Mr. Patterson said it does allow you to manage it the way you want to. Mr. Patterson said the only downside that might be from a traffic engineers perspective is that people would be getting used to it being one way and then causing confusion about what to do.

Ryan Londeen asked if the steakhouse owner is not interested to collaborate with them. Dave McCorquodale said the steakhouse owner is open to it.

Cheryl Fox asked how many parking spaces does this delete. Mr. Patterson said fifteen parking spaces. Cheryl Fox said it is a real concern to the businesses there as there is not much parking downtown. Mr. Patterson said during the Master Plan they learned there is more of a perception of a parking problem when they compare it to the distance we all walk to an HEB or something similar as parking is available. Mr. Patterson said when we go downtown we all expect to park very close to the place we are going.

Ryan Londeen asked if they are losing 15 parking spaces. Ryan Londeen said he does not like the idea of it because there is nothing down there in his opinion and he would rather go the other way.

Dan Walker asked if the steakhouse area is wide enough to facilitate a road through there. Mr. McCorquodale said for one way it would be. Mr. Patterson said it could even be two way if you did not have parking but you cannot have a two way street and parking.

Mr. McCorquodale said one of the challenges with the concept from the Master Plan of the parking on the north end, in the sketch shown currently there is a dead end parking lot without a turn around and that is part of what the traffic engineers were saying could be an issue.

Byron Sanford said the steakhouse owner is not a fan of the dumpster in the corner. Mr. Patterson said that will not be the future home of the dumpster.

Byron Sanford said it is his understanding the City has tried many times to repair McCown Street and asked what the solution is to properly repairing it. One of the traffic engineers said the area is recorded to see what the base and condition of the soil is and then they would create a proposal of what needs to be done and if

it is concrete pavement, exactly how thick it needs to be. Ryan Londeen said they will look under the pavement, see the condition of the soil, and know what to do.

Mr. Patterson said in regard to the material being used, they wanted to first make sure everyone agreed with the direction they were heading. Mr. Patterson said they would work with Mr. McCorquodale concerning recommendations for materials and look at options in which to provide pros and cons of each and cost implications for it. Mr. Patterson said all options will need to comply with city roadway design standards.

Mr. Patterson said in regard to the overall plan, it was mentioned maybe they do not want to allow traffic to go through there. Mr. Patterson said if they developed it the way it was shown then you have the ability to manage it the way you want to. Ryan Londeen said he is more open to it if they have an agreement with the steakhouse. Mr. Patterson said then your hands would not be tied. Mr. McCorquodale said the steakhouse owner did express a willingness to sell it to the City. Mr. McCorquodale said if they are going to reroute all of the traffic they want it to be a right of way. Mr. McCorquodale said it is fair to the owner because we do not want him to pay the property taxes on a city street. Mr. McCorquodale said they have not had conversations on this to be able to get into the details of it.

Mr. McCorquodale said with the City controlling 213 Prairie Street there is opportunity for on street parking with a dozen spots behind the steakhouse for parking and even if the property were to go back on the market it would behoove the City to create some on street parking on the west side of that lot. Byron Sanford said perhaps include parallel parking behind there and clean up the entire area which is very unattractive.

Mr. Patterson said what you have seen is a concept at this point. Mr. Patterson said they are ready to move ahead to detail design but they do not want to move forward until everyone is comfortable with the direction they are going.

Byron Sanford said for Beaumont and other cities at five o'clock and beyond is when most business is going to happen and that would be the time to be able to close that section off. Byron Sanford said creating an atmosphere is also a part of this plan and it makes no sense to him if they are still going to run traffic through that section. Mr. McCorquodale said to Byron Sanford's point they could take the materials and keep the design with the materials of the street on the southern end and be able to have more flexibility where it feels like an extension of that to give them the opportunity to close that down and test drive it a bit.

Ryan Londeen said they could shut that down during the wine festival and each street would get shut down. Mr. Patterson said it could be to still have the public right of way that covers almost the entire parking bay so you could do that and still have the freedom to manage it to be open to traffic or not since it would be the City's right of way.

Byron Sanford asked if the west part of McCown Street will need to be raised all the way across. Mr. Patterson said they are not raising the street and that the roadway stays relatively the same. Mr. Patterson said it is essentially a shared deck along those buildings.

Cheryl Fox asked what are they going to do from McCown Street to SH-105. Mr. McCorquodale said right

now that is out of the project scope but that would be the next step in whether there will be access all the way to SH-105 or do they want to close that off. Mr. McCorquodale said the Master Plan did propose closing it at SH-105 from John Butler south. Mr. McCorquodale said the primary goal was on SH-105 being able to have a right hand turn lane north on Liberty Street, but with the location of McCown Street there is no room without the access.

Byron Sanford said ideally if they could work the right of way on the SH-105 idea is where they might be able to pick up some spots. Byron Sanford asked if it is possible if it is closed off to have some more spots there.

Mr. Patterson said during the Master Plan they included a budget for all the different projects in the Master Plan and since then they have already experienced incredible construction market escalation and so is sure they will already be budget challenged. Mr. Patterson said originally in the Master Plan it did not include treatment of the pavement in this area.

Mr. McCorquodale said the assumption back then was this would get repaved with asphalt and put on hold long enough to see if they could pave it as part of this project but not try and repave the entire street but come back a year later when they would have the funding to do so. Byron Sanford said they would need to take this in three phases over three years. Mr. McCorquodale said there are some opportunities but they are not at the point if they really dug into it to figure out what they can afford. Mr. Patterson said in addition to pavement there will be storm drainage and raised traffic table issues in which they would coordinate with the drainage engineers to make sure that is accommodated.

Mr. McCorquodale said if the Board has an idea now certainly share it or if you want to wait and think on it and then follow up with him, he can relay the message.

Mr. Patteson answered additional questions relating to turning left on College Street.

Mr. McCorquodale asked if the Board has any direction or if they want to sleep on it and follow back up.

Jeff Angelo said no one is jumping at moving forward so maybe they should have a discussion and decide if they like this design or want to see additional changes.

Ryan Londeen said they added a through street which was somewhat there before which they already agreed on and now they have a turning lane on McCown Street. Ryan Londeen said the only thing different is less tables on McCown Street which is fine and less trees.

Jeff Angelo asked if they need to get a buy in from Wade before a decision is made. Mr. McCorquodale said Wade is open to it. Ryan Londeen said they should try and see where that conversation goes before they decide anything.

Byron Sanford said they should consider a phase I, II, and III and work with the busiest traffic area first which is around the steakhouse and solve that area first even if it means temporarily closing it down at certain times of the day. Byron Sanford said the other part of the plan is at least two or three years away.

Byron Sanford said if they were to focus on anything that would be it.

Jeff Angelo asked how will that affect the businesses where the plaza area is going to be and how will people get to those businesses. Byron Sanford said they would need to regulate it how they see fit.

Discussion continued regarding the plaza area, resurfacing, the right of way, and the timeline these phases would take. Ryan Londeen asked if they would be resurfacing everything with the project area. Mr. Patterson said that was the intent. Ryan Londeen said they would be separating it out in two phases with resurfacing in one phase and pedestrian parking in phase two so it would be more manageable from a fund standpoint. Byron Sanford said he is wanting to do resurfacing on the busiest part of town. Mr. Patterson said from the construction standpoint they could have two phases, but from the design phase no matter what they do, the drainage needs to begin before repaving. Ryan Londeen said they need to hear a recommendation as far as doing the parking area first. Jeff Angelo said they need to decide if they can get the go ahead to continue with the design phase. Mr. Patterson said whatever they draw they could do it in one, two or three phases.

Ms. Lori Sanquidulce with CSE Inc. said one concern with McCown Street is there is the bowl effect so when they go through and they redesign the drainage which has to tie into pavement design, it will elevate the roadway and is a reconstruction of the entire street. Ms. Sanquidulce said if you try to break it you will have tie in issues. Ryan Londeen asked if they can do it in phases. Lori said it would be more difficult because the drainage is in the middle. Ryan Londeen asked if they could see them putting this into two phases from a drainage perspective. Ms. Sanquidulce said as of right now no because it all drains south.

Ryan Londeen said he thinks they need to put this on pause until they see if there is any momentum in getting the right of way for the steakhouse and negotiate a deal with the steakhouse.

Mr. Patterson said he thinks it would help if they could tell them how they want traffic to go one way or the other and if they need to pause to reach a level of comfort in their decision that is fine. Ryan Londeen said they want the traffic to go east which was preferred and in the original plan.

Jeff Angelo said for the purpose of this visit they can pause it for now and get back to them with a decision. Mr. McCorquodale agreed and said to put the direction of the project on hold until the Board follows up.

CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE ACTION:

1. **Approval of meeting minutes for May 15, 2023.**

Motion to approve the May 15, 2023 meeting minutes was made by Ryan Londeen and seconded by Dan Walker. All in favor. (5-0)

3. **Review and discussion of the proposed FY 2023-2024 MEDC budget.**

Mr. McCorquodale presented the high points of the budget and reviewed line items separately.