

Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: May 12, 2021
To: Citizens Advisory Committee
From: Benjamin H. Pingree, PLACE Director
Subject: Summary Minutes for March 31, 2021 CAC Meeting

Committee Members present:

Jim McShane, Chair	Elva Peppers
Peter Okonkwo, Vice-Chair	Allen Stucks
Chris Daniels	Robert Volpe
Mary Glowacki	Hugh Tomlinson
Claudette Cromartie	Seán McGlynn
Kathy Bell	Daniel Petronio
Linda Vaughn*	

*virtual participant

Committee Members absent:

Mandy Bianchi	
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I. AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

There were no agenda modifications.

II. CITIZEN COMMENTS

The Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency offered three alternatives for citizen comment, by email, through virtual participation, or in person. There were no comments received by email and no speakers in person or registered via Zoom.

III. CONSENT

Allen Stucks moved, seconded by Claudette Cromartie, to approve the consent agenda.

The motion passed 11-0.

Robert Volpe and Linda Vaughn joined the meeting following the motion.

1. Approval of the February 4, 2021, Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Option #1: Approve the February 4, 2021, Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Citizens Advisory Committee meeting minutes.

2. Recommendation of Acceptance of the Status Update on Blueprint Infrastructure Projects

Option #1: Recommend that the Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Board of Directors accept the March 2021 update on Blueprint Infrastructure projects.

IV. PRESENTATION / INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- Office of Economic Vitality Project Updates

Richard Fetchick and Drew Dietrich provided a brief overview of the business development activities, strategic initiatives, and major capital projects for OEV including the Convention Center, FAMU Bragg Stadium upgrades, Innovation Park Incubator, TLH International Airport improvements, and 11 active recruitment projects. Mr. Dietrich also provided an update on site selection, development, and market analysis. Lastly, membership expansion of the Big Bend Manufacturing Association into Madison, Suwannee, and Lafayette counties was also discussed.

Darryl Jones provided a brief overview of the Minority Women Small Business Enterprises (MWSBE) activities including currently underway updates to the Disparity Study, program expansion through the MIT Sloan School of Management, an IEDC project to identify ways that HBCUs and Economic Development Organizations can partner together, similar to how OEV has worked with FAMU, and the work of the MWSBE Division to provide a tool kit to all MBE and WBE firms.

Claudette Cromartie asked CAC Chair Jim McShane about whether his organization, CareerSource, was still working on skill development in order for students to become local government contractors. Mr. McShane indicated that such trainings were ongoing and included a two-week training period with lessons on ethics, professionalism, and other essential skills, employer placement for 320 hours of work, and hopeful employment after that period. Ms. Cromartie questioned how difficult it was to get students to participate in those programs. Mr. McShane indicated that recruitment was difficult. Last year, of 300 referrals from the City's TEMPO program, 20 joined the program. Mr. McShane highlighted a new program with the school board that provided referrals of dropouts to pull more students into the program.

Allen Stucks asked whether the pool of MBE and WBE firms was growing. Darryl Jones indicated that the pool was increasing, with support of CEDR and CARES Act funds, and with reciprocal certification offered by the MWSBE Division to those businesses certified with Office of Supplier Diversity. Mr. Stucks asked how OEV was helping sustain existing MBE firms and how the MWSBE Division supported MBE firms in seeking procurement opportunities. Mr. Jones described the MWSBE Academy curriculum that changes based on the advice of the MWSBE Citizens Advisory Committee. He further described programs of the ARPC Revolving Loan Fund and FAMU Federal Credit Union that provide capital to non-traditional borrowers to help firms build capacity.

Mr. Stucks asked what sorts of programs were available to businesses that sustained losses. Mr. Jones indicated that referral to a lender might be appropriate.

Chris Daniels requested additional information on reciprocal certification. Darryl Jones stated that businesses certified by the Office of Supplier Diversity qualified for utilization in the MWBE Program in procurement. The business would need to register with the MWSBE Division to ensure that spending with their firm, as minorities, was captured in the contract compliance databases of all three local governmental entities. Mr. Jones also noted that the MWSBE Division was working on reciprocal certification for those businesses certified by the Leon County School Board.

Claudette Cromartie questioned whether the support provided to local businesses on site selection, development, and market analysis was passed on to end consumers. Drew Dietrich stated that the support identified in site selection, development, and market analysis was technical and data-based, not financial, and helped business performance.

Richard Fetchick provided a brief overview of the data and analytics for OEV including March Data Driver statistics and business establishment.

Allen Stucks questioned whether outreach was being done outside our region to encourage companies to locate in Tallahassee. Drew Dietrich stated that OEV advertised nationally, regionally, and locally; however the primary focus of advertisements was driven by the targeted industries in the OEV Strategic Plan, not area of the country.

Elva Peppers noted that she had experienced that lower wage positions were difficult to fill during COVID because of the availability of increased unemployment and stimulus funds and that perhaps unemployment numbers could be exacerbated by this phenomenon. Richard Fetchick indicated that he had also heard this from other small businesses resulting from federal aid packages and stimulus. He noted that OEV remained engaged with CareerSource and other ecosystem partners to encourage reentry into the workforce.

Allen Stucks questioned whether training operations were still underway. Drew Dietrich indicated that ecosystem partners such as CareerSource, TCC, Lively, and others performed that work. Jim McShane stated that as an example, when manufacturers needing specific skills were identified, CareerSource and their partners recruited students and workers into training programs in order to ensure a pipeline was in place to get workers into those skilled jobs.

A copy of the presentation is on file at Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency.

V. PUBLIC HEARING

Shortly after 5:30, Jim McShane convened the First Public Hearing to Consider a Substantial Amendment to the Northeast Park Project and called for any citizens to be heard. Megan Doherty indicated that no written comments were received and there were no public speakers in person or present on the Zoom platform.

Megan Doherty gave a presentation on the Substantial Amendment to the Northeast Park Project. Ms. Doherty stated that the County intends to sell the old site and that an amendment is necessary to update the Blueprint project map to reflect the new location of the Northeast Park.

Hugh Tomlinson questioned the anticipated financial impact with the site change. Megan Doherty stated that currently, no change to the total Blueprint project cost was proposed. To purchase the new site, Leon County intended to sell the existing property at Thomasville Road and Proctor Road and use those funds to purchase the new Northeast Park site. Susan Dawson clarified that Leon County did not currently have appraisals of the site and that all information provided was based on the best data available.

Elva Peppers suggested that, for the presentation to the IA Board, a map showing the locations of both the old and new sites would be helpful.

Allen Stucks moved, seconded by Peter Okonkwo, to recommend that the IA Board approve the Substantial Amendment to Blueprint Project 19, Northeast Park, as described in Agenda Item Attachment #2.

The motion passed 12-0, with Mr. Volpe abstaining from the vote because of a conflict.

IV. PRESENTATION / INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- Blueprint Project Updates

Autumn Calder provided a brief overview on the Blueprint Infrastructure program updates including a \$160 million investment over 14 active capital projects in the Southern Strategy Area. Ms. Calder also provided an update on the Market District Park project and the central park programming concept. Megan Doherty provided an overview of the recent community engagement activities and survey results for the Northeast Connector Corridor: Bannerman Road project.

Claudette Cromartie questioned the status of the FAMU Way Project, specifically the connection at Gamble Street, and whether the project was within budget. Autumn Calder stated that FAMU Way roadway improvements were a City of Tallahassee project therefore they would have budget information on the project. Blueprint will reach out to the City to get the current budget information. Regarding timing, Ms. Calder stated that the City was currently planning the ribbon cutting ceremony which she anticipated occurring within four to six weeks.

Tatiana Daguillard provided a brief overview of the History & Culture Trail project including project goals, project area, and next steps. Interpretive kiosks and public art installations would highlight the Allen Subdivision, FAMU & Civil Rights, Railroad Depot, and the economic engines of Villa Mitchell, Boynton Still, and Elberta Crate.

A copy of the presentation is on file at Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency.

- Status Update on the Northeast Gateway Project

Ryan Wetherell provided a presentation on the Northeast Gateway project including the proposed treatments and intersection options evaluation.

The proposed roadway alignment was altered to minimize impacts to cultural and historical sites, existing homesteaded properties, and reduce environmental impacts by crossing the floodway at the narrowest point. It further maximized opportunities for a future interchange with Interstate-10. The estimated cost for construction was \$43 million; Blueprint was pursuing a State Infrastructure Bank loan or bond for the project construction.

Regarding operations at Centerville Road and Shamrock Street South extension connection, Ryan Wetherell stated that Blueprint proposed a roundabout for efficiencies through the 2045 design year. The roundabout minimized impacts to commercial property, created ideal conditions for a future trailhead in the southeast corner, and provided for safe and continuous operations supported by the Killlearn Homes Association. It was noted a roundabout design would impact the Celebration Baptist Church property, the Canopy Protection Zone, and increase construction cost by \$1-2 million. Staff also evaluated a signalized intersection; however, it was less efficient operationally through 2045 when compared to the roundabout, and the Canopy Road created sight distance challenges. The roundabout option allowed for improved site distance through the intersection and was the best alternative and therefore, was the staff recommendation.

Allen Stucks asked about public engagement on the proposed alternatives. Ryan Wetherell stated that two virtual engagements were conducted within the past month, one scheduled midday and one in the evening to accommodate different schedules so various community members could attend. Mr. Wetherell noted that another public engagement would be held in May, and stakeholder engagement would also continue.

Regarding operations at Welaunee Boulevard and Shamrock Street Extension, Ryan Wetherell stated that for reasons of safety and traffic efficiency, a roundabout would be the only option proposed to the IA Board. The intersection would be in the middle of a greenfield with no adjacent development. The roundabout maintained efficiency and provided an inherent traffic calming effect. It would be well signed and lit to identify it per Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) standards.

Regarding operations at Welaunee Boulevard, Roberts Road, and Centerville Road, Ryan Wetherell noted four options: Alternative A proposed a five-leg roundabout, Alternative B a five-leg signalized intersection, Alternative C realigned Roberts Road, and Alternative D provided an eastern alignment. Alternative A would be aligned mainly along the existing conservation easement to avoid impacts to homesteaded properties. Alternative A also maintained the connection with Pimlico Road, as requested by Leon County School Board, provided continuous operations, and presented no conflicts with pedestrian facilities. Pedestrian safety was of concern; however, there are no existing sidewalks or trails in the area. Mr. Wetherell stated that the goal of residents and Blueprint was to maintain the character of Centerville Road. A five-legged roundabout had a large footprint and right-of-way needs would impact five parcels, including a portion of the St. Phillips AME Church property and conservation easement. Mr. Wetherell noted that the conservation easement was created with the construction of Roberts Elementary and Montford Middle Schools in mind and provided for construction of transportation and utility improvements through the easement. It was largely planted pines which were important but not environmentally sensitive, particularly when compared to the floodplain and other environmentally sensitive areas in the area. Lastly, Mr. Wetherell noted that one important feature with Alternative A would be the opportunity to preserve a healthy, 71-inch live oak tree on site.

Ryan Wetherell stated that Alternative B, the five-leg signalized intersection presented multiple challenges to operations including lags or delays in signal timing, as well as the tight, acute, and skewed angles of each roadway. Alternative B would include two dedicated right turn lanes to support operations, would maintain the Pimlico Road connection, and minimize impacts to homesteaded property through a smaller footprint.

Ryan Wetherell stated that Alternative C, Roberts Road realignment, shifted to a four-leg signalized intersection at acute angles, for Welaunee Boulevard and Centerville Road with Roberts Road connecting south of the intersection. It also included the requested Pimlico Road extension. Alternatives C minimized the impacts of the five-leg signalized intersection, however, it produced significant impacts to the homesteaded property and right-of-way and construction cost increases to the project.

Ryan Wetherell stated that Alternative D, the eastern alignment, continued Roberts Road east, on its existing path, aligning Welaunee Boulevard through the adjacent non-homesteaded property that held significant wetland areas, and realigning Roberts Road to a stop condition on a curve. The proposed alignment for Welaunee Boulevard would cross a significant floodway that drained to Lake Lafayette. Alternative D would require bridging and mitigation, and would be a longer roadway, making Alternative D inconsistent with Leon County's approach to preserving flood plains. Furthermore, Alternative D would not preserve the 71-inch live oak tree. Alternative D did not directly support a Pimlico Road connection, but one could be accommodated to the south of the schools. Lastly, Alternative D would increase the project budget by approximately \$2.9 million.

Mary Glowacki moved, seconded by Claudette Cromartie, to adopt staff's recommendations regarding the ranking of the alternatives.

The motion passed 12-0, with Robert Volpe abstaining from the vote because of a conflict.

V. ADJOURN

Alan Stucks moved, seconded by Chris Daniels, to adjourn.

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:19 pm.