

MEETING NOTES

MACON/PLEASANT HILL PROJECT

MASTER CONTRACT#: TOOELENV100523 · TASK ORDER#: 10 · PROJECT#: NHIM0-0016-01(092), BIBB

Version #: 1.0

Issue Date: 5/2/13

Attendees: GDOT: Clinton Ford, OPD; Eric Duff, OES; Kimberly Larson, Communications

EnviroResolution (ER): Banks Craig; Jeff Dickerson

URS: Mickey O' Brien; James Lawson

PHNIG: Peter Givens

Community: Alice Jackson; Yolanda Latimore

Local Elected Officials: Senator David Lucas

City of Macon: Keith Moffett

Location: 4499 Riverside Drive, Macon, GA

Date: 5/2/13

Purpose: Macon/Pleasant Hill – URS/ Penniman Meeting

CC: Peter Givens; Naomi Johnson; Della Henderson; Captain Willie May; Pastor Billy Graham McFadden; Pastor Tom Anderson; Pastor Tony Lowden; Camilla Johnson; Judge Billy Randall; Senator David Lucas; Representative Nikki Randall; Representative James Beverly; Representative Allen Peake;- Meeting invitees received email invitations and telephone calls reminding them of the meeting.

Discussion

Item 1: URS-Presentation of Jefferson Long Park and Streetscapes

Action Item(s)

Mickey O' Brien led the discussion of URS' design plans for the Jefferson Long Park:

- Mr. O'Brien thanked everyone for coming and thanked Mr. Givens for all his help.
- Mickey said he, Mr. Givens, Naomi Johnson, and Yolanda discussed the history of the Community Garden and Park. They discussed how the framework for the park could start taking shape. Next, the group discussed Sarah Bailey, one of the founders of the park. They also discussed where there are sun and shade opportunities in the park.
- Peter Givens said Jefferson Long is appropriate for the park. We don't want to include any others in the park.
- Peter Givens has concerns about the project moving too slowly. He wants to find ways to fast-track the project.
- Mr. Givens discussed a meeting he attended with the DOT Commissioner, several DOT Board Members, and several state representatives. He said there was discussion at the meeting about finding ways to get Russell Claxton involved in the project again. Peter said there is some design that has already been done by Russell Claxton that is ready to go. Russell has already made renderings re: trees, shrubs, and walking trails.
- Mickey taped a piece of paper to the wall and began drawing a framework for the Jefferson Long Park. Mickey said all great parks consist of two things: 1) areas for shade, and 2) areas for sun. The park will be bordered by First Avenue; Pursley Street; and Craft Street. Pecan Street will be turned into green space to enlarge the park.
- Mickey said Jefferson Long Park is a beautiful site which is well positioned for a park. The area has nice pecan trees and a wonderful community garden. He said Mr. Givens also took URS

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down First Avenue and across I-75 to show URS the Linear Park site.

- Mr. Givens had discussions with owners of two adjacent lots in the park, and the two lot owners are willing sellers. Acquisition of these two lots would expand the size of the park. In addition, there is a house on the corner of First Avenue and Pecan Street. This house is a tenant house with no tenant at the moment. The owner of the house is an unwilling seller because he knows the park is going to be built and is holding out for a high offer.
- Senator Lucas asked if eminent domain could be used by GDOT to acquire the two vacant lots and the house.
- Clinton Ford said these parcels are not affected by the project so GDOT cannot use eminent domain to acquire the parcels.
- Mr. Givens said he would set up a meeting with the Mayor to discuss the possibility of the City of Macon acquiring the home and lots to expand the size of the Jefferson Long Park.
- Senator Lucas said it is incumbent on the City of Macon to acquire the house because it is for the good of the community. One property owner should not stop the mitigation from proceeding.
- Senator Lucas suggested meeting with the City of Macon Economic and Community Development Department (ECD) right now.
- Mr. Givens said he has spoken with Wanzina Jackson of ECD about this issue before. If the Mayor gives the marching orders, this parcel can be acquired.
- Mickey said the Community Garden is doing well despite too much shade. It is best to limit the amount of shade in the garden.
- Mr. Givens said several of the trees are hollow or dead and need to be removed to give the garden more sunlight. He stated there is no interest in planting any more trees, but Macon is hot in the summer so it is necessary to be careful not to remove all the shade. Low shrubs are preferred in the garden.
- Mr. Givens said he spoke with Ms. Denard because she has a stage/amphitheatre next to the Community Garden which could potentially serve as a stage for free concerts. It might be possible to put a gate on her property line which could be opened during events.
- Mickey said it is necessary to be aware of liability issues from people crossing onto private property.
- Mickey said at this point, the total park area is 4 ½ or 5 acres. If the City of Macon can acquire the adjacent vacant lots or house that would be a bonus. The Community Garden will stay in place. Logically, the lawn area will fall in the middle of the park.
- Peter said there are discussions about putting a gazebo in the park area either at the end of the great lawn or on the great lawn depending on where the walking trails are laid out. In addition, there should be an area on the lawn where people in Pleasant Hill can lay out a blanket and relax.
- Mickey said Pursley Street's interaction with the park will be critical to the park's success. He suggested finding a way to tie in Pursley Street as an extension of the park. URS thinks a shaded, pedestrian promenade with benches along Pursley Street is a great idea. The pedestrian promenade on Pursley Street will be a very active, energized area. URS also thinks there could be electricity wired to the gazebo for performances. Mickey said with respect to the amphitheatre next door, it is necessary to be careful about portraying private property as a public space.
- Mr. Givens discussed putting a brick entrance on Pursley Street as an inviting entrance to the Jefferson Long Park. He said this entrance to the park could be part of the streetscapes.

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- Peter advised against opening Pecan Street because that would be limiting the green space for the park. The great thing about green space is being able to sit down on the grass and relax.
- Mickey said URS is exploring ways to lay out walking trails across the lawn area.
- Yolanda Latimore asked if Pecan Street will be removed.
- Peter Givens said yes. The asphalt will be taken up, and the street will be removed to create more green space.
- Mickey said that with an area this small, there should not be too many trails across the lawn.
- Mickey said this is the community's park. He asked if anyone else has input. Mickey asked for questions and comments.
- Senator Lucas called Keith Moffett, with the City of Macon, to come to the meeting and discuss the house at the corner of First Avenue and Pecan Street. Sen. Lucas wanted to know the possibility of the City of Macon acquiring the house.
- Senator Lucas asked whether construction of the park is scheduled a long time in the future.
- Clinton Ford said the City needs to acquire the other parcels now if the City plans on acquiring them.
- Peter Givens said the gazebos are in the park for a focal point and aesthetics, not to establish an entertainment venue. We just want an inviting, passive green space.
- Yolanda Latimore said she read how High Line Park in New York became one of the most successful parks in the country.
- Mickey said he has worked on parks for over 20 years, and the Jefferson Long Park has that type of potential. The Community may want to consider forming a conservancy to help maintain the park.
- Peter Givens said the Pleasant Hill Neighborhood Improvement Group has a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the City of Macon to maintain all the green space.
- Keith Moffett said the MOA signifies that the City of Macon is a strong partner in this project. Keith asked if the house on the corner of First Avenue and Pursley is a priority right now.
- Senator Lucas said yes. He said there are two lots with willing sellers and one house with an unwilling seller. He asked the City to look into acquiring the lots and house.
- Senator Lucas asked if PHNIG has a 501(c)(3) in place to get a grant in order to help maintain the cultural resource center.
- Peter Givens said the community is going to maintain the cultural resource center. There is some funding from GDOT and some grant money. PHNIG has been talking with FHWA about grant money. PHNIG and the Youth Activities Task Force are both 501 (c)(3) entities. Peter said PHNIG will get to this issue down the line, but PHNIG has been focused on more pressing issues.
- Mickey said to maintain and run a facility like the cultural resources center is going to take revenue for staff and utilities.
- Peter said FHWA is talking to PHNIG about getting grant money to maintain the facility.
- Peter said PHNIG is trying to get the park design finalized before it figures out maintenance and staffing of the cultural resource center. PHNIG has a plan for this issue, it's just not etched in stone like the mitigation plan.
- Mickey said the park has the potential to be one of the best parks in the country. It will take teamwork between the community, the City of Macon, and GDOT.
- Mickey ended the presentation by saying the framework for the Jefferson Long Park is the Community Garden, the great lawn, and the pedestrian promenade along Pursley Street. There will be a low hedge between the lawn and the Community Garden.

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- Mickey said Clinton Ford will be the conduit for getting all information and suggestions about the park to URS. Please bring Clinton any comments or suggestions for potential incorporation into the final plan.

Item 2: EnviroResolution-Discussion of Penniman House Acquisition

Action Item(s)

Tommy Craig led the discussion of the celebration and announcement associated with the Penniman House acquisition.

- Tommy said there is an agreement between the City of Macon, GDOT, and PHNIG which says GDOT will use its “best efforts” to acquire the Richard Penniman House for use as a cultural resource center.
- The house will potentially be relocated adjacent to Jefferson Long Park.
- Tommy said Mercer University determined independently to honor Richard Penniman on May 11th with an honorary doctorate in humanities at Mercer’s Commencement Ceremony. Richard Penniman will be present for the ceremony and has agreed to play a few numbers.
- Bill Underwood, President of Mercer University, contacted Mayor Reichert to check on the status of the Penniman House acquisition by GDOT.
- Tommy said Mr. Penniman will be arriving in Macon on Friday, May 10th. The City of Macon is hosting a celebration in Pleasant Hill on Friday, May 10th at 4:00 p.m at L.H. Williams Elementary School. The City of Macon is checking to see if Richard Penniman can play a few numbers at the celebration on May 10th.
- Tommy said the City is talking to Richard Penniman’s former band mates about playing at the celebration. The City is also trying to get a children’s choir to perform. The City will be providing refreshments at the celebration. GDOT will not have a speaking role at the celebration, but GDOT would like for Peter Givens to speak at the celebration.
- Peter Givens said this is the first time he is hearing about this. Mercer University didn’t have a clue about the Penniman House acquisition, and the Mayor didn’t have a clue about this. Things like this should be discussed with Peter first. Now, he is being asked to have a small speaking role. Mr. Givens stated that he came up with this idea.
- Tommy Craig said the plans were only finalized yesterday.
- Eric Duff said this meeting is being held because GDOT doesn’t do anything without talking to the community first.
- Peter Givens said he has known the City was planning this event for a while. He heard things, but nobody talked to him about it.
- Yolanda Latimore said the announcement is best for the community so she doesn’t understand the ownership issue. She asked whether Peter viewed this as something that discredits his efforts.
- Peter Givens declined to debate the issue.
- Tommy said the City has secured local musicians to play at the event on the 10th. Mr. Penniman is having some health problems. The plan is to move forward with the event whether or not Mr. Penniman can make it to the event.
- Tommy Craig said Jeff Dickerson and Kimberly Larson are going to communicate with local media at the celebration on May 10th. Jeff will coordinate with the City of Macon and get a press release out about GDOT’s acquisition of the Penniman House in advance of the event on May 10th.

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- Yolanda said she has an ad agency, and she is willing to coordinate with Jeff on getting the press release out.
- GDOT will be sending out its own press release about the acquisition of the Penniman House. GDOT will not be sending out a press release about the May 10th celebration since GDOT is not sponsoring the event.
- Eric Duff said he met a gentleman who is interested in buying the renovated homes. The gentleman said he is well known in the community. Eric said he would send Yolanda and Alice Jackson the man's name to see if they recognize him.
- Peter Givens said the City of Macon is meeting with him tomorrow to discuss the agenda for the celebration on May 10th.