

TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION

April 23, 2019

A meeting of the Committee on Traffic and Transportation was held this date beginning at 2:03 p.m., at City Hall, 80 Broad Street, Council Chamber.

Notice of this meeting was sent to all local news media.

PRESENT

Councilmember Seekings, Chair; Councilmember Wagner, Councilmember Moody, Councilwoman Jackson, **Staff:** Keith Benjamin, Susan Herdina, Rick Jerue, Tracy McKee, Troy Mitchell and Bethany Whitaker, Council Secretary **Also:** Josh Johnson, PE, PTOE

The meeting was opened with a moment of silence provided by Chairman Seekings.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On the motion of Councilmember Moody, seconded by Councilwoman Jackson, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the February 26, 2019 meeting.

Application for Original Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity for Approval:

- *Tecs Limo Services, LLC (Limo)*

On the motion of Councilmember Moody, seconded by Councilwoman Jackson, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the above item.

Resolution for Approval: State of South Carolina and County of Berkeley- Clements Ferry Road (S-33) Widening from Jack Primus Road (S-119) to SC 41 Project

Mr. Benjamin said this was the usual MOU of agreement for them to move forward with their project. There was one piece that was different and that was a mitigation agreement in the amount of \$18,000 that was for some tree loss that would be along the corridor. The City coordinated with Berkeley County on that and they were in agreement with it, so they were coordinating with the City's Planning and Parks Departments to get that together. That was the only change, so he would ask for their approval.

Councilmember Moody said he wasn't sure what section this was, but he was sensitive to that area. There was a lot of controversy about how the roads would go. He assumed this wasn't connected to that. Mr. Benjamin said it wouldn't interfere with anything. It was just giving the co-sign to move forward. The only piece they discussed was there was a specific large tree that would be lost and so they were discussing the mitigation for it to replace it. Berkeley County agreed to it. There was no controversy other than dealing with the tree.

On the motion of Councilmember Moody, seconded by Councilwoman Jackson, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the above Resolution.

SCDOT Presentation: 526 Signals Project

Mr. Benjamin stated that because there had been a lot of work and questions about the efficiency of traffic along some of the major arterials and work in Columbia regarding the 526 improvements, a big part of that was the signal locations and how they were working.

Mr. Johnson stated that back in 2013, there was an I-526 Corridor Study done for the west side of 526. That was what had evolved into what would be the I-526 widening. Some short-term things had already been implemented such as the painted shields on 26 as someone was approaching 526 to let people know that the lane they were in went east or west. The signal project was the mid-term thing. The goal was to make improvements at corridors that intersected 526 to improve the operations of those corridors and thus, improve the operations of 526 by being able to get traffic on and off more efficiently. The exhibit that he had provided was the corridors that were in the City of Charleston West Ashley area. There were also some corridors in the City of North Charleston, as well. This was all on the west side of 526. The exhibit showed the corridors and the schedule that the contractor had presented to do such. The contract was awarded earlier in the year and they began work last month on making some of the upgrades. The upgrades that would take place were converting the left-turn phases to flashing yellow arrows. That gave them the benefit of being able to lead or lag a phase if necessary and provided a safety benefit. National studies showed that flashing yellow arrows were safer than the traditional 5-section heads that they used to use. There would be some pedestrian upgrades at the intersections. It wouldn't be adding crosswalks on all four legs of all of them. But, for intersections that didn't have any, they wanted to make sure they got at least one crossing across the main line. So, most of them did have at least one new crosswalk in the set of plans. If they needed to look at any specific intersections, they would do that. There would be new detection going in to support a responsive signal system on a couple of the corridors including US 17 and Glenn McConnell Parkway. A responsive signal system was the next step above the traditional time of day plan. They would identify set timings and then the system, based on the traffic count, triggered what plan should be selected, instead of always running the same thing in the same times. Overall, it was about a two and a half year project. Right now, they were working on S.C. 61 and that should go through June. They would then work on Glenn McConnell Parkway from July-October and then would work on Hwy 17 from Dobbin to the Interstate and Sam Rittenberg would be from November-February 2020. Finally, they would finish out Hwy 17 from the interstate to Wesley Drive from March-June 2020. After that, they would move on to the signals in North Charleston.

Councilmember Moody referred to the yellow flashing light and the fact that it was safer. Mr. Johnson said it was safer than the five-section head. The flashing arrow gave them their own signal in front of their lane that had a green, yellow, flashing yellow, and red signal. Councilmember Moody asked if they would do away with the green or red arrows. Mr. Johnson said no. Converting to the flashing yellow arrow would take the five-section head and make it an exclusive four-section head for that lane. The signals that were protected, where you could only turn on the green arrow, weren't being changed. Councilmember Moody asked what the criteria was for the red arrows. Mr. Johnson said that they could make an assumption that at some point a safety problem occurred that required it. The flashing yellow arrow was not a tool in the toolbox until fairly recently. So, before it was all or nothing. The flashing yellow arrow provided a safety benefit. The issue with making the signals less restrictive, taking a signal that had a red light and turning it into a flashing yellow arrow, was that everything was a liability issue. So, if they went from full-on protection, and then provided the motorist and option and they got in a crash, they could say if the City didn't change it, they wouldn't have been hit. They had done it in one location in Mt. Pleasant where the town did a before study and an after study after one year of implementation. Currently, SCDOT was not engaged in making those changes, but they were willing to entertain the locals who were maintaining the signals. Mr. Benjamin said they could do the study, but it ultimately was SCDOT's decision. Mr. Johnson said that they wouldn't back down on the phasing if there were a lot of crashes, but if there was a low crash number, it could be an option. Councilmember Moody said that the one he got the most complaints about was on Folly Blvd., in front of

Windermere. When the bridge was up, there was no traffic coming at all and there was a red arrow. Mr. Johnson said that wouldn't be a part of this study, but they were looking at having it rebuilt and cooperating with the City to upgrade it.

Councilwoman Jackson asked how many intersections were included in this project. Mr. Johnson said he believed the total project was 62, but that included intersections in North Charleston. There were about 50 in West Ashley.

Mr. Benjamin said that a few months ago, he had presented 17 intersections in the City that they were working on to add improvements for pedestrian access such as cross walks and ADA compliance. Nine of those were outside of West Ashley, in projects that were moving forward. The other ones were included in this project. So, they were able to get those pieces together and have them included. Chairman Seekings asked how they had determined what intersections would get pedestrian upgrades. Mr. Johnson said that the scope of the project wasn't focused on that, but if there was sidewalk, and not at least one crosswalk already, they wanted to add one. That wasn't to say that there weren't more crosswalks that should be added or that all intersections got them because there were some complicated intersections that would require more geometric improvements to get it in. But, his goal was to eventually have four legs crossing all signals, everywhere. However, they were doing what they could when the opportunity arose and would do more later.

Councilmember Wagner said he was interested in the Savannah Highway improvements because that was where he traveled every day. They had a County traffic study going on and that entire area seemed to be so clustered. The lights were out of kilter. He was trying to figure out how all the different studies were working together. Mr. Benjamin said that at the County level, they had their \$48 million project where they were looking at the opportunities for increasing of the capacity, what opportunities there were to improve the corridor, and at the same time, they were doing their U.S. 17 Corridor Study which was a 2040-2050 build out of what it would look like in the future. From a State perspective, they were going out of their way to enhance the signals that they owned that the City was operating and maintaining. SCDOT was coming in and adding additional technology and new infrastructure that enabled the City to do a better job at being able to trouble shoot and monitor traffic. Their coordination through monthly meetings allowed them to have those conversations on the front-end. Mr. Johnson said the County was aware of these elements. It was being folded into their study.

Chairman Seekings asked what the total cost of the project was. Mr. Johnson said that it overbid the first time. They put it out one more time. They had expected it to be split up into smaller pieces, but the contractors took a second look at it and came back with a lower cost. Mr. Troy Mitchell said that in 2013, when he approached DOT, the reason the project was even being given to the City was because they were making upgrades to the traffic signal system. They already had the advance traffic controls in place in 2013. It took a number of years to get everything in place, but it was a part of that. Mr. Benjamin said that with the upgrades, it channeled right into the traffic management system and let them be able to use that space and gave them the opportunity to have people there who could help manage both peak hour and off-peak traffic.

Mayor Tecklenburg asked if all the work was being done by contractors. Mr. Johnson said it was all contracted work from the set of plans. Councilmember Wagner said there was an intersection down by Forest Lakes and Sycamore, they went under 526 and it was part of the two-lane of 61. If there was a way to get up on 526 right there, the traffic would be better. Mr. Johnson said that everything having to do with the

interstate was not only a decision by DOT, but also the Federal Government, and new access to interstates was not easy.

Discussion regarding proposed review of Vendor Spaces and updates to Ordinance

Ms. Herdina said it was the time of year again when they considered the food cart spaces. This year they were proposing some changes for the Committee to consider. They currently had 16 spaces that were designated as food cart spots. Under the ordinance, those spots were first come-first serve, unless they were franchised out. Last year, she thought it was Councilmember Moody who brought a discussion about whether they needed to re look at the program, which seemed to be dated. They had gone back and done a comparison of the last three years. In 2016-2017, out of the 16 spaces, they had about 9 spots that were franchised and bid out. In 2018-2019, they only had two spots that were bid on. The rest were first come-first serve, or people initially put a bid in and failed to go forward. They thought the program needed to be freshened up a bit. So, they currently had two spaces that were under a franchise agreement which would expire at the end of August. Those spots were the Waterfront Park spot and by the Medical University. Many of the other spots were not used for various reasons. They were suggesting letting the two contracts expire, which would be at the end of August, and after that, all of the spots would convert to first come-first serve basis until they could get a new ordinance in place. They thought it was time to move beyond the current bidding process. They had done a lot of research on what other communities were doing and what was successful. They thought this system of franchising was the only one in the country. Today, they would be asking the Committee to agree that they would not franchise any additional spots after the two contracts ran out. However, they would approve the map of 2019-2020 which T&T had looked at and felt it was appropriate. The idea was to come back to the Committee before the end of the year with a new vending program that would be more attractive and productive and more financially rewarding for the City.

Mr. Lanier said he couldn't say much about what the ordinance would look like as there would be a long process behind it to figure out what would best. They potentially wanted to resurrect the mobile food vending system if they could. There was some discussion to be had with some of the vendors if the decline was market driven or if it was a dying industry. He didn't think that was the case. They looked at a number of other cities and in many of them the mobile food vending was thriving. Some cities had complex systems that were very involved and the output seemed to be very good. In Madison, WI, they had over 100 food vendors out at any time and had a community board that reviewed and rated them. They decided the program was tired, and he hadn't found any other City that bid out their spots. So, they wanted to rework that and they would need to consult all of the relevant staff and departments. They also needed to have meetings with the active food vendors, as well as the larger restaurant industry. Brick and mortar restaurants had very strong opinions about mobile food vending in general, and they wanted to make sure they weren't creating a situation where there was anger or a division. They thought they could figure it all out with a few months time, and so they would come back by the end of year. That may include removal of some spots, addition of some spots, or a number of other things. They wanted to start from scratch and build it back up.

Councilwoman Jackson asked if there were potential vendors that would be unhappy when they found out there was no program to commit to. Ms. Herdina said that they had fielded a few calls, but there didn't seem to be a lot of interest and/or the vendors had figured out that they didn't need to bid when they could go into a spot for free. If they notified the current vendors now that they wouldn't franchise the two spots anymore, it would give them adequate notice. She thought that the only spot there might be an issue would be the Waterfront Park spot because that spot was popular, but they had talk to Mr. Riccio in Livability and

he felt he could deal with any issues that might arise at that spot. Mr. Johnson said that Business Services would be happy to take that on and communicate with those vendors to make it clear that this was the beginning of a process that they would be heavily involved in to hopefully rewrite the ordinance to benefit the vendors as well. Ms. Herdina said that everything was on the table. They had questions about flower carts and crafts. Other cities were doing things like that and Cultural Affairs had proposed having some sort of system where they could review products and make decisions on whether something should be sold in a cart. Food trucks were being talked about. Mr. Johnson said this only applied to right-of-way vending. This would not affect anything related to private property food truck/vending. Chairman Seekings asked if there was a sense on how the spots were organically populating. Mr. Johnson said he didn't think there were many active ones in the City. Mr. Benjamin said there were a lot of limitations right now, and so they were looking at it all, as to what it should or shouldn't be.

Approval of 2019-2020 Vendor Spaces

On the motion of Councilwoman Jackson, seconded by Councilmember Moody, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the 2019-2020 Vendor Spaces.

Director's Update

Mr. Benjamin stated they met with Charleston County and SCDOT monthly on a number of different topics. They found out that the 61 Bikeway Crossing was definitely going to be occurring this year. Their staff were designing that internally and they were coordinating to get the final plans to move the project forward. That night, the Riverland/Central Park project would be on County Council's agenda. The City had supported one of the alternatives in that project and they were looking to see how County Council would vote. The City supported alternative three. They had gotten notification about submitting CTC Project Requests that were due on May 20th. With Berkeley County, that week they moved forward with starting on the Daniel Island/Seven Farms roundabout project. They, as a staff, had coordinated with Berkeley, and completely redid the project. That was supposed to be a 90 day project and should be done in mid-July. There were new bus shelters coming online in a number of areas. They had some installed already on Sam Rittenberg and in downtown. Some additional ones being installed in the next few weeks were Savannah at Coburg, Savannah at Wappoo, President at Line, and Old Folly/Maybank Highway. They had come to the committee with a full list of requests that they approved for traffic calming, including Betsy Road, which SCDOT approved as well. Because they went through that process, they had allocated the vast majority of the funds already. He knew they were still getting requests in. They welcomed those, but they did need to get the petitions first. Any requests they got in would have to be pocketed with the larger list of requests as they started to think about fiscal year 2020 because they had already come with priorities for both maintenance and work for this year. He also wanted to make sure that they knew that the parking garage and meter collection RFP went out the past weekend. The contract with ABM was expiring soon and there was a coordinated effort with a lot of different City staff to get that in place. Proposals were due back on May 22nd.

Chairman Seekings asked what was included in that. Mr. Benjamin said that they found out in the 2012 scope that there was little to no language on stipulating the general operator on what they needed to do with meter collection. So, they changed all of that language and mirrored the expectations on what would have to happen with garages with what would need to happen with the meters. That would be

helpful to the meter techs who were trying to navigate that process. Chairman Seekings asked how automation fit into all that in the garages. Mr. Benjamin said that was a great question that he didn't have the answer to. Mr. Benjamin said he would look to BFRC as to what the answer was because he couldn't speak to the timeline and where it should or shouldn't be.

Councilmember Moody said that he had mentioned Betsy Road. He knew they were getting ready to build a new Lincoln dealership at the corner. Typically, when they had a building like that, they required sidewalks to be put in. On that side of the road, there was a line of trees and they would have to dig out all of those trees and no one wanted to do that. He was talking with Mr. Lindsey who had said it was a flooding issue. So, they were under the impression that they wouldn't have to put a sidewalk in. He wondered why the City couldn't tell them that they needed to take the money they would have used to build the sidewalk, and put the sidewalk on the other side of the street or give the City the money and when the County started proposing sidewalks out of their money, the City would have money to put in. There was an objection to that as well. He said if they couldn't do that, then they should make them take the money and underground the wiring on their side of the street. He asked why they let them off the hook. He didn't know whose purview that was, but it ought to be other sidewalks or undergrounding. Mr. Benjamin said he would follow up with that. Mayor Tecklenburg said they had been having conversations about getting into the sidewalk business, and if they were going to do that, they would need some funding long-term. Councilmember Moody said that his understanding that if they just said they wanted a sidewalk, it got lost in the shuffle, but if they said they wanted a sidewalk and it would connect to different facilities and they had money, that request went to the top of the list. Mr. Benjamin said there was a point system in their review process and part of that was if there were match dollars, schools, and connectivity. There were a lot of sales tax projects they were able to get the last year because they were in existing plans and it was a coordinated effort. Councilmember Moody said they might want to even put money in their budget to do some cash matching.

Mr. Benjamin said they had a maintenance plan for the entire City since last year and he had reported at the end of last year that they had fulfilled almost 3,000 work orders. As of April 10th, they had already done almost 700 work orders regarding signs and markings. That was a credit to their very small crews who were doing their specific work. He thanked them for the tools to be able to execute that. They also gave them some money for training for signs and marking crews. He thanked them for that. They were moving forward with both a flagging class, a zone safety class, and some marking training. Both the work zone and the flagging class were being attended by Public Services and Stormwater Departments.

Councilwoman Jackson referred back to the garage bids and bringing up the automation and asked why automation was such a hot topic. She thought that automation was already happening. Mr. Benjamin said it was his understanding that Councilmember Waring and White served on the selection committee when ABM was contracted. There were conversations about what the progress of garages would look like in the future. There were questions about where the decisions were being made on automation and when they were made and when they would go into effect, as well as how it would affecting long-standing employees.

Having no further business, the Committee adjourned at 2:54 p.m.

Bethany Whitaker
Council Secretary