



City of Richmond

900 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219
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Meeting Minutes - Draft Urban Design Committee

Thursday, August 7, 2014

10:00 AM

5th Floor Conference Room of City Hall

Call to Order

Mr. Eastman called the meeting to order at 10:06. He stated that Ms. Nolt and Mr. Green were absent from the meeting and that a chairperson would need to be elected for the meeting. Ms. Harnsberger made a motion that Ms. Shirley be elected chairperson for the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Arias and carried unanimously.

Roll Call

Present: 6 - Mr. Chris Arias, Mr. Doug Cole, Mr. Vaughn Garland, Ms. Giles Harnsberger, Ms. Andrea Levine and Ms. Claire Shirley
Absent: 4 - Ms. Andrea Almond, Vice Chair Bryan Green, Chair Jill Nolt and Mr. Robert Smith

Staff Present

*Jeff Eastman, PDR
Tara Ross, PDR
Mark Olinger, PDR
Kathleen Onufer, PDR
Jim Hill, PDR
Leigh Kelley, PDR*

Others Present

*Raymond Powell, Richmond Public Schools
Lloyd Schieldge, Richmond Public Schools
Allison Rios, Mary Munford PTA
Lamont Benjamin, Dept. of Public Works
Mark Vasco, Whitman Requardt & Associates
Alexandra Davis, Whitman Requardt & Associates
John Schmidt, Land Planning & Design Associates
Charles Price
Lawrence Williams
Nathan Burrell, James River Park Service
Ted Elmore
Michael Taliaferro
Graham Moomaw, Richmond Times-Dispatch*

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Harnsberger, seconded by Mr. Cole, that the minutes from the July 10, 2014 meeting be adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 4 - Cole, Garland, Harnsberger and Levine

Abstain: 2 - Arias and Shirley

ID 14-033 Regular Meeting of July 10, 2014

Attachments: [Regular Meeting of July 10, 2014](#)

Secretary's Report

Mr. Eastman stated that at the July 21st meeting the Planning Commission approved the conceptual 17th Street Farmer Market redesign with all the UDC recommendations and additional conditions that the final plans include a connectivity plan, a future shade tree plan, a trash and delivery plan and a management/programmatic plan. Mr. Eastman stated that he approved the encroachment permit for 208 E. Leigh Street that was reviewed by the Committee at the meeting last month.

Consideration of Continuances and Deletions from Agenda

There were no continuances or deletions.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Mr. Arias, seconded by Ms. Levine, that the Consent Agenda item be recommended for approval by the Planning Commission. The motion carried with the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Arias, Garland, Harnsberger, Levine and Shirley

Abstain: 1 - Cole

1. **UDC No.** Final Location, Character and Extent Review of a pavilion at Mary
2014-28 Munford Elementary School, 211 Westmoreland Street

Attachments: [UDC Report to PC](#)
[Staff Report to UDC](#)
[Location Map](#)
[Application & Plans](#)

This Location, Character and Extent Item was recommended for approval on the Consent Agenda as submitted and forwarded to the City Planning Commission for their meeting on September 2, 2014.

REGULAR AGENDA

2. **UDC No.** Conceptual Location, Character and Extent Review of Phase 4 of the
2014-27 Cannon Creek Greenway, from Valley Road to Oliver Hill Way

Attachments: [UDC Report to PC](#)
[Staff Report to UDC](#)
[Location Map](#)
[Application & Plans](#)

Ms. Shirley asked the applicants if they would like to respond to the Staff

recommendations.

Mr. Mark Vasco with Whitman, Requardt and Associates stated that the plan is to have bike connectivity from Hermitage Road all the way to the Capital Trail. Mr. Vasco stated that original the plan was to take sharrows markings in Richmond-Henrico Turnpike all the way along Valley Road and Oliver Hill Way and proceed down to the Capital Trails via bike lanes and markings down through the 17th Street Market. Mr. Vasco stated that Valley Road is a very narrow segment of roadway and their plan gets the bike traffic and pedestrians off of that area and brings them along this trail down to Hospital Street, which is more accommodating as far as sharrows are concerned. Mr. Vasco stated that it will be an easier transition.

Ms. Shirley inquired how do they feel about the requirements of adding the pedestrian connectivity through there and Mr. Vasco stated that currently there are sidewalks on the north side of Hospital Street from 7th Street to Valley Road and then on the other side of Hospital Street they can have sidewalks from there to Oliver Hill Way. Mr. Vasco stated that it would be good to have sidewalks for the entire length and the city's intention is to do one or two things on a subsequent project that would be to have a multi-use trail all the way along the Oliver Hill Way and have the pedestrian trail actually cross the railroad tracks and connect on both sides. Mr. Vasco stated that way you will have pedestrian accommodation and bike accommodation on both scenarios.

Ms. Shirley inquired about the connection between Richmond-Henrico Turnpike and Valley Road.

Mr. Lamont Benjamin, Capital Project Manager for Public Works, stated that is something that they can consider as an additional project and he knows Mr. Eastman stated that he would like to see that before they go to final review and that is something that they can consider. Mr. Benjamin stated that there are existing sidewalks over there that need to be cleaned up and as far as the paving project that is going to happen with the sharrows it might be something that they consider at the same time.

Mr. Cole inquired if there was any reason that it hasn't been already considered because it seems like its missing one piece. Mr. Vasco stated that they have considered it and it is going to be resurfaced with the pavement project and in conjunction with resurfacing and the sharrows there will be provision for completing the sidewalks between Richmond-Henrico Turnpike and I-64 and stated that is a future project as well and stated that he does know that it is going to be resurfaced.

Mr. Benjamin stated that in terms of the sidewalk improvements they can work with to accommodate pedestrian connectivity.

Mr. Arias inquired about the wayfinding signage and stated that when they get to the end of the trail is there something else to let them know where they are going. Mr. Vasco stated that on the projects shared directional signage and markings where you need to go guidance is part of the final design. Mr. Arias stated that when the get to the end and Mr. Vasco stated that with all of their projects they have directional signage.

Mr. Charles Price, a citizen who volunteers with the Greenway Project, stated that he has been with the project from the beginning and he hopes to continue on until the greenway connects with the Capital Trail and the river front. Mr. Price stated that he strongly urges the passage of this request with the proviso that the Staff recommendations for sidewalk be adhered to. Mr. Price stated that originally it was to be both a pedestrian and biking trail and the trail is not only envisioned as a connector to the East Coast Greenway and Bike Route 76 and all the through way passages for the increased bicycle traffic. Mr. Price stated that it is conceived as a bikeway and a

walkway for people to go downtown to jobs in the riverfront district as well as the commercial district downtown. Mr. Price stated that the showcase connection is with the Capital Trail so that they have a continuous pathway for people coming into Richmond as an alternate route for them to go wherever they are going on the Capital Trail and going eastward on the East Coast greenway down to Florida. Mr. Price stated that it is secondary but equally important that it serves a way for citizens to get downtown to jobs and hopefully if they can increase the bicycle capacity that they can reduce the vehicular traffic and give our citizens of Richmond a great passageway to get to jobs and other recreational opportunities. Mr. Price stated that he strongly urges that the Staff recommendations be followed here and stated that they need a good sidewalk connection all through that area.

Mr. Cole stated that he appreciates Mr. Price's passion for the greenways and other projects and wishes that they had more citizens like Mr. Price, who does a whole lot of work without a lot of recognition.

Mr. Lawrence Williams, representing the Eastview Civic League, states that their neighborhood is about 10 blocks east of this area. Mr. Williams stated that one reason this route has been chosen is because it helps green an industrial area that is somewhat blighted and hopefully it will spur additional development. Mr. Williams stated that his community will support the sidewalk issues from Valley Road to the Juvenile Building at the end of Oliver Hill Way and they recommend as well as good strong railroad rail concrete elements so that there are no pot holes at that location. Mr. Williams stated that they support it in the greening Industrial Area and stated that it will add another amenity to add development along Hospital Street.

Ms. Levine inquired if they have an ornamental lighting plan and Mr. Eastman stated that condition is for the final plan and stated that it is to his understanding that lights will be provided just as on the other sections of the trail.

Mr. Shirley stated that her only concern is that it seems disjointed and the pedestrian access between Richmond-Henrico Turnpike and the Valley Road connection will help but it seems like you are on this great trail and then you are not.

Ms. Arias stated that he thinks the Staff suggestion would help to solve that problem.

Ms. Shirley inquired if there was any merit to including street trees along with the sidewalks in the connection on Valley Road to kind of keep the same feel of being on the Greenway. Mr. Eastman stated that he doesn't think there is sufficient right-of-way but that is something that the Committee can ask the applicant to consider.

Mr. Arias stated that it would make sense to continue the feel of the greenway through plantings and what not even though it's not a formal trail.

Ms. Shirley stated that she thinks the street trees will help define the path and help with the wayfinding.

Ms. Harnsberger stated that this area is industrial in nature and that it is a difficult right-of-way and she thinks they have actually considered street trees where there is available right-of-way. Ms. Harnsberger stated that she doesn't have any issues with recommending that they consider street trees on Valley Road and Richmond-Henrico Turnpike but it is a narrow right-of-way. Ms. Harnsberger stated that there is a time and a place for a good street trees and that section of Valley Road is not what she would spend city resources on.

Ms. Shirley stated that she disagrees because it's so industrial that the trees are

needed to help with the feel of the greenway.

Ms. Harnsberger stated that it is a great project and it is a tricky area and she thinks this is a nice solution.

Mr. Cole stated that they have done a great job with Phase I through III and they are doing a good job on this one and the bar is set high whether there is trees or no trees and the little that is missing will match the other phases.

A motion was made by Mr. Cole, seconded by Ms. Harnsberger, that this Location, Character and Extent item be recommended for approval with the following conditions:

- That the final plans show how pedestrians will be safely accommodated from Richmond-Henrico Turnpike to Oliver Hill Way, whether in the scope of this project or through provision of new sidewalks and crosswalks from other funding sources.
- That the final plans show the location of any trash cans, and that the applicant considers providing trash cans (consistent in design with those used in other phases of the project) at each end of the shared-use segment of the trail and at the corner of Oliver Hill Way and Hospital Street.
- That the final plans show the location of any proposed ornamental street lights, to be consistent in design with those used in other phases of the project.
- That the final plans show the location of any proposed benches, to be consistent in design with those used in other phases of the project.
- That each trail crossing across a roadway be striped with a ladder-style crosswalk.
- That the applicant considers providing street trees along Valley Road between Richmond-Henrico Turnpike and the limited access VDOT right-of-way and along Hospital Street between N. 7th Street and Oliver Hill Way.

The motion carried by the following vote, and the item was forwarded to the City Planning Commission for their meeting on September 2, 2014:

Aye: 6 - Arias, Cole, Garland, Harnsberger, Levine and Shirley

- 3. UDC No. 2014-05(2)** Final Location, Character and Extent Review of the Brown's Island Dam Walk connecting the north and south banks of the James River

Attachments: [Staff Report to UDC](#)

[Location Map](#)

[Application & Plans](#)

[Letter of Support](#)

Mr. Eastman stated that they have received a letter of support from Shockoe Partnership.

Mr. Cole inquired if there was much discussion on the planting plan. He stated that the plants are arranged in a grid pattern and out of character with a natural state and the trees on the pathway are the exact same tree.

Ms. Kathleen Onufer, Project Manager for the Department of Planning & Development Review, stated that on the planting plan there is design intent to reinforce some of the linear functions of the connectivity and they spent a lot of time designing this pathway to make sure they are not encouraging any short cutting. There are dangerous steep slopes here and they want make sure that unless they are providing a connection that

no one besides the critters are taking those other connections through the landscaped areas. Ms. Onufer stated that the reinforcement of the trees along the path helps with the shade but also creates a sort of a barrier beyond the landing zone. As to the plantings within the rain gardens, nothing is going to be maintained in a sort of fashion of lines or there is no design intentionality in the maintenance plan for this. The grid layout is there for the ease of planting over two thousand plants. Ms. Onufer stated that by using all native species the designers are creating conditions where they have installed plants where they think they have the best chance of surviving. They have made alterations to the plans based on the City Arborist input. There are micro climates within the structure based on the elevation and drainage and that drainage will also change based on use of the site and as the plants go in. Ms. Onufer stated that they are expecting to see a sort of pioneering of tree species and other shrubs across the site and by starting with the fully native planting plan they are allowing for succession to then continue on the site as it has now. The process of creating this landscape using only native plants should ideally avoid the current condition from reestablishing itself but they know that is going to require maintenance.

Mr. Cole stated that he likes the native plants and if the designer has a good intent or concept then it is okay.

Ms. Onufer stated that every planting plan when it first goes in looks rigid because it's brand new and it's fresh out of the nursery but the plan for the succession and evolution of the site over time by using that mix of native plants will create a softening.

Ms. Levine stated that she was in agreement with Mr. Cole and that she feels that the plantings should look as natural as possible.

Ms. Onufer inquired if they were talking about the trees on the path. Mr. Cole stated yes, the trees on the path but also on sheet L463 it looks like a vegetable garden with plantings as straight as an arrow. Ms. Onufer stated that the designer stated that rather than to create a grid which will raise the construction cost of this project extensively and is unlikely to be successful because it requires a level of oversight of the planting of the site that will be unlikely to follow through. Planting them this way but not maintaining it in linear function will allow for succession and thrive.

Mr. Jim Hill with Planning and Development Review stated that there has been a lot of discussion about this issue and that one of the issues that came up with the city arborist was for more variation in the species of the oaks that lined the paths so that so that it wasn't as quite regimented. Mr. Hill stated that the decision was made to emphasize the linear paths. Mr. Hill stated that for plantings and rain gardens there are some sections where the plants look like they're in very strict rows and there are others in the curve. Mr. Hill stated that Hargreaves showed them that as they grow they will look soft and naturalistic banks of planting and stated that this will not be a manicured landscape, it will be allowed to grow naturally.

Ms. Harnsberger asked for clarification about the final conclusion on the stair in the far terminal that goes down to the Manchester climbing wall. Ms. Onufer stated that the exact configuration in terms of how many landings and double backs that the stair has is still under consideration with various users and government agencies. Ms. Onufer stated that the floodway comes very close there and high water intrudes very quickly in this area. Ms. Onufer showed a photo of an existing DPU sewer pipe that is active and stated that their original intent for the landing was over top of that pipe but they were told to come up with a new solution. Unlike the existing stair connection this deck is now going to be at an elevation of 47.5' and the process of getting down the run of the stairs is much longer and they want to make sure that by building it closer to the wall don't impede on any existing recreational uses of the site. Ms. Onufer stated that currently

they are looking at configurations with double landings to tuck it in closer and come underneath and ultimately how many landings on that stairway is subject to what the Army Corps and engineers tell them what they can do related to flood protection. They know that connection is essential to making sure that they have access to the top of the wall to set up top ropes and to continue to use the functionality and that is an ongoing design effort that they are negotiating with all the regulatory stakeholders with no intent to change the materials.

Mr. Garland stated that he loves the project and that he lives on the south side and has been noticing a lot of apartments and hopefully commuters that are coming into the south side area and that there is a desire to connect the south side banks to the north side. Mr. Garland stated that one thing he is seeing as people try to commute to work is how to get those commuters onto the bridge as quickly as possible. Mr. Garland stated that instead of sending them around the larger loop, he would take the short cut and to him it is a very dangerous moment for a commuter. Mr. Garland stated that he wants to make a proposal they that take the path that is already on the SunTrust bridge that is a bike path which is steep and connect it towards or through the rain garden to the path to the bridge so that commuters can get through quicker. Mr. Garland stated that he would like to something safer because some commuters are still going to take the steep route to get on the bridge quicker.

Ms. Harnsberger stated that Mr. Garland's point is on safety and commuting efficiently but if she were a bike commuter coming from south side down the trail that Mr. Garland wants she would fly right down the trail into a pedestrian and that would set up a crisis.

Ms. Onufer stated that area that Mr. Garland is referring to is where they are cutting the hillside and that would become an even steeper slope than it is today; a 3 to 1 slope in sections of that hillside and being that steep will be a helpful deterrent to avoid that cut through that currently exists.

Mr. Cole inquired if they were using Federal Grants and Mr. Mark Olinger stated that they are all city and state.

Mr. Cole stated that this is one of the best kept secrets in the city and inquired about signage for the site. Ms. Onufer stated that they will bring back the wayfinding as a package back to the UDC in the fall.

Ms. Harnsberger inquired about the lights and what time they are going to be on and the rating of the lights and Ms. Onufer stated that the hours of operation will ultimately be decided by the operation of the structure but part of the revenue sharing funding says that they need it to be open during commuting hours and they will further discuss whether they will be on all night. Ms. Onufer stated that in the appendix in the packets they have some samples of the proposed lighting looks like in other locations.

Ms. Shirley inquired if there would be a time when the bridge would be closed and Mr. Olinger stated that the discussion of operations is ongoing but he would like to see it open more.

Ms. Harnsberger stated that the lighting has a lot to do with the character of what it would look like and she appreciated the photos renderings that they provided. Ms. Onufer stated that small printing in the packets might have the information and stated that the under bench lighting that they are looking at is very similar to the ones they are looking at for the overlook LED tape embedded on the bridge and posts and stated that they want to have lighting on one side and stated that once they get to the south bank they will be moving to a pole lighting LED and stated that this is the first use of LED in a city project which is exciting as they move towards more energy saving. Ms. Onufer

stated that the pole mounting also gives them an edge of being able to mount some of their way finding signage on them which will hopefully leave them lit at night.

Ms. Shirley stated that the color of the LED is important in creating that feeling and aesthetic of being in nature.

Ms. Onufer stated that all of the lighting configurations and specs are being done to dark sky standards to the point that they have a lot of stakeholders for this project that are concerned about the lighting impacts on the environment in the area so the goal of keeping it dark sky standards to avoid any spill over and to keep it using natural tones.

Mr. Olinger stated that the other thing about the bridge is with the downtown lighting scene there is a fair amount of lighting in the vicinity any way and this is not a pitch black environment and one of things they need to think about is how the lighting on the bridge and elsewhere compliments the ambient lighting they have so they won't over light things. Mr. Olinger stated that they are very sensitive to having a lighting level that supports the activities.

Ms. Shirley stated that it is a great transition between Manchester, the river and Brown's Island and the downtown area and it is exciting.

A motion was made by Ms. Harnsberger, seconded by Ms. Levine, that this Location, Character and Extent Item be recommended for approval as submitted.

The motion carried by the following vote, and was forwarded to the City Planning Commission for their meeting on September 15, 2014:

Aye: 6 - Arias, Cole, Garland, Harnsberger, Levine and Shirley

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

Adjournment

Ms. Shirley adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.