

Parks and Parkways Commission August 6, 2018

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Scott Discon and the secretary called roll.

Present: Scott Discon, Lee Frederick, Anne Marie Fargason, Eric McQuiston and Nancy Clark

Absent: Marilyn Osborne and Karin Crosby

Also Present: Louise Scott, Planning Director

Minutes

Ms. Fargason moved to adopt the minutes of May 21, 2018, seconded by Mr. McQuiston, and was unanimously approved.

Ms. Frederick moved to adopt the minutes of June 4, 2018, seconded by Ms. Clark, and was unanimously approved.

Discussion and Presentation of Causeway Underpass Project

Dana Brown and Andrew Doyle, Dana Brown and Associates, presented an update on the project. As a recap of the project, it would be located in the area between Mariner's Boulevard and Monroe Street to maximize the use of the open space. The biggest shortcomings were the hydrology and circulation of the project. At the last presentation there were two alternatives, but in the discussion Alternative 2 was preferred and the plan was modified with the meeting comments to now be called the Final Master Plan. There was a discussion of how water collected, fell through the joints and hit the site. It was a function of the overpass not working correctly and GEC would repair with Mr. Doyle adapting the plan to the repairs. Sealants would be placed on the end of joint that failed and where water seeped. The repair would defer the water to the downspouts down the columns. Ms. Frederick said there was an exposed column with green vines and she thought it would be nice to have water come down it. The distinction was to line the exterior edges with trees and shrubs to provide a strong edge.

The plan extended down toward Mariner's Boulevard and would have people access. They would use crushed concrete, native materials or brick pavers as material that was not imported from out of the state. Additional information obtained from the GNOEC modified the plan for the revised stormwater management features to avoid the foundations. There would be seat walls for people to gather and view the water structure. Ms. Fargason said with the encouragement of the use of the space, the only parking was to the left of the site. She asked if the surrounding businesses would allow parking for people arriving by car. Mr. Doyle said he did not consider this because the conversation was about bike and pedestrian access. Ms. Brown said school buses might need parking locations for the educational programs. Mr. Discon said going east on Monroe Street, under the underpass there could be a graveled area for parking. Ms. Scott said there was a plan in the works for the roundabout and they were not considering parking. With converging traffic, it would be better to leave it pedestrian. Ms. Clark said with the barriers created, people would not park on the grass. Mr. Doyle said on the west side there would be a barrier curve. The stormwater bio swale would deter parking. They could have a gabion basket edge as a retention area for the grade so no one could not park there even if they jumped the curb. There had been a discussion with GEC about addressing that as well as runoff from the adjacent businesses and GEC was in agreement as long as the project was not manipulating the soil.

Mr. Doyle said beneath the linear feature was a 42" storm drain line receiving all of the runoff from the overpass that was currently located under the grass. The columns tied into the drain line and this was an opportunity to pull stormwater and retain it on site to hold water and

filter pollutants. When they received the survey, they could show this in greater detail. The water was flowing out of the Causeway to the lake. Ms. Brown said this would help with the MS4 compliance. The EPA and DEQ like to see cities trying to comply and they want to see the educational component. Mr. Discon asked to find out the pollutant level in the water from Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation and what it would be in the future. Ms. Brown said with that known, they could model it in-house.

The large triangular space was the area for users to visit. The exterior edges of the site would be in line with the stormwater management and tie into the drain lines. A gateway sign had been discussed and it was being sited at this time. It would be aligned with the East Causeway roadway. It would catch the people exiting the bridge and the northern portion would be visible heading to the bridge. Mr. McQuiston said the roundabout had been discussed and it was an excellent opportunity. But, roundabouts did have their challenges with pedestrian crossings that must be moved away from the circle. Ms. Scott said there was a general consensus scope, but there were no roundabout drawings yet. Mr. Doyle had acquired the CAD lines and was reaching out to the Landscape Architect. He wanted to integrate it as soon as possible, but he did not want to trace a PDF.

The elevation drawings indicated the seat access with terraced seating overlooking the stormwater management area. They were not envisioning many gabion baskets because of the cost. They focused on the edge where people congregated. Ms. Brown said the gabion baskets were capped with precast concrete to provide seating. She could imagine a teacher on the side of the stormwater management area and the students on the terrace learning how it worked. Ms. Clark said the height and sound of the trees looked reduced. Mr. Doyle said the other option intended to create a dense canopy, but there were concerns about blocking the overpass. The trees would frame the edges and the overpass would create most of the shade. Ms. Scott said it would be an enclosure for the space with the traffic. Mr. Discon asked about the existing trees. Mr. Doyle said they worked around the existing trees as much as possible. Ms. Frederick said it had been discussed to plant native low growing shrubs like wax myrtle and button bush between the overpass. Ms. Clark said the overpass was noisy and it would help absorb the sound. Ms. Brown said they must low enough to see through for safety issues. Ms. Frederick suggested spacing them.

As a recap, there was a discussion about integrating public art. The aesthetic would be more meadow and native than a manicured garden. Mr. McQuiston said there were areas labeled as lawn. He did not think turf grass would grow with not more than 4 hours of sun. Mr. Doyle said within the details of the construction documents there would be pathways, pavers, and courtyard spaces. Mr. McQuiston said there could be understory ground cover plants with some irrigation available. The suggested species were liriope, indigo, and native grasses, but there would need to be a shade study. Mr. McQuiston asked about a plan for rain harvesting for irrigation. Mr. Doyle said they had not explored that, but he liked the idea. Mr. McQuiston said it could be below ground with a cistern or aqua blocks with a master pump. There were areas underneath in the rain shadow that could have a micro drip. Mr. Discon said the water off of the bridge would be filtered and used. Mr. Doyle said that would work well with engineer's view and we could reroute the pipe for filtration. Ms. Frederick said it would be nice to see it working above ground as an educational component. Mr. McQuiston said it could be explained with signage. Ms. Brown suggested subsurface viewing with windows. Ms. Frederick suggested seeing how it could relate to homes with a rain barrel. Ms. Brown said the problem was piping it up with a pump, but it could be explored.

Mr. Doyle showed signage examples that could be integrated into the gabion seawalls and interpretive signs to explain the filtration on the façade of buildings.

There was a slide presentation of the plans that GNOEC would be using to repair the downspouts that aligned in the center of the column, the elbow and the lateral pipe. The City's opportunity was when the pipe left the footprint of the foundation. The Causeway was worried about the undermining of the concrete and water going where it was not intended. Ms. Clark said there would not be an active visual of the water and it would come out of the ground. Mr. Doyle said the consensus of the meeting with GEC was they were agreeable to the project intercepting the water after clearing the foundation of the column. The revised plan indicated the expected hydrology of the water passing through the column, laterally intercepted by the bio-retention feature which filtered the water and then into an overflow that tied into the existing storm drain. Ms. Frederick asked if it would be accessed at several columns. Mr. Doyle said they would like to get all of the columns, but it would be contingent on the topographic survey. They knew it went to the 48" line on the Service Road.

A preliminary cost estimate was presented:

- Construction cost was \$1.1 Million with a 20% contingency.
- Maintenance unit cost could be for a future discussion. Based on New Orleans, it was \$100,000 per year including watering with drought, trash pickup, and the establishment of plants for the first 3 years. Mr. Discon asked if the cost included the cleaning of the pumps. Mr. Doyle said it was included in the cost. Ms. Scott said the staff would review the cost and the associated breakdown. Ms. Clark suggested installing security cameras with the previous water feature pumps having been destroyed. The commission asked to have the Causeway Commission pick up that cost.

After funding, there would be phasing of the plan starting from the exterior edge and working inward. Ms. Scott said it would establish the tree line immediately and then work on the interior space. Ms. Clark said it would weave it back into the neighborhood. Ms. Scott suggested adopting a resolution supporting the plan and then present it to the City Council. Ms. Clark moved to approve a resolution to recommend the adoption of the plan for phased implementation beginning with the 2018/2019 budget year. Ms. Scott said there was money budgeted. Ms. Brown said when the commission knew the funding allocated for the first phase, they could design to that. Ms. Frederick seconded the motion and the motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Frederick asked if the cost incorporated educational signage and six signs were included in the cost. They could be freestanding or mounted on the column of the overpass. Mr. Discon reiterated to obtain the reading on the water coming out. If the commission could show compliance with the federal government that would help with the funding. Ms. Brown said she would provide a sheet showing the ecological benefits, the water quality, and the reduction in the water pipes to let the gray infrastructure work better. Ms. Brown would provide a summary. Ms. Frederick verified the project would also capture the business runoff which was a drainage solution.

Oak Tree Signage

Rich Adamiak was requesting an endorsement to finalize the live oak survey. He proposed tagging the trees with a spring which was a method endorsed by the forestry industry doing the least damage to the trees. The tag would only be installed on the 29 trees measured, surveyed and registered. He proposed a permanent tag for the trees not registered using stainless steel hardware since the tannic acid in the oak won't react to it. The spring method allowed for growth pushing the washer toward the tag and not placing any pressure on the bark of the tree. Each year it would be measured for a true growth and the spring would be adjusted at that time. Mr. Discon was concerned about vandalism. Mr. Adamiak said it would be placed at a height to read it. It would be an educational program since all of the trees would be labeled. Ms. Frederick asked how far into the bark would the screw be placed and it was

answered to be $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Mr. Adamiak researched different methods and this was the best method available. A registration of a city number using a brass tag would be assigned to the trees not meeting the 8' registration requirement. It would be attached with one stainless steel screw. The material cost was about \$400. The approval would be handled administratively. Sign Here had a City account and would be billed directly. Mr. Adamiak and the commission would handle the installation. Mr. Adamiak had installed two "stay off the oak tree" signs. There had been no complaints. Ms. Frederick asked for a newspaper article be written explaining the tagging. Ms. Scott said this item could be included on the City Council's agenda in the Projects in Progress and an article could generate from that presentation.

Ms. Fargason said in 1985 there was a dying tree by Lamarque and Foy Streets at the curve so several citizens formed the Dead Oak Tree Society. Several citizens donated an oak tree with the planting being photographed in the newspaper. Mr. Adamiak said he would tag the tree. It was suggested to earmark the tree to be named after Jim Fargason.

Short Term Work Program

Ms. Scott said all of the projects were included in the budget. The projects included the Marigny Avenue implementation for three blocks, West Beach Parkway median, the cemetery, the live oak trees on Florida Street, the underpass, and the Street Tree program. There would be a budget amendment request for the grasses to present Mr. Perkins information. Ms. Fargason said several neighbors on West Beach had asked about the dirt in the median. Ms. Scott said she did not know anything about it.

Updates on Florida Street Streetscape plantings

Mr. Discon said the commission should continue the tree planting in fall. He proposed to plant one block of each side with grasses until the suicide lane was replaced. The proposed median could be green grass. The original budget was costly and the estimate was revised with a reduction of planting. Adam Perkins said he used two different methodologies. One method was drawing in plants using an average cost and the second method was basing the cost on square footage. The revision was for a smaller area as an attempt to scale down the project budget wise.

Mr. Perkins presented the space available for planting. The median would break up the wide space, but it was depending on the curbing to determine what could be planted. Ms. Scott said money had been allocated to remove the suicide lane. Mr. Discon said the state was in agreement that they wanted the lanes removed. The maximum height allowed for planting was 24". Ms. Scott said it was a layering effect. Mr. Perkins suggested planting the median with some of the same plantings as the edge to have the appearance of the same project. Ms. Scott said even though the cost was reduced, the long term maintenance must be reviewed for approval of the project. Mr. Perkins said there was a lack of warranty as it was a large roadside non-irrigated area. The average plant stock value was a determination of the cost. Ms. Clark said the Florida Street tree planting started out as great with the rain, but became a problem when the rained stopped. Ms. Scott said she did not know about grasses time for establishment or maintenance. Mr. Discon suggested experimenting with a small area. Ms. Clark asked to focus on the area by the Tammany Trace tunnel making it a special place. The grasses could be planted in the fall and watch it for a season. Ms. Frederick said this was a different habitat than the roadside. Ms. Scott said the area was already a feature and it would be a good experiment location. It had been discussed to create the project and request a budget adjustment. Mr. Discon requested a presentation of the trees and grasses before and after. The median with grass should be included. Mayor Villere related to Mr. Discon that the median project would be quoted in February. Ms. Scott said she had not seen the median plans, but the City wanted curbing for planting. The commission suggested repeating the median trees planted on East

Parks and Parkways Commission

August 6, 2018

Page 5

and West Causeway. Mr. Perkins would provide aerials of the entire area and provide suggestions. Mr. Discon said the commission would also begin Florida Street tree planting solicitation for the fall. Mr. Perkins asked if the City was willing to do any maintenance. Ms. Scott said the City did not have the ability to water the planting. The discussion moved to the wildflower garden where many people viewed it as a weed patch and they were frustrated. Mr. Discon said it looked beautiful. Ms. Scott said the wildflower garden was in its third year, but people wanted manicured landscaping so they will need to better understand how it looked. Mr. Perkins said he would develop a detailed conventional plan view. Ms. Fargason asked about planting monkey grass and liriopse. Mr. Perkins said those species would not survive with this much sun. Ms. Clark suggested planting gaura which was a low clumping plant that was drought tolerant. Ms. Scott said wieldsier (melanpodium) grew well in Phoenix and was drought tolerant. Ms. Scott said since this was a commercial corridor, the businesses would expect a tidy planting. Mr. Perkins said he would view the Texas DOTD website for plant materials.

In summary, Mr. Perkins would develop a model to be presented to the City Council.

Update on Marigny Avenue Edible Forest

Mr. McQuiston clarified that the project was for the first two blocks from Florida Street and one block from Lakeshore Drive. Ms. Scott said if the first block from the lake was developed there could be flooding problems. It was verified that the first three blocks from Florida Street would be the first planting area. Mr. McQuiston said there was a water line down the center for irrigation, but there would be a need for power for the controllers. Hunter Irrigation Products had battery operated valve controllers that could be used with solar power. The advantage was that the controller could be placed in the ground. There was a discussion that parking would not be included in this planting as it was a more passive use.

Mr. McQuiston said there was only one species of peach that would survive the chilling hours and he also suggested an apple species. Mr. Discon asked if the trees would be wrapped in the winter weather. The discussion was that they would not be wrapped, but heavily mulched. This was the reason for test varieties. Ms. Frederick suggested incorporating fig trees and Mr. McQuiston said they grew well. The funding was included in the budget and when the species was determined, the project could move forward. The plan would be simple and a competitive bid would not be necessary. Ms. Clark said the neighbors had requested repetitive species on the ends. Mr. McQuiston suggested fringe trees. Ms. Clark said fringe trees were planted on Carroll Street and most of them were lost. Ms. Frederick said she would prefer to only plant edible trees. Ms. Scott said there was some push back from the residents so there had been suggestions of planting live oak trees on the resident's corners with end caps on each corner. Mr. McQuiston said the planting must be pushed back from the curbs for visibility. Being located close to the Tammany Trace there should be low endcaps for visibility and there were suggestions of planting lantana and rosemary. Mr. McQuiston said he would also explore signage. Ms. Scott said all signage must include the City seal and committees were not included since it was City projects.

Fall Educational Program

Ms. Clark said in the past there was an educational morning held at City Hall. Ms. Scott said Ms. Casanova had been looking at a few topics. Mr. McQuiston suggested stormwater management and rain barrels. The commission suggested having Dana Brown make a presentation. It was also discussed to again hold a half day program at City Hall during the week with invitations to professionals to attend. It was requested to have Ms. Casanova present ideas for the next meeting. Mr. Discon suggested that Ms. Frederick be included as a speaker.

Parks and Parkways Commission

August 6, 2018

Page 6

Staff Update

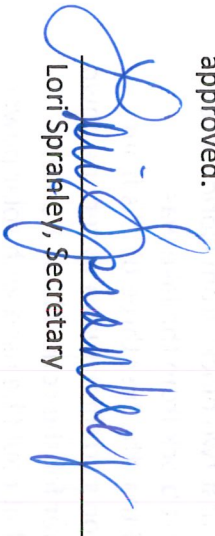
Signage - Ms. Frederick asked why it was a problem to include Parks and Parkways with the City logo. Ms. Scott said it was to keep the City together and not divide it. It was a policy of the City. Ms. Frederick said the commission initiated the project, and people needed to know there was a Parks and Parkways Commission that was working hard and moving toward on being green with progressive ideas. Ms. Scott said there were many people involved in the projects.

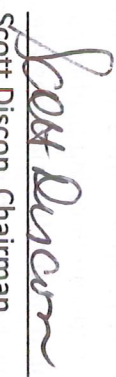
Ms. Clark asked about the Pottery Oak historic marker. Ms. Scott would look into it.

Mr. Discon said the blue rope was still around the Pottery Oak tree and it looked bad. Ms. Clark said the area was not being maintained. There was the right rope on the Marigny Avenue tree with an extra bollard. Ms. Scott would investigate the rope.

Ms. Frederick requested to include the Tyler Thomas Park on the next agenda. She had spoken with Pastor Winston and he was talking to his community. He would write a letter of support.

Ms. Clark moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. McQuiston and was unanimously approved.


Lori Sprahley, Secretary


Scott Discon, Chairman
Parks and Parkways Commission