

DISCUSSION NOTES OF A RESCHEDULED REGULAR MEETING  
OF THE DOWNTOWN ADVISORY COMMISSION  
AND  
JOINT SPECIAL MEETING OF THE  
: TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION :

DECEMBER 10, 2015

A Rescheduled Regular Meeting of the City of Peoria's Downtown Advisory Commission and Joint Special Meeting of the Transportation Commission, for Public Workshop #3 Regarding the Downtown Streetscape Master Plan, convened at 5:35 p.m. on Thursday, December 10, 2015, at the Gateway Building Ballroom located at 200 NE Water Street, Peoria, Illinois.

**CALL TO ORDER – DOWNTOWN ADVISORY COMMISSION**

The following Downtown Advisory Commission Members were in attendance: Commissioner John Gibson, Commissioner Jon Jenkins, Commissioner Ray Lees, and Chairman Mark Misselhorn – 4.

Absent: Commissioner Alison Daly, Commissioner Rebecca Frye, Commissioner Adam Hamilton and Commissioner Kip Strasma - 4.

**CALL TO ORDER – TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

The following Transportation Commission Members were in attendance: Commissioner George Ghareeb, Commissioner Brandon Lott, Commissioner Lon Lyons, Commissioner Pat McNamara, and Commissioner Randall Ray - 5.

Absent: Commissioner Dan Adler, Commissioner Mary Jane Crowell, Commissioner Nathaniel Herz, Chairman Joe Hudson, Commissioner Joe Messmore, and Commissioner Michael Vespa - 6.

Others in attendance are included on the attached Sign-In Sheet, and also included Assistant City Manager Chris Setti, Public Works Director Michael Rogers, Assistant Director of Public Works/City Engineer Scott Reese, i-Team Leader Anthony Corso (arrived 6:04 p.m.), City Traffic Engineer Nick Stoffer, Jereck Boss and Tarah Brand of OJB Landscape Architecture, and Public Works Administrative Specialist Ruth Blancaflor.

**1. Welcome.**

Public Works Director Michael Rogers welcomed all who were in attendance and he explained the meeting would summarize OJB Landscape Architecture's (OJB) findings toward making the best possible Master Plan. He invited comments and interaction throughout the presentation, to make sure nothing important to the commissioners had been missed. He introduced presenter Jereck Boss of OJB Landscape Architecture.

**2. Overview of Master Streetscape Planning Efforts.**

Mr. Boss gave an overview of OJB's work on the Master Plan over the last several months. He explained the goal was to present all the information they had gathered, which could be a springboard for some projects to be phased over the next few years. He discussed how some things would fit together, such as the bike plan, street widths, and transitioning some streets from a one-way system to a two-way system, as well as narrowing the right-of-way to appropriately size it.

He discussed some of the ideas collected from the Downtown Streetscape Master Plan Workshop #2, such as a proposed park at the Civic Center parking lot. He noted the comment that any new structures needed to be maintainable and long lasting. Due to the extensive discussions at Workshop #2 regarding the importance of bike facilities, he said adjustments were made to their plan. He discussed the challenge

of addressing the city of Peoria's combined sewer overflows (CSOs) and balancing that with the streets' ecosystems. Other items of importance previously submitted by the group were connections from the neighborhoods to the riverfront, and possibly reopening Fulton Plaza. He said some comments favored reopening it, with the ability to close it to allow for programmability for activities and event.

### **3. Presentation of Final Recommendations.**

Mr. Boss discussed the Peoria Streetscape Goals. He said the important items for Peoria included addressing issues specific to this climate, such as snow storage, street trees spacing, and amenity zones including street lights. Safe streets were noted, he said, and visibility and lighting were key to that. He also discussed keeping automobiles, traffic patterns, and intersections clearly defined and having clearly delineated bike facilities and pedestrian crossings. He discussed the goals of making Peoria a more walkable community, along with connecting some of the green spaces and shortening the distances between the medical centers and the neighborhoods to the north and from the riverfront and civic center.

The Transportation Planning Methodologies, as outlined on the handout, were then discussed. Mr. Boss pointed out there were 15 different principles that had been set from the Streetscape Goals for Peoria.

Mr. Boss discussed the proposed traffic plan. Ultimately, he said it was proposed to transition downtown Peoria back to a two-way traffic system. He said key alignments were identified for one-way to two-way, to make traffic easier. Some of the larger changes he outlined were on Glendale and Fayette. He said Perry was considered for two-way traffic with the addition of bike lanes and for connectivity to the neighborhoods and riverfront. Other considerations for the downtown streets included right-sizing lanes, or eliminating a lane, and providing opportunities, such as on Hamilton and Main, to continue the median plantings from the medical centers down to the riverfront.

Mr. Boss then discussed the slides depicting the overlapping plans of the entire 300 acres of the downtown including the existing street sections at 11' lane widths with 5' bike lanes and an 8' on-street parking lane. He discussed the key interventions the groups previously proposed for adding green space along Glendale, around the courthouse and library, and continuing south to the riverfront.

One's first impression of the city when coming off the freeway, Mr. Boss said, were many travel lanes with fast traffic and interesting configurations. He said the first intervention was for Glendale and Fayette, to make them two-way in each direction and reconfiguring Fayette's intersection to open it up. He discussed right-sizing those traffic lanes to give the ability for street trees and amenities zones and 6 to 8' sidewalk on the north and south sides of Glendale. He discussed removing parking on the north of the medical center for a park, or something else, to add green space and adding bike lanes on Hamilton.

Mr. Boss said the second proposed intervention was at Perry and Kumpf. He said these streets' configurations had almost freeway-like conditions and were very confusing for pedestrians crossing. Since the neighborhoods to the west made their way across Perry to the east, he said it made sense for Perry to become a two-way connection with traffic in each direction, an added bike lane and on-street parking on both sides. He said it was an important east-west connection in the north of the Central Business District (CBD), and those changes would make it cleaner and more legible for the vehicle, and the pedestrian. He said on-street parking on both sides of a street was good for retailers and allowed people to reasonably park downtown. Where Glendale turns into Kumpf, he said the width there allowed the expansion of the center lane median.

The next intervention, Mr. Boss discussed, was making Fayette a two-way alignment. Currently, he said, its traffic was all southbound and that it had entrances to the freeway, but the blocks from the north were hard to access. Changing Fayette (IDOT's road) to one northbound lane, two southbound lanes and going back to a one-way configuration in the block before the freeway, he explained, would make it a lot cleaner and more convenient, while allowing on-street parking on both sides of the street north and south. He noted that on-street parking slowed traffic, which was a goal for the downtown area.

Mr. Boss said the next area discussed had been Fulton Street, for opening it to traffic but with the ability to close it to allow for events programming. To accomplish that, he said they considered transitioning Fulton to one lane in each direction between Jefferson and Adams, and adding angled parking, which was possible due to its wide alignment. He noted Fulton was in the area of the hotel developments and City Hall, where much on-street parking was needed. If this configuration was added at Jefferson and Adams, he said, it would be easier to navigate Fulton and provided easier access around the Civic Center.

Mr. Boss discussed a slide which presented an idea from workshop #2, for the transition of Adams and Jefferson from big one-way streets to two-way traffic, in the future, and switching out the center lane to medians with protected left turn lanes.

There was a question regarding the truck traffic on the proposed two-way streets. Mr. Boss stated that, when that point in the planning was reached, considerations should be given to the amount of traffic on the streets, the types of users, and how that traffic could be distributed evenly.

The questioner stated it was her belief that there were two reasons people didn't go downtown: 1) one had to pay for parking, and 2) it was hard to parallel park. To inform the decision, she asked whether Mr. Boss had any data about angled parking versus parallel parking.

Mr. Boss discussed OJB's findings from a number of cities about the pros and cons of angled parking. He said steering committees liked the back in, angled parking because the accident ratios were lower for people pulling out of those spaces. Also, he said, the challenge of wide rights-of-way had been overcome by some cities, with back in, angled parking which could take up 18 to 20 feet. He said those cities found it was a better working relationship with vehicles and cyclists, as the vehicle backed in with much more caution and, when pulling out of the spot, the driver was better able to see cyclists.

Assistant City Manager Setti stated those were two misconceptions about parking since, after 5 p.m. and on weekends, parking was free except for in parking decks. Depending on where one was going, he said, there were various types and locations for parking in Peoria. Also, he said parking was never free, as it was a cost for somebody. He said if there was no control of parking during the weekday, everybody would be parking on the street and not allowing any visitors.

Public Works Director Rogers agreed, and he said his department had recently witnessed that scenario, when parking near city hall had been free for two months. The traffic analysis taken during that time, he said, showed that people were parking in those free spots and staying all day. He said the City had heard from businesses many times that they wanted parking turnover, and that was a major reason for meters, so that people could patronize the businesses.

Another question asked regarded avoiding pedestrian conflicts in two way traffic patterns, and Mr. Boss explained the method was to eliminate all rights on red, to protect pedestrians. He said it was a recommendation that required a final decision based on the details. Another component of that situation, he said, was the pedestrian push button which engaged the walk signal. He said, when the traffic signal turned green, the first part of the cycle had protection for the pedestrian. He said traffic counts helped balance the decision for streets like Adams and Jefferson with a little heavier volume, where there may be some turn lanes.

Transportation Commissioner Ray questioned the purpose of medians on Adams and Jefferson in a two-way lane configuration, and Mr. Boss explained those lane widths felt so wide that the medians would scale them down and provide a type of pedestrian "rescue zone."

In response to another question, Mr. Boss confirmed the planning process being utilized for Peoria was very similar to the process used in other cities, from its beginning to ultimately meet its implementation. Further, he said, the city of Peoria's plan implementation would be over multiple years and be due to funding availability.

Mr. Boss discussed Street Typology slides and the three typical alignments, with travel lanes, parking, bike lanes, amenity zones and sidewalks. He discussed using the streetscape as its own ecosystem to help solve some of the CSO challenges by maximizing planting zones to capture, store, and filter the water back into the system. He discussed the methods to capture the storm water: at the curb, in the street trees area, a little below the sidewalk levels, and with different filtration zones with native and adaptable plantings that can handle the water and some salts. The areas to store and filter the storm water, he explained, could be soil sections and a gravel zone with angular pieces of gravel with a lot of voids, and a gravel trench for storage capacity for the water before it drained naturally down in the soil. He said there were well-drained soils in downtown Peoria that would work well in that type of system. Of course, he stressed there was a balance to determine how much water to capture.

Mr. Boss said his team was curious about how much water needed to be captured for the micro shed area so they calculated for two-blocks with one intersection, or about 150,000 square feet. With a 10-year storm event, which was about 4.3" of rain over 24 hours, he said there would be about 400,000 gallons of water or 25 swimming pools of water to manage. He said a typical streetscape system might have 1000 square feet of landscaped area, but if the street trees planting areas were enlarged all around the city, the green number could increase to 16,000 to 17,000 square feet of planted area.

#### **4. Discussion and Next Steps**

##### **Preliminary Planning.**

Mr. Boss summarized the previous public transit discussions. Once a pilot project was planned, he said he recommended a review of how the bus routes and bus stops worked within the current alignments. He said the Fire and Public Works Departments should be included in that review in regard to their areas of concern. He briefly reviewed the proposed parking plan and bicycle facilities plan, which included initial recommendations on placement of bike share facilities downtown. He said they could be moved to accommodate pedestrian patterns.

##### **Phasing the Plan:**

The first question in these matters, Mr. Boss stated, was always how to phase the plan or what should be done first. From his experience with other cities, he said they determined to do something, do it fast, and get it finished. He said the faster it happens, the better it is for public relations, because streetscape was always inconvenient for business and visitors.

Mr. Boss outlined the following recommendations for Peoria's Downtown Master Streetscape Plan:

- 1) Reopen Fulton, because it was big in terms of the way traffic operated and worked; it was a nice right-sized project; it gave the opportunity to redo two intersections; it had a fairly limited alignment so, budget-wise, it was a nice piece for everyone to see and also gave something bigger to build on; it's about 420 feet in its length and has two intersections; After that, he said the next project was debatable, but could be as simple as the next project the city was excited about.
- 2) Make a section of Main Street really great: University Street down to the Riverfront; right size it; Main Street has a lot of nice architectural character in the buildings; seems to have a great opportunity there now because the businesses are doing well; that corridor could be an interesting piece to this.
- 3) After that, Mr. Boss suggested proceeding with Perry, Glendale, Hamilton, and Fayette as he had previously outlined during the discussions.

There was a question about how the ecosystems would work when the improvements were in pieces as opposed to complete, and Mr. Boss explained they would be engineered for the piece that was being constructed. He said it was important for the master plan to be broad in its ideas, because the first piece should capture the best of the ideas and be as close to the best solutions it could be. Further, he said it was good to have a small alignment in the streetscape, because there were many unknowns when the digging begins.

Mr. Boss then reviewed the "Before and After" slides of the proposed streetscapes of Main Street, Perry, Glendale, Hamilton and Fayette, and ended the summary of the Plan.

Next, a video summary was shown which again listed the Master Plan's recommendations. The video ended at 6:48 p.m.

#### **5. Public Comment.**

Downtown Advisory Commissioner Ray Lees said he understood the study had a defined area, but he said it didn't answer the question of how to transition to the rest of the community, especially regarding bike lanes.

Mr. Boss stated the one-way traffic to two-way traffic transition on the streets would often include new striping for bike lanes. Where there were bike lanes in the CBD, he said, connecting to those should be addressed during the phases of the plan with the new alignments. He said a part of OBJ's final report would include the districts and the associated reports that related to those.

Assistant City Manager Setti referred to the Peoria Master Bicycle Plan that was being finalized and he said Tri-County Regional Planning Commission was working on a regional bike plan, as well. No matter where OJB and the City of Peoria stopped with this Plan, he said it would transition into some other plan like the Bicycle Master Plan.

In discussion with Transportation Commissioner George Ghareeb, Mr. Boss said OBJ's study didn't include city bridges, but it had been discussed with the steering committee. He said they were aware that most existing bridges crossing I-74 had narrow alignments. One transition he said they discussed was adding a median rail along those bridges to get pedestrians across the freeway to the eastern neighborhoods.

Downtown Advisory Commission Chairman Mark Misselhorn questioned the next steps to the Plan's approval and launching, and combining it with the CSO issue.

Public Works Director Rogers said this Plan was a foundation to all other infrastructure plans the City would endeavor for the CSO or street improvements. He said the CSO issue was huge and would involve a great deal of work downtown. He said the Master Plan would have to be approved by the City Council and, thereafter, each and every location for infrastructure improvements would be analyzed for green infrastructure designs.

Mr. Setti added that the Plan would set a template for downtown development. He said the approximate cost was \$1 million per block face but that, as funds became available from any source, it would be developed a portion at a time. He said it may be done over 10 to 12 years as a part of the budgeting process or whenever any type of funds became available.

Mr. Rogers agreed, and he noted as an example the reconstruction of the Main and University intersection after a water main break. He said that project wasn't planned, but it became an opportunity, and staff was able to use old plans in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan and the Heart of Peoria Plan to determine what was still valid. This Plan had that same importance, he said, as a roadmap for future development. He agreed that funding was critical, but that every opportunity would be taken as it presented itself.

In further discussion with Commissioner Misselhorn regarding the strategy for building support for the Plan, Mr. Rogers reiterated it would be presented to the City Council for their support. After that, he said, when the opportunities came about, the Plan was ready to go.

Mr. Boss thanked everyone for their attendance and invited them to complete the comment sheets that had been placed around them, or to email any further questions or comments to him at [peoriastreet@OBJ.com](mailto:peoriastreet@OBJ.com).

**6. Adjournment.**

There being no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

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Nick Stoffer, Traffic Engineer

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