

MEMORANDUM

TO: Michael G. Herring, City Administrator
FROM: Mike Geisel, Director of Public Services
SUBJECT: Planning & Public Works Committee Meeting Summary
Thursday, February 19, 2015



A meeting of the Planning and Public Works Committee of the Chesterfield City Council was held on Thursday, February 19, 2015, in Conference Room 101.

In attendance were: **Chair Dan Hurt** (Ward III), **Councilmember Connie Fults** (Ward IV), **Councilmember Nancy Greenwood** (Ward I), and **Councilmember Elliot Grissom** (Ward II).

Also in attendance were: Mayor Bob Nation; Councilmember Mike Casey (Ward III); Planning Commission Member Merrell Hansen; Mike Geisel, Director of Public Services; Jim Eckrich, Public Works Director/City Engineer; Aimee Nassif, Planning & Development Services Director; and Kathy Juergens, Recording Secretary.

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

I. APPROVAL OF MEETING SUMMARY

A. Approval of the February 5, 2015 Committee Meeting Summary.

Councilmember Grissom made a motion to approve the Meeting Summary of February 5, 2015. The motion was seconded by **Councilmember Fults** and **passed** by a voice vote of 3-0 with Councilmember Greenwood abstaining.

II. OLD BUSINESS

A. River Valley Street Closure Request.

STAFF REPORT

Mike Geisel, Director of Public Services, stated the residents of River Bend have requested that the City consider closing River Valley Drive due to a proposed development in Howard Bend Valley in Maryland Heights. Staff's presentation is not related to that development specifically, but rather the issue of any large development in the Howard Bend area of Maryland Heights which relies on River Valley Drive as a means of ingress/egress. If the Committee wishes to consider a road closure, additional due diligence will be required by Staff in the following areas:

- Communicate with public agencies/utilities.
- Review and report on the impact of the closure including the impact on Hog Hollow Road.
- Develop recommendations for physical implementation consistent with City standards.
- Develop cost estimates for physical implementation.

Mr. Geisel gave a PowerPoint presentation showing an aerial of the proposed development and the surrounding area and discussed the typical traffic flow in that area. Slides were shown of the proposed mixed use development in Maryland Heights and its close proximity to River Valley Drive and Hog Hollow Road.

Mr. Geisel referred to Maryland Height's comprehensive plan which includes a development plan and the allowable land uses within Howard Bend Valley, which is similar to Chesterfield's development plan for the Valley. Based on Maryland Height's projections, a development could include an estimated 28 million to 33 million square feet. As a comparison, the original proposal for Chesterfield Commons was 1 million square feet.

Maryland Heights' comprehensive plan also identifies transportation improvements that are necessary in order to facilitate development within Howard Bend Valley. They intend to extend River Valley Drive northward to Riverport and have identified a new interchange at Page Avenue (Hwy 364) and River Valley. Until recently, the extension of Baxter Road was also included in their capital improvement plan. However, their comprehensive plan now states they are not actively pursuing the extension of Baxter Road and identifies it as a County and Chesterfield initiative. They may still support the extension; however, it appears that they will not be participating in that project. From Chesterfield's perspective, the Baxter Road extension is critical for the region and is the single most important improvement for the City of Chesterfield as it impacts our transportation model.

The estimated 28-33 million square feet of development would generate between 220,000-330,000 vehicular trips per day. Projected daily traffic volumes in the area after transportation improvements estimate that the section of River Valley immediately north of Chesterfield would be carrying 25,000 cars per day. An excerpt from the Maryland Heights comprehensive plan states that "without specific systemic transportation improvements and enhancements, the local roadway network would be able to support only a small portion of the development envisioned within the planning area."

Several photos of River Valley Drive were shown. The roadway south of the intersection of Ridgecrest and River Valley meets current engineering standards. However, north of that intersection, there is an asphalt section that does not meet current standards. The City simply maintains the road in its current condition. The roadway includes steep hills and curvatures with a lack of drainage.

Hog Hollow Road is similar to River Valley Drive, in that it too has design issues that include steep slopes, dangerous intersections, lack of drainage, etc. Despite the City's best efforts, Hog Hollow is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain. The City has taken no position on whether the road should be closed.

DISCUSSION

Councilmember Greenwood stated the City is always concerned with traffic impact from new developments. In this case, we have a mature neighborhood that has had some privacy. Now there is a possibility of a mixed use development that will greatly impact neighborhood traffic as motorists tend to take the shortest route, which in this case, will be through River Valley. She also noted the number of driveways off of River Valley Drive where homeowners will have difficulty entering the road because of the estimated 12,000 cars traveling daily along this roadway. Councilmember Greenwood requested an engineering study of River Valley Drive

and Hog Hollow Road. The residents have made their views known to Maryland Heights officials, but apparently they are not listening to the Chesterfield residents.

Mr. Geisel pointed out that this discussion is not related to any individual development but is associated with the inevitable development of the Howard Bend area.

Due to flooding in the area, Chair Hurt asked if any development is even economically feasible in this area. Mr. Geisel stated the vast majority of the land is out of the floodplain because the Howard Bend Levee has been improved to a 500-hundred year level of protection and they have an interior storm water drainage program. In response to Chair Hurt's question, Mr. Geisel stated that while Maryland Heights may encounter problems during development, he didn't think there would be any "deal killers" from a State or Federal regulatory standpoint.

RESIDENT COMMENTS

Ms. Barbara McGuinness spoke on behalf of the residents. She was very appreciative of the City taking an interest in helping the residents. The thought of 33 million square feet of development a half a mile from their neighborhood is almost incomprehensible. They will not be able to survive the onslaught of development in Maryland Heights and they must have protection. They want to protect the character and integrity of the neighborhood. She expressed concern about the future of the neighborhood if the street is not closed and feels it may become just a cut-thru to Olive. In response to Chair Hurt's question, Ms. McGuinness stated they are still asking for full closure of River Valley Drive. She also confirmed that 87% of the residents approve the road closure, 8% are not in favor, and 5% are unsure.

Councilmember Fults asked if the proposed development is planning to use only River Valley Drive as a way into and out of the subdivision. Mr. Geisel confirmed that there are four areas on the McBride development drawing which show direct access to River Valley Drive. The only other road in the area is John Pellet Drive.

Ms. McGuinness pointed out there are no services located in that area so anyone needing gas or groceries will drive up River Valley Drive to Olive to access these services.

Councilman Grissom asked for clarification on what the study would encompass. Mr. Geisel delineated the following:

- Communicate with all involved agencies, which include adjacent cities, St. Louis County, the fire district and utility companies.
- Validate and determine the level of resident participation.
- Determine the method of closure if the road is to be closed.
- Show the impact to a motorist as a result of the road closure.
- Study can be performed in-house and will take approximately two months.
- Depending on the result of the study, Staff may or may not provide a recommendation for closure.
- All information will be compiled and presented to the Committee.

Councilmember Fults asked if the County will require the City to improve Hog Hollow Road if River Valley Drive is closed. Mr. Geisel stated that in the past, the City has communicated with the County and they have expressed no interest in Hog Hollow Road. One alternative for Hog Hollow Road would be for the City to vacate it. If that occurred, the County could accept it or the road would be turned over to adjacent property owners for private or utility use.

In response to Councilmember Casey's question regarding Hog Hollow, Mr. Geisel stated if River Valley is closed, there are still multiple points of access onto Olive Road for the residents of River Bend Estates and River Bend Addition. Hog Hollow is strictly a through street from Olive to Maryland Heights. There is no subdivision access from it. For the past ten years, it has been recognized and understood that an east-west connection from Maryland Heights' valley to Chesterfield Valley is critical. It is now not only being de-emphasized, it is being disowned by Maryland Heights.

Councilmember Casey asked about emergency vehicle access to the water plant if Hog Hollow was vacated or if River Valley was terminated. Mr. Geisel stated there are several possible configurations which would be included in the study. Another area of concern is access for service vehicles to the water plant.

Councilmember Casey recalled that a past Councilmember asked Staff look into improving Hog Hollow and asked if that study was conducted. Mr. Geisel stated it was. The City had a cooperative partnership with the developer of Briarcliff, of the prior Chesterfield Manor Nursing Home site, to substantially improve Hog Hollow. There are three public potable water lines in this area that are not completely within the right of way and the water company wanted 20% of \$1.6 million to relocate them. The total cost of the road improvement was \$4 million. When the Briarcliff project was abandoned, the City's ability to even initiate a project in excess of \$4 million was not feasible. There is also a secure communications pod that is located at the bottom of the first S-curve near Olive, which is located on private easement, which must be relocated with any road reconstruction. That pod is a \$150,000 telephone communications pod that cannot be put out of service, even temporarily.

Councilmember Greenwood made a motion directing Staff to communicate with public agencies/utilities, review and report on impacts of closure, develop recommendations for physical implementation, and develop cost estimates for physical implementation of closing River Valley Drive. The motion was seconded by Chair Hurt.

Councilmember Casey suggested the study include potential alternatives to closing River Valley Drive.

Councilmember Greenwood made a motion to amend the original motion to include in the study of potential alternative solutions to closing River Valley Drive. As the seconder of the motion, Chair Hurt accepted the amendment. The motion, as amended, **passed by a voice vote of 4-0**.

DISCUSSION AFTER THE MOTION

Since Staff estimates a two-month time period to complete the study, Chair Hurt asked where the Maryland Heights project will be at that point. Ms. Nassif stated Maryland Heights is currently working with their consultants on changes to their comprehensive plan. The proposed project has been placed on hold until such time that their comprehensive plan is revised. Mr. Geisel indicated the McBride development is at least eight months away and that Ms. Nassif will remain in contact with Maryland Heights.

III. NEW BUSINESS

None.

IV. PROJECT UPDATES

Due to time constraints, Ms. Aimee Nassif, Planning and Development Services Director, stated that she will email the Committee her presentation on project updates.

III. OTHER

None.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.