

MINUTES - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD

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The Economic Development Advisory Board of the City of Fort Myers, Florida, met in regular session at Oscar M. Corbin, Jr. City Hall, 2200 Second Street, its regular meeting place in the City of Fort Myers, Florida, on Thursday, May 6, 2021, at 2:00 p.m. Present were: Chair, Dennis Landfried, presiding, Vice Chair, Jerome Miller, and Regular Board Members, Orie Lee Ford, John Kakatsch, Roy Kennix (Arrived at 2:15 p.m. and left at 3:07 p.m.), Sharon Schulman, Ken Pariser, and Alternate Board Members Nannette Maxson (Arrived at 2:18 p.m.) and Duane Dyar. Also present were: Steven Belden, Community Development Director; Barbara Carr, Business and Economic Development Administrator; Grant Alley, City Attorney (left the meeting at 3:07 p.m.); Gwen Carlisle, City Clerk; and Jennifer Myers, Recording Specialist. Absent: None

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Landfried called the meeting to order at 2:06 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO FLAG AND ROLL CALL

Chair Landfried led the Pledge of Allegiance and roll call was taken by Recording Specialist Myers.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Anderson gave the Board Members City pins and thanked them for all they do.

PRESENTATIONS

1. Update on the Fowler Street Corridor Plan by Nicole Monahan, City Engineer

Carl Karakos, City Transportation Engineer, stated that Nicole Monahan, City Engineer was not able to attend the meeting to give the presentation, therefore, he is taking her place.

Mr. Karakos presented a brief history of Fowler Street and Evans Avenue that included improvements and conversions approved in 1999 and 2009. He stated that currently the Fowler Street lane balance remains between the two corridors with a total of 5 lanes northbound and 2 lanes southbound and no pedestrian or bicyclist amenities on Fowler Street north of Hanson.

Mr. Karakos noted the Ultimate Improvement Plan needs to be approved by the City Council and could be completed along with other Downtown Improvements over the next 14 to 20 years:

- Converting Fowler Street from 2 northbound lanes and 2 southbound lanes and no sidewalks into 1 northbound lane and 2 southbound lanes with 8-foot sidewalks on both sides of the road
- Converting Evans Avenue from three northbound lanes with a 4-foot bicycle path into 2 northbound lanes and 1 southbound lane with 8-foot sidewalks and a 10-foot bicycle track

Mr. Karakos noted the Interim Improvement Plan and could be completed along with the Midtown Improvements over the next 4 years:

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- Converts Fowler into 2 southbound lanes and 1 northbound lane with a 4-foot physical separation barrier and a 6-foot pedestrian pathway.
- Improves pedestrian safety
- Stays within existing roadway
- Includes multiple pedestrian mid-block crossings
- Maintains adequate vehicular capacity

Board Member Miller mentioned that the Interim Improvement Plan Concept is a final plan whereas the Ultimate Improvement Plan requires numerous right-of-way acquisitions. There is a large budget difference between the two plans and stated that Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is paying for the projects. Barbara Carr, Business and Economic Development Administrator, stated that there may be funds available from Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) that would help with the Interim Improvement Plan and additional development in the Fowler Street area. Board Member Kennix suggested exploring available funding resources from the federal Infrastructure Program. Ms. Carr mentioned there may be funds available through the Federal CARES Act. Mr. Karakos stated that Phase I of the Interim Improvement Plan would cost FDOT approximately \$2 Million and they have not asked for matching funds. Board Member Schulman suggested partnering with Utilities to upgrade together and use some of their funding. Mr. Karakos conveyed that the City is currently working on the John Yarbrough Linear Park (JYLP) Trail and possibly extending it across the Caloosahatchee Bridge, however, life expectancy of the bridge needs to be considered. Discussion ensued regarding the JYLP trail funding and locations. Board Member Kennix suggested that if the project is considered a "Road Safety" funding from the federal Infrastructure Program should be considered as they have a "Road Safety" category listed.

Board Member Ford asked about the efforts for slowing down traffic on Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Boulevard. Mr. Karakos explained that FDOT is looking into safety improvements on MLK. Board Member Ford felt that the traffic must be mitigated for a commercial district in that area. Mr. Karakos conveyed that with Midtown and Downtown improvements, MLK may be re-routed to create less traffic in a long-range plan. Board Member Ford stated creating less traffic will not benefit the businesses, the traffic needs to slow down so the businesses get customers. Mr. Karakos stated he meets regularly with FDOT and will share these concerns.

MOTION: Vice Chair Miller moved that the Board will support the FDOT Fowler Street Interim Improvements for inclusion in the budget; motion withdrawn.

Mr. Karakos summarized the discussion at the September 29, 2020 FDOT Meeting regarding the Fowler Street improvements and noted that there is one FDOT project with 2 phases: Phase 1 is the Interim Improvement Plan and Phase II is the Ultimate Improvement Plan. Mr. Karakos stated that the next steps would be for the City Engineer to get the new City Manager up to speed on the project and then presenting it to Council for approval. Board Member Maxson inquired if there are bike paths planned for Downtown or Cleveland Avenue. Mr. Karakos stated that a recommendation in the Bike and Pedestrian Mater Plan was to revisit bike/ped access in Downtown. Board Member Ford restated his concern for MLK and that other streets are being addressed while MLK is not, therefore, he will not vote in favor of this project.

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MOTION: Vice Chair Miller moved that the Board supports Phase I, Interim Improvements, and Phase II, Ultimate Improvements, of the FDOT Fowler Street and Evans Avenue Improvement Project with drainage and utilities and incorporate Phase I into all necessary budgets as soon as possible and Phase II as soon as feasibly possible; seconded by Board Member Kakatsch; motion carried 7-2, Board Member Ford and Board Member Kennix opposed.

Chair Landfried stated that this vote will be an item presented to Council on June 7, 2021 along with a caveat that MLK and other major arteries be addressed.

Steven Belden, Community Development Director left the meeting at 2:56 p.m.

REGULAR ITEMS

2. Approve Minutes of the meeting held on April 1, 2021

MOTION: Board Member Kakatsch moved to approve the Minutes of the April 1, 2021 Economic Development Advisory Board Meeting; seconded by Board Member Kennix; motion carried unanimously.

3. Discuss a request to make a presentation to the Board on a Midtown Connectivity Vision by Diana Giraldo, President of Streets Alive of Southwest Florida

City Clerk Carlisle conveyed that Diana Giraldo reached out to her requesting to make a presentation to the Board and she advised her that it would need to be approved by the Board prior to adding it to the Agenda.

Mr. Karakos informed the Board that Diana Giraldo and Matt Leger each have great ideas similar in nature and there is an opportunity with the Midtown Project to include both of their scope of work. A Feasibility Study of socio-economic impacts will be done, it will be presented to Council for approval, and then it will become part of the plan.

Board Member Kennix left the meeting at 3:07 p.m.

Matthew Leger, Vice Chair, City Planning Board, conveyed that he developed the Hendry Street Pedestrian Study that he would like to present to the Board as it is a catalyst for growth and development in the Midtown sector. He and Diana Giraldo work closely, and he has a group that meets the 4th Thursday of each month to make this project a reality.

Chair Landfried recommended that Ms. Giraldo's presentation and Mr. Leger's presentation be on the next agenda.

4. Review draft Ordinance submitted by the City Attorney to change the term limit of the Chair and Vice Chair

Chair Landfried stated that the City Attorney provided a draft Ordinance to strike the language that refers to the number of years the officers can serve. Vice Chair Miller outlined that the change would allow the Chair and Vice Chair to be re-elected for unlimited one-year terms. City Clerk Carlisle stated that the Ordinance will need to be approved by Council.

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Chair Landfried stated that draft Ordinance will be added to the list to be presented to City Council.

MOTION: Board Member Kakatsch moved to approve the draft Ordinance; seconded by Board Member Ford; motion carried unanimously.

5. Discuss addressing the City Council on June 7, 2021 (Final items due to the City Clerk by May 28, 2021)

Chair Landfried outlined that the current items on the list to be presented to Council on June 7th are (1) The Fowler Street Project Endorsement, MLK, and other major thoroughfares, and (2) The Ordinance changes. There will be more items added to the list prior to the June 7, 2021 Council meeting.

BOARD MEMBER FOCUS AREAS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

6. Board Member Pariser's recommendations from his previous report on FIU Corridor Planning

Chair Landfried stated that Board Member Pariser submitted four recommendations for consideration by the Board:

1. A concerted effort to dissuade panhandlers at intersections such as Daniels and 41 be initiated.
2. Despite sentiment presented to the contrary, I believe the attractions in our community presently, ie: FGCU, Century Link, Hertz Arena (accessed through FM), downtown river walk and amenities, B Mann, etc. warrant addressing appropriate welcoming signage at all major arteries similar to entry from North FM on southbound 41.
3. A statute requiring commercial/industrial companies to install privacy fencing 8' tall to remove unsightly viewing of items such as junked cars and scrap as currently visible on MLK south of I-75 and that piles of such debris be no greater than 20' high this lessening view from major thoroughfares.
4. A city ordinance be established allowing golf carts only traveling to and from golf course (verifiable by golf equipment and time of day in cart). All carts must only be temporarily used and NO recreational use on public sidewalks or streets is permitted. As with bicycles, all carts must be equipped with dusk to dawn lights, be operated by driver possessing valid license or have successfully passed a safety course.

Board Member Pariser noted that recently Lee County passed an Ordinance that banned panhandlers from the roadway medians, therefore, at this time policing will minimize panhandlers. Chair Landfried mentioned that he was advised that the City does have a panhandler Ordinance that is strictly being enforced and panhandling in the medians is at a minimum at this time.

Chair Landfried stated that homeless people have been given temporary housing while the agencies are searching for permanent housing for them. Board Member Kakatsch asked where the temporary housing is located and Chair Landfried replied hotels. Board Member

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Ford stated that he has been advised that the owners of the hotels are evicting the homeless occupants when they do not follow the rules which is putting them back on the streets. Vice Chair Miller mentioned the Board could get an update from the Mayor's Homeless Task Force as well as an affordable housing perspective. Board Member Ford suggested that if an owner has rental units available, they can contact the County or the City to negotiate a term as they have funding for that purpose. Vice Chair Miller noted that a lot of people are working on this issue from a lot of different angles. Chair Landfried stated that he will investigate this matter and what is happening with permanent housing solutions then follow-up with the Board, however, this does not need to be an item on the Agenda.

Board Member Pariser felt that our community is a thoroughfare to many attractions that bring people to Fort Myers and the signage has a lot to be desired or is nonexistent. Board Member Schulman felt that signage needs to be part of a more encompassing project. Board Member Pariser mentioned that other communities in Lee County are making concerted efforts of placing welcome signage into their communities and suggested the City place something grander than what is currently in place. Vice Chair Miller felt it can get done, however, there needs to be a plan. City Clerk Carlisle stated that on the City Council May 17, 2021 Agenda there is an item for discussion regarding signage for Highways 41, 80, and 82 to match the City's signage on McGregor at the Alliance of the Arts. Chair Landfried mentioned that Councilperson Burson advised him that they are trying to get signs like the signage on McGregor at the Alliance of the Arts on every major corridor heading into the City. Vice Chair Miller noted that this Board and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board both made motions for the City to consider the vacant area where ABC Liquor used to be as a welcoming signage park and the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is working on signage on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (MLK). Board Member Ford agreed there should be more emphasis on welcoming signage and landscaping coming into the City.

Board Member Kakatsch inquired about the fencing requirements for the areas coming into the City. Board Member Ford conveyed that junkyards coming into the City are outside of the City limits and governed by Lee County. Board Member Dyar asked if the big development projects have already planned signage and beautification components. Chair Landfried conveyed that developments have minimal signage and beautification components, and the Florida International University (FIU) Study has components, however, waiting for the projects and the study to be finished will be a long time. The job of this Board is to endorse tasks and move them forward or get Council to readdress the issues. Board Member Ford suggested that when developers submit their Planned Unit Development (PUD) to the City, the City could make requirements that they must contribute beautification or signage improvements near their property as well. Vice Chair Miller suggested finding out how those funds could go into a specific project budget such as a park. Board Member Ford stated that moneys could have a targeted fund rather than going into the general fund. He suggested that the Board have a discussion with the Community Development Director about the process of adding requirements to a PUD and then the Board can make the recommendation to Council. Vice Chair Miller noted that the CRA has a list of nonprofits and projects that target a specific issue. Board Member Ford suggested also having that discussion with the CRA Director for beautification and signage targeted funds. Chair Landfried suggested adding to the recommendations to Council the Board's endorsement to address major signage, landscaping, and strictly enforcing the fencing Ordinance coming into the City.

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MOTION: Board Member Schulman moved to add to the Board's Agenda addressing Council its support of Council's efforts in unifying signage, landscaping, and strictly enforcing the fence ordinance throughout the City and encourage Council to move forward as soon as possible; seconded by Board Member Maxson; motion carried unanimously.

Board Member Pariser discussed his safety concerns regarding golf cart traffic on sidewalks as well as underage drivers and improper lighting on carts. He is not sure if the City has a golf cart Ordinance, however, suggested something needs to be enforced.

Councilperson Bochette noted the traffic and density will increase as the City grows wherein the intersections will not hold all the future traffic properly and suggested exploring specific golf cart corridors. There are various pockets throughout the County where golf carts are allowed by an Ordinance with codes and requirements. He recommended a golf cart corridor pilot program on West First Street to alleviate the traffic coming into Downtown and parking problems. This micro-transportation amenity could increase property values and solve future transportation problems. Councilperson Bochette highlighted that at this time the City Engineer is evaluating the traffic issues on McGregor Boulevard and will be introducing solutions for different transportation flows to deter accidents. Councilperson Bochette advised that other Boards are discussing the same topics this Board is and will be suggesting to the new City Manager a cross communication between the Chairs of all Boards. Chair Landfried mentioned that this Board did draft a letter to the other City Boards to encourage communication. Vice Chair Miller suggested that if golf carts are allowed Downtown, different classes of golf carts should be considered as well as parking. Board Member Schulman explained that there are differences between golf carts and low speed vehicles.

Barbara Carr, Business and Economic Development Administrator reported that she researched a software system called Streetlight Data which gathers data to formulate travel patterns of vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, and buses so that it can be visualized to make decisions based on traffic flows. This is valuable data for business development as well as other City departments. Vice Chair Miller suggested they could give a presentation to the Board. Ms. Carr stated that the concept could be discussed during budgetary meetings. She felt that the idea of the different City committees and boards communicating could also apply to the different City departments as well.

ADDITIONAL ITEM

City Clerk Carlisle mentioned that the Board can schedule another meeting during the month if it is needed occasionally. Vice Chair Miller suggested entertaining the idea of another meeting this month due to addressing the Council on June 7, 2021. Chair Landfried stated that an extra meeting would be to continue with the Board Focus Area Items 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 which could not be addressed at this meeting due to a time constraint. Discussion ensued and there was Board consensus for a Special Meeting on Monday, May 24, 2020 at 2:00 p.m.

Board Member Ford stated that he would also like to add a discussion item regarding the City's zoning and land use. There is a company looking to expand their industrial business and are looking in the City for vacant land. He suggested that the Board review the City's land use map to see what vacant land is available and then evaluate the best use for the larger plots of vacant land. Some of the City land is being designated for multi-family unit developments, however, it could be designated for industrial and commercial use. Ms. Carr

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gave a brief overview of the Lee County industrial market and conveyed that there is an extremely strong demand in the City. Chair Landfried stated that this topic will be place on the Special Meeting Agenda.

MOTION: Board Member Kakatsch moved to approve a Special Meeting on May 24, 2020 at 2:00 p.m.; seconded by Board Member Ford; motion carried unanimously.

Items 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 continued to the May 24, 2021 Special Meeting

7. Report on Water Quality (Board Member Schulman)

Chair Landfried stated that Board Member Schulman submitted three recommendations for consideration by the Board which will be discussed further at the Special Meeting. He noted that he asked the City Attorney to find the City's Fertilizer Ordinance for the Board to review based on one of Board Member Schulman's recommendations. Vice Chair Miller felt that the City piggybacks on the Lee County Ordinance and noted that Councilperson Burson is working on this issue and suggested getting his input.

8. Report on DBE Task Force (Board Member Ford)

9. Report on Parks and Beautification Committee (Vice Chair Miller)

10. Report on Mayor's Affordable Housing Task Force (Chair Landfried)

11. Report on Affordable Housing and Homelessness Sub-Committee of the Mayor's Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Task Force (Board Member Kennix)

REPORTS

12. Community Development Department Director's Report - None

13. Business and Economic Development Administrator's Report

Barbara Carr, Business and Economic Development Administrator reported that she has a budget meeting on May 13, 2020 to discuss funding for economic development.

NEXT MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT – June 3, 2021

Chair Landfried noted that he was assigned by the Board to report on affordable housing although it is more than he anticipated and asked Board Member Dyar to take over affordable housing which includes attending the Mayor's Affordable Housing Task Force and Board Member Dyar agreed.

Chair Landfried announced that Marty Lawing is the incoming City Manager who will arrive soon and spend some time with this Board. He noted that in his conversations with City leaders it was suggested: (1) The Board have a public-private workshop to understand how those work; (2) The Board create an Ordinance pertaining to the Riverwalk as the CRA has attaching Tax-Increment Financing (TIF) funds to new projects built on the River to include Riverwalk; (3) The Board's support with the Southwest Florida Enterprise Center expansion

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and Chair Landfried asked Board Member Pariser to investigate this with the CRA Director, Michele Hylton-Terry.

Chair Landfried stated that he will compile the Council presentation agenda from the items in this meeting and will forward it to the Board Members prior to the next meeting. Vice Chair Miller noted that there may be other items added to the list at the next meeting.

Vice Chair Miller commended Board Member Schulman on her presentation at the Ward 6 Community Meeting on behalf of the Board.

ADJOURNMENT: *There being no further business, it was moved by Board Member Kakatsch; seconded by Board Member Ford; and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 4:15 p.m.*