

STAFFORD COUNTY
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MINUTES
MARCH 4, 2010

- Call to Order. A regular meeting of the Stafford County Historical Commission was called to order by Anita Dodd, at 3:07 P.M., Thursday, March 4, 2010 in Conference Room ABC, Stafford County Administration Center.

- Roll Call. The following members were present: Anita Dodd, Chairperson; Cessie Howell, Secretary; Ann Best-Rolls, Jane Conner, Barbara Kirby and Frank White.

Also in attendance were: Kathy Baker, Assistant Director, Planning & Zoning and Terry Baxley Morton, Commission Clerk. Brad Johnson, Redevelopment Administrator and M.C. Moncure, Tourism Manager, both of Economic Development, were present. Cord Sterling, Board of Supervisors, was present.

- Discuss Falmouth Interchange. Quintin Elliott, Fredericksburg District Administrator, Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and Cord Sterling, Stafford County Board of Supervisors, Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) Member.

Cord Sterling said major traffic back-ups and challenges have occurred at the Falmouth Intersection for decades. He said funding has been provided in the past but taken away as a result of not knowing which direction to go forward. He said officials put money into it for design. He said before he was on the Board officials attempted to get the Board to reach an agreement about what it would support regarding the intersection. He said going in the Board realized there is no perfect solution. He said the more efficient the interchange the more impact it would have on the budgetary and surrounding community. He said there was talk of a fly-over at one time but there were concerns of the cemetery, the church and many other aspects surrounding the area.

Cord Sterling said Quintin Elliott and his team of engineers looked at a fly-over for the existing situation as well as the possibility of what is an at-grade.

Quintin Elliott said they would show illustrations that would show a cost/benefit analysis. First he spoke of a fly-over, basically an over-pass. He said they knew residents wanted to maintain a community look.

The purple portion of the graph illustrated no improvements to the intersection. The average amount of time to go through the intersection in 2008 was three minutes. By 2016 it would take an average of four minutes to get through the intersection. By 2036 it would take an average of nine minutes. The light blue illustrates a fly-over. The purple illustrates an at-grade intersection. In 2016 it would take an average of 1 minute 30 seconds to get through with an at-grade improvement. By 2036 it would take an average of three minutes (the same as today), which is still five minutes less than 2036 with no improvements.

Cessie Howell inquired about a by-pass plan that was previously considered. Cord Sterling said the by-pass costs about three times as much as the fly-over.

Anita Dodd said at the last meeting she attended with the consulting parties there was a lot of discussion about whether this is an EIS study or an EA study. It was her understanding at the time of the EIS that because the historic district that was there deals with no significant impacts. She said she understood the EA study to be conducted when there is no knowledge of any significant impacts. She said this is a historic district so that means you automatically have impacts that should be studied.

Quintin Elliott said he has environmental staff going through that process now. Anita Dodd said she finds it difficult, for the past 10 years, of considering different options for the intersection, people have been asked to choose between two options. She said you cannot make a decision about a particular change to the intersection without studies being conducted. She understands the archeological investigation has just been completed. The Historical Commission has not seen the report. She said it is her understanding they have to be presented with all options and studies with all pros and cons. She said she understood the costs of the studies cannot be a part of the decision. She said the Commission would like additional clarification on the subject.

Quintin Elliott said he could not address the question regarding an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or an Environmental Assessment (EA). He would have to consult with his staff. He said the fly-over would cost \$54 M. He gets approximately \$20 some M a year to divide among counties for road improvements. This project is \$24 M. He said if the prices rise there is no money over the next six year period to be able to fund a massive project.

Cord Sterling said there is a study now to see what the project would and would not factor. Anita Dodd said the studies need to be in place before anyone can make an informed decision on how to deal with the issue. Cessie Howell said every historical area has trucks, Front Royal, the Plains, Winchester and Warrenton to name a few. Every historical town has a by-pass for trucks. She said the main problem with these areas are trucks. She said truck drivers want a by-pass so they do not have to wait at the intersection and can by-pass historical areas. Anita Dodd said VDOT staff has admitted this plan is only a 10 or 15 year fix and will have to take more of the historical district later.

Cord Sterling said the real question is, what is the timing increase or decrease, what is the level of service? He said the question is whether you're sitting there for one and a half minutes, two minutes or eight minutes, whether traffic is backed up for miles or a couple hundred yards. He said a by-pass can be put on the table and we will be where we are now. He said there is no money for it.

Anita Dodd said where these type surveys are required, you have to consider the options without the condition of money. Cord Sterling said officials are making sure they are following the letter of the law regarding all of the requirements. Anita Dodd said she would like a copy of the regulations required. Quintin Elliott said he would be glad to set up a meeting with Anita Dodd and his District Environmental Manager to make sure the laws are understood. Anita Dodd said there seems to be a total disregard for the historic district. She said, regardless of what is done, it

will impact the historic district. Anita Dodd and Cessie Howell iterated the historic district should be left alone and trucks should be rerouted. Quintin Elliott said if you leave the intersection as is it will take over eight minutes to get through. Commission members said not if trucks are relocated.

Discussion ensued.

Cessie Howell requested a set of the plans. Quintin Elliott said the CTB deals with a finite amount of money. Quintin Elliott said there is barely funding for maintenance. He said it could take possibly 30 years to get the funds together for a by-pass and that would be only one project for one county of the 14 counties he is responsible for.

Jane Conner asked about the possibility of a study being conducted of the purple graph without truck traffic. Quintin Elliott said rerouting the trucks would affect Fredericksburg. Frank White mentioned observing large trucks taking several side and back streets to avoid the Falmouth Intersection. Anita Dodd asked if Quintin Elliott or Cord Sterling had experienced traveling to other historical areas that had no truck traffic. Quintin Elliott said when truck traffic was prohibited in the areas mentioned the State was not in the budget situation it is in now. Quintin Elliott said staff could discuss a by-pass but he would be gone and they would be dealing with another District Residency Administrator because the funds are not available for the by-pass. Anita Dodd said that would destroy something people can never get back. Cord Sterling said the Board has approved the at-grade intersection.

Anita Dodd said the Board of Supervisors is a consulting party to VDOT as is the Historical Commission. Cord Sterling said the Board can endorse plans for road improvements. Barbara Kirby elaborated on the statement.

Discussion ensued regarding a proposed bicycle path for the area. The Commission felt there is not sufficient space for a bicycle path. Quintin Elliott said he would personally find out if bicycle paths in historic districts are a requirement. Jane Conner said she recalls a bicycle path project going from Ferry Farm to Belmont in the River Road area using Safe-Tea funds some time ago. Cord Sterling said the information on the by-pass will be provided to the Commission. If the Commission deems a bicycle path unnecessary and the Board adopts a resolution stating such, VDOT can proceed without including a bicycle path.

Jane Conner said the plan just appears to be adding an extra lane. She said traffic still has to go over the bridge. Quintin Elliot said only one lane will work at a time without adding an additional lane and the signal will not work at its optimum. He said adding a couple more lanes will add to the signal phases and there will be improvement in time. Cord Sterling said there would be a dedicated left turn lane, a dedicated right turn lane and two through lanes. He said that would provide more optimal use of the receiver lanes.

Cord Sterling said the bank building is not historical and has a mold problem because a spring is located there. He said the car dealership is not historical. Quintin Elliott said the improvement would have a four foot high concrete median to separate the traffic moving northbound from southbound traffic. He said the median restricts movement through the area and makes traffic

flow better. Cord Sterling said there are properties at the corners that have to be taken. He said the Commission could put together a plan on the best way to utilize the remainder of the property on the corners, perhaps a statue or monument.

Jane Conner asked if Gordon Green Terrace to the south on US-1 and the Cotton Warehouse are going to be eliminated, the Commission was told no. Anita Dodd said the cemetery at Union Church, the worker cottages along Butler Road and the Manor across the street will be affected. Cord Sterling said officials are looking for ideas to get traffic moving in that area. Barbara Kirby asked if VDOT could have no through trucks. Quintin Elliott said VDOT could not because US-1 is a major road.

Discussion ensued.

Anita Dodd said she does not agree with medians and asked why a sign cannot be installed. Quintin Elliott and Cord Sterling said people do not always obey signs. Barbara Kirby asked if people have to make a choice between the Manor and the workers cottages. Quintin Elliott could not answer yes or no because it is still being studied, reviewed, and must go through public comment. He said he cannot take a definite position until all of the steps are complete.

Quintin Elliott said at the end of the day this is all the money he has. Anita Dodd asked how much is for mitigation. She said he will have to mitigate on historic resources. She said there were historical foundations found in the recent archeological study.

The Commission, Cord Sterling and Quintin Elliott, all concurred that no one has all the information yet. Cord Sterling encouraged the Commission to consider the opportunities not just the challenges with the intersection.

The Commission appreciated and thanked Cord Sterling and Quintin Elliott for their information and time. Cord Sterling said the bicycle policy needs to be researched and assessed. In addition he repeated that the Commission wants any information available from earlier and current by-pass studies.

- Election of Officers. The current Chairperson opened the nominations.

Barbara Kirby nominated Anita Dodd for Chairperson.

Cessie Howell nominated Ann Best-Rolls for Vice Chairperson.

Jane Conner nominated Cessie Howell for Secretary.

Hearing no objections from the Commission, the nominations were closed.

The Commission Vote on the Nominations for Officers was:

Yea: (6) Best-Rolls, Conner, Dodd, Howell, Kirby, White

Nay: (0)

Anita Dodd resumed the Chair.

- Discussion of By-Laws and Rules of Procedure. The Historical Commission By-Laws were approved with minor changes.

The Voting Commission Tally was:

Yea: (6) Best-Rolls, Conner, Dodd, Howell, Kirby, White

Nay: (0)

- Approval of Commission Meeting Minutes. Barbara Kirby motioned, seconded by Frank White to approve the February 4, 2010 Commission meeting minutes with one correction.

The Voting Commission Tally was:

Yea: (4) Best-Rolls, Conner, Howell, White

Nay: (0)

Abstain: (2) Dodd, Kirby

- Value of Billboards for Future Removal. Cessie Howell asked Kathy Baker to locate the value of the billboard on Mary Washington Hospital that is not an LED billboard at Falmouth.

- Continue Revising the Historic Preservation Award Process. Jane Conner and Cessie Howell reviewed the ideas they shared with the Commission previously. The sub-committee would like the recipients to receive more recognition. Anita Dodd asked if the subcommittee had considered the process of choosing.

Discussion ensued.

Ann Best-Rolls suggested considering master gardeners as candidates.

- Discuss Phase I Portion of Proposed Ordinance O06-47 - Dated July 18, 2006 - Regarding Archaeological Surveys and Investigations. Barbara Kirby reiterated the importance of pursuing the proposed ordinance. Anita Dodd mentioned the County no longer has a Historic Preservation Planner and that the County owns cultural resources. She said you have to have a process in place, otherwise there are consequences. Anita Dodd inquired about meeting with the Board. Kathy Baker explained the protocol. Anita Dodd said it would be best to give the Board background on the subject first.

Commission members decided they would form a plan of action at their next meeting to meet with the Board regarding their recommendations for the proposed ordinance.

- Report by Commission Chairperson. The members of Stafford Crossing Church formerly known as Forbes Landing are installing signs to interpret a Civil War site located at the church. They are requesting the Commission's assistance. Anita Dodd said the request is to write the text for the sign and assist with choosing a location. The spokesman for the church would like an answer after this meeting. She suggested the member of the church view the Union Church signage for ideas. She said she would have to use the archeological report for information. The church is located off Forbes Street. The Commission agreed to appoint Anita Dodd and Barbara Kirby as a sub-committee for the task.

Anita Dodd said Richard Knight called her in reference to the Knight House and the Knight Cemetery. He is experiencing problems with vandalism. Although the house and the cemetery are his family's old homestead, technically a developer owns both. Richard Knight must be

named the caretaker for legal purposes. He is requesting the Commission write a letter to the developer designating him as caretaker. The property is off Eustace Road.

Anita Dodd said she would like copies of the archeological studies of the Civil War Park located next to the landfill. She said the park does not have a long term management plan. Kathy Baker said a conceptual plan was submitted to Planning & Zoning and received comments back. She said until an engineering plan is formally submitted staff cannot provide official comments. Kathy Baker said the Board of Supervisors authorized themselves to be the applicant. Kathy Baker said Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities staff would likely be responsible for maintenance. Kathy Baker said the Board approved the conceptual plan to proceed. She said the group has three years in accordance to the agreement to raise the remainder of the money.

- Reports by Commission Members. Ann Best-Rolls said she wants to add discussion of the streetscape in Ferry Farm from Chatham to the Blue & Gray Parkway to the May or June agenda. She said she would like to invite Pete Fields to that meeting. She would like to see some improvement in time for the sesquicentennial.

Frank White said nice comments about Tim Dwight, a Historical Commission member that passed away. Jane Conner said she hopes Master's Mill can be saved because Tim Dwight was an advocate for the mill. Frank White initiated a moment of silence in memory of Tim Dwight.

Jane Conner suggested adding Master's Mill and the Steven's House onto the next agenda.

- Adjournment. At 5:37 P.M., the Chairperson declared the meeting adjourned.

Anita Dodd - Chairperson

Ann Best-Rolls - Vice Chairperson