MINUTES
City Council Public Safety Committee

Monday, November 27, 2023 – 3:30 PM
City Hall Council Chambers

Members Present:	Mac Morrow, Chair, Council Member Maurice Jones, Vice-Chair, Council Member Kevin Gallo, Citizen Member Mayor Mauren Copelof, Ex-Officio Member
Staff Present	Wilson Hooper, City Manager Tom Jordan, Police Chief Bobby Cooper, Fire Chief Alex Shepherd, Assistant to the City Manager Becky McCann, Communications Coordinator Wesley Shook, Interim Public Works Director
Guests:	Nora Jane Montgomery, Gary Lowden, Carrie Lowden, Connie Mields-Perry, Linda Gallo, Monica Driscoll, Dawn Altman, Joe Kelly, Greg Hunter, Morris Jenkins, Rachell Hall, Janna Zwerner, Caiti Klassovity, Billy Parrish, Robbie Lindaman

A. Welcome & Call to Order

Committee Chair Mac Morrow welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:31 PM.

B. Certification of Quorum

Assistant to the City Manager Alex Shepherd certified that a quorum was present.

C. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Mr. Jones, seconded by Mr. Gallo to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

D. Minutes from September 14, 2023 Special Meeting

Motion by Mr. Jones, seconded by Mr. Morrow to approve the minutes of the September 14, 2023 special meeting as amended. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes from October 23, 2023 Meeting

Motion by Mr. Jones, seconded by Mr. Morrow to approve the minutes of the October 23, 2023 meeting as amended. The motion carried unanimously.

E. Update on Transportation Working Group

Mr. Hooper updated the committee on the progress of our proposal for Probart St. We are in the process of gathering additional data, particularly focusing on the section near the Brevard Music Center. Although we don't anticipate this new data altering our findings, it will provide the necessary information for potential collaboration with the NCDOT. The forthcoming proposal will present three escalating options, varying in cost and intensity. The initial option involves enhanced signage and road markings from the Brevard Music Center to Oaklawn Street. Subsequent phases include the addition of a three-way stop at Railroad Avenue and Probart Street, designed to establish the right of way. The final and most intensive phase proposes the installation of speed cushions along the narrow and curvy section of Probart Street between White Oak Lane and the Music Center. The cushions will be strategically placed at intervals of approximately six hundred feet. This most intense option is accompanied by significant financial costs and potential physical impact when driving over the speed cushions. We will present this information to the committee for evaluation at a later date. Additionally, we are mindful of the procedural steps outlined in our traffic calming policy. We have reached the stage where support from fifty percent of the stakeholders is required to move forward, then we must conduct a neighborhood stakeholder meeting to share the three options and gather community feedback and a formal vote will follow.

Mr. Morrow inquired if the process involved a vote by the citizens.

Mr. Gallo proposed a revision to the policy, citing the example from the City of Charlotte. In Charlotte, homeowners can submit requests online, and the procedure involves stakeholders in the affected area providing input. This approach reduces hurdles, making it less burdensome for individuals with an interest in the topic. Mr. Gallo also raised the question of stakeholder representation for several Airbnb properties on the street.

Mr. Hooper clarified that, according to the current policy, each residential dwelling is allowed one vote as a stakeholder, typically the property owner. He posed a question to the committee, asking whether they would prefer to bypass the fifty percent stakeholder support step and proceed directly to a neighborhood stakeholder meeting.

Mr. Jones expressed that the current process seems cumbersome, but he emphasized the importance of allowing sufficient time for property owners and stakeholders to provide feedback.

Mr. Morrow pointed out the necessity of holding a neighborhood meeting. He suggested that sharing information and involving consultants from the transportation working group to address stakeholders' questions would be beneficial.

Mr. Gallo proposed the idea of sending out a mailing to individuals along Probart Street, covering the stretch from Oaklawn Street to the Music Center. The mailing would include the three proposed options and announce an upcoming meeting to discuss them, specifying the date, time, and location.

Mr. Hooper expressed his view that the petition and stakeholder vote processes seem cumbersome and redundant. He emphasized his preference for the City Council to have the final say in changing the policy. He also mentioned that the proposal is still in the reforming stage, and they aim to present a fully developed proposal to stakeholders at the meeting.

Mr. Gallo recalled past meetings on proposals to change land use plans, suggesting that presenting comprehensive information, costs, and gathering feedback from stakeholders during the meeting would be sufficient.

Mr. Jones sought clarification from Mr. Hooper on whether a consensus or vote is needed to move forward and whether the verbiage in the policy can be changed.

Mr. Hooper informed the committee that he intends to present a revised version of the entire policy at a later date. The stakeholder meeting is expected to take place after the first of the year. Mr. Hooper also addressed the intersection at Wilson Street, Main Street, and Greenville Highway, highlighting the complexity involved in reconfiguring state-maintained streets, which requires various approvals. The transportation consultant provided a quote of approximately $13,000 for the professional work needed to meet state requirements for the intersection reconfiguration. This cost estimate does not include the actual cost of reconfiguring the intersection. Mr. Hooper plans to present a detailed breakdown of all costs in a future committee meeting. The decision has been made to install a four-way stop at the new intersection at Silverstein Park for safety reasons, particularly due to pedestrian traffic. Additionally, the committee has received a request from residents at French Broad Place regarding West Apple Tree, which has been added to the list for evaluation, although there are no further updates or recommendations at this time.

Mr. Morrow inquired whether the Transportation Working Group has addressed the issue of having both a stop sign and a traffic light at the same intersection on Railroad Avenue.

Mr. Hooper responded that necessary adjustments will be made when reconfiguring the bollards.

Mr. Gallo inquired about the possibility of receiving support from the State for implementing traffic calming measures on Greenville Highway.

Mr. Hooper explained that the State bases its decisions on objective data, including crash statistics and traffic volumes. If the data does not meet their threshold, they are unlikely to support the measures, regardless of other subjective factors. While it's challenging to demonstrate a significant number of crashes or pedestrian activity to meet their criteria, the State has allowed us to post signs on the road, even though it doesn't qualify. Mr. Hooper expressed doubt that the State would contribute financially.

Mayor Copelof acknowledged the State's cooperation, citing a recent example where they installed a three-way stop at French Broad and Park Avenue. The community has provided positive feedback, indicating a favorable impact.

F. Revise Animal Control Ordinance

Mr. Jordan reported that the animal control ordinance underwent revisions. A significant focus was on the tethering section, where recommendations for tether length were added to prevent animals from getting entangled. The revised policy specifies that the tether should be four times the length of the animal from nose to tail, with a minimum of ten feet to allow movement. Mr. Jordan emphasized the importance of balancing the government's ability to intrude on private property when adding ordinances, especially those involving law enforcement access. The revised ordinance emphasizes the welfare of the animal, ensuring access to shelter, water, food, and overall good health. Tethering is permitted for a limited time or under conditions that an officer deems potentially harmful, giving authority to animal control officers to observe and intervene when animals are in distress. No specific time limit was included in the revision, considering enforcement challenges seen in other jurisdictions.

Mr. Gallo inquired about the advertisement of the new ordinance once adopted by the Council and whether local humane society chapters or individuals report violations.

Mr. Jordan explained that individuals often make complaints

Mr. Cooper suggested collaborating with Ms. McCann to share the information through social media, the website, and newspaper publications to raise awareness.

Ms. Mields-Perry expressed gratitude for the revision of the tethering ordinance, considering it a good starting point. However, she expressed concerns about the shelter requirements and expressed a wish for more comprehensive regulations regarding the sheltering of animals.

At 4:18 PM a motion was made by Mr. Jones, seconded by Mr. Gallo to approve the revised animal control ordinance as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Additional Comments:

Mr. Jones inquired about any updates from staff.

Mr. Cooper mentioned that we underwent our rating in June 2023, and we are expected to remain where we are. However, due to software issues at the state level, we hope to have more clarity by the end of the year.

Mr. Jones then turned to Ms. McCann and asked how citizens can stay informed about events or emergencies.

Ms. McCann explained that last month, we introduced our new mass communication system called CivicReady, allowing people to opt-in to receive phone calls, texts, or emails.

G. Set Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Public Safety Committee will be on Monday, January 22, 2024 at 3:30 pm at City Hall.

H. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:26 PM.

Minutes Approved: January 22, 2024

X _____
Aaron Baker
Chair, Council Member

X _____
Alex Shepherd,
Assistant to the City Manager