MINUTES
City Council Public Safety Committee

Monday, February 26, 2024 – 3:30 PM
City Hall Council Chambers

Members Present:	Aaron Baker, Chair, Council Member Mac Morrow, 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
Guests:	Amanda Wade, Linda Gallo, Monica Driscoll, Morris Jenkins, Paul Cooper, Billy Parrish

A. Welcome & Call to Order

Committee Chair Aaron Baker welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:30 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. Morrow, seconded by Mr. Gallo to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

D. Update on Transportation Working Group

Mr. Hooper said that he has three updates for the committee: one from the transportation working group, one from the meeting with the Mayor and Wanda Austin recently, and a summary of the public meeting on Probart St and next steps. He said at the transportation working group, we went over the results from the public meeting and everyone was pleased with the feedback we got from that. The other issues we discussed were what we could do for W Apple Tree St., possible solutions for the Ecusta Rd./Pisgah Dr./Temple Church Rd. area. He said we also

received information that the downtown circulation study will begin this summer if it's awarded. We also talked about which items on our sidewalk and pedestrian plan we could do for $45,000 because that is a fee in lieu that we have in the bank. Mr. Hooper said we discussed R-5800, which will enhance the sidewalks at Asheville Hwy and Old Hendersonville Rd. intersection, and we also discussed how the traffic signal installation at Greenville Hwy and Gallimore Rd has been delayed.

Mr. Baker asked what is the work being completed at Greenville Hwy and Gallimore Rd.

Mr. Hooper said it's near the elementary school where Greenville Hwy and Gallimore Rd. come together to install a traffic signal at the intersection to make it safer for crossings.

Mayor Copelof said NCDOT would repave E French Broad St. and Whitmore St.. She said that there was no update on the crosswalk at King and Caldwell St. She said that NCDOT has agreed to look into putting a crosswalk at the Farmer's Market and the road surface that in front of the Ingles Grocery Store. Mayor Copelof said that NCDOT will look into the bike path and installing a flashing light on Ecusta Rd. where the traffic circle is.

Mr. Hooper said that the public meeting on Probart St. went well and that we concluded that the citizen who attended had no strong objections to our concept and that there were a few minor recommendations on where to place the speed cushions and perhaps additional features we could add.

Mr. Gallo thanked the City staff who attended the public meeting. He said the main comments that he heard are from the Director of the Mountain Sun Community School and they would like to see speed cushions all the way down to Andante Ln because they have a number of activities where students walk on the sidewalk or ride their bikes.

Mr. Cooper mentioned that area is outside of the city limits.

Mr. Hooper said Ms. Austin did say she would investigate allowing us to install a speed cushions near the city limits.

Mr. Baker asked if these are permanent speed cushions.

Mr. Hooper said no, they would be temporary and installed with bolts. He said they can be moved, and if a snowstorm comes, we can remove them for snowplows. He said he would like to receive feedback from the committee on whether, if we follow the provisions of the policy and have gathered data and information from the public, the next steps should be to provide a written report to the community. However, he wanted to get their feedback on whether the report should go to Council to be considered as part of the budget discussion, or if we should stick to the letter of the

policy and proceed with step seven, which is the referendum or vote of the stakeholders in the Probart St. area.

Mr. Gallo said Mr. Baker was not at the meeting where they discussed this procedure. He said that this is one of the steps that the committee thought was too cumbersome for the citizens. Mr. Gallo stated that the 70% approval from stakeholders was higher than what other cities and towns require. Also, the more concerning part was that nonresponsive stakeholders are considered a "no" vote, which does not seem representative of voters. He said the committee had decided that the committee can make recommendations to skip this step, and then those recommendations go to Council for approval.

Mr. Baker said if the committee makes the recommendations, then it sets an expectation that these things will be completed, but it's before the Council and budgetary level before we even know if we can afford an intervention.

Mr. Hooper said he will write the report and bring it back to the committee for endorsement. Then we will send a recommendation to Council.

Mr. Gallo asked for clarification on the timing of events. He said he read that there was a Council Strategic Planning Meeting. If we are able to review the report and recommend it go to Council, does this fit into the timing of entering our project into the budget.

Mr. Hooper said the strategic planning meeting will not discuss specific projects and will solely be about setting general priorities for the upcoming year.

Mayor Copelof said that she has had several people mention to her about walking across the Railroad Ave pedestrian bridge and how dark it is at night. She said people are hanging out there at night and it would be safer if we had lights.

Mr. Gallo asked for more information regarding W Apple Tree St. concerns. He asked if the concern is about the only access road where the affordable housing is projected to be built.

Mr. Hooper said it is right near the French Broad Place units, and it appears like an alley, but it's really a street. The residents are asking us to make it more like an alley to slow traffic.

E. Downtown Residential Parking Permits Discussion

Mr. Jordan said we are now considering several people for downtown parking permits. What we have right now is two-hour parking on the street from 9 am to 6 pm. This means that someone living in the overhead apartments could technically park at 4 pm and stay until 11 am without any penalty. They could park in the lots; however, we do not allow overnight parking. He said if we were to consider

residential parking permits, it would allow them to park in a city lot overnight. The question is, what happens if you work nights and need a place to park during the day. Mr. Jordan said that the parking permits would not apply to the street because we are trying to keep commerce. Eligible individuals for a permit would be residents holding a long-term lease of 6 months or longer in a central downtown area or owners of units downtown who reside here the majority of the time. We would limit the number of passes to two, and the permit would be tied to make, model, and registration. The permit fee would be around $100 a year.

Mr. Gallo asked about residents who work at night and would need a parking space during the day.

Mr. Jordan said this is one item we would have to differentiate.

Mr. Baker asked if Mr. Jordan reached out to local municipalities.

Mr. Jordan said he reached out to local municipalities but did not hear anything back.

Mayor Copelof mentioned that she asked about the Army Reserve parking lot near the French Broad Community Center but have not heard back.

Mr. Hooper said it sounds like the committee wants us to bring this back, but are you all ready to make a recommendation to Council? It will require one small change in the code, so I just want to be sure.

Mr. Gallo asked if another building went in, would it be required that parking spaces be allocated.

Mr. Jordan said that is separate because that would go through the planning department.

Mr. Baker said he is comfortable with the direction but wanted reassurance that we are not out of bounds with other municipalities.

At 4:12 pm Mr. Morrow motioned, seconded by Mr. Gallo to recommend a downtown residential parking permit program to City Council.

F. Public Comment

Ms. Wade asked what the timeframe for this would be to start.

Mr. Jordan said technically, you can park on the street at 4 pm and not have to move your vehicle until 11 am.

Mr. Parrish asked when the City did the analysis of speed on Probart St.

Mr. Jordan said February of last year and at different points throughout the year.

Mr. Parrish asked if there is a way to access the type of vehicle and their speed.

Mr. Jordan said not with the type of systems we use.

Mr. Parrish asked if the speed cushions still slow down a dump truck.

Mr. Cooper said a large truck could straddle it, but you still must approach it with caution because it can throw you off to the side if you hit the cushion.

Mr. Baker asked if a chicane would be appropriate.

Mr. Hooper said he didn't know if that would qualify.

Mr. Jenkins asked have you thought about reducing the speed limit to 20 and would that be effective.

Mr. Hooper said we would need to consult with the traffic engineer.

G. Set Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Public Safety Committee will be on Tuesday, April 2, 2024 at 3:30 pm at City Hall.

H. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:28 PM.

Minutes Approved: April 2, 2024

X _____

Aaron Baker
Chair. Council Member

X _____

Alex Shepherd,
Assistant to the City Manager