

MINUTES
Special Streets Sustainability Committee Meeting
Meeting #6: 1:00 p.m. Tuesday, September 14, 2021

ATTENDANCE:

Committee Members:

1. Lance Beck
2. Cal Coblentz
3. Robin DeRuwe - *absent*
4. Tom Dingus
5. Kyle England - *absent*
6. Matt Ewers
7. Mike Frucci
8. Kelly Fukai
9. Jesse Granado - *absent*
10. Todd Henry
11. Chris Moan
12. Karl Otterstrom
13. Kevin Person
14. Greg Repetti - *absent*
15. Melanie Rose
16. Ben Small - *absent*
17. Cheryl Stewart
18. Frank Tombari
19. Joe Tortorelli
20. Kevin Wallace: replacement Lois Bollenback
21. Diana Wilhite
22. Kathe Williams

Internal Staff:

1. Adam Jackson, Planning/Grants Engineer
2. John Hohman, Deputy City Manager
3. Chelsie Taylor, Finance Director
4. Bill Helbig, City Engineer
5. Taylor Dillard, Administrative Assistant
6. Lesli Brassfield, Economic Development Specialist
7. Chris Bainbridge, City Clerk

External Staff:

1. Joy York, Whitworth University, Moderator
2. Linda Pierce, NCE Engineering, Consulting Engineer

1. Introduction & Overview – Joy York

Ms. York welcomed everyone to the meeting; said today's discussion will focus on preferences and feedback from the committee members, and how all that will align with received public feedback; said we will spend the last half of today's meeting to make sure all questions are answered, and to gather any comments or feedback members would like to go to Council. She said today we will have three breakout sessions to explore those things; and she reminded everyone that all sessions are recorded; to please provide time for everyone to participate; and that for any community observers, to not comment at this meeting, but any questions or comments can be sent to streetsolutions@spokanevalley.org.

2. Summary: Committee Goals & Survey Responses

Mr. Jackson went over the committee goals and survey responses; said the intent is to ask committee members to take that deep dive into the topic of the City's pavement management program (PMP); said we want to get the general public's input as the final questionnaires are completed. He noted that as of today we have received about 940 responses and said he hopes to get a few more this week; that over 900 responses is our City's highest response rate on any survey. Going over the responses, Mr. Jackson stated that over 88% feel our streets are fair or in better condition and that 89% agree that the PMP should be a city priority. He noted that 60% support increased priority for local streets; 65% support the use of surface treatments; 80% support increased PMP funding to prevent decline; 74% do not want to pull funding from other programs; 60% favor TBD (transportation benefit district); 77% favor a balanced combination of all options, and for the question on utility/property taxes, he said the results are too close to call. Mr. Jackson said that today is also an opportunity to determine what questions committee members might be struggling with.

3. Breakout #1: Final questions and clarifications

Ms. York explained that the first breakout session will be about ten to fifteen minutes to discuss what questions and information needs clarification. Members went into their breakout sessions at 1:13 p.m., and returned at 1:23 p.m.

Group 1: said they had no particular questions but did talk about how successful this has been so far and how good it is to see from the survey how supportive the community is.

Group 2: said they discussed TBDs and what happens if they are approved or not; talked about the additional \$8 million and where would that money be spent, or what projects; talked about the current situation versus what it would look like; said if the survey shows locals are where the money should be spent, and we get grant dollars for arterials, how do we explain all that to citizens; they talked also little about treatments and the need for explanation and of transparency to tell people what is being done and why and where their money is being spent; and asked if a city can implement a TBD. Director Taylor explained that voter approval is not necessary to create a TBD. Mr. Hohman further explained that there are several different tab fees Council can implement starting with \$20, and then up to \$50, but anything above that would require voter approval; and sales tax would be voter initiated. Mr. Hohman said he appreciates the great feedback; that we will generally come up with some representation of what the program would look like, with comparisons showing the additional \$8 million; where the focus would be and how much we could do over the next two to three years.

Group 3: said they questioned the history of why the chip seal hadn't been used or promoted more in the past; talked about the need to identify what utility could be implemented and what would not be included in such a utility option; said they felt there was some possible confusion the way the information was presented and what would end up being included. Mr. Hohman explained that there are varying levels of success with some of the chip seals and that he is somewhat hesitant about using them and if we used them, we would want a contractor who had the basics down where the process would keep the chips glued to the road. There was some discussion about water and if that would be included, with comment from Mr. Hohman that there are some difficulties with some water districts and our ability to tax them. Ms. Taylor said we have steered away from water partly based on feedback we got in 2016 and that some of the water districts are very understaffed and don't have the sophisticated systems to handle our taxing them, so it would be a burden. Mr. Hohman added that water wouldn't generate a lot of revenue, and Director Taylor agreed it would be a fairly minimum dollar amount.

Group 4: said they didn't have much to add; feels there could be better explanation to the public about chip sealing and to help them understand the real options and what it all means practically speaking.

There was also brief discussion about taxing solid waste with Ms. Taylor explaining that in that case, the utility tax would be on the disposal services, which is the transfer station, and not the collection services, but an increase in cost for the disposal side would affect the collection rate to some degree. Electricity or gas utilities were also mentioned and it was noted that if they appeared on that bill, it would be a separate tax line item. Mr. Hohman explained that the City does not have mandatory solid waste collection which at times and in some areas of town, leads to code violations dealing with garbage piling up. Ms. York took a moment to encourage all committee members to complete the committee survey form and send that to Mr. Jackson.

4. Breakout #2: Final reflections

Ms. York explained that this breakout session will be about ten to fifteen minutes, and she asked members to focus on what they think might be useful in discussions. Members went into their breakout sessions at 1:42 p.m., and returned at about 1:50 p.m.

Group 1: said the representation of citizens in this group might be better as far as general residents versus actual voters; said they don't envy the problem of how to fund these with the 'no new tax' banner that current and past Councils have had; said with an upcoming election, the makeup of Council could change so if new people come onboard, that will have to be addressed.

Group 2: mentioned their concerns with taxes and wanting to stress transparency and to be clear in what our city is going to do, and build that trust with the residents; said we need to make sure the results of the survey that local streets are important, is brought to Council's attention.

Group 3: they focused on the process; said they thought it was efficient and the group was very complimentary of staff and moderators; said they want to make sure that whatever is chosen, that all the elected officials are 100% behind it, which would be necessary if any of this goes to the voters; that otherwise it would be difficult to pass; mentioned a strong recommendation to be unified in the mechanism to send that message to the voters.

Group 4: they also extended kudos to staff for a well-managed process; said this committee has a lot of non-city residents and they want to make sure Council is aware of that and how citizens differ from businesses on the issues. A question was also raised of what percentage of survey respondents were citizens and what were businesses owners. Mr. Jackson said he will look that up; but the majority of respondents were citizens.

5. Breakout #3: Committee process

Ms. York stated that this will also be a five to ten minute breakout; and the focus is, how would you describe the pros and cons of this committee process and how effective was it. Members went into their breakout sessions at 2:00 p.m., and returned at about 2:08 p.m.

Group 1: said they had questions regarding the \$8 million and how it would be spent; talked about maybe having an upcoming presentation to Council about how that money will be spent in a bid process versus a non-bid process and how the current staff can manage that; said they also talked about how the process worked and everyone thought Ms. York's and staff's involvement was outstanding and said they were very appreciative of all the preparation; stated that the committee members were a good representation of businesses and the private sector.

Group 2: they were also very complimentary of Ms. York and staff and the entire process; said the virtual meetings were decently handled with a very efficient use of time of all those involved; appreciated that staff put in a lot of time and energy to get prepared for the meetings; said the data was very succinct and said they weren't sure they identified any cons, other than it would have been nice to meet in person.

Group 3: this group had similar comments, despite the challenges of meeting virtually, said the form and Ms. York's work as moderator kept the flow going; said they were happy to hear varying opinions and not just one or two voices; said the drawback is this falls within an election period; but said they enjoyed the process and that it was well run, and hopes the information is helpful and is taken into consideration.

Group 4: said this was a very efficient use of time and liked the idea of not requiring participants to travel to and from a meeting location, plus additional time spent in going into forming breakout groups; said they felt good about the sensitivity of time and not having individual's time eaten up by travel; said they learned things about city procedures and didn't note anything negative about this process; said many people get surveys and sometimes it is easy to lose track whether you had replied and the question was posed about the city keeping a running tally of a participant's survey. Mr. Jackson said it was noted that in his group,

committee members said it would be very deflating if this effort doesn't result in some sort of action, and would be demoralizing for any future committee if this were all disregarded come November.

6. Final Optional Meeting #7 – October 12 at 1:00 p.m.

Ms. York mentioned the final optional Oct 12 meeting to discuss findings of this committee and of what would be taken to Council; that it would focus more on presenting the ideas and she again stressed the importance of committee members returning their completed survey to Mr. Jackson.

Mr. Hohman stated that on behalf of the Mayor and Council, past and present, that participation in this committee was tremendous and helped shaped the surveys; that this is the larger piece of information Council wanted and said he could not have done any of it without member's work, and he extended thanks to everyone; he also reminded members to send staff any further feedback, and that staff will be contacting members about the November 9 Council meeting, and again he thanked everyone for their diligent, hard work.

Mr. Jackson said he looked up the data about tonight's previous question of percentages of residents versus non-residents, and said there were 941 responses with 855 residents, and only 2% of the respondents did not live or work here.

Ms. York thanked everyone for their time and thoughtful discussions, commitment and investment in this process.

The meeting adjourned at 2:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Bainbridge
Spokane Valley City Clerk