

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

December 10, 2009

The Planning Commission convened in Courtroom No. 1 at City Hall for their regular meeting. Chairman Fitzgerald called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

Members in attendance were, Mr. Andrew Eade, Mr. Brian Temming, Ms. Christine Shoop, Mr. David Komjati, and Chairman Thomas Fitzgerald. Also present were, City Manager Rita McMahon, Assistant City Manager Douglas Lewis, City Planner Russ Schaedlich, Assistant Law Director James Lyons, and Secretary Lynn White.

MINUTES: Motion by Ms. Shoop, seconded by Mr. Komjati to approve the Planning Commission Meeting Minutes from October 29, 2009 and November 12, 2009 as submitted. All members present said "aye". Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

None.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT:

Transportation Plan – Presentation of the TIGER Grant Application and the projects and timelines associated with construction.

Ms. McMahon began the presentation of the Transportation Plan. She explained she would like to discuss the TIGER Grant Application, which encompasses the City's Transportation Plan, which has been labeled as the Mentor, Painesville Economic Development Corridor (MPEDC). She explained that TIGER stands for Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery which is a stimulus grant program created by the US Department of Transportation to fund transportation improvements in areas that would have both short and long term job creation opportunities.

Ms. McMahon stated that when the City received the notification of the grant opportunity, the first thought was the Shamrock Boulevard improvements and additional infrastructure improvements in Mentor. This was identified as a potential funding source, and an application was submitted in September 2009 with notifications of awards in February 2010. Ms. McMahon stated that projects that are multi jurisdictional would receive a higher ranking or points in the program. Painesville approached the City of Mentor about participating in the application since Heisley Road is included, and they agreed. Ms. McMahon indicated that she spoke to the County Engineer, who also agreed since the project included areas of Painesville Township. The final application was submitted by the County Engineer as the applicant, with the support of Painesville/Mentor/Painesville Township.

This application brings together the entire area for the desired development of land encompassed by State Route 2/State Route 44/ Jackson Street/Heisley Road. Ms. McMahon explained in detail the various tracts of land within this area. The Commission viewed a presentation slide while she explained the areas affected. This grant gives the City an opportunity to consolidate a number of different studies that have been completed over the last five to six years. This consolidation becomes a Transportation Plan for the area that Mentor, Painesville, and Painesville Township can utilize for future development.

Ms. McMahon stated that the Transportation Plan is to develop the corridor and make sure the enhancements take place in order for maximum development to occur. One of the other reasons the County Engineer is involved is due to their responsibility of Route 2 and Route 44. She stated this is a summary plan document. Eight significant projects were merged together and these projects must be done in a sequence to be completed. The projects are: 1) Heisley and Route 2 interchange; 2) the widening of Heisley Road south of Jackson to Mentor Avenue; 3) Heisley Road Bridge over SR 2 Widening with Ramp Improvements; 4) Jackson Street Overpass and Realignment; 5) relocation of Jackson Street; 6) the improvements of Route 44 and Jackson Street and the relocation of that interchange; 7) Jackson Street Widening from Fern Drive to Shamrock Boulevard; 8) primary connect of Shamrock Boulevard from Jackson Street to Diamond Center with the overpass of the railroad.

Ms. McMahon stated that as part of her presentation she would go through each of these segments

in the order they need to take place in order to make it all work.

The first issue that was looked at was the land use of the area. In 2005 a Network Access Study was done with Lake County and the City of Mentor to address the new interchange at 44 and Jackson Street. The Ohio Department of Transportation indicated that due to the proximity of State Route 2 and 44, they needed to be studied together particularly once Shamrock Boulevard is constructed. The study was completed in approximately a year and a half. It looked at the existing land use, the future land use and what the acceptable traffic pattern would be if all the land use that was planned actually occurred. Ms. McMahon stated that Painesville used the Shamrock Business Center Plan that was approved as a PUD; the Heisley Park Development Plan; and an estimated build out of the LEIMCO property that the Commission just heard in October. Additionally, on the east side of 44, the build out of Renaissance was also estimated. Based on the estimated uses of the land a traffic analysis was created. Ms. McMahon indicated this was also done for the land uses on the Mentor side of the corridor. The objective is to look at what the actual traffic will be at complete build out of the area, which is estimated in 25 to 30 years. Ms. McMahon showed a slide showing the various intersections where the volume of traffic will be a concern. If the current roads were not going to handle the proposed traffic, a solution of widening or creating additional intersections would be necessary. She stated that when the City and the surrounding communities were informed about the TIGER Grant the thought was to put all of these projects into one grant request since the minimum request had to be at least 20 million dollars. The total for all eight of the projects is over 47 million dollars. The Commission was given two documents to review during the presentation. One is a timeline and cost breakdown of the projects, the other is a color map showing the land use data and the amount of investment in relation to job creation.

Ms. McMahon stated that in the scenario that was discussed, the Heisley Road and State Route 2 Split Ramp and Interchange Improvements are a necessary improvement. The anticipated improvements are designed to provide a split exit ramp from eastbound SR 2 onto Heisley Road and into Diamond Centre Drive. The northbound Heisley Road traffic would exit with left turn lanes at the existing exit ramp location. The "split" ramp would align with Diamond Centre Drive where southbound Heisley Road traffic will turn right and Diamond Centre Drive traffic would continue in a through movement. A conceptual drawing of this project was shown to the Commission.

Ms. McMahon explained the next project that would need to be built as the Heisley Road Widening Phase III (US 20 to Jackson Street). She stated that US 20 is classified as a principal arterial serving east/west traffic in Lake County. The current two-lane configuration of Heisley Road south of Jackson Street impedes the free and efficient flow of traffic to and from the commercial/industrial districts between US 20 and SR 2. Therefore, completing the widening of Heisley Road to four through lanes with a turn lane and signal improvements at the intersections will mitigate the congestion and improve prospects for development within the MPEDC. All parties agreed that the project as shown was the preferred alternative of the Network Study.

Ms. McMahon further explained that Heisley Road has been widened in two previous phases from Jackson Street north to SR 2 including two overpasses that have eliminated hazardous at-grade railroad crossings. In addition, various intersection improvements with new turn lanes and signals have been incorporated into the two previous projects. She stated that the proposed Phase III would complete the north-south corridor for the MPEDC. This improvement would eliminate the last north/south bottleneck in the Heisley Road corridor and improve the flow of traffic to adjoining commercial and residential districts.

Ms. McMahon continued with the next improvement involving the Heisley Road Bridge over SR 2 Widening with Ramp Improvements. She explained that in conjunction with the eastbound split ramp project mentioned earlier, the Heisley Road Bridge over SR 2 requires widening to accommodate left-turn lanes onto SR 2 for this diamond interchange. The improvements will be in conjunction with the relocated Jackson Street/SR 44 interchange, which will be described next. The existing structure has two through lanes in both directions however; left-turn lanes onto both eastbound and westbound SR 2 are needed to provide the structure for adequate stacking distances. The widening of Heisley Road for the turn lanes will require the existing structure over SR 2 to be widened to six lanes total. In addition, the anticipated ramp improvements are to include dual-left turn lanes from Heisley Road onto both eastbound and westbound entrance ramps. The ramps will be widened to accommodate two receiving lanes and merge into one lane prior to entering the freeway system. The improvement will improve traffic flow entering and exiting the freeway eliminating congestion and improving access to the corridor and north to Lake Erie.

The next project is the Shamrock Boulevard Grade Separation Overpass and Extension. The 600-acres of developable land within the MPEDC currently has one access point, Diamond Centre Drive. This has been the major impediment to further development within the area. The proposed Shamrock Boulevard Overpass will provide a grade separation over the CSX mainline tracks through Lake County and open much of the 600 acres for commercial and industrial development. This second access point will also improve the life of the improved infrastructure along Heisley Road as additional development occurs on the 600 acres.

Ms. McMahon stated the proposed north-south Shamrock Boulevard begins on the north side of Jackson Street just west of SR 44. Phase I was constructed and opened this year. It extends northerly from Jackson Street, an urban collector, for approximately 2,000 feet. Phase II will consist of the grade separation over the CSX railroad and extend to the north to intersect with Brookstone Boulevard to complete the corridor along with Diamond Centre Drive to Heisley Road. Once this is complete, the improvement will reduce congestion around JTO, Shamrock Business Center and Heisley Park developments and improve the balance of traffic between the Jackson Street and Heisley Road corridors and their respective interchanges on SR 44 and SR 2.

Ms. McMahon explained the next project known as relocated Jackson Street and State Route 44 Interchange. The relocated State Route 44 interchange will replace an existing half diamond service interchange with a full diamond interchange just north of Jackson Street. It should be noted that it is Federal Highway Administration policy that, except in extreme cases, all interchanges should provide for all movements. The relocated interchange will improve access to existing manufacturing facilities to the east of State Route 44 as well as the 600-acres. The existing companies located to the east of SR 44 in Renaissance Business Park have invested over \$75 million dollars in their operations and created 350 jobs since 2005.

Ms. McMahon stated that modifying the Jackson Street and SR 44 interchange into a full-access interchange provides a much-needed secondary outlet for the congested area and helps alleviate future problems at the SR 84 and SR 44 interchange to the south in Concord Township. The SR 44 and Jackson Street half-diamond interchange consists of only northbound-on and southbound-off access to and from SR 44. The SR 44 northbound entrance ramp forms a T-intersection with Jackson Street. The southbound SR 44 exit ramp forms a four-legged signalized intersection at Jackson Street with Fern Drive, located directly across from the exit ramp. Fern Drive extends south, parallel with the freeway, to its intersection with US 20. Back-to-back left-turn lanes are provided across the bridge on Jackson Street over SR 44 between the ramp intersections that result in backups on Jackson Street and the exit ramp due to the limited distance for the left-turn lanes.

Ms. McMahon commented that presently, in order to access this area from northbound SR 44, traffic must either exit SR 44 at the SR 84 interchange located in Concord Township approximately one mile to the south and utilize existing Painesville City, Mentor City, Concord Township, and Painesville Township streets. The alternative to this would be to continue northbound on SR 44 and westbound on SR 2 to the Heisley Road interchange. Similarly, existing traffic near Jackson Street that is destined for southbound SR 44 must use either the Heisley Road/SR 2 interchange or the SR 44/SR 84 interchange. This interchange project consists of converting the existing Jackson Street interchange to a full-access diamond interchange. To accomplish this, the existing Jackson Street interchange ramps would be removed and relocated to the new Renaissance Parkway/Relocated Jackson Street connector road to be located approximately 700-feet to the north of existing Jackson Street. To the east, Renaissance Parkway presently terminates approximately 1,000 feet east of the SR 44 limited access right-of-way and just north of Jackson Street. It intersects Newell Street, an urban collector, to the east, just south of the CSX railroad crossing and provides the final east-west link through the industrial sector in this area. The existing Jackson Street bridge would be replaced as part of the project with the piers relocated to make way for the new southern ramps.

Ms. McMahon stated that previous traffic and environmental studies dating back to 1998 have shown that making a full-access interchange at its present location on existing Jackson Street is unfeasible. As many as fourteen concepts have been analyzed and shown not to be feasible. The current traffic analyses have shown the relocated interchange operates efficiently and minimizes impacts to the existing dwellings and wetlands within the area.

Ms. McMahon discussed the next project known as the Jackson Street Overpass and Realignment. The improvements along Jackson Street include relocating it further to the north. It is a logical connector to the new State Route 44 interchange. The traffic will be moved away from a residential

area, the new overpass over a Norfolk and Southern rail line would eliminate surface congestion, and ongoing safety concerns for the existing at-grade railroad crossing. The relocation of Jackson Street north of its existing alignment will provide a direct connection to Renaissance Parkway and the proposed Jackson Street/SR 44 interchange relocation as discussed. The improvement will eliminate traffic congestion, improve accessibility to the MPEDC corridor and the Mentor Avenue commercial district and protect adjacent residential areas. This alignment is the result of a study completed in 2008 by the Lake County Engineer.

Ms. McMahon continued to the next project, Jackson Street Widening from Fern Drive to Shamrock Boulevard. The improvements along this section of Jackson Street will consist of a turn lane and signal improvements at Fern Drive and Shamrock Boulevard to accommodate traffic redirected by the relocated interchange and overpass projects. This section of Jackson Street is mostly residential at the eastern end and industrial to the west near Shamrock Boulevard. The widening will improve traffic flow and access to the full interchange as well as the commercial corridor on Mentor Avenue.

Ms. McMahon stated the eighth project is the widening of Shamrock Boulevard and Diamond Centre Drive to four lanes. As part of the long range build out, this urban corridor from Jackson Street to Heisley Road consisting of Shamrock Boulevard, Brookstone Boulevard and Diamond Centre Drive, will require upgrading from two through lanes to four through lanes with turn lanes as needed at intersections. Diamond Centre Drive will be widened to four lanes with a center turn lane from the proposed Ruby Lane and existing Home Depot Access Drive intersection to Heisley Road. Improvements also include a new signal at this intersection. As it is proposed, Ruby Lane will be a future street accessing the property to the south of Diamond Centre Drive. The improvement will improve traffic flow and reduce congestion to this main corridor.

Ms. McMahon asked if the Commission had any comments or questions. Mr. Komjati asked if the grant were not approved, what would be done for this area. Ms. McMahon responded the projects would be built in increments as funding permits. The primary focus currently is the completion of Shamrock Boulevard. This project is about one-half completed. The City will keep looking for other funding mechanisms. She informed the Commission that Phase I of Shamrock Boulevard was funded through assessments to the developer and the TIF.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Fitzgerald asked for a motion on this item.

Motion by Ms. Shoop, seconded by Mr. Temming to endorse the Transportation Plan as presented. On roll call, Ms. Shoop, Mr. Komjati, Mr. Eade, Mr. Temming, and Chairman Fitzgerald answered "yes". Motion carried.

OTHER MATTERS THAT MAY PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE PLANNING COMMISSION

ADJOURNMENT

There being no other items to come before the Planning Commission the meeting was adjourned.

Lynn M. White, Secretary

Thomas Fitzgerald, Chairman