



MEETING MINUTES

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING NO. 18

Date: September 18, 2021

Time: 10:00 am – 12:37 pm

Location: I-526 Lowcountry Corridor Community Office, 5627 Rivers Avenue, N. Charleston, SC; Microsoft Teams (Virtual)

Project Name: I-526 Lowcountry Corridor WEST

Attendees:

Larenda Baxley, Ferndale

Tina A. Baxley, Ferndale

Earl Muhammad, Ferndale

Michael Halls, Ferndale

Gilbert Reeves, Ferndale

Angela Anderson, Russelldale

Jeanaris Bannister, Liberty Park

Doris Twiggs, Liberty Park

Prayonda Cooper, Joppa Way

Joy Riley, SCDOT

Chad Long, SCDOT

Pamela Foster, FHWA

Yolonda Jordan, FHWA

Maxine Smith, Maximum Consulting

Mattese Lecque, Maximum Consulting

Gwendolyn Boyd, Maximum Consulting

Clay Middleton, Maximum Consulting

Jamelle Ellis, Empowerment Strategies

Rick Day, Stantec

LaTonya Derrick, Stantec

Ryan White, Stantec

Hannah Clements, Stantec

Horrace Tobin, Stantec (Community Office)

Participant Summary:

Total participants: 23

Ferndale: 5

Highland Terrace/ Joppa Way: 1

Liberty Park: 2

Russelldale: 1

Adjacent affected communities/ agencies: 0

SCDOT: 2

FHWA: 2

Community Liaisons: 4

Stantec: 5

Facilitator: 1

Meeting Summary:

Welcome and Introductions

- Roll call (in-person, online, and phone participants)

Administrative Items

- CAC Meeting 18 hosted using a hybrid approach with participants joining via the Microsoft Teams platform or by phone
 - The meeting was recorded solely for accuracy of meeting minutes.
 - LaTonya served as the technical host for participants joining remotely.
 - Meeting etiquette for call-in, in-person, and on-line participants was reviewed.

- CAC Meeting 18 packets were distributed to meeting participants prior to the meeting date, including minutes for CAC Meeting 17.

Agenda Review

- Welcome and Administrative Items
- Neighborhood Update
- Final EJ Community Mitigation Plan Components
- Proposed Mitigation Schedule
- Final Thoughts on Mitigation Plan Components
- Project Oversight Committee Recruitment
- Outreach Update
- Project Schedule and Milestone Review
- Community Office
- Summary and Next Steps

Neighborhood Update

Facilitator:

The project team continues to receive feedback from CAC members on project-related comments from community members, as well as any new insights or feedback from CAC members. Have CAC members spoken with neighbors or members of the community who have questions or comments for the project team? Please note any specific items that your neighbors would like to bring to the project team's attention from any of the four impacted communities. Are there comments from CAC members or any reflections from Maximum Consulting? (Ellis, J.)

CAC Member:

There are a few residents that are interested in becoming members of any group moving forward and are interested in restarting the neighborhood association. (Anderson, A.)

Will there be another community meeting? People are concerned about the relocations. (Bannister, J.)

Response: Yes. When the ROD is issued, there will be a 4-6 month gap due to potential litigation. When funding is available, then we can provide additional information about relocations.

I am familiar with some additional potential POC members. (Twiggs, D.)

Final EJ Community Mitigation Plan Components

Each commitment listed in the EJ CMP is summarized on pages 3-16 of the packet. The Facilitator provided a synopsis of each. The narrative that is in green font in the information packet is highlighted to emphasis.

CAC Member: Will there be a set number of meetings, or will that be determined by the POC's membership?

ANSWER – The current plan is to have quarterly meetings with an orientation at the onset. Things will not move as fast in the implementation phase. Commitments that require physical construction will have a public involvement phase due to the design elements as well, just like developing the Mitigation Plan.

CAC Member: Will there be job and volunteer opportunities for residents of the community at the Community Center?

ANSWER – While the City of North Charleston will follow their hiring practices, we have asked that residents have preference over nonresidents. That information is part of an agreement between SCDOT and the City, just like the park amenities, programs, and everything else that will be part of the FEIS-ROD.

Participation by the current CAC Members, at least at the beginning of the POC's is so important so that the spirit and desires the CAC and community expressed are actually delivered.

Russelldale Pocket Park – Locations are limited. The property on the corner of Rebecca and Rockingham didn't work out, despite attempting to swap properties in Ferndale that SCDOT has already purchased. A duplex or multi-family housing will be placed on that property. SCDOT can't control what an owner does on its property and we heard Ferndale clearly say they didn't want additional multi-family housing. If the owner of the property at Rebecca and Rockingham accepted a swap, that owner could very well construct affordable, multi-family housing that the local resident don't want.

Condemnation is not an option for community park purposes. After looking at other properties in Russelldale, all would require condemnation. Also, many of the available parcels are next to occupied homes. It wouldn't be ideal to place a pocket park between residential lots.

CAC Member: Russelldale is getting the butt of the deal by not getting a park. It is not acceptable to not give us a community feature that we're already accustomed to using. Kids are always in the community playing and now I have to tell them there won't be a place to play inside there neighborhood.

RESPONSE – After refining the design, the apartments at the end of Russelldale Ave. won't be impacted by the interchange improvements. We also are taking into consideration not putting another park-like facility next to the interstate like the current building and park features are now. We could look at parcels closer to Rivers Ave. but that could present new social and safety issues being so close to the major road. SCDOT is committed to delivering each commitment in the final environmental document and we will look for feedback from the community after the document is signed if we're not able to secure a property.

CAC Member: The property that should be selected should be at least in the middle of the neighborhood and not in a place where violence and drug deals could occur. (Baxley, T.)

CAC Member: Does SCDOT buy properties that are up for sale? There are so many that are available. (Anderson, A.)

RESPONSE – It isn't customary for SCDOT to buy property that is habitable and not impacted by the project. SCDOT would like to hear from Ferndale about the swap option if we can still get the parcel at Rebecca and Rockingham. We can't put a deed restriction on the property that we swap and one of the larger ones that we have already purchased in Ferndale is on the corner of Lakewood Street and Railroad Avenue. It is L-shaped and fronts Kerry Street as well.

CAC Member: We do not want more options for people to come in and build anything huge or more multi-family housing. If the swap resulted in Russelldale getting a pocket park and no multi-family housing being constructed in Ferndale, then we fully support that approach. But we are firm on not wanting more density with residents in our community. (Baxley, T.)

CAC Member: The property at the end of Rebecca has been vacant for years. The owner Also, will we have more North Charleston Police protection in the area when these projects get underway and when the kids are going to-and-from? (Bannister, J.)

RESPONSE: The property at the end of Rebecca is deed restricted for single-family only. It would have to be condemned and the City doesn't want to condemn properties for parks. SCDOT doesn't have authority over the police protection. The enhanced amenities that this project would bring are assets of the City and should be things the City are invested in protecting. We can continue to help the residents to advocate for more protection but nothing SCDOT can enforce.

CAC Member: If Russelldale starts their neighborhood meetings again, please let us know and maybe we can get our neighborhood meetings started again. (Baxley, T.)

RESPONSE: The proposal to make an offer for the property seems unfavorable for Ferndale. Is there another option Russelldale would like SCDOT to consider.

CAC Member: We don't want to create challenges for our sister-neighborhood. The parcel on the corner of Russelldale would be good or another vacant property in the neighborhood.

RESPONSE: **SCDOT Internal Question** – For the purpose of moving forward and identify additional opportunities in the future, can we show Russelldale and Twitty as the potential location and qualify that with, over the next year or two, as we move into the ROW phase, we will be looking for other options. Construction of the replacement Community Center will take some time. A pocket park would be a quick build so we have more time to continue to evaluate some of the vacant, boarded-up parcels and then present that to the Russelldale residents. Can we do that so we can secure the commitment and then pursue options in the future.

SCDOT Internal Response – Yes, we can update the commitment to find a replacement parcel within Russelldale proper and show the Russelldale and Twitty option as the #1 option in the document. We will still have to look for options and we should definitely go back to the community and ask them what they want to see of a pocket park down the road given the stock of available property.

SCDOT to L. Derrick or others at Stantec – Coordinate with Ms. Anderson to look at options within Russelldale so SCDOT can research them further.

CAC Member: Land owners in Liberty Park maybe interested in selling their properties. What should they do? (Bannister, J.)

RESPONSE: The priority is to secure lots for the community center and the pocket park. Please send them to the Community Office so we know who they are and can get in touch with them once we have the funding to buy residential lots.

CAC Member: Some of the City's light replacement initiative didn't address all of the needs in Liberty Park, notably on Taylor Street. (Bannister, J.)

RESPONSE: The 526 impacted neighborhoods are a priority of the City. You should see this work performed and completed in your neighborhood soon. We can help coordinate and facilitate any conversations with the City if needed.

CAC Member: After speaking at a Council meeting about speeding and speed humps in Liberty Park, the Councilwoman mentioned getting them for her neighborhoods.

RESPONSE: She may not be aware of the funding that SCDOT is offering through the EJ CMP commitments. We hope to get funding through a RAISE Grant that will help us start the CIEP phase. Also, some stuff that we deliver in this project will have to be prioritized based on the construction schedule.

CAC Member: Can the Mitigation Wall be placed on the structure nearest Ferndale. (Baxley, T.)

RESPONSE: The commitment is to reduce noise levels. SCDOT doesn't have a policy regarding putting noise barriers on raised structures but the design team will be looking at to reduce noise.

CAC Member: Residents on James Bell are concerned about noise. What is being proposed is a great idea. Safety is important as well. These walls give some level of comfort from a safety perspective. (Twiggs, D.)

RESPONSE: We should highlight that because of the CAC's feedback and letter, the mitigation barriers are a reality.

Proposed Mitigation Schedule

The schedule may be impacted by the execution of the FEIS-ROD but the educational commitments will advance in 2023.

Final Thoughts on Mitigation Plan Components

CAC Member: The minutes included a reference to Mrs. Mary Howard. I will follow-up on her status. (Twiggs, D.)

Please provide any additional concerns related to the EJ CMP Commitments as soon as possible as we are wrapping up the language for the FEIS-ROD submission.

Project Oversight Committee Recruitment

How can we best identify members for the POC?

- Finding people that are willing to get involved is difficult. The community is actually more rental based. Consulting with the churches in the neighborhood may be a good option. (Baxley, T.)

Is there enough awareness of the project that would get people more interested in the next phase?

- It's a "marketing" thing. If we can get more project people in the neighborhood, and sometimes using more formal invites will get residents and tenants attracted to the project. And you have to break down your materials into more digestible pieces. Some of what you present is so bulky and overwhelming. And a 10-year commitment on the POC is a lot. (Twiggs, D.)

The future Community Advocacy Group is important, but it may be difficult to source both the POC and the Community Advocacy Group. We would appreciate your help with ideas on how to keep people accountable.

Outreach Update

The Information Sessions are great opportunities to attract traffic to the office. The first session was successful and we look forward to attracting more people to the events.

CAC Appreciation Event

Thoughts on the time frame and comfort level given COVID restrictions.

- No responses given so LaTonya will follow-up.

Community History Preservation Program Open House

Thoughts on the time frame and comfort level given COVID restrictions.

- Wait given the fear of repeat infections (Baxley, T.)

Community Office Stats

(April 12 –August 13, 2021)

* Visitors: 176 * ROW Appointments: 42 * Incoming Calls: 139

* Outgoing Calls: 207 * Voicemails: 14

Project Schedule and Milestone Review

The schedule as outlined in the packet is subject to change. The litigation potential could be an impact.

Summary and Next Steps

We would like to discuss lessons learned and how we can improve on engaging the community in the future.

CAC Meeting #19 is scheduled for October 9, 2021 at 10:00 AM.