



City of Farmers Branch

City Hall
13000 Wm. Dodson Pkwy
Farmers Branch, TX 75234

Meeting Minutes

Mayor's IH-35E Betterments Task Force

Tuesday, May 5, 2020

10:00 AM
Virtual Meeting
Microsoft Teams

City Hall

This meeting was held virtually via Microsoft Teams teleconferencing in accordance with the temporary suspension of the Open Meetings Act to allow telephone or videoconference granted by Texas Governor Greg Abbott, in order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Present 13 - Mayor Robert Dye, Tina Firgens Director of Planning, Kyra McCardle Planning Consultant, Brian Campbell Planning Technician, Marc Bentley Director of Public Works, Shane Davis Director of Sustainability and Public Health, Pam Smith Parks Landscape Manager, Giovanni Zavala Planning and Zoning Commissioner, Matthew Peters Public Art and Cultural Board Member, Councilmember Cristal Retana (arrived 10:12 AM), Ignacio Mejia Kimley-Horn (Consultant), Farzine Hakimi Kimley-Horn (Consultant), and John Land Deputy City Manager

A. AGENDA ITEMS

A.1 [20-241](#) Adopt the minutes from the April 21, 2020 meeting of the Mayor's IH-35E Betterments Task Force.

Mayor Dye called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

Mayor Dye thanked the task force members for their attendance.

Mayor Dye opened discussion on Agenda item A.1 Adopt the minutes from the April 21, 2020 meeting of the Mayor's IH-35E Betterments Task Force.

Mayor Dye asked for any questions or comments regarding the minutes. Hearing none, Mayor Dye asked for a motion.

A motion was made by Mayor Robert Dye, seconded by Ms. Tina Firgens, that the Minutes be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 8 – Mayor Dye, Ms. Firgens, Mr. Bentley, Mr. Davis, Ms. Smith, Mr. Zavala, Mr. Peters, and Mr. Land.

A.2 [20-235](#) Discuss the results from the IH-35E betterments priorities poll.

Mayor Dye opened discussion on Agenda item A.2 Discuss the results from the IH-35E

betterments priorities poll.

Ms. Kyra McCardle, Planning Consultant, presented the results of the IH-35E betterments priorities poll. The priorities were ranked in the following order from most to least importance: Overhead Utility Relocation; Intersection Design; Landscaping; Lighting; Structural Improvements; Sidewalks; Hike and Bike Trail Connectivity; and Public Art.

The Task Force members discussed the following:

- Importance of improving the appearance of properties from an aesthetics perspective by burying overhead utilities near the intersections of Valley View Lane and Valwood Parkway, but also within the Station Area;
- Opportunity for cost savings with work being performed by TXDOT;
- Where it is not feasible to bury utilities underground, to consider increasing the height of the overhead utilities to improve visibility of adjacent properties, and potentially consider use of concrete poles instead of wooden poles;
- Should existing utilities be buried along the frontage roads, if the city cannot require developers to bury existing utilities perpendicular to the frontage roads, then it may be not appropriate to pursue burying the utilities;
- Requiring developers to bury existing utilities where possible if development agreements and/or partnerships are pursued with the City;
- Possibility of relocating utilities farther west closer to the railroad line, and the complexities associated with that due to easements needed and redesigning service within the area; and
- Potential need for easements adjacent to TXDOT right-of-way to accommodate burying utilities particularly where water lines and sanitary sewer lines are present.

After much discussion, it was the consensus of the task force on the following related to addressing overhead utilities:

- Burying existing utilities located within the Station Area on the east side of IH-35E extending from Havenhurst Street to Farmers Branch Lane, and on the west side of IH-35E north and south of Valley View Lane an approximate comparable distance (e.g. one-eighth mile) should the Station Area be extended west of IH-35E;
- Identifying appropriate locations for burying existing utilities underground near the intersection of IH-35E and Valwood Parkway; and
- Staff could also evaluate locations where it is appropriate to bury utilities and then transition utilities above ground.

Hearing no further questions or comments, Mayor Dye closed discussion on this agenda item.

A.3 [20-237](#)

Presentation by Kimley-Horn and discussion related to potential

betterments ideas, including project scope and timeline.

Mayor Dye opened discussion on Agenda item A.3 Presentation by Kimley-Horn and discussion related to potential betterments ideas, including project scope and timeline.

Ms. McCardle gave an overview of the project scope and time, and then introduced Mr. Ignacio Mejia and Mr. Farzine Hakimi, consultants with Kimley-Horn.

Mr. Mejia and Mr. Hakimi gave a presentation regarding the betterments project, including: project overview and schedule; team introduction; and a review of precedent highway overpass and gateway enhancements, including projects in which they have worked on.

Discussion and feedback received from the task force was as follows:

- Cost estimates of the Spring Valley at US-75 project in Richardson, Texas;
- Potential for a public art statement piece for the northeast corner of Valley View Lane and IH-35E, welcoming people to the city, and the use of iron or metal since that material is associated with Texas;
- Design elements associated with the consultant team's previous overpass project in Orlando, Florida (IH-4 at Church Street) that were favorable including the enhanced walkability, the improvements such as lighting and public art encourage people to walk under the overpass; and the use of a vertical element that draws a person's eye upward, while also addressing motorists traveling on the overpass;
- Need for a full-height wrap around abutment wall to prevent persons from sheltering under the overpass;
- Opportunities for the incorporation of sustainable design elements such as solar panels;
- Use of landscaping to offer tall, vertical enhancements visible to motorists traveling on the highway but also cautioned the use of landscape enhancements such as along US-75 due to maintenance concerns;
- Having a signature piece spanning Valley View Lane on both sides of the highway, and a complimentary piece for Valwood Parkway, recognizing there are potential cost implications; and
- Incorporating design elements related to the City's motto of "A City of Park".
- There was consensus amongst the task force members regarding seeking opportunities for high quality betterments improvements, including overpass enhancements and pursuing designing the signature piece at Valley View Lane.

Hearing no further questions or comments, Mayor Dye closed discussion on this agenda item.

A.4 [20-239](#)**Discuss draft graphics for the abutment panels at Valley View Lane and Valwood Parkway.**

Mayor Dye opened discussion on Agenda item A.4 Discuss draft graphics for the abutment panels at Valley View Lane and Valwood Parkway.

Ms. McCardle presented five design options for the abutment panels and requested feedback from the task force members regarding their preferred options.

Discussion and feedback received from the task force was as follows:

- Lighting infrastructure related to design option number five (#5), including required materials, conduit layout and cost;
- Materials used for abutment panel graphic for the University of the North Texas;
- Potential costs related to installing design option number four (#4) for the abutment panel at Valwood Parkway; and
- Potential TXDOT concerns related to structural implications attaching enhancements to the abutment walls and the need for additional structural engineering analysis.
- It was the consensus of the task force to pursue option number five (#5) for the abutment panels, with option number four (#4) as the alternate option.

Hearing no further questions or comments, Mayor Dye closed discussion on this agenda item.

A.5 [20-240](#)

Discuss direction received from TxDOT related to betterments funding timeline.

Mayor Dye opened discussion on Agenda item A.5 Discuss direction received from TxDOT related to betterments funding timeline.

Ms. McCardle discussed feedback received by staff from TxDOT related to the timeline for potential betterments funding, including the funding commitment timelines for items that could be incorporated into the base package versus that for larger scale items. Ms. McCardle stated that that the funding timeline would need to be established by the release of TxDOT's draft Request for Proposals (RFP) in August 2020.

Ms. Firgens stated that the funding timeline and commitments of significant items, such as a signature arch bridge or the burying of all overhead utilities within the TxDOT right-of-way, would need to be provided to TxDOT prior to the August 2020 deadline. Ms. Firgens noted that that coordination required for such items would take more time.

Mayor Dye requested feedback from TxDOT related to funding sources that needed to be identified in the immediate versus those that could be identified later for potential betterments improvements.

Ms. McCardle recommended having Kimley-Horn, consultant team, develop the conceptual plans related to potential betterments improvements, and staff bringing those concepts back for discussion with the task force.

Councilmember Retana requested adding to the next meeting agenda an item related to discussing various funding sources for the potential betterments improvements.

Ms. McCardle stated staff would seek feedback from TxDOT related to funding sources that needed to be identified in the immediate versus those that could be identified later. After some discussion, it was the consensus of the task force to meet biweekly on Wednesday afternoons.

Ms. McCardle asked for any additional items from the task force members to add to the agenda for the next meeting.

Mayor Dye requested an agenda item related to discussion of potential areas of concerns within the corridor regarding the burying of overhead utilities.

Hearing no further questions or comments, Mayor Dye closed discussion on this agenda item.

B. ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business, Mayor Dye adjourned the meeting at 12:24 PM.

Mayor

City Administration