MINUTES
WORKSHOP
DESTIN CITY COUNCIL
MAY 13, 2024
ANNEX COUNCIL CHAMBERS
5:30 PM

The Council of the City of Destin met in special session with the following members and staff present:

Destin City Council

Mayor Bobby Wagner
Councilmember Johnny King
Councilmember Kevin Schmidt
Councilmember Torey Geile
Councilmember Terésa Hebert
Councilmember Jim Bagby
Councilmember Dewey Destin
Councilmember John Stephens

City of Destin Staff

City Manager Louis Zunguze
Public Information Director Tamara Young
Public Works Director Michael Burgess
Projects/Grants/Contract Manager Jeffrey Cozadd
Engineering Assistant II Joe Bodi
City Attorney Kimberly Romano Kopp
City Clerk Rey Bailey
IT Director Andy Peters
City Engineer Ryan Scott
Finance Director Krystal Strickland
HR Director Jamie Haynes
Records Specialist Sharon Gardner

CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bobby Wagner called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM, followed by the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Claude Perry, 732 Harbor Blvd, emphasized his support for public parking garages, specifically advocating for the construction of three garages, including one at Crystal Beach. He discussed the long-standing issue of the parking garage, and its importance for visitors to the harbor. He discussed the long history of the parking garage issue, mentioning its discussion began 15-20 years ago under previous councils. He highlighted the need for adequate parking for visitors to the harbor and the importance of this issue for the community.

Mr. Lockwood Wernet, General Manager of the Destin Water Users and Chairman of the Town Center CRA Advisory Committee, supported the priority list and the projects covering various transportation needs, and noting the significant public and committee input it reflects. He also urged consideration of removing project NC6 (Sunchase path through the Old Creek course) due to conflicts with Destin Water Users' plans.

WORKSHOP

A. Mobility Plan – Project Priority List

The City Engineer provided a brief overview of the draft Mobility Plan:

The purpose of this workshop is to brief the City Council on the phasing recommendations for the projects in the plan and receive feedback from the council on the priorities as recommended. City council feedback on the priorities is requested prior to bringing the Draft Mobility Plan for adoption, which is anticipated in the immediate coming months. The Draft Mobility Plan document is substantially complete and will be published for review as soon as possible after the city council is briefed on this item and has communicated its priorities to staff.

The Community Development Department has been working to vet, prioritize, and create final recommendations for the Draft Mobility Plan, which identifies projects to address transportation needs through 2050. The Draft Mobility Plan includes a comprehensive list of projects the City can undertake and fund with mobility fees and other sources of funding.

In addition to being a roadmap for future transportation network investment, the priorities of the Mobility Plan will be used in calculating a new Mobility Fee for the City to replace the current Transportation Impact Fee. The background work to calculate the fee has commenced and can be finalized after the Draft Mobility Plan is adopted.

All the projects in the Draft Mobility Plan have been identified for implementation in the short, medium, or long term. This phasing strategy is based on the prioritization methods developed by staff and the consultant team working on the project (shown as the benefit score in the materials) as well as the results of community engagement and City Committees' input around their stated priorities.

DISCUSSIONS:

Councilmember Bagby questioned the prioritization process, especially the inclusion of parking garages, which ranked low in public surveys. He expressed skepticism about the methodology used to prioritize projects. He suggested reevaluating the prioritization of projects, particularly moving critical intersection improvements to phase one. He also proposed reconsidering the closure of access to the Shell Station on US-98 and suggested the potential for an underground tunnel for pedestrians to reduce surface traffic congestion.

Councilmember Destin expressed concerns about the potential high mobility fee and its impact on development. He requested clarification on how projects are funded and if grants could be included in the funding calculations. He also emphasized the importance of knowing the potential mobility fee before approving the plan.

Mayor Wagner suggested designating a true bike path and implementing speed calming measures on the Destin Crosstown Connector to enhance safety for pedestrians and cyclists. He discussed the feasibility of roundabouts for traffic calming and improving safety, especially at key intersections. He also proposed speed calming measures and landscape improvements to ensure a pedestrian-friendly design.

Councilmember Schmidt highlighted the importance of a flexible plan adaptable over the years to meet evolving needs and future council preferences.

Councilmember Hebert expressed the importance of prioritizing intersection improvements and suggested addressing existing sidewalk repairs before building new ones.

The council debated the inclusion of NC1 and NC2, which involve connecting existing dead-end neighborhoods. Concerns were raised about maintaining the character and safety of these neighborhoods. There was a suggestion to change these projects to focus on pedestrian connectivity rather than vehicular, proposing a shift to bike and pedestrian pathway instead.

There were concerns about NC6 and its potential conflict with existing plans and land ownership.

The council deliberated on potential changes to the Mobility Plan, including the removal or re-prioritization of certain projects, emphasizing the importance of financial feasibility and alignment with public interest. They agreed to continue refining the plan with input from staff and further public engagement.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Capt. Gary Jarvis, 804 Harbor Blvd, urged the council to take a long-term view and not delay decisions due to current uncertainties. He emphasized the need for future councils to have the tools to improve the city's quality of life and infrastructure. He highlighted the importance of setting appropriate fees for development to ensure that new projects contribute to community needs.

Mr. Don Dallas, 442 Snapper Drive, expressed his gratitude to the council for their efforts and highlighted the ongoing stormwater issues on Snapper Drive. He suggested having better communication about public meetings and emphasized prioritizing citizens' needs over tourists.

Mr. Curis Gwin provided clarification on NC6, stating it is planned as a private road and not intended to connect to Indian Trail. He suggested correcting the alignment based on the comprehensive plan to avoid conflicts.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:08 PM.

Bobby Wagner, Mayor

ATTEST:

Rey Bailey, City Clerk