

New Smyrna Beach City Commission Meeting – April 12, 2022

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NOTE: Mayor Russ Owen was absent and excused from this meeting.

City Commissioners voted 4-0 to approve the first phase of traffic-calming measures that are intended to slow down motorists on South Riverside Drive.

In the past few years, the city installed a variety of devices such as speed humps and stop signs at intersections along sections of Live Oak and Magnolia streets to slow traffic through those neighborhoods. Although those measures have worked, a number of South Riverside residents told the Commission its actions moved the problem of speeding drivers over to their street, despite its 25-mph speed limit.

Commissioners largely agreed.

The first phase of traffic-calming actions will involve installing “all-way stop signs” at the Fifth Street and Andrews Street intersections, along with posting more speed limit signs. This phase of work should not exceed \$5,000, staff members said. The Commission agreed that cost should be paid from the city’s operating budget, not its reserve funds.

If officials decide a second phase of traffic improvements are necessary they may add additional stop signs at Third Street and/or a “speed table” centered on the road between Andrews and Fifth streets. City Engineer Kyle Fegley said staff members will reevaluate in six months how well the first phase has worked.

Commissioner Jake Sachs agreed phasing in the traffic control work has merit, and said he was willing to support “reasonable measures” to accomplish that and try to offset increased traffic from area growth.

Vice Mayor Jason McGuirk said he heard differing ideas about what was needed to slow traffic from residents of South Riverside Drive. “When we put the traffic-calming measures on Magnolia we promised not to shift the problem. I don’t want to ignore the fact that we specifically said we would not move the problem (elsewhere) and that’s exactly what we did.”

The City Commission voted in unison to approve the final draft of a Master Plan for city park needs now and in the future. It represents more than \$81 million of potential enhancements to existing parks and the creation of new ones.

Consultants from the planning and engineering firm VHB began working on an inventory and evaluation of city parks more than a year ago. VHB representative Roberta Fennessy, a Director of Planning and Design, and Katie Shannon, a community planner, visited and took an inventory of the city’s 37 parks and recreational facilities, evaluated their condition and level of use and sought insight about the parks from members of the community and Commissioners. Based on that information, the consultants assessed current and future needs and where any new amenities should be located.

Fennessy and Shannon said they focused on enhancing what the city already has and expanding the accessibility of recreational and park facilities throughout local communities and neighborhoods. New Smyrna Beach is doing very well with the overall acreage allotted to parks, the diversity of its park and recreational facilities and the quality of its assets, they reported. The consultants did recommend major enhancements for three city parks that have seen limited development: Callalisa Park, Indian River Lagoon Park and the North Causeway Boat Ramp Park. Potential improvements for those areas might

include one or more trails for walking, running, biking and skating, more access to the water for kayaking and paddle boarding, and dog-walking areas.

In addition, VHB suggested that New Smyrna Beach develop five Neighborhood Parks of two to five acres each in the Fairway area, along Pioneer Trail, a Saxon Drive linear park, an Atlantic Arts park, and a "parklet" on the north beach near Smyrna Dunes Park. Key features for these amenities would be to connect neighborhoods and close existing gaps, provide a mix of active and passive recreation, and take advantage of each park's unique features like water access or natural areas. Focusing on the latter, one idea is to develop a Turnbull Creek Boardwalk that incorporates a kayak launch, pier and walking trail. VHB's representatives also recommended that the city develop five Community Parks in areas such as the South Mainland along SR-44, the Glencoe-Paige Avenue area, the Westside North and South, and a Marine Discovery Center Park.

Guidelines for these community facilities suggest that they:

- be 10-30 acres each,
- offer a large mix of active and passive recreational facilities,
- serve multiple neighborhoods, and
- take advantage of each area's features.

Consultants said the biggest gap in the city's general and passive recreational spaces is in the western part of New Smyrna Beach, particularly west of I-95. They also recommended that the city work on "connectors" linking its parks and recreational facilities to one another, other regional multi-use and rail trails, the beach and planned bicycle/pedestrian links.

To pay for all these improvements, the park study suggests that the city consider including some funds in future budgets, use park impact fees, and look into the potential for federal, state and regional grants. Partnerships with other entities and bond referendums are other possibilities.

VHB planners also looked at the city's demographics based on the 2020 Census:

- NSB's average age is 56.4 years old, compared to the state's 42.4 years.
- The city's average age is expected to rise to 58 years old by 2025.
- NSB's population boomed as development accelerated west of town.
- Between 2000 and 2020, the population grew nearly 30% from 22,438 to 29,073.
- The number of people here is anticipated to reach 30,816 by 2025.
- In 2000 the city had 14,752 housing units. That grew to 19,912 units in 2020 and is expected to reach 20,807 housing units by 2025.

Commissioner Kolody commented that past city officials erred by not acquiring land or requiring developers to put aside property for future recreational amenities such as those recommended by VHB. As a result, he said, "You can't get the land.....The focus has to be on implementing a lot of the recommendations you have, because for the most part they're very good."

Commissioner Randy Hartman added, "Thank you for the all the hard work you put into this. It brings home the point." Parks are needed west of I-95. "That's also where most of our park impact money is coming from."

"You did a great job. I think it's accurately identified the problems in the community with our parks and open spaces," said Vice Mayor McGuirk. "The one that hits me the most is the gap you talked about. We don't have much open space. We don't have fields where kids can play soccer, fly a kite, play some tackle football ... Building a park and not necessarily filling it full of structures is important."

City Commissioners voted 4-0 to pass a resolution to amend an earlier grant application the city submitted to the Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND) for design work on waterfront property improvements.

The original grant request was to design proposed improvements to the North Causeway Boat Ramps and adjacent city-owned land known as the AOB site at 160 N. Causeway, as well as partially offsetting the purchase of a boat for the Police Department. Changes approved April 12 include requesting money to design 1,220 lineal feet of floating docks, additional picnic pavilions and approximately 270 lineal feet of shoreline improvements.

The City Commission took no action on different options to repair, replace or demolish Spyglass Pier, after hearing from a number of residents who either supported or opposed the idea. Instead, officials agreed they would like residents who want to see the pier rebuilt to come forward with money to repair and/or replace it. The city could then hold those monies and administer the project.

Spyglass Pier extends into the Indian River from a street end at the intersection of Dune Circle and Spyglass Lane. The pier was damaged by a hurricane in 2017 and has been closed since then. An evaluation of its structure revealed extensive storm damage and deterioration due to rot, marine borers and corroding hardware. The city looked at the cost of several options:

- ✓ \$69,875 to demolish and remove the pier.
- ✓ \$92,310 to remove the last 24 feet of the pier extending into the river and replace remaining deck boards and other sections.
- ✓ \$146,361 to replace an overlook section and the last 24 feet of the main pier.
- ✓ \$295,088 to fully replace the entire pier.

Complicating the issue is the fact that the city didn't build the pier, and whoever did apparently did not obtain proper permits, according to city officials. Despite that, City Attorney Carrie Avallone said historical information indicates even though a private individual built the pier, the city agreed to maintain it and it was placed on the city's insurance list. "So, by all indications we have some sort of ownership/maintenance obligation here," she said.

City Commissioners heeded the concerns of local business owners and unanimously voted down an ordinance that would have waived on-site parking requirements for eligible businesses that require 20 parking spaces or less, if there is on-street parking or a public parking lot within 200 feet of the business.

City leaders agreed with Assistant City Manager Ronald Neibert's suggestion for staff members to meet with local business owners to clarify how the city might change existing parking requirements in the downtown and listen to their responses. Then, the staff can schedule workshops to present those findings to the City Commission.

Senior Planner Bob Mathen said the city's Arts Overlay District originally was created to stimulate business development in the Canal Street Commercial district and on properties that were primarily zoned Mixed Use, as well as others zoned for commercial and high density residential. Now that the Canal Street District is thriving, Mathen said there is a perception it may be on the brink of a parking shortage. That led staff members to work with the city's parking consultant, VHB, to propose revisions to current parking regulations in the Arts Overlay District.

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