

**FORT MYERS BEACH  
TOWN COUNCIL WORKSHOP  
MAY 10, 1999  
NationsBank, Council Chambers  
2523 Estero Boulevard  
FORT MYERS BEACH, FLORIDA**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The Town Council Workshop was opened on Thursday, May 10, 1999, at 9:00 A.M. by Mayor Ray Murphy.

**Present at the meeting were:** Mayor Ray Murphy, Vice-Mayor John Mulholland; Council Members Daniel Hughes and Garr Reynolds; Town Manager Marsha Segal-George; and Presenters from Kimley Horn, CPH and Wilson-Miller.

**Excused absence from the meeting:** .Anita Cereceda.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**III. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS**

None.

**IV. INTERVIEWS OF ESTERO BOULEVARD STREETScape DESIGN TEAMS**

9:00 a.m.: Kimley Horn

10:00 a.m.: CPH

11:00 a.m.: Wilson-Miller

**A. KIMLEY HORN**

David Garrison identified himself as the project manager for the Fort Myers Beach/Estero Island Experience Project. He introduced his associates who were with him today. He advised that most of their work for this project would be done out of Kimley Horn's Sarasota office.

Funding for the project would come from federal, state and local funding.

One of the associates spoke regarding the project. From their standpoint, he advised, the key question is how we would use the the Estero Boulevard right-of-way, how we will manage it, not only to manage the traffic that's using the street, but to guide the road for the future of the Town. They just completed a streetscape project in Palm Beach; and the key elements there, like most other streetscape projects, are traffic calming, how to deal with pedestrians, the bikes and parking. Fort Myers Beach has those same elements. Some differences that are seen here on Fort Myers Beach are severe traffic congestion and circulation problems, pretty severe right-of-way restrictions, narrow right-of-ways. One of the big advantages that they see is an opportunity to have transit solve some of the travel demands in the city. We have over 200 acres of street right-of-ways, or 14% of the land that makes up this island, and that's a pretty significant element and a pretty significant force valued at about \$175,000,000. It is a part of the island and it needs to be a major player in how the other parts of the island fit together to feed off each other and bring the island into the future.

A recommended right-of-way would be a 10-foot dedicated transit lane down the middle of Estero Boulevard; two narrow lanes for other vehicular travel outside of that; bike paths and sidewalks. The dedicated transit lane is for transit vehicles. The trolley carries a lot of passengers, but the disadvantage is that it sits in traffic like everything else. So it is recommended to move that transit into the center lane, which will have no median and can also be used for left turns. Emergency vehicles can pass stopped traffic in that center lane.

How the design project would be handled was discussed. A couple of examples were given of how to get the funding for the kind of designs that were envisioned in the master plan.

Questions and Comments by Council Members:

Vice Mayor Mulholland stated that it was fine for a trolley to go down the center lane, but

what if it wanted to pick up or discharge passengers? He was told that riders are picked up and discharged at cross walks and cross one lane of traffic.

Mr. Mulholland also noted that it seemed that the presentation was aimed at business and the return on investments and the revenue to the Town. However, Estero Boulevard goes through business districts and residential districts. What can we look forward to giving residents on this streetscape through the residential areas? Advised was that the rate of return on tax dollars is very important to residents.

Councilman Dan Hughes stated that with just one track, the trolley can only go one way at a time of course. The response was that we would need places for trolleys to pass each other, perhaps in the roadway. Then there is a potential to incorporate the trolley line into developments, which would allow them to pull into a development, whether it's Times Square or a hotel or some out of the right-of-way location, and then pull back out. That would give us two sets of tracks for a little bit longer distance so that trolleys could pass each other.

Dan Hughes also noted that we use the County transit system, which are buses. Would we ask Lee Tran to acquire this equipment? He was advised that since Lee Tran is in the business of transit, they would potentially be a major part of the funding for the trolley equipment. Mr. Hughes remarked that they would have to be the applicant for the funding for the equipment. He was told that that depended on whatever strategies could be put together. ISTEA potentially has some other funding efforts where the Town could be the applicant. Who the applicant is may not make a whole lot of difference, but we need to get Lee Tran into the mix.

What would be the source of these trolleys? Mr. Hughes wished to know. He was told that they would use vintage trolleys that hold 80-90 passengers per car and one driver. Labor would amount to 60-75% of the operating expenses.

What do they feel is feasible and realistic to bury our above-ground utilities? Mr. Hughes asked, and several suggestions were made.

Councilman Reynolds asked for more details about how traffic calming would be handled. Advised was that they envisioned raising the cross walks vertically and bringing in the visual cone. Engineers have learned that the cone of vision that you can see has to do with the speed at which you're driving. The faster you go, the narrower the cone becomes. In traffic calming they try to work that equation backwards. By giving drivers more things to see, their cone will open up and slow them down. At various locations, therefore, they bring in landscaping and other kinds of visual impacts to the cone of vision to slow drivers down. Pedestrians slow drivers down. Trolleys certainly slow them down.

Garr Reynolds remarked that we are a low island and that after any type of storm we're going to be covered with water. He wondered what the safety factor would be on electric trolleys on rails. The response was that a 10-foot right-of-way would take care of the trolley. The lanes on the side have to be 10 or 11 feet. The travel lane would be 10 feet. Mr. Reynolds also asked for a clarification of the one and a half miles that was mentioned and an explanation was given. He noted that we have

approximately six miles from the base of the bridge to the end of the island and that a mass transit system would, therefore, be helpful during the three months that we're inundated with people.

Mayor Murphy asked when talking about the right-of-way averaging 50-55 people, how that compared in a typical situation. The response was that this was average for two lanes.

Ray Murphy also advised that he was most concerned with the funding element. He can see this being at least a \$20,000,000 project. Right now the County owns Estero Boulevard and we're in the process of trying to negotiate its takeover ourselves. Does the ownership of the boulevard itself have a great impact on the availability of the funding? Advised was that it wasn't clear what that impact would be. It is part of the strategy that needs to be considered. Suggestions were made by Kimley Horn with regards to funding.

Town Manager Segal-George advised that our situation differed from that of West Palm, which had been used as an example. Most of our Estero Boulevard does not have a TIF. It's not in an overlay situation and is mostly residential. The Town is not in any kind of utility upgrade situation, nor does it seem like we would be in the future. Another issue needing clarification has to do with the County. If the County doesn't want to give us the road, then there's a lot of what

we're talking about with regards to streetscape that the County will never approve. That has to be factored in. If the County isn't interested in doing any of these upgrades with regards to the road or flood, they can basically sit there, hold on to the road and not let us have street trees, not let us have a lot of what we're looking at here because they don't allow that on any of the other County roads. What is going to trigger their having to come and do something on that road? Kimley Horn gave a reply which included putting political pressure on the County.

Mayor Murphy thanked Kimley Horn for their presentation, which he said was very well done.

## **B R E A K**

### **B. CPH Engineers, Inc.**

Carl Porter, President of CPH Engineers, Inc., introduced himself and his associates, who included Carleton Ryffel, their director of planning and a 12-year resident of Fort Myers Beach. He said that they felt it was important to have an engineering firm as the leader of this project, because in the end it is a construction project. He noted that they've had fresh experience with similar projects, which he described.

Mr. Porter passed out a packet showing the Stanford project that they recently completed and noted that it was not a streetscape project but a drainage project. He advised that there are several disciplines involved in a project like this: planning, public awareness, utilities engineering, transportation engineering, traffic engineering, electrical engineering, stormwater management, landscape architecture, historic preservation considerations, surveying and financing. He advised that they would like to help the Town of Fort Myers Beach find all the various types of financing and funding to make this project work.

Mr. Porter remarked that Carleton Ryffel would be the co-manager of the project along with Tom Mann, the engineering end of company management in this area.

Carleton Ryffel took the floor and said he was very happy and pleased to be part of this most able team and for the opportunity to work on this project. One thing he hoped was obvious to us in reviewing their proposal was the demonstration in it of local knowledge, local projects, local problems and opportunities. Even the cover is a demonstration of a potential design problem solution. Mr. Ryffel feels that it's important to be able to sketch out the vision of what people see and want. He talked about some of the considerations they'd had in preparing the proposal, but first handed out a little summary book.

Mr. Ryffel put up an exhibit, and referring to it, he expounded on the items it contained:

1. Public awareness: Good public awareness is important because it will help businesses and residents feel as though they are partners in this. The public should also be part of the visioning process and in consensus building.

2. Lee County streetscape rules that could affect this project. If the County owns Estero Boulevard, we would be limited in what we can do. Suggested is that the Town take Estero Boulevard and also consider taking the bridge onto the island.

3. Location and dimension of Estero Boulevard. Survey work is critical. It is the basis of all the work that we're going to do. For the most part no one really knows where Estero Boulevard is and how big it is.

4. Drainage. This is a great opportunity to improve the drainage.

5. It might also be possible if we took Estero Boulevard to get Lee County to pay for some of the improvements or contribute to them before we take it over.

6. Burying utilities. This is very important in this project because of a) the visual blight those overhead lines create, and (b) the need to provide enough room to do a good streetscape. Estero Boulevard varies in width from 55 feet to 100 feet. Having the land available to do the improvements is very important, especially in the 55-foot areas.

7. Phasing is very important in this project, not only in terms of location but in terms of time of year. The segment of Estero Boulevard between the pier and the park is a dead-end street and the best time of year to do streetscape work there is in season. The other segments of the boulevard where traffic is moving through it should be done in off season.

8. Multiple themes. Common elements should be tied to the streetscape design, such as lighting standards, crosswalk treatments and historical considerations. There are maybe three or four different flavors of Estero Boulevard as you ride through it.

Carleton Ryffel noted that three members of their team have previously worked on Fort Myers Beach. It is his home and he has both a professional and personal interest in making certain that this project is completed at the highest standards, on time and within budget.

Mr. Ryffel introduced Jeff Kooner, their survey partner, and gave his background.

Mr. Kooner noted that Estero Boulevard is critical to this project. The history of the Town, he advised, goes back to the late 1800s. The north end was platted first and the southern end remained in homestead until later. He pointed out on a map where the character of the land was different and controlled by a 1957 survey by the DMT. As you move northerly from Flamingo, the right-of-way is controlled by the plats that were recorded along there over time. What you have to do to establish the right-of-way is survey the subdivision, and what's left between the subdivision is the right-of-way of Estero Boulevard. The right-of-way survey will be the basis of the design and it will also be the basis of the construction layout and the improvements. Because this project will run the entire length of the Town, many many projects later on will tie to this. We will get the use of this survey information over many years.

Mr. Kooner spoke about the work that the research specialist on his staff, Mary Whistle, has been doing. He advised that Gary Davidson was the original surveyor in the subdivision. He pointed out a compilation of several important historical spots along the way that we might encounter in the streetscape project, such as the site of the Koreshan Unity homestead at the southern end of Estero Island. He advised that Brad Swarmsi, a landscape architect, would give us more details about the conditions of this project.

Brad Swarmsi said he'd like to talk to us a little more about the aesthetics of the Estero Boulevard corridor. He believes that one of the most important aspects of this project and the very foundation of it is a detailed site analysis which includes survey work. He noted that there are many existing things that we have very limited ability to manipulate. He explained the drawbacks and how their team would proceed to overcome them. With respect to traffic control, he suggested speed bumps and wider crosswalks.

Carl Porter offered additional reasons why his team would be the most effective one for the project.

#### Questions and Comments by Council Members:

Dan Hughes told CPH that he was impressed with the scope of what they've done already and that they obviously have a good feel for the community. He asked if they would consider it economically feasible and practical to bury our overhead utilities. He was given examples of what other municipalities had done and was told that they didn't have a really firm answer to his question.

Mayor Murphy asked Jeffrey Kooner if the County didn't have existing surveys of the right-of-way. Mr. Kooner advised that when plats were set aside, there weren't specific guidelines on how much right-of-way to set aside. Estero Boulevard exists as a result of those plats and the right-of-way is not consistent.

Vice Mayor Mulholland complimented CPH on their excellent presentation and the quality of their handouts. He felt there were some strong points that they had made. He stated that to his mind drainage brings in a much broader problem of storm water management and asked what their thoughts were on storm water management under drainage. He was told that part of the solution would be to put some decent-sized pipes underground that would provide filtration, at least for part of the overflow, and considerable inland places for the overflow to get into and underground storage tanks for high level overflow.

Mr. Mulholland asked about lighting the boulevard, and he was told that there were a lot of ways of looking at it. With the new lighting fixtures, you can get a lot of light without having to have the 40-foot poles. The new poles are shorter and more aesthetic. You get the light that you need where you need it, bringing it down to a human scale and making it more tolerable for the pedestrian walking along the street.

Mr. Mulholland asked for their thoughts on trolley pull ups and he was given ideas on different areas that could be used for trolley stops.

Carleton Ryffel replied to John Mulholland's question on the benefits of taking over the bridge and Estero Boulevard.

Ray Murphy thanked everyone for a good presentation.

## B R E A K

### C. WILSON-MILLER

Bruce Rankin, Vice President and Director of Corporate Design for Wilson-Miller, opened the presentation. He remarked that they have a really grand plan for Estero Boulevard and that seven miles of streetscape takes a very complete team that is well-organized and well put together. Among their goals is producing solutions with respect to the unique natural resource that is Fort Myers Beach and creating a high quality environment in which to live, play and work. He introduced Anita Jenkins as the leading expert in pedestrian/bikeway design in South Florida; Dan Burden, the national leader in walkable communities, a creator of pedestrian environments; Jeff Curry, former Chairman of the Metropolitan Planning Organization in Collier County and in Syracuse, New York, and one of the leading people in this part of the country on transportation planning. The media specialist was also introduced.

Mr. Rankin stated that their methodology for problem solving has a three-task, two-team approach. The first task is the definition of a vision. We have already laid out a vision for Fort Myers Beach and their job is to define that and come to a clear picture of what Estero Boulevard will be, which is really what the face of Fort Myers Beach is going to be. In the technical criteria task, they pull together all of

the technical criteria necessary to make the vision work and then the two-team approach responds to that.

Anita Jenkins advised that they have observed over eight segments of right-of-way types that are repeated along the seven-mile corridor of Estero Boulevard. The team will try to come together with some thoughts of what Estero Boulevard could be. They know that we have a vision of a tree-lined boulevard that's pedestrian friendly and where bicyclists and motorists can move up and down this corridor safely. The way that they're going to get there is through a six-step planning charette process. This team knows how to conduct a charette and how to get results from a charette so that Estero Boulevard will be designed by and for the residents of Fort Myers Beach. One of their charette leaders will be Dan Burden.

Dan Burden spoke regarding how he would conduct a charette on the Beach. They would take our criteria, what we're interested in and what comes out of a charette, and develop to those standards. And in case we can't get the control that we want of Estero Boulevard, the other alternative is to take the Lee County standards, analyze them and push them as far as they can possibly be pushed to stay consistent with the Beach standards.

Mr. Burden said that part of the process of creating a safe, walkable environment is to separate the sidewalk from the traffic. There may be opportunities where we don't need the left turn lane, which will give us room for bike lanes on the street. Anita Jenkins said that one of the most important things for pedestrians in South Florida is shade along the sidewalks so that they can move about in a more comfortable environment. Another area to explore is putting some arbors at the transit stops so that when people are waiting for the trolley they can feel a little bit cooler.

We were shown photos of what has been done in other towns in order to get perspectives on what might work for us.

Funding sources were discussed. We were told that they had the ability to structure the grant applications to show our projects in the best light. The state also provides funds both from the highway side and the transit side. New funding programs are being developed that should be explored.

Bruce Rankin assured us that at every level of this process they have the people right here in this area. The most important part of this whole thing is the face-to-face, personal communication that's fundamental to the charette process and also to fully capturing and interpreting and then producing the vision of the community.

Mayor Murphy thanked Mr. Rankin and his team for their presentation.

Questions and Comments by Council Members:

Vice Mayor Mulholland also thanked Wilson-Miller for their presentation. He stated that they had mentioned the environment early on but hadn't touched on drainage and stormwater management. He wished to know their thoughts on those. He was told that they did recognize that there were drainage issues, as well as sea turtle issues, coastal construction permitting and a few other things that are part of the project. There are places where it appears there is no drainage.

Mr. Mulholland advised he had felt disappointed at some of the charettes held by the Town. What is their alternative if we don't get the desired participation of the townspeople and businesses. He was told that they were looking at a five- or six-day period when they had everybody here in town. You have to do a lot of homework beforehand. You work with the local media to get some things out and stimulate thinking, even if it's controversial. Anita Jenkins advised that it wasn't just one public meeting where everyone comes to participate. It's over a several-day period with specific persons coming in small groups. Those who can't attend are given an opportunity to talk about the results of charettes.

Councilman Hughes asked for an idea of the timetable. He was told that the process would be geared in part to when they can get the most participation at a charrette. They would like to start in the fall and then come again after the holidays once they have the master plan put together. There are a lot of graphics involved so that people can see if what is being portrayed is what they had in mind.

Mr. Hughes asked about the one-lane trolley lane. Advised was that trolleys would have to keep on a schedule so that they don't arrive at the turn off at the same time. With the kind of right-of-ways that we have, we want to try to keep it a single lane. According to Anita Jenkins, we could have trams just running along certain sections.

Councilman Reynolds wished to know how they see traffic calming. Anita Jenkins noted that some sections needed more traffic calming than other. They would use different techniques for different segments of the road. After asking for a definition of traffic calming, Mr. Reynolds was advised that it was slowing down traffic. Access management is moving traffic more efficiently. In season we might need more rapid movement which can be achieved by controlling turning movements and managing how many places people can come onto the road, how many places they can't. The tram or trolley is really a good device for that as it has a dedicated lane it can travel. Mr. Reynolds stated that what they're suggesting regarding a dedicated lane for a trolley is about the only future answer he sees to our problem.

Mr. Reynolds wished to know what percentage of the cost they would see coming from local funds and what percentage might come from federal and state in a grant situation. The reply was that right now all of the TVA enhancement dollars are essentially 100% federal funds. Maintenance costs would come from a local sponsor. Local governments can enhance highway dollars when putting in improvements that are over and above the state standards. For instance, the County might pay for certain types of street lights. If something fancier is wanted, the local government would pay the difference. Other sources of funding were also mentioned.

Mayor Murphy said that in our short history as a town, this is certainly the biggest undertaking that we've ever considered and may very well be for years and years to come. He appreciates their ideas about community involvement. We are in many ways and by many definitions a small town, and we will be for years to come. It is imperative to us, therefore, as council members and also as members of the community to have this sort of community involvement all along the way with this project. We have had charettes in the past and while they were successful, typically what happens is that you have that same core group of people that show up at these things and participate. Their comments about segmenting and going after the different groups are, therefore, appreciated. We have this kind of business versus tourists versus residents battle that continues all the time. Having someone facilitate different charettes for different groups and somehow bringing it all together had appeal for Mr. Murphy.

Touching on drainage, Ray Murphy stated that because of our soil type, we can have very good drainage on this island without a lot of great expense. He feels that the majority of places on this beach drain just fine, but that over the years, because of the hodge podge development, everything is misdirected. It's just not getting to the right swales. It's not given the chance to drain properly. Dan Hughes stated that a prior presentation indicated it would be necessary to

have a totally new survey, because what's available on the County level is either not all there or not sufficient or valid.

Mayor Murphy thanked Wilson-Miller for a fine presentation. Bruce Rankin left a booklet and was asked to make them up for each council member.

**V. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Lorraine Calhoun  
Transcribing Secretary