

University Hill Public Safety Association

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December 21, 2016

Syracuse University Department of
Public Safety Office
130 College Place

11:00 am

MINUTES

Present: President Sardino, Vice President LeRoy, Messrs. Brown, Daugherty, Goldacker, Goodale, Hernon, Riley, Robertson, Vasile, and Walsh

Staff: David A. Mankiewicz

I. WELCOME AND MINUTES OF AUGUST 17 AND NOVEMBER 2, 2016

Mr. LeRoy called the meeting to order and welcomed the members and guests present. He asked for consideration of the minutes of August 17 and November 2. Mr. Goldacker moved and Mr. Daugherty seconded a motion to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion was unanimously approved.

II. I-81 UPDATE

Mr. Mankiewicz provided an update on the Interstate 81 Project. He noted that the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) had narrowed the options for the reconstruction of Interstate to two: (1) the community grid solution and (2) the viaduct. The viaduct would be 10 to 20 feet wider than the current facility to allow breakdown lanes along the viaduct. It would also be placed at least 10 feet higher in order to allow more sunlight under the viaduct to eliminate the problems of the dark space below it. Under this option the current I-81 remains Interstate 81 through the city as a high-speed highway. However because the highway has to get wider and straighter, 25 properties in the city's core have to be acquired and 24 buildings demolished in order to make way for it. The construction cost of the viaduct is placed at \$1.7 million.

The community grid brings traffic down to grade. However, the grid solution disperses traffic over a number of north-south streets and not just Almond Street. Under this solution the current 481 would become the new Interstate 81 and traffic destined to the city center could move north along Almond Street, Townsend Street, State Street, and Salina Street. The traffic would also be expected to be dispersed before it gets to the section of Almond Street beneath the current viaduct. The

project would create a new interchange for Interstate 690 at Crouse and Irving Avenues. University Hill bound traffic could either exit from Interstate 690 at this point or could exit at the I-81 interchange for Salina Street or Oswego Boulevard.

In addition, NYSDOT has proposed a number of components to the project called the “common features,” which would be built no matter what solution is adopted. These include (1) the elimination of the West Street arterial and the reconstruction of West Street as a normal city street at grade and (2) a new interchange on Interstate 81 at Martin Luther King Boulevard and Renwick Avenue which would provide a new means of access and egress to University Hill. In addition, I-81 North of 690 would be widened to four lanes in each direction and the bridges over 81 that connect the Northside of Syracuse to Franklin Square and the Lakefront would all be reconstructed in order to accommodate the wider profile of Interstate 81. A full interchange would be built out between Interstate 81 and Interstate 690 including the “missing links” between Interstate 690 and Interstate 81. This is a requirement of the Federal Highway Administration where two interstates intersect. The construction of the missing links and the widening of I-81 north of the city has been criticized by the businesses and residents of the Northside and Franklin Square as this would result in the taking of even more properties adjacent to the highway.

At a meeting last Wednesday night, Senator DeFrancisco and the state legislative delegation called for the inclusion of at least one tunnel option to be considered in the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS). Since NYSDOT has eliminated all of the tunnel and depressed highway solutions, the outcome appeared to be that either the community grid or the new viaduct would be the only two choices. The tunnel option had generally been favored by suburban interests who want a way to have a continuation of the high-speed highway through the city while allowing the demolition of the existing viaduct which splits downtown from the University Hill area. NYSDOT has rejected those solutions largely because of cost, the difficulty of construction, the number of properties that would have to be taken and the length of time it would take to construct those solutions. Whether a tunnel project is given any further consideration remains to be seen.

NYSDOT intends to release the DEIS in January and allow 30 to 45 days for comment. Once the comment period is over, NYSDOT intends to respond to all of the comments and would issue the final environmental impact statement sometime in mid-2017. Along with it would be the record of decision which would indicate the solution which NYSDOT wants to adopt. The record of decision needs concurrence from the Federal Highway Administration. With the change of administration in Washington, it is possible that there will be changes at the Federal Highway Administration as a new U.S. Transportation Secretary has been appointed. The former Transportation Secretary was a vocal opponent of having highways run through the center of cities. Delays could also result if a lawsuit was filed by any party.

III. DE-BRIEF ON THE 2016 TABLETOP

President Sardino reviewed the results of the 2016 Tabletop. He noted that one of the areas for improvement noted in the report was the recommendation that UHPSA create a formal communications plan for the members of the University Hill Corporation that would include both law enforcement partners and businesses. It would identify specific trigger points and redundant communication steps in order to maximize effectiveness. The concern expressed was that during the tabletop exercise there wasn't a clear method of communicating with the private sector interests that are located close to the point of the incidents. Mr. Mankiewicz noted that University Hill Corporation could transmit messages to private sector property owners and merchants but a

protocol would have to be established to determine when University Hill Corporation is asked to do that and who would have the authority to ask University Hill to send a message to the private sector interests.

A second element for improvement recommended in the report was the role of Hillnet to notify members regarding the incident. The Hillnet radio system that links the UHPSA members may no longer be necessary given the new digital radios and trunking system that are being operated through the Syracuse Police Department. Almost all the institutions have radios that would access that system. It was noted that Upstate, ESF and S.U. are all in the same talk group and that would be the likely communications vehicle that they would use. However, Chief Brown at Hutchings noted that he did not have a connection to that system and therefore the Hillnet system could still have value to him. He is hopeful that the Office of Mental Health will soon authorize the purchase of new radios that would allow the connection to the City of Syracuse system.

In emergency operations coordination the report noted that all of the UHPSA members rely heavily on the Syracuse Police Department and in an event of an emergency, the SPD officers and resources could be directed elsewhere. It was recommended that the SPD and the UHPSA members discuss the creation of a plan in the event that SPD's resources have to be redirected. The second recommendation is that UHPSA should seek an update of the staggered evacuation or early dismissal plan for the University Hill area and the center of the City of Syracuse. The plan was put back in place in the early 1990's after a significant snowfall snarled traffic in the city when everyone tried to leave at once. A plan devised shortly thereafter recommended to employers that they release employees who live 25 or more miles away from the city first and then release those who live between 10-25 miles, and finally those who live within 10 miles of the city would be released last. It was noted that one of the chief challenges to this staggered dismissal was that as in the case of the storm in the 1990's the school districts who had brought students into school then let them out early triggered a need for parents, no matter where they lived to try to get home. Any early dismissal plan adopted by University Hill members would due to be coordinated with other systems such as the school districts. It was recommended that the UHPSA obtain a copy of the early dismissal plan from the County Emergency Management Office and have a meeting with Emergency Management to discuss the workings of that plan. It might be necessary to develop and put in place "a plan within a plan" for the UHPSA members. If the plan needs to be updated, the UHPSA should identify a committee and then also look at the protocols for communicating the updates to the plan. This would be an agenda item for the next meeting.

Mr. Walsh noted that Centro will provide busses no matter what the need of the institutions. However, the busses should be used to move people from a place where an incident was taking place to a safe place rather than simply using them to house people temporarily. He did note that once the County Emergency Management system opens and responds to an incident, Centro takes their direction from them.

IV. SECURITY INCIDENTS AND CONSTRUCTION REPORTS

It was noted that one of the scam artists, an African-American woman in her 40's has again appeared in the area. She will approach a person at their car and tell them that she is pregnant and needs a ride to her home. It was noted that if the victim gives her a ride, they will go to a location where her boyfriend is waiting at a bank in order to force the victim to withdraw money from an ATM.

Mr. Mankiewicz gave an update on the construction schedules of the various housing projects. He noted that the Aspen Heights project in Outer Comstock is underway. The City of Syracuse is moving forward with approvals for two other student housing projects: one is proposed by the Michaels Organization for the site now occupied a near vacant office building on the corner of Walnut and East Genesee Street and another proposed by Peak Campus for the north side of the 900 block of East Genesee between Irving and Crouse Avenues. The first project will house 363 students, the second will house over 600. Both projects will be underway in construction in the spring if all approvals are received. Both would be complete by August of 2018. Mr. Mankiewicz noted that the Landmark Properties proposed project at the corner of University and Adams Street had been withdrawn. This was the project that started as a 17-story building and was later reduced to a 13-story building. While the attorney for the developer said they will re-approach the City, it appears that the developer cancelled several projects in multiple cities at the same time indicating a potential financial problem. There is no current action before the City on that project.

There are two other housing projects that are just beginning the approval process. The first is a project on the east side of the 700 block of South Crouse Avenue. For this project two of those buildings will be demolished and replaced by an eight story building with one floor of retail and seven floors of housing that would offer 275 beds for students and young professionals. The same developers indicated an interest in building across the street on the site of The Varsity and Faegan's but have not moved that project forward as of this time. Another developer from New York City is proposing to build a 200-unit apartment complex at 728 East Genesee Street, which is currently occupied by the former Church of Christ Scientist. The office building would be torn down, the church sanctuary would be restored and two new buildings, one of eight stories parallel to Cedar Street and one of six stories that would perpendicular to Forman Park would be built on the site. Mr. Brown indicated that the executive leadership of Hutchings would like see that project proposal. Mr. Mankiewicz also noted that another property owner at the intersection of East Fayette Street and Pine Street had indicated that there was another 400-bed student housing project that would be proposed there. That one has not materialized as of this time.

Mr. LeRoy noted that SUNY-ESF plans to break ground in late spring on its new research building. This will be at Sims and Forestry Drive. Mr. Sardino noted that the new building that houses the National Veterans' Resource Center would also be under construction in the late spring. This building would be built along Crouse Avenue between Waverly and Marshall Streets. The Hoople building is occupying the site now and is being prepared for demolition. It is possible that there will be a significant construction disruption along Irving Avenue for the next two years as the NVRC and one of the proposed housing projects would be within one block of one another.

V. OTHER BUSINESS AND ADJOURN

With no further business to come before the board, the meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.