

**CALLED MEETING, MAYOR AND COUNCIL, CITY OF COVINGTON,
GEORGIA, COUNCIL ROOM AND TELECONFERENCE, OCTOBER 19,
2022, 6:34 PM.**

Mayor Steve Horton presided with Mayor Pro-tem Fleeta Baggett, Council members: Susie Keck (via teleconference), Anthony Henderson, Charika Davis, Kenneth Morgan, and Don T. Floyd, City Manager Tres Thomas, Assistant City Manager John King, City Clerk Audra M. Gutierrez, Deputy Clerk Amanda Huggins, and City Attorney Frank Turner, Jr. present.

Mayor Horton called the meeting to order and stated purpose of meeting is to discuss Highway 278 CID Improvements Phase II.

Mr. Sam Hay, Vice Chair of the CID (Community Improvement District) Board, gave a detailed PowerPoint presentation of Highway 278 CID from inception to current. Mr. Hay stated the City recruited property owners to form the CID to improve Highway 278 in 2014 and was approved by Georgia General Assembly in 2016-2017. Mr. Hay stated property owners agreed to an additional five mils in taxes annually. Mr. Hay stated the payback of the CID is traffic control, safety, beautification, and improved quality of life to the 3.3-mile corridor of Highway 278.

Mrs. Kathy Morgan discussed the multi-faceted reasons GDOT wants to convert traffic lights to roundabouts on the 3.3-mile corridor of Highway 278 including cost-efficacy, smooth traffic flow, and decreased vehicle accidents. Mrs. Morgan discussed "destination" areas involved with project including the area between Emory Street/West Street, Elm Street to Hospital Drive, Highway 142 intersection, and Mill Street to Adams Street. Mrs. Morgan stated funding awarded for Phase I design phase including preliminary engineering, right-of-way, and utilities relocation. Mrs. Morgan stated application of grants occur in phases of engineering and construction, and work shall be done with money that is awarded.

Council member Baggett questioned if the proposed roundabout near Pi-Jon, Inc. would affect gas lines.

Mrs. Kathy Morgan stated gas lines would not be affected.

Fire Chief Jeremy Holmes voiced concern on whether emergency vehicles were going to be able to make safe turns at the roundabouts and divided highways, and if emergency response times were to be impacted negatively.

Ms. Thelma Nolley questioned who selected the CID Board members, concern of gas lines being closer to residential homes than to local businesses, and why many citizens are just recently hearing of the plans.

Mrs. Kathy Morgan state the bylaws state the CID Board members are chosen by property owners, the CID appoints five members, the City of Covington appoints a member, and the County Commissioners appoint a member, to equate to seven total CID Board members.

Mayor Horton stated he believed GDOT had been sending out letters and survey cards.

City Manager Tres Thomas stated GDOT is required to have an open house, normally the projects take a long length of time, and open house for this project is scheduled for June 2023. Mr. Thomas stated the open house will be advertised.

Mr. Howard Griggs of 55 River Shoals Court Covington, GA 30016 stated the roundabout at Turner Lake Road is too small, and backs up frequently. Mr. Griggs stated City needs to build for growth.

Mr. Roger Starr stated more that the five feet mentioned by Pi-Jon, Inc. is needed for project, and the information for grants should be accurate. Mr. Starr stated cost maintenance of landscaping in the future is a concern.

Mr. Jimmy Tanner, Chair of CID Board, stated he would like to check with other CID Boards on how they handle the maneuvering of emergency vehicles, and the right-of-ways for the project are larger than the right-of-ways at the Turner Lake Road roundabout. Mr. Tanner stated trust is in GDOT and they have decades of data to support the project.

Mrs. Kathy Morgan stated the proposed roundabouts have two lanes and several right exit turns. Mrs. Morgan stated two lane roundabouts can handle in excess of 40,000 vehicles per day, and the highest traffic count at the intersections of the corridor was approximately 26,000 vehicles per day. Mrs. Morgan stated this is only the preliminary engineering phase of design of Phase I, opportunity provided for City to bring concerns to GDOT, and the Phase II PFA approval presented currently to Council includes the enhancement portion and roadway to be done by CID with GDOT guidance. Mrs. Morgan stated all portions of Phase I have funding, except for the construction phase. Mrs. Morgan stated there is no reason GDOT would not receive the funding for construction from grants closer to the projected timeframe in 2025.

Mayor Horton stated he believes a better job should be done informing the community on plans.

City Manager Tres Thomas reiterated the documents for approval currently are for Phase II preliminary engineering. Mr. Thomas stated the City was awarded grant money amounting to \$1,017,280.00 and CID funding support of \$254,320.00.

Council member Henderson questioned what the City would be responsible for if something were to go wrong.

City Attorney Frank Turner Jr. stated if SPLOST fails, the project is in jeopardy, as there is \$1,000,000.00 of SPLOST set aside for project.

Mayor Horton would like to have contingency on 2023 SPLOST passing, which mirrors intent included in the letter of support.

Ms. Thelma Nolley stated traffic backs up from the railroad tracks on Emory Street to Highway 278.

1. Motion made by Council member Floyd, seconded by Council member Baggett to approve the Project Framework Agreement for Phase II, the Transportation Enhancement Memorandum of Understanding, a modified CID support letter, and the Roundabout Maintenance Agreement for Highway 278 CID improvements Phase II.

Motion carried with Council members Keck, Morgan, Baggett, Floyd, and Henderson, voting for. Council member Davis voting against.

Being no further business meeting adjourned at 8:01 PM.

Steve Horton, Mayor

Audra M. Gutierrez, City Clerk