

Memo

To: John Holic, Mayor, City of Venice
From: R. Fazzalato, Chairman, Traffic Advisory Task Force
CC: Kit McKeon, Vice Mayor; Richard Cautero; Bob Daniels; Fred Fraize; Jeanette Gates; Deborah Anderson; City Manager Ed Lavallee; Jason Adams; Monty Andrews; Carol Barbieri; Paul Cline; Sandy McGowan; Linda Nelson; Mike Pachota; John Ryan; Bill Shauman
Date: February 1, 2016
Subject: Interim Status Report

Summary

The Task Force met for the first time approximately six months ago. The purpose of this Interim Report is to advise the reader of the progress made and issues encountered during this time. Many of the accomplishments are listed in section V. Three issues are brought to the Council's attention: membership (section II), implementation of recommendations (section IV-1), and operating under the Sunshine Law (section IV-2).

I. Background

The Traffic Advisory Task Force was chartered and commissioned by City Council on May 25, 2015. Thirteen members were selected; City Manager Lavallee is the staff representative.

The Task Force met for the first time on August 19, 2015. Originally we met monthly, but decided we would be more effective meeting twice/month. There were nine meetings held through January 31, 2016.

Our meetings generally are held in the Community Room of City Hall at 5:00 pm on the first and third Thursdays of each month, for approximately 90 minutes. Attendance by the public is sparse, ranging from two to five. We held one offsite meeting, at the Venetian Golf and River Club on November 5, 2015. Approximately eight citizens attended.

II. Task Force Composition; Attendance

Task Force member participation may be found in Appendix A. In summary: of the thirteen members selected for the Task force, three resigned, two have not attended one meeting, and one member has missed two thirds of the meetings.

As it stands, the Task Force has difficulty attaining a quorum to even approve minutes. Moreover, it is unreasonable to ask the remaining participating members, who have

RECOMMENDATION

Council should take immediate steps to repopulate the Task Force with six to eight new members representing all areas of Venice.

taken on their assignment with enthusiasm, to effectively carry out the charter of the Task Force. Frustration is starting to build, and I fear the loss of additional members. Additional members need to be added, and they should be representative of the population demographics of our expanding city.

III. Public Participation

The Task Force solicited and received email suggestions from a number of citizens, through newspaper articles, the city newsletter, website and email server. We continue to review, discuss and process suggestions from the public. As we refine our focus and tasks we will conduct additional offsite meetings and concentrate on one or two specific topics or ideas at each meeting.

The Task Force met with Jeff Shrum and Tom Murphy, representing the Planning Commission, and listened to the plan and process for updating the Venice Comprehensive Plan.

IV. Process

1. Action

Members are frustrated at the amount of time it takes to actually get something changed, no matter how small. Examples include: Parking lot signage, park benches, intersection obstructions, signage, parking space changes at crosswalk, bicycle racks, etc. Perhaps we can establish a small quick-action team of city employees empowered to either take immediate action where appropriate, or contact the appropriate department to see that action is taken in a reasonable time frame. We recognize some things require outside agency consultation or even approval, but it seems that something as simple as installing a sign to attract drivers to a parking lot should not take weeks or months to accomplish. Perhaps if something just simply makes sense we should apply the old adage, it's easier to ask forgiveness than to seek permission.



2. Sunshine Law – an Obstacle to Progress?

At its first meeting the Task Force received guidance from the City Clerk regarding conducting business under the FL Sunshine Law. The Task Force is not comprised of city employees or elected officials, rather it is made up of a group of volunteer citizens who desire to help the city deal with traffic-related issues. In a different environment a task such as defined by our Charter would lend itself to offsite collaboration and communication among the members to gather information, subtask assignments, and periodic convening of the entire group to discuss status, direction, findings, results, recommendations, etc.

RECOMMENDATION

Council should make a proactive attempt to bring the attention of our state legislators to the hindering nature of the Sunshine Law as it is applied to volunteer groups.

The Task force is indeed following the direction set for us by the City Clerk (and by inference, City Council and the City Attorney), and we are operating under the rules of the Sunshine Law as explained to us. However, common sense and logic leads me to believe, in good conscience, that our lawmakers in Tallahassee never intended for a volunteer citizens' committee to operate so ineffectively and inefficiently. It is totally beyond comprehension to me that, for this task, members cannot communicate by telephone, email, share information, pass on helpful articles, and act in concert in subcommittee fashion. The effect of operating in this fashion is that a task that could be accomplished in weeks will take months, possibly even years to accomplish.

I want to emphasize we will continue as directed so as not to place the City in any perceived jeopardy, but I must ask that the City lead the charge on this issue, put this matter forward to our legislators, and ask for a defined opinion as to the application of the Sunshine Law to groups such as ours.

V. Accomplishments

The Task Force is making progress with a number of so-called "quick hitters" and has identified several topics for full discussion (see VI Additional Topics). To date,

1. We identified a significant number of "problem" intersections, mostly on the island. These included sight obstructions, signage issues, missing or faded painted lines, etc. The Task force discussed these issues and referred most to city staff through Mr. Lavallee for correction. This process was put in place at the first meeting of the group. Recently we added City manager and Task Force Member Disposition Matrix charts to record and track activities, referrals and progress. See Appendices B and C for samples.
2. A recommendation was made to convert the southbound left lane at the stop light at Harbor Drive and West Venice Ave. to a left-turn only lane to improve traffic flow at the light.
3. A resident noted a danger to pedestrians using the crosswalks on West Venice Ave. due to obstructed view by traffic caused by vehicle parking in the last space before a crosswalk. Recommendation was made to make these spaces available for bicycle parking only, and for the city to install bicycle stands in these spaces. The crosswalk at TJ Carney's will be used as a test.
4. The Task Force conducted many discussions regarding availability of parking in Venice. Mr. Lavallee shared the Public Parking Expansion Plan, documenting the addition of over 700 spaces in the past year. Members of the Task Force visited several private sites and spoke with property owners regarding use of their lots, to no avail. Direct observation by members at various days and times revealed less than 50% utilization at many lots. Recommendations were made for improved signage (Ex.: Parking/Beach Access sign at Brohard Park) and advertising of lot locations (Ex.: modify city map to include parking lots). All-day use of on-street parking by both postal and business employees was noted as a problem, and recommendation was made to engage parking enforcement.

5. Recognizing the biggest traffic bottlenecks are caused by the raising/lowering of our three bridges, Task Force members researched the procedures in use and the schedule for bridge opening. We recommended installation of signage listing the bridge schedule at each site, and further, that the city discuss establishing a fixed opening schedule for the Circus bridge, which currently opens on demand only.
6. Task Force members recognized the lack of public benches and shaded areas for pedestrians to use while awaiting public transportation. We recommended an inventory of existing benches and their location be pursued, and new benches added wherever public transportation stops. We also recommended that, wherever possible, plant shade trees near the benches to protect those waiting for transportation.


VI. Additional Topics

Other topics discussed and deferred (continued) include

1. Preferential bicycle parking
2. Pros/cons of parking meters
3. Off-island parking/trolley
4. Efficacy of traffic round-a-bouts
5. Pros/cons of a parking garage
6. Traffic flow
7. Use of angled parking
8. Resident proposal for a pedestrian mall

The Task Force appreciates the time taken to read this interim report and welcomes any comments or feedback.

Respectfully submitted,



Ron Fazzaloro, Chairman
Traffic Advisory Task Force

Appendix B: CITY MANAGER UPDATES

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>DISPOSITION</u>	<u>STATUS</u>
Speed Limit Reduction	Request police dept. measure speed with traffic counters	
Traffic Accident Report	Request information from police department regarding accidents within city limits/troubled intersections	
Signaled Pedestrian Crosswalk (St. Augustine)	Request to install a signaled pedestrian cross walk	
Four way stop at Nokomis Avenue and Tampa Avenue		
Relocate Sign at Althea's	Request staff relocate parking sign for more visibility	
Left Turn Only Trial on Harbor Drive and W. Venice Ave	Request trial basis and information from Engineering and Police regarding configurations.	
Postal employee parking at Ephiphany	Speak with representative at church	
Chalking tires & parking time signs	Provide input	
Number of spaces for public parking	Publish list of lots & number of spaces for public parking	
Traffic Counter Installation	Provide data	

IN PROCESS ITEMS

Three Year Trial Trolley Service	Staff already acting on topic	In-Process
Wayfinding Signage	Staff already acting on topic	In-Process
Street Parking @ Crosswalk Near TJ Carney's	Consensus to use 1 space on each side for bicycles on trial basis to improve motorist visibility	In-process
Identification of Public Parking Areas	Request county approval to install beach access sign at Brohard Park	In-process
Posting Bridge Opening Times	Request usage of digital signs	In-Process
Left Turn Signal Installation/Traffic Counters	Request FDOT install traffic counters in pavement	In-Process
Stop Light Programming	Provide timeline on additional traffic signalization study in current budget	In-process

Appendix C: BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>DISPOSITION</u>	<u>STATUS</u>
Posting Bridge Opening Times	Ms. Barbieri - Eric Krauth (building contractor) regarding regulations and bridge postings.	
Article on Parking Downtown	City Representative to contact Roger Button	
Bank and Daquiri Deck Parking	Mr. Ryan contact representative	
Develop Simple City Map	Mr. Bramble to provide Ms. O'Ryan parking locations. Mr. Andrews to provide bike rack locations.	
<u>DEFERRED ITEMS</u>		
Preferential Bicycle Parking	Deferred to later date	
Considering Parking Meters	Deferred to later date	
Off-island Parking/Trolley	Defer until pilot study complete	
Round-a-bouts	Deferred to later date	
Parking Garage Locations	Deferred to later date	
Angled Parking	Deferred to later date	
J. Kreiss Proposal for Pedestrian Mall	Deferred to later date	