

**ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY  
SPLOST 2020 CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
DRAFT MEETING MINUTES**

**January 16, 2019**

The Athens-Clarke County SPLOST 2020 Citizens Advisory Committee met on Wednesday, January 16, 2019, at 5:30 p.m. The meeting was held at 780 Barber Street, Athens, Georgia. The purpose of the meeting was review of project presentations

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** John Aitkens, Sara Beresford, Frances Berry, Carl Blount, Laura W. Carter, Dr. Cshanyse Allen, Tracy Davenport, Katrina Evans, Dr. LaKeisha Gantt, David Griffin, Thomas P. Lauth, Robert Miles, Adam Shirley, Lora Thompson, Rob Trevena, Jim Weck, Dr. Shannon Wilder, Dr. Marilyn Wolf-Ragatz and Jennifer Zwirn

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Shane Blackwell, Amy Stone, Denny Galis

**STAFF PRESENT:** Keith Sanders, SPLOST Program Administrator, Robert Hiss, ACCGOV Assistant Manager, Jackie Harrington, SPLOST Administrative Assistant, David Fluck, Central Services Director, Kent Kilpatrick, Leisure Services Director, Melanie Cochran Davis, Assistant Leisure Services Director, Drew Raessler, Director Transportation & Public Works

**WELCOME/COMMENTS**

Welcome by Chair, Dr. Shannon Wilder.

**MEETING MINUTES REVIEW & APPROVAL:**

**January 14, 2019 Minutes:** Laura Carter made a motion to approve the January 14 2019 Minutes with one correction. Tom Lauth seconded. The amended minutes were approved unanimously.

**PRESENTATIONS:**

**#18 Live Stream Pipe Replacement Program**

Drew Raessler, Director of Transportation & Public Works made the presentation.

**Questions / Answers:**

**Tracy Davenport:** When were storm water rates increased? How much revenue do you take in per year for storm water fees? Is it possible to take care of these with an increase in property taxes?

**Drew Raessler:** Storm water utility went into effect in 2005. An audit in 2014 of impervious surfaces was performed and the amount of billing may have increased but the rates did not increase. About \$4 million per year in storm water fees are collected annually. It is possible with property tax increase but the advantage of the stormwater utility which has the same advantage as SPLOST in that it is able to charge non-profits and charge them equivalent to their impact on the system.

**Laura Carter:** What do you replace the metal pipe with? What is the lifespan?

**Drew Raessler:** It depends on the project. 100+ years.

**Sara Beresford:** There is the possibility of a rate increase and M&C is considering that. Will that issue be resolved prior to our making a decision?

**Drew Raessler:** The decision would most likely be in the May/June cycle.

**Cshanyse Allen:** What kind of maintenance program is in place?

**Drew Raessler:** We are required to lay eyes on at least 20% of our system annually. Every five years we look at all of our system.

**Tom Lauth:** Who pays the stormwater fees? Does Athens have a development impact fee?

**Drew Raessler:** Everyone with developed property. There is not a development impact fee.

**Jim Weck:** Would you have to have a bond issue to cover the replacements?

**Drew Raessler:** We would try to cash flow it.

**Keith Sanders:** There will be some bonds sold on this program or it will have to be limited to six years.

**Marilyn Wolf Ragatz:** I received a postcard invitation today to a community session on community input for raising stormwater prices. Would this be talking about raising stormwater rates to cover the next few years? I'm confused about the timing of this.

**Drew Raessler:** The information you have today is unfortunately the information you will have the day of the vote. We know that M&C accepted the idea of raising the rates for live stream pipes but we don't know what the final direction will be when the May / June time period. The meetings that you are talking about are for Phase II.

### **#13 Areawide Stormwater Improvement Program**

Drew Raessler, Director of Transportation & Public Works made the presentation.

#### **Questions / Answers:**

**Tracy Davenport:** Would this be outsourced or taken care of in house?

**Drew Raessler:** This would primarily be contracted out.

**Tom Lauth:** How much to do the most needed work?

**Drew Raessler:** A 30% cut would be logical / fine.

### **#23 Regional Stormwater Facilities**

Drew Raessler, Director of Transportation & Public Works made the presentation.

#### **Questions / Answers:**

**Frances Berry:** What does stormwater as an amenity mean?

**Drew Raessler:** Rather than the traditional stormwater facility - more of a park like facility.

**Adam Shirley:** What does improved water quality mean?

**Drew Raessler:** Water gets to the streams much faster and a whole lot more of it. Improved eco system and less streambank erosion.

**Katrina Evans:** Have you studied possibly putting some of these facilities underground?

**Drew Raessler:** That is not what we have looked at. It is possible but at a lot higher cost.

**Carl Blount:** The area behind the mall would lend itself well to the West Athens Park proposal.

**Sara Beresford:** Is the request for #23 to fund 2 one acre facilities or is it to fund a group of facilities that were shown?

**Drew Raessler:** The request in front of you is for funding Willowood and the mall.

## #19 Local, State, Federal Matching Projects

Drew Raessler, Director of Transportation & Public Works made the presentation.

### Questions / Answers:

**John Aitkens:** How many miles of storm water and live stream pipe do you would use this money for?

**Drew Raessler:** There are 1,200 land miles of roadway so a ballpark guess would be 200 miles of pipe facilities. There is probably 1,000 to 1,500 of ditched facilities.

**Rob Trevena:** Do you have a fund already in place in your budget in case a grant announcement is made and you have to match it?

**Drew Raessler:** We don't.

**Tom Lauth:** I got one of those green cards as well. Is the purpose to inform people or to solicit input from folks because you are thinking about changing the assessment process?

**Drew Raessler:** It is both.

**Adam Shirley:** Of the projects you presented tonight am I hearing from you the most urgency around the first one, live stream replacement? Where would you put the other two?

**Drew Raessler:** Yes. Matching Program is nice to have and is something that helps the program be more successful. If I were asked to cut I would take more of the Regional Stormwater and then I would take 30% off of the Areawide Stormwater Improvements.

**Carl Blount:** What is the minimum amount that you could get back in terms of matching funds? Just say with \$5 million and what would the timeline be on that?

**Drew Raessler:** My experience is primarily with GDOT so it is traditionally 20% local match to 80%. Usually \$1 million could turn into \$5 million. It really depends on the particular grant source. Usually with federal and state it is 20 / 80. I would recommend that the money not be programmed in year one but be spread out or put into the later years. Staff would be challenged to go after and find those matching opportunities. I would say 5 – 7 years.

## #03 Facilities Equipment/Systems Replacement Program

David Fluck, Director of Central Services made the presentation.

### Questions / Answers:

**Frances Berry:** Will you submit an alternate proposal with a reduced budget?

**David Fluck:** I can do that. If you can fit it in at any amount – it will work.

**Rob Trevena:** Do you have an average of what repair costs are per year?

**David Fluck:** Roughly, \$1 million. Labor costs are mainly in-house.

**Katrina Evans:** Looking at your chart, you are requesting \$1.8 million this year in capital?

**David Fluck:** Yes.

## #11 Public Safety Vehicle Replacement

David Fluck, Director of Central Services made the presentation.

### Questions / Answers:

**Tracy Davenport:** I thought the Police told us during their presentation that their vehicle replacement plan was funded?

**David Fluck:** Yes, by this program that we are talking about through the general fund. It is just not funded as fast as we would like it to be. It will take a long time to catch up those 103 vehicles that are behind. This will help us get caught up.

**Katrina Evans:** I noticed you dropped the percentage of project management down to 1% and the program management is 3%. They are normally 7% and in this case they total three quarters of \$1 million dollars which is like 21 cars and I am just confused about that. This project is much different than other projects that are construction and design intensive.

**David Fluck:** When the SPLOST office reviewed the project it was discussed. That is why the percentage is lower. The practice with program management has been to spread it evenly across all projects. Those details will be tweaked and worked out by Mayor and Commission as they put together true budgets.

## #70 Jackson Street Art Walk

Helen Kuykendall, Volunteer with Athens Cultural Affairs Commission, made the presentation.

### Questions / Answers:

**David Griffin:** The \$5 million dollars includes moving that parking lot and the road?

**Helen Kuykendall:** The road stays. It will just become narrower and new paving.

**Shannon Wilder:** On the budget, is that the only funding available for the art?

**Helen Kuykendall:** One of the ideas we have is to use the money we have set aside for benches, bollards, bike racks and trash cans. We could have artists design all of those structures so we will already have an exhibit of public art when it opens without even spending money on a statue, etc. We see this as an opportunity to invite temporary art exhibits. This is not intended to buy art pieces. It is intended to be designed by artists and become a forum for art to be exhibited.

**Katrina Evans:** I understand why you chose those two blocks but why not extend in toward downtown a little bit more or to Broad Street. I have heard about this project being kicked around for a while and it was my impression that it would connect all the way to Broad Street. Is that a Phase II or is that not part of the plan?

**Helen Kuykendall:** We tried to stick to the Downtown master plan and our master plan which specifically identified between Dougherty and Clayton. That was the area indicated.

**Tom Lauth:** Has Cultural Affairs applied for any grants?

**Helen Kuykendall:** We recently did get a National Endowment for the Arts Grant which we are currently implementing at Morton Theater. We are also eying an Our Town matching funds Grant which provides funding of up to \$200,000.

**LaKeisha Gantt:** You mentioned that local artists will be used. What will that process look like to get local artists involved?

**Helen Kuykendall:** Much of the work our Commission does is solicit proposals and help to find public Art. We always encourage our local artists to apply for our projects. We have an extensive mailing list of the local artists and we generally open the art projects nationally but usually get local artist proposals. It is a blind process where we look at the art based on the merit.

**LaKeisha Gantt:** You mentioned that the playground would be relocated, can you tell me where?

**Helen Kuykendall:** The playground will be next to the rec center which is where it belongs.

**Sara Beresford:** Will fire trucks be using the road? Is that one of the reasons that closing it to vehicular traffic was not an option?

**Helen Kuykendall:** Yes. The theory is that the more use there is in a corridor, the more activity there is, the more eyes are on an area and the safer it becomes. It also seems more vital. When streets are

closed off it sometimes has a deadening effect. A lot of European Cities are like that – they all share the space and it is a dynamic way of designing streets.

**Tracy Davenport:** What will be the quality control methods to ensure that the art will last?

**Helen Kuykendall:** That is part of our review process. When we look at proposals we look at what the artist has done in the past, we review the materials and may have engineers and architects look at the proposals to be sure they are safe and done to engineering standards. We also maintain the artwork so when there is a maintenance need we use our funding and other city funding to take care of those maintenance needs.

## #66 **Five Points Pedestrian Safety Improvements**

Paul Stutz, Friends of Five Points Neighborhood Organization, made the presentation.

### Questions / Answers:

**Tracy Davenport:** Has this proposal been vetted by the Planning & Zoning?

**Paul Stutz:** We enlisted the help of Williams & Associates and they talked with the Transportation and Public Works Department.

**Buck Bacon:** Vetted and supported. These are goals that have already been established through multiple long range planning mechanisms like Envision Athens, Athens in Motion and Safe Routes to School. All of the elements of this project have been noted by Transportation & Public Works and other community involved organizations.

**Tracy Davenport:** So are you saying that projects like this are being approved and recommended in areas close to schools or just areas of a similar nature?

**Buck Bacon:** The Safe Routes to School have already recognized this area as one needing improvement for access to the school as well as Envision Athens and Athens in Motion.

**Tom Lauth:** Isn't it true that when pedestrians receive a light to walk that vehicular traffic is also allowed to make turns into those crossing lanes?

**Paul Stutz:** Sure, that is what we have now. Lots of near misses right there especially from Lumpkin onto Milledge.

**Marilyn Wolf Ragatz:** I think that cutting off the entrance into the gas station with an entrance farther down the street would be one of the biggest problem solvers. That is the most dangerous spot right there. Also, the little island that sticks out between Milledge Circle and Lumpkin.

## DISCUSSION / ALTERNATE REQUESTS

### Discussion:

## #18 **Live Stream Pipe Replacement Program**

**Katrina Evans:** Clarified that this is Drew's departmental priority – not the priority for the Committee.

**Shannon Wilder:** Project contingent on actions of M&C but should consider them on their merit and critical nature.

**Sara Beresford:** The increase in cost per person is only \$14 per year.

## #13 **Areawide Stormwater Improvement Program**

**Sarah Beresford:** Project scalable by 30%.

**David Griffin:** Main focus is flood mitigation priority wise.

**Adam Shirley:** Improved water quality.

**Tom Lauth:** Important but may be reduced by 30% - encourage alternate request.

## **#23 Regional Stormwater Facilities**

### **Questions / Answers:**

**Jim Weck:** Point of proposal is that there are so many hard surfaces built prior to any code.

**Carl Blount:** Project kills three birds with one stone. Inefficient to have impoundment areas for individual parcels when something like this is available. It incentivizes redevelopment on Atlanta Hwy. Seems that a park could be incorporated.

**Marilyn Wolf Ragatz:** Flooding problems in neighboring Huntington neighborhood may be improved.

**Sara Beresford:** Simple amenity of a walking path around the detention pond can be beautiful. May incentivize the mall redevelopment.

**Jim Weck:** Would be surprised if there is 15 acres in the area being discussed.

**Katrina Evans:** Would like to get the opinion of landscape architects and civil engineers. \$5 million per area is a lot to throw at economic development. More about creating community resource and treating the water.

**Marilyn Wolf Ragatz:** Is it something that will contribute to the betterment of the community in the next ten years? If water is clearly a big issue that must be dealt with during the next ten years, what can be done to enhance community for everyone?

**Jim Weck:** 70% of property owned by UGA and County – limited opportunities for new development and vaster opportunities for redevelopment.

## **#19 Local, State, Federal Matching**

**Tom Lauth:** Of the four projects this one is the least significant. Does not think it is a good use of SPLOST funds.

**Marilyn Wolf Ragatz:** Disagrees – likes opportunity for getting \$4 million for every \$1 million.

**Tracy Davenport:** Agrees that project is least significant.

**Carl Blount:** Thinks that a 20% return every 7 years is a no brainer. Good way to be a good steward of the money. Limited budget can be grown with this.

**Tom Lauth:** Not a good use of SPLOST funds should be General Fund.

## **#03 Facilities Equipment/Systems Replacement Program**

**Adam Shirley:** Why have these not been budgeted?

**Laura Carter:** Backlog which will not go away without some attention.

**Tracy Davenport:** Frustrated that there is not itemized listings of where money will be spent. Wants more detail.

## **#11 Public Safety Vehicle Replacement**

**Tom Lauth:** Do the commissioners have the ability to adjust the dollars when they get the project list?

**Keith Sanders:** Yes.

**Tracy Davenport:** I think that this project is funded by their budget but this money would accelerate the replacement program, right?

## #70 Jackson Street Art Walk

**David Griffin:** Believes that cost is very feasible.

**Cshanyse Allen:** Moving the playground makes so much sense so that children will not have to cross the parking lot.

**Laura Carter:** Economic engine for downtown to enhance and capitalize on what we already have.

**Sara Beresford:** Nice project. Idea of shared streets and keeping streets alive makes sense.

**LaKeisha Gantt:** Likes the playground. Wants to know the process by which local artists are used historically. How were local artists involved in the creation of art? Concern is for a diverse representation of art. (To be submitted in Q&A.)

## #66 Five Points Pedestrian Safety Improvements

**David Griffin:** Why hasn't it been fixed? Is there not a current plan to fix this dangerous area of town?

**Sara Beresford:** Stated that she personally knew that there had been a blinking crosswalk added in front of Earth Fare but seems that "band aids" have been applied. Little things have been done here and there. Lives on street that is used to avoid the intersection. Believes there are fundamental geometry problems with the intersection.

**LaKeisha Gantt:** There are other areas where kids don't have a sidewalk. Has tension here because this is an exclusive area.

## INFORMATION / NEXT MEETING DATE

- The next meeting of the committee: Wednesday, January 23, 2019 at 5:30 p.m. at the Bob Snipes Water Resource Center. Purpose: Project Presentations

## ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

The above summation is an interpretation of the items discussed and decisions reached at the above referenced meeting, not a transcript of the meeting. A digital recording of the meeting is available upon request. Anyone desiring to add to, or otherwise correct the minutes, is requested to return written comments to the SPLOST Administrator by the date of the next meeting.

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Keith D. Sanders, SPLOST Program Administrator

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