

Brenham City Council Minutes

A workshop meeting of the Brenham City Council and Washington County Commissioners was held on December 3, 2020 beginning at 10:00 a.m. in the Barnhill Center, Hasskarl Auditorium, at 111 W. Main Street, Brenham, Texas.

City of Brenham City Council Members present:

Mayor Milton Y. Tate, Jr.
Mayor Pro Tem Andrew Ebel
Councilmember Susan Cantey
Councilmember Keith Herring
Councilmember Clint Kolby
Councilmember Adonna Saunders
Councilmember Albert Wright

Members absent:

None

Washington County Commissioners present:

Judge John Durrenberger
Commissioner Kirk Hanath
Commissioner Don Koester
Commissioner Joy Fuchs
Commissioner Candice Bullock

Members absent:

None

Others present:

City Manager James Fisher, Assistant City Manager - Chief Financial Officer Carolyn Miller, Assistant City Manager, Assistant City Manager – Public Services/Utilities Donald Reese, Economic Development Director Susan Cates, Development Services Director Stephanie Doland, Public Works Director Dane Rau, Fire Chief Ricky Boeker, Director of Tourism and Marketing Jennifer Eckermann, City Secretary - Director of Administrative Services Jeana Bellinger, Project Planner Shauna Laauwe, Deputy City Secretary Karen Stack, Alton Sommerfield, and Officer Marley Mayo

Citizens present:

Doug Marino, Jim Cook, Leigh Linden, Donald Voelter, Ross McCall, Brett Smith, Ou Taking, Lois Holley, Don Holley, Roger Mireska, Brad Tegler, Al Patel, Jared Engelke, Billy Rogers, Bill Kendall, Alison Bryce, Kevin Derann, Jon Hill, Michelle Panko, and Renee Mueller

Media Present:

Mark Whitehead, KWHI

1. Call Meeting to Order

WORK SESSION

2. Discussion and Presentation of TxDOTs Proposed Improvements to the US 290/SH 36 Interchange in Brenham, Washington County, Texas

City Manager James Fisher presented this item. Fisher introduced Doug Marino, Director of Transportation Planning and Development from the Bryan District of TxDOT.

Marino discussed the design concepts currently being considered for the new US 290/SH 36 Interchange:

- Concept A – Diverging Diamond Interchange
- Concept B Revised – Central Direct Connect
- Concept C – Split Northern Connection
- Concept D – Northern Connection
- Concept E – Southern Connection

Marino briefly explained each concept and advised that none of the concepts were final, as there was still a lot of work to be done by TxDOT. Marino then opened the meeting for questions and comments by those in attendance.

The following citizens and area business owners spoke out in support of one or more of the concepts presented by TxDOT:

Mayor Tate read an e-mail he received from Larry Tegler. Tegler stated his support of Concept B-Revised as it seemed to have the least intrusive footprint for citizens and businesses. Tegler also stated his opposition to Concept E.

Jim Cook with Emerson Process Management voiced his support for Concept B-Revised. Cook stated that widening the Old Mill Creek bridge would be a good idea. Cook also stated that he could possibly support Concept D if there was some plan to connect Old Mill Creek Road with Westwood Lane to improve traffic flow.

Brett Smith, owner of Lone Star Southern Grill, Westwood Movie Theater and Horseshoe Junction stated that each concept would probably have some negative affect on his business but that he felt Concept B-Revised was the best choice. Smith also stated that, in his opinion, Concept A does not support an emergency evacuation scenario due to the traffic signals and Concepts C, D and E would be detrimental to his business and the whole Westwood area.

Bill Kendall, a citizen representing residents living along Farmers Road, stated that the residents along Farmers Road support Concept B-Revised. Kendall advised that he had collected several letters from the residents and would provide copies of the letters to City Manager Fisher for distribution to the City and County elected officials. Kendall stated that while Concept C would take the highway noise out of their neighborhood, the residents did not think that Concept would be a good fit for the community as a whole. Kendall also stated that the residents were adamantly opposed to Concept E as it would totally destroy their neighborhood. Kendall inquired about where the temporary roads would be located during the construction of the project; Marino stated that TxDOT does not have that information at this point in time.

Don Voelter, resident of Country Place Northwest Subdivision, stated that he and most of his neighbors supported Concept B Revised and that Concept D would be devastating for their neighborhood.

Michelle Panko, owner of Brenham Veterinary Hospital, stated that she is not in support of Concept B Revised due to the signage that would have to be added so that that people could easily locate the vet hospital and other businesses in the Westwood area. Panko expressed support of Concepts D and E due to the addition of a crossover at Berlin Road. Panko stated that Concept D is, in her opinion, is the concept that will best accommodate travelers into Downtown.

Commissioner Bullock asked if TxDOT could somehow combine Concept B Revised and Concept D. Bullock stated that she supports Concept B Revised but would like to add a crossover at Berlin Road, as shown on Concept D. Bullock asked if TxDOT has evaluated the costs of each concept. Marino advised that \$50 Million was the starting point for the project. If, after a final concept is chosen, cost estimates come in lower then there is a possibility that an overpass at Berlin Road could be added to the project. If there are no funds available for the crossover, then it would be the responsibility of the County and/or City to fund the crossover.

Jon Hill, owner of Appel Ford, stated that he supports Concept B Revised. Hill stated that property owners such as Brenham Veterinary Hospital and Westwood should be given lots of consideration. Hill advised that he is against Concepts E, C and D.

Carolyn Miller, citizen and Assistant City Manager/Chief Financial Officer for the City of Brenham advised that she supported Concept A because she felt it had the least impact on area business owners. Miller also stated that in her opinion a concept should not be decided solely on a rare occasion such as an evacuation for a hurricane.

Commissioner Kirk Hanath expressed his support of Concept B Revised; however, he would also be very interested in a Concept B and D combination as suggested by Commissioner Bullock. Hanath explained that a crossover at Berlin Road is badly needed and if it cannot be included as part of the TxDOT project, maybe the City and County could work together to get it done.

Councilmember Saunders asked how driveways for businesses affected by the construction and final Concept will be decided. Marino advised that TxDOT would meet with each business owner and come up with a plan that would accommodate their needs. Saunders also asked if there were accident statistics on a diverging diamond intersection like being considered for Concept A. Marino explained that a study has not been done but that conflict points are fewer in these types of intersections so the number of accidents should be less.

Michelle Panko, owner of Brenham Veterinary Hospital, stated that in her opinion Concept D does not allow for citizens and visitors to have easy access into Downtown. Panko stated that it appears to her that Concept B Revised would better accommodate travelers to Downtown.

Councilmember Keith Herring asked if TxDOT has prepared a list of parcels that will be affected by each concept. Marino advised that information has not been prepared yet. Herring also inquired about who would be responsible for utility relocation costs. Marino explained that if the utilities are in the current right-of-way, TxDOT would cover ninety percent (90%) of the relocation costs, the City/County would be responsible for the other ten percent (10%).

Councilmember Cantey asked when TxDOT would be deciding on a final concept. Marino explained that over the next few months TxDOT would review all the citizen feedback received and consult with local officials. Once a preferred concept is decided, there would be more public meetings to receive additional citizen comments.

County Commissioner Joy Fuchs stated that she supports Concept B-Revised but would be interested in looking more closely at a special combined concept of B and D, like Commissioners Bullock and Hanath mentioned earlier. Fuchs advised that she does not support Concept A.

Darrell Krebs, citizen with home in Rolling Ridge Subdivision, stated that he is in favor of Concept B Revised and would really like for TxDOT, the County and City to work on getting an overpass at Berlin Road.

City Manager James Fisher advised that the City and County will continue to meet with TxDOT to make sure that whatever concept is chosen will protect the residents and businesses as well as the Downtown area. Fisher advised that this topic will be on the City Council agenda again on December 17, 2020 for more discussion by the City Council.

The meeting was adjourned.

Milton Y. Tate, Jr.

Mayor

Jeana Bellinger, TRMC, CMC

City Secretary



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