

Winchester/Homeland Municipal Advisory Council

MEETING MINUTES

Date: August 14, 2014

Place: Winchester Community Center, 32655 Haddock Street, Winchester

Attendees:

Winchester MAC:

Dirk Meredith, Vice-Chairman

James Horecka, Secretary

Jimmy Sheldrake

Jeff Logan

Andy Domenigoni, Chairman

Ex Officio:

Opal Hellweg, Legislative Assistant for Supervisor Jeff Stone

Members of the Public

Call to Order: Call to Order by Andy Domenigoni at 6:41 PM.

Flag Salute. Introductions.

Approval of Agenda:

Motion to approve: Meredith; Second: Sheldrake. Approved, unanimously.

Approval of June Meeting Minutes:

Motion to approve: Sheldrake; Second: Logan. Approved, unanimously. (Reminder: July was dark.)

Guest: Anne Mayer, Executive Director, Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC).

Via a PowerPoint presentation, Mayer brought us up to speed on the status of the SR-79 Realignment Project. Staff also passed out four-page color flyers, illustrated with maps, snapshots, tables of milestones, partners, contact information and high-level Q&A. they also brought many maps, which were displayed on easels for public viewing. RCTC is NOT at a decision point yet; still "in process." Gave overview of timeline: Started 2002. Many routes considered. Many nixed; environmental, technical, other reasons. The Draft Environmental Report (EIR) was released in 2013 for public review, Feb thru Mar. Project over \$1 billion. In 2015, RCTC will recirculate the EIR documents, as revisions have been in response to public input. In 2016, a Record of Decision (ROD) is slated. CalTrans and RCTC have processed some 500 comments, held many meetings, open house events, etc., to communicate with the public. These have covered alignments, process, more.

Currently, there are two Preferred Alignments: Alternatvie 1b, west of the hills, and Alternate 2b, on the easterly side of the hills, through the mountain. The alignments have strived to: Preserve access north-south to Winchester Road, have an appropriate interchange at the Domenigoni Parkway, and shifting the interchange to Ranchland Road (driven by Hemet).

In September & October, 2013, reviews were made. The agencies became aware of cultural resources at the north end of Winchester, up in the hills. November 2013 through May 2014, the agencies studied refinements to reduce impacts: Cultural resources, visual impacts, lessening the cut through the hill, etc. Study resulted in changes, modifying the swoop at northwest to be farther west of the hills, slightly wider radius, with a narrowed cross section. The team displayed 3D simulations of the proposed routes, including the various alternatives, which demonstrated the distinct advantages of minimizing cuts. The former big cut would have affected existing cell towers, e.g., whereas the new swoop would not. So Build Alternate 1b-modified would have significantly less impact on the hills; in many ways, such as less cut, no impact on cell towers, less visual impact, less impact on cultural resources; it would also preserve the peak.

Overall, the project is large & complex. It will likely be phased. Phasing will be guided by traffic benefits, over the 14 mile total realignment project. Possibly as follows: Phase 1, Florida to Sanderson; Phase 2, Domenigoni Parkway to Florida; Phase 3, Sanderson to south of San Jacinto River; Phase 4, south of Newport Road to Domenigoni Parkway. RCTC brought 100 of the color flyers, and gave info for contacting them for more information: 951-787-7141 pcas-tillo@rtc.org www.sr79project.info

Public Questions then ensued. Highlights:

- Q: What about houses & properties? A: Various properties would be required. Processes would follow mandated rules. Eminent domain is a tool, yes, but usually one of the last resorts.
- Q: Will Simpson be cut off? A: No; 79 will bridge over.
- Q: What do the orange lines on the maps represent? Project area; some of the areas are not road, but other uses; for example graded slopes, drainage, etc.
- Q: How will the realignment affect land use? A: Not yet known. That is why it is important to keep moving ahead and settle on an alignment, so that communities may know, then adapt and plan based on that.
- Q: Who improves the local roads, some of which are dirt? A: City of Hemet east side; the rest would be worked out by the County and RCTC.
- Q: Are there cross sections of the highway? A: Yes. Cross Sections and simulations are in the EIR.
- Q: It appears the alignment will be near the historic Simpson House? A: Historic analysis was/is part of the EIR.
- Q: If ROW needs only affect a corner of a parcel, would all the parcel be obtained? A: Engineers would first try to avoid or minimize the impact on individual properties. Then, make incremental bites.
- Q: What is the width of the ROW? A: Varies.
- Q: Why build an expressway with interchanges rather than just signalized intersections? A: Too much traffic. Existing configuration is a labyrinth through the valley floor. Overall, the valley forms a vast cul-de-sac.
- Q: Discuss access to San Jacinto, Hemet, Winchester. A: The interchanges were demonstrated.
- Q: Why not just fix the roads we have? Don't need 79 altered. A: Comment heard; project necessary.
- Q: Will the local roads be fixed as part of the project? A: No, that is a local matter.
- Q: How long before we know? A: Alignment 1b-modified will be put forth. Process will take its course.
- Q: How long will it take to acquire property? Early buying? A: It is intended that there be no early land buying between now and 2016. One a new document is approved, the agencies are "allowed" to purchase land.
- Q: Dave Jeffers, representative of various land owners, asked: Are the maps and documents on display here tonight available? A: Yes; on the website and in the EIR.
- Q: Have some properties already been acquired? A: Yes; in 2008, certain "sure" parcels were acquired. Then the recession hit. Currently, they are NOT buying.
- Q: What is the Mid-County Parkway? A: A different project. Info available online.
- Q: Are flood issues being addressed? A: Yes, drainage is being considered.
- Q: Is the fairy shrimp issue over? A: The project has been designed to minimize or avoid impacts.
- Q: Will properties be acquired in phases? A: Most likely, parcels would be acquired in general order.
- Q: Where will the funding come from? A: Measure A; also additional from State & Federal sources. However, the EIR must be done in order to obtain the other funding.
- Q: Expressed concern that public will have a voice. A: Always, via normal processes. Stay engaged.
- Q: Will Stetson Ave be realigned before this project? A: Stetson is not an RCTC project; not known.

The presenters announced again contact info. The WHMAC and citizens thanked the presenters.

New Business:

1. Riverside County General Plan Amendment No 960:
 - Tabled to our next meeting.
2. City of Menifee: Petition for the Annexation of 1,920 acres from Briggs Rd to Scott Rd, Leon Rd to Newport Rd. Also, the proposed City of Menifee Sphere of Influence Map, which encroaches into Winchester boundaries.
 - Cindy Domenigoni advised us of this affair. An individual is petitioning LAFCO to have Menifee annex 1920 acres. She told of a proposal to create a Petition to be circulated & signed by citizens who wish to protect our boundaries. Cindy brought Petitions, with the text and maps. Noted that the time frame is very short. Placed them at back of room, for those interested. Signatures of residents &/or property owners in the area.
 - Q: Why such a short fuse? A: A questionnaire was pitched to LAFCO. Months ago?
 - Q: What may happen to projects in the pipeline, when a parcel is annexed by a city? A: The city generally accepts existing entitlements.
 - Q: Maps? A: See maps, various sources.
 - Per George Spitodors: Does not intend to have the "sphere" issue on the September 25th agenda in LAFCO.
 - Q: What is the timing for Winchester to become a city? A: Unknown; a matter of money and time.
3. Other New Business: None.

Old Business:

- A. Update – Opal Hellweg, 3rd District Legislative Assistant (Harvest Valley Community & Green Acres). Opal:
 - The Community Resources Festival is coming up, during which the Bookmobile in Winchester will be unveiled. September 27, 10 AM to 2 PM.
 - Veterans' Benefit Program: October 17th, Perris Fairgrounds. For more info, contact Olivia Barnes.
 - Opal noted that there are various opportunities open in the County. CPA, Fair Board, etc.

- On July 29th meeting, the Board of Supervisors voted to review Ordinance 348. Those interested may appear in person or on line, September 23rd. www.riversidecounty.ca.gov
 - Roads! Selected dirt roads in Winchester are slated to be improved in late August. Hurray!
 - Gregg Cowdery reminded us that the Bookmobile will be in Winchester every Wednesday, 11:30 – 12:30.
- B. Sheriff Dept:
- Sgt Robert Novak, Perris Station, brought us up to date on a few items. Listed various stats. Noted that one dispensary was identified, and that Code Enforcement cited the business. Reminded the public of contact numbers.
 - Mike Judge, Commander of the Perris Station, spoke. Told us of the Drug Team and Gang Team at that station. Reminded us that citizens are the eyes & ears of the community. Noted that the National Night Out event went well. He thanked the Domenigoni Family for their sponsorship, presenting an award to Andy Domenigoni.
- C. MWD Updates: Director Phil Paule spoke.
- Still in drought conditions. Urged all to conserve.
 - Asked if EMWD may present at the WHMAC next month.
 - Noted that Olive Ave and Salt Creek projects are underway.
- D. Highway 79 - Update on widening.
- Both phases now open for driving. Work continues: Traffic signals: Newport Rd by end of August, Keller Sept.
- E. MWD Proposed Solar Farm:
No news.
- F. Land Use:
- Downtown Core: A Contract has been let for the contract Planner to study the Downtown Core. He is now working. At the Executive Board Meeting, a check was received for \$10K toward the efforts. Winchester Town Assoc also presented a check for \$10K. Property owners and residents ponied-up another \$20,000. Wow!
 - Solar Project proposed for Grand Avenue (10 acres). Ecos Energy. The Developer is continuing to work through the process. Going to Planning Commission in September. The proponent has been to the WTA, Land Use Committee & MAC. WTA is “unopposed” to the project, but expressing some concerns about the future proliferation of such facilities, a desire to see more landscaping, and a remediation plan should the facility cease to operate (decommissioning). WTA voted. WTA is now making the recommendation to the WHMAC. The Board of the WHMAC will now pass that recommendation on to Supervisor Stone.
 - Emerald Acres Project. John Sherritt. This project is NOT within the WHMAC boundaries. It’s in Hemet sphere. The WTA recommended No Oppositions. Asked that we be kept abreast of progress. WTA voted. No opposition. The WTA presented the letter to the WHMAC, to forward to Supervisor Stone.
- G. Gangs in Winchester: Sheriff covered; see above.
- H. Not covered. Horecka suggested that this item be dropped from Agenda; covering in Sheriff: Agreed.
- I. City of Hemet: Jeff Logan reported on various items. No news that affects the WHMAC.
- J. Citizens Patrol: Bob Gibbons was not present.
- K. Marijuana Dispensaries in Winchester: Sheriff covered; see above.
- L. Other Old Business:
- Citizen Mary Plumb spoke about her idea for Shelters at Bus Stops. She did various research to pursue, and found the following: Contacted RTA, who informed here that bus shelters are a Land-Use/Code issue. If any improvements are added to a stop, then all accessibility requirements would need to be met, and improvements made: Very costly, perhaps \$45K average. Other complications, alas. Still, the WHMAC commended Mary for her efforts in following up on her proposal. This is a good example of citizens actively participating.
 - Gregg Cowdery brought up the traffic speed issue (see previous meeting). He has sent an email to Basel, to see if speed might be reduced through the downtown area, and traffic signals added at key intersections.
 - Ms Deni Horne presented, standing in for Assemblywoman Melissa Menendez. Announced that Melendez is in Session: She listed Bills that were in various states, including one that passed both houses, re sexual exploitation; one that would make it possible to place AEDs in schools; signed a resolution for the release of our Marine held in Mexico; one other bill, covering whistle-blowers, was defeated in the Senate. She also announced events: Senior Scam Stopper; Sept 4, 1-3. Veteran’s Event: Sept 13, Wildomar, 60 vendors. Noted that her office is open; field office is Murrieta City Hall. District Office: 951-894-1232. See also website.

Open Forum:

1. Bonnie: Please get a working audio system! Gregg Cowdery responded: Existing system is old & faulty. The issue is being worked on.
2. Gregg Cowdery noted that sending out 2,000 flyers for this meeting consumed the entire \$500 operating budget.

Next WMAC Meeting:

The next WMAC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 11th, 2014, 6:30 PM, at the Community Center.

Adjournment: The WMAC adjourned 8:45 PM.