

JIM THORPE BOROUGH COUNCIL
JULY 18, 2019
MINUTES

Meeting called to order at 6:30 pm in the Memorial Park Hall, 115 East Tenth Street, Jim Thorpe by President Strubinger with the pledge of allegiance and moment of silence for the men and women serving our country.

Roll Call of Members & Officials

Gregory Strubinger	Kyle Sheckler	Joanne Klitsch (a)
Thomas Highland (a)	John McGuire	Edith Lukasevich
Jay Miller	Borough Manager Sterner	
Connor Rodgers, JCP (a)	Police Chief Schatz	
Mayor Michael Sofranko	Secy. McClafferty	

Public Comment

President Strubinger said this meeting is focused on the parking study the NEPA has been working on for 2 years. We will hear about the findings and then we will have public comment and any questions that Council may have.

NEPA Parking Study Presentation

Alan Baranski he is Vice-President for Transportation Planning Services with Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance. This is a planning study that is being done for the borough. We received some funding from Penn Dot to conduct a study. They requested proposals to conduct the study for a consultant, and a steering committee to get the interest from the borough.

Joe Sciulli, Vice-President, senior operations consultant at Chance Management in Philadelphia.

Adam Supplee, Landscape Architect and Planner, he represents all the plan designs for Chance Management.

Bill Kavanagh, Architect, he specializes in design parking facilities.

Alan Baranaski said they gathered a lot of information of this past year and have observed the parking situation in the borough and the pedestrian safety matters. He said they will be giving a written report to Council in September.

Joe Sciulli said they have the project principal and founder of Chance Management, Barbara Chance along with them. He said their project goal is to solve and develop workable solutions to the parking problem, traffic congestion and pedestrian safety. There has been progress in Jim Thorpe. The Borough has added kiosks, and removed single space parking meters on Broadway. The Tourism bureau explored and added some great findings for parking out at the Mauch Chunk Lake for fall foliage. The County is presently looking to add kiosks in their parking lot, this will relieve traffic congestion on Susquehanna Street & Lehigh Avenue. The people will be able to go into the lot freely, that is a big improvement.

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Joe Sciulli said they did a lot of interviews with merchants and tourists back in December 2018. Adam's group did a time lapse photography to see how all the pedestrians were crossing where they shouldn't. They are looking at the parking supply and demand analysis. Going to show what the potential could be to improve pedestrian safety on Hazard Square and Susquehanna Street. They spoke to visitors; some have been here before and they knew where the parking was located. Some didn't know there was a parking lot.

Joe Sciulli said they spoke with merchants and they talked about the traffic and congestion in Hazard Square and how people crossing against the traffic light where there aren't any crosswalks and how other merchants park at the parking meters. They found that there are parking signs needed. He spoke about the cash transaction being taken for parking in the parking lot, this had traffic backing up. The parking kiosk will improve this. He spoke about the pedestrian pathways by the railroad tracks. He said the crosswalks are faded. He said with the pedestrian bridge being done you will be seeing more tourist coming to town.

Adam Supplee spoke about complete streets. Complete streets are a street that offers the opportunity for everything not just vehicles. Make it more comfortable for the pedestrians and bicycles. The streets need to be safe for everyone all year. They took a look at where people where actually crossing where there were no crosswalk lines painted. He spoke about Hazard Square how the traffic backs up. He said there are crosswalks missing where there should be lines. He spoke about the sidewalks not being wide enough for people to get around, not a single wheelchair could get around there. The option is to walk out into the street, there are some areas that are in need of upgrades.

Adam Supplee spoke about the drainage problem at the bottom of the hill by Hazard Square. This is the opportunity for infrastructure to help with the stormwater management. They did take video of how this would work and how they walk through the streets. You have to make sure the intersections are safe for pedestrians. They are looking at colored pavements or different types of surface that can applied. They are looking at shared zones for vehicles and bicycles. They are talking about cart way diet, narrowing the streets down, where they don't need to be so wide. This is not cutting off any lane, they add a bike lane, which reduces the lane of traffic for vehicles. There is continuity through Jim Thorpe the light matches up, the landscaping matches up. He spoke about garden accents.

Adam Supplee said they did meet with Penn Dot; they took a look at this. They worked through some of the recommendations. They want us to know where Penn Dot right-of-way is, that is curb to curb. Anything they are doing in this area, they need to make sure Penn Dot is ok with this. They can't go past step one if we don't fix the parking that they consider hazardous, that is any parking that is perpendicular to the street that requires vehicles to back out on to the street. Penn Dot does not see this safe or legal in the state of Pennsylvania. In order for them to move forward, they are looking to see those perpendicular parking spaces taken away and revised. This is one major issue. They mentioned the stronger crosswalks, just striping and colored pavement, pulling the curb away from where it is at now, narrowing the cart way, but staying in line that vehicles can pass through Hazard Square safely. This is making cars know where they are supposed to be.

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Adam Supplee said they did speak with Penn Dot about the Race Street intersection without crosswalks, this is a legal crossing for pedestrians. Anywhere there are two streets, that intersection, they are allowed to have crossing there. They recommend that we put that back.

Adam Supplee spoke about areas where cars don't park, bumping that out, so that it is clearly plain marked, to make it a shorter distance for people to cross from one side of the street to the other side, faster. He spoke about zebra lines for the crosswalks. They are looking at paving markers -crosswalk area by the Treasurer Shop, and at the other areas going up further on Broadway, this would make it safer for the pedestrians to cross the street.

Joe Sciulli spoke about people being shuttled from Hazard Square to the JT Area School District to avoid congestion. He has spoken with the gentleman from Flagstaff about the gondola coming down into town, that could be another alternative for parking.

Bill Kavanagh said what would address most of your problems with parking, if you would consider a structure parking facility, that would be on the County parking lot, placing a parking garage. He mentioned there are grants that are available to help with the construction costs.

Alan Baranski said the grants that are available are: LSA, Penn Dot Multimodal, Federal Highway money, Pocono Mountain Visitors Bureau, Pa Capital Project funds, Congestion Mitigation Air Quality and asking the State Senators and State Representative to support the project.

Public Comments

Mr. McGuire, Council member and Steering Committee member, said one of the concerns the committee had is we never talked to you guys. We are the Borough; we are not the County and we are not the State. When you talked about drainage. There is a drain in front of the Court House, it's on State property, it's on State highway, they tell us this is our problem. Race Street coming down is an intersection, we were told to take that out. To park at the high school, taking people over by shuttle it's back backed up to the bridge. We have asked the County to turn those parking spots into a turning lane to go into the parking lot.

The Planning Commission and Council have talked about the gondola and trains coming into town. We have been trying to manage the traffic in town. We have talked about shade trees, drainage problems, and garage for parking. We need your help; we will do more with someone that has some pull with the State. He said one thing we need to address is the parking issue on West Broadway, we need some answers. They are talking about this on Planning Commission level, permit parking and talking about short term rentals. There are things that we can do.

Joe Micko said the Railroad right-of-way, there are restrictions and crossings, PPL the pole at the light has been hit at Susquehanna Street & Broadway. The one part of Broadway is a business district, this does entail trucks. He doesn't know if you noticed the traffic, what the impact of putting the bump out there would have on the delivery areas. We are trying to do something for residential parking.

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Joe Micko said the residents that live on Broadway do have an issue with parking, is there a possibility of putting in parking lots on Broadway and West Broadway? Parking deck was brought up 10 to 15 years ago. Joe Micko said there are a lot of good points with parking include shaving, run off control, and we are along the river so you have to be conscientious about the impact on the natural resources. He spoke about the shuttle services, cost of electrical services for signs. He stated not all the parking is controlled by the Borough.

Mayor Sofranko said parking deck was discussed 25 to 30 years ago, we know the concerns on Broadway & West Broadway with parking. You did a great job with the report, but there is nothing in it that we don't already know. He has concerns with you narrowing Broadway. He needs a more in-depth study on how you narrow a street that is already narrow.

Adam Supplee said they are not recommending to narrow Broadway any further than what it already is. They showed the narrowing with the bump outs at the intersections, not specifically in Broadway. They are not recommending changing Broadway to parallel parking. They are not recommending to change the curb line or width on Broadway, with the exception of the intersection. He understands the concerns with the intersections and the safety. They are not looking to change Broadway into parallel parking. The only area they are looking to change is in Hazard Square, that is the specific area that Penn Dot has said this is a no start if we don't fix that area. They don't want to reduce parking.

Mayor Sofranko said the biggest issues we have are: the parking study is for downtown, there are a lot of people that park on West Broadway. It is not addressing how to put signage to direct people off of West Broadway. There are people driving up West Broadway, to the East side and the Heights area of the town and the pedestrian traffic needs to be addressed. The second area that he has not seen in the study is traffic is the number one complaint from the residents that live in this area year-round, they are tired of sitting on the Mansion House, tired of sitting on the bridge. He did not see any way to help change the flow of traffic or flow any differently than the way it currently is.

Bill Kavanagh said they will address this in the report solutions and recommendations. This report is looking at a number of different solutions. It was not a traffic impact analysis, or traffic study for level of service. What they are doing is foundational if you will put some test recommendations out there. He saw the long line going into the parking lot, he saw the pedestrians crossing the middle of the street, saw pedestrians crossing every which way in Hazard Square, and the congestion in the parking lot. The concern if there is parking at the high school, this is an information problem for the tourists where to park. There are terms to steer the people to the proper parking areas. He spoke about placing a parking garage in the County parking lot.

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Barbara Chance said the biggest hold up is there are not enough signs up, to tell people where to go, this is easy to do, and it's not a lot of money. The big thing that will help is when people don't have to stop and get the \$6.00 out to park in the lot. Not having that and people going directly into the lot and come out of the lot, they are paying while they are in there, that will make a big difference. Paying on entry is the worst way to do anything, it could have been pay when exiting. You need to get the information out to the people sooner that the lot is full and locations for them to park.

Joe Sciulli said he spoke with the County and they said the kiosks won't be operational for fall foliage festival. He spoke with Jenn Christman about where the signs should be placed. They are going to be working on the cost analysis.

Mr. Miller stated he thinks we need a Parking Authority, and we need to look at erecting a parking deck, and we need to put the handling of the traffic in the hands of the Parking Authority. His goal is to get the traffic off of Broadway. One answer is to get it into the lot earlier than what it does. That is right before the Ice Cream shop, where they come out presently have that an intake and take it right off RT 209 and off Hazard Square. You will eliminate half of the problems that we have now. You need to convince the County that we need a parking deck, through a Parking Authority, maybe this should be a joint venture. He would like to take the traffic off of Broadway and West Broadway, other than local, we know how congested this is now. Get it before it comes into town. Get it off and into the lot, with signage, a larger entrance way, across the railroad track or two, get it in there, pay when you go out.

Police Chief Schatz said when we talk about Penn Dot, if they are so concerned about pedestrians, how comes they didn't put that 4th loop on coming out of the bike shop?

Adam Supplee said they did question them, and they did say if you did that, that would change the single timing and would back traffic up. There is no reason that shouldn't be there, Penn Dot admitted this should be there.

Police Chief Schatz said people don't obey the signs, they do whatever they want. We have Police Officers there and they don't even want to do it because people don't listen. The entrance at the County lot. The kiosks aren't going to make that difference because there are people coming North bound on Rt 209 to make a left into that lot. Without having a turning lane there, that backs up all the way up to the light, across the bridge all the way up to 4th St and 5th St. Pedestrian traffic is the cause of the traffic concerns in the down town section.

Jim Gilmore, 50 W. Broadway, he is looking at the report. Some of the recommendations are quite unsafe. He lives here, traffic, people, parking, tourists, is a hobby of his. You sit on the deck at Molly Maguire's on a Saturday with him, and he will show you why most of the things you are saying are not going to work. He will show you what people do; they don't care about the signage. The unsafe thing he's looking at, you want split crossing downtown. There are only three crossings, you know why there is only three at the traffic signal? It is an unsafe condition to cross at the other one. Semi-trucks come through there.

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Jim Gilmore said they swing through; they have knocked down the pole and hit the fence how many times? You want to have people waiting there, so they can cross there. The trucks come by and people are going to get injured. People don't wait for the light, if they think they can cross they are going to cross. The cut out in front of the Court House that would be a great place for motor cycles to park. That cut out is where our parking officer parks, and court officers park there. When you put cuts out on Broadway, people will stand in them.

Adam Supplee said this is a matter of finding the right balance, doing nothing is not the solution. It is a matter of finding the right balance between pedestrians and cars. Not letting cars go as fast as possible, not letting the people do the same thing. It's a matter of finding the balance for the safety of everyone.

Jim Gilmore said you are thinking you should put a railroad crossing for the cars. Did you talk to the guy that owns the railroad?

Joe Sciulli said that is for pedestrians, not for vehicles.

Jim Gilmore asked did you talk to the guy that owns the railroad? He is not in favor of it. He is very much against it.

Adam Supplee said they are recommending pedestrian and vehicles have clear areas where they should be, not mixing pedestrians with vehicles upon the entrance to a parking lot.

Jim Gilmore said when the pedestrian bridge is opened those bikes are dumped right into the parking lot. You have tourists that don't pay attention, what is the solution for the bikes? Where are you going to put them in the parking lot? That is another hazardous situation.

Adam Supplee said they are trying to find the right balance.

Russell Renszkowski lives on W. Broadway and people are parking up there for shows at the Opera House. They don't know the parking lot is downtown to park there. He suggested the Opera House put something on their website that there is parking down town and that they have shuttle services.

Adam Supplee said people that are from out of town don't know any better, the first thing they want to do is find parking so they won't be ticketed. If there is not a good way for them to find the parking lot with signage, they won't know this. If they knew the best solution for them is to park at the train station they would go there.

Kathy Henderson, Carbon Chamber & Economics and Development, said the County parking lot, they will be putting a cart way for pedestrians and people on bicycles. This plan has been worked on by the Commissioners and has been approved.

Andrew Roberts, you mentioned about the grants, the only one he does not recognize is the air quality congestion. Is that a specific grant or is that a broad grant?

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Alan Baranski said that is a funding pot from the Federal Highway Administration.

Andrew Roberts said the crosswalks; you are allowed to cross the road anywhere a road connects. The State just did the crosswalks when they did the new paving job. The corner of the Opera House, Hill Road and Race Street they did not paint the crosswalks.

Joe Sciulli said it is not a requirement that the crosswalks are all straight. It is legal for pedestrian to cross at the intersection of streets.

Andrew Roberts said they only did them in one direction, they did not do all four at the intersection.

Adjournment

MOTION: John McGuire second Kyle Sheckler to adjourn.

YES 4

NO 0

ABSENT 3 Joanne Klitsch, Thomas Highland
Jay Miller (excused earlier)

Adjourned at 9:08

Respectfully submitted



Louise McClafferty
Borough Secretary