

**COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS**

June 30, 2021

A special meeting of the Committee on Ways and Means was held this date beginning at 4:28p.m.

**PRESENT (13)**

The Honorable John J. Tecklenburg, Mayor

Councilmember Delcioppo	District 1	Councilmember Waring	District 7
Councilmember Shealy	District 2	Councilmember Seekings	District 8
Councilmember Sakran	District 3	Councilmember Shahid	District 9
Councilmember Mitchell	District 4	Councilmember Griffin	District 10
Councilmember Brady	District 5	Councilmember Appel arrived at 4:30 p.m.	District 11
Councilmember Gregorie	District 6	Councilmember Jackson	District 12

**1. INVOCATION:**

The meeting was opened with an invocation provided by Councilmember Gregorie.

**2. EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT: APPROVAL TO SUBMIT A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$25,000,000 TO SUPPORT CONSTRUCTION OF THE 1.7-MILE BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN TRAIL ON RECLAIMED/ABANDONED RAILWAY TRACK. A \$5,000,000 MATCH IS REQUIRED. THE CITY OF CHARLESTON, AS THE GRANT APPLICANT, WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MATCH. FRIENDS OF THE LOWLINE HAVE INCLUDED A LETTER EXPLAINING THEIR INTENT TO RAISE FUNDS FOR THE MATCH. THE CITY DOES NOT HAVE FUNDING IDENTIFIED AT THIS TIME.**

Councilmember Griffin said he was a proponent of the Lowline project and thought it was a great project to revitalize a very important sector of the City. He said he was nervous about the grant application because of the \$5,000,000 match the City had to come up with. The funding source was unidentified. He understood the partnership with the Friends of the Lowline and that they were made up of successful, very well-connected individuals led by Mr. Bradford. He recalled a time where Council put money aside for the Battery Wall project but had not done so for other projects like Church Creek Drainage or in other parts of the City that did not have a funding source. The City was in a tough financial situation for the past year. As important as the Lowline project was, the characteristics were not enough of a need for the City to make financial commitments putting aside \$5,000,000. Councilmember Griffin said he wanted to make sure the vote was for support of submitting the grant application and not towards making a \$5,000,000 commitment.

Councilmember Waring said the applicant would be the City of Charleston and not the Friends of the Lowline. The City was in discussions with the Friends of the Lowline to take care of 50 percent of the match. He said to Councilmember Griffin he understood his concerns with regard to commitments made but the City was the applicant and would be able to secure the match beforehand. There were also discussions with Ms. Wharton to determine whether or not the City would be in the position if awarded

\$25,000,000 to make the match in agreement that the Friends pay 50 percent of the match. Councilmember Gregorie referred to Mayor Tecklenburg.

Mayor Tecklenburg thanked the Friends of the Lowline and re-introduced to Council Mr. Robert Mariner. Mr. Mariner was on the line for specific questions about the grant itself. He was the grant writer submitting the application on behalf of the governmental entity needs to apply for the funds. The vote tonight was only for Council to approve the submittal of the grant application. In the good grace it gets approved then, the City would commit its match of the grant. Everyone agreed that a transformational change of the Lowline would be a great, long-term project, and how the City would pay for it was always the question. Mayor Tecklenburg said if the City could get \$20,000,000 from the federal government to help make it happen, then it was a smart decision to find and raise the money in order to make the match. After the grant submittal, if the federal government approves the grant, the City will then make the decision of how much to put forward to match along with the Friends of the Lowline. There were several discussions before. There was capacity in the Tax Increment Finance District. Mayor Tecklenburg said he spoke with one of the developers currently working on a building along the Lowline near Line Street, who said they would have invested \$250,000,000. The project will generate TIF revenue for that district that the City had not included in any other calculations. The Mayor respectfully asked for Council's approval on the item as it was a wise investment for the City.

Councilmember Seekings said if the City had an office of Economic Development, they would encourage the City to set money aside to build into an area that would see huge economic development for a small investment. The project had his support. Councilmember Sakran said the project was quintessential of the public-private partnership that the City should be looking for. The developers were asked to find additional funding because the City would not be able to pay for all, and they returned with a match offer. He said the City owed it to the Friends of the Lowline, not just to prove it but to provide some additional clarity around what the City's role would be. The Friends returned with a basic request that was customary for federal grants. He said the project had his support.

Councilmember Waring said when it came to looking for additional sources to fund the Lowline, he was for it. His concern was he thought the City needed clarification on whether the grant should be received. The reason was more than just applying for the grant. It required Councilmembers to reach out to Congressmembers and members of the Senate to try and push the efforts through. He said the City did a similar process with the Pedestrian/Bike path. When things got to the "nitty-gritty," a number of the Councilmembers reached out to Katie Zimmerman and her team, Congresspeople, Senators to help push through funding. Councilmember Waring said he was uncomfortable if the awarded funds were not going to be seen by the Capital Projects Department. For example, the Spring/Fishburne Drainage project was a \$200,000,000 project. He did not know of another municipal project in the state of South Carolina that oversaw when it came to linear parks. The Capital Projects Department had multiple experiences building linear parks. The most current project was the Low Battery. Having done the high Battery and the curve, building cofferdams to hold back the river was much more complicated than building the Lowline would be. Councilmember Waring asked for transparency as to whether the project would be overseen by the Capital Projects Department. Mayor Tecklenburg said the grant was in the name of the City and would be managed as Council decide. Councilmember Waring said to his knowledge, Council never decided on spending \$25,000,000 to \$40,000,000 on a project to be managed by a private entity. He said he was proud of the projects the Capital Parks Department previously managed, like the Gailliard, the International African American Museum, and the list went on. For clarity, he asked Mayor Tecklenburg if the Capital Parks Department would manage the project, handle the bids, and have the Ad Hoc Committee review contracts as the City had done in the past. Mayor Tecklenburg said the Capital Parks Department was a great team, but to spend money on projects took the approval of City Council. The City was not doing the construction because it was working on the Low Battery Seawall under the leadership of Frank Newham, the Project Manager who had done a terrific

job. He said the City hired a company that handled the workforce, but the projects would be managed by the City. Councilmember Waring said when it was time to reach out to people in Congress, he wanted to be truthful and let them know that the bid process came through the City and not some other gray area of spending where the CFO and the head of the Legal Department are put in a position to approve contracts above the \$40,000 limit that traditionally fronts the Committee on Ways and Means.

Councilmember Appel said there were hundreds of millions of dollars being invested based on the fact there was a concept of the Lowline. There were some appealing pictures and a nice website. If the City was granted \$25,000,000 from the federal government, “who was dishing out money left and right,” for the foreseeable future, the developmental on the Lowline would skyrocket, which in return would cause the TIF to skyrocket. There will be more money for affordable housing, stormwater projects, as well as freeing up money for West Ashley. He said he was really excited about the project and could not support it more.

On a motion of Councilmember Shahid, seconded by Councilwoman Jackson, the Committee on Ways and Means voted unanimously to approve the submittal of a grant application to the U.S. Department of Transportation in the amount of \$25,000,000 to support the construction of the 1.7-mile bicycle/pedestrian trail on reclaimed/abandoned railway track.

**3. PARKS-CAPITAL PROJECTS: APPROVAL OF A SMALL CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT WITH HOWELL & HOWELL CONTRACTORS, INC. IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$50,000 FOR COMPLETION OF WORK AT SAVANNAH HIGHWAY FIRE STATION #11 TO MEET SUBSTANTIAL COMPLETION. THE CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT WILL OBLIGATE \$50,000 OF THE \$9,530,761.66 PROJECT BUDGET. THE FUNDING SOURCES FOR THIS PROJECT ARE THE INSTALLMENT PURCHASE REVENUE BOND (\$7,989,524), PROCEEDS FROM THE SALE OF REAL ESTATE (\$1,135,607.64), SURPLUS SALES (\$1,130.02) AND HOSPITALITY FUNDS (\$380,000).**

Councilmember Waring said the American Recovery Act had \$2.5 billion for the State of South Carolina that had to be decided upon and vetted out. In September or late August of 2021, the City of Columbia, Greenville, and Myrtle Beach requested specific projects. He said to his understanding, the City of Charleston did not have any requests for any specific projects. \$2.5 million could be transformative. In agreeance with Councilmember Appel, Councilmember Waring suggested applying for all available funding. He spoke with the Mayor about making the project a larger project. The Lowline was one part, but the project could be extended from the Ravenel Bridge to Morrison Drive from the Lowline, down to Huger Street, Hagood Avenue, and Fishburne to build the pedestrian bike bridge. Then the route could come across the Ashley, hit the Greenway through Krogan’s Landing at Carolina Bay for bikers to cross Highway 17, through Carolina Bay to Sanders Road, and connect with Bees Ferry Pedestrian Bikeway. He was unsure how many miles it was, but no inch of right-of-way would have to be purchased in order to achieve that path. He hoped full funding was awarded, and the project became a transportation project in addition to the linear park. He asked that a request for funding from the American Recovery Act be submitted for the project that assists with West Ashley Revitalization.

Councilmember Gregorie said there were some aging bridges like the old Ashley River bridges that could be replaced. Any lobbying done for the \$2.5 billion dollar Recovery Bill or Infrastructure Bill that could come forward later should include bridge replacements. Mayor Tecklenburg said those were Department of Transportation bridges. Councilmember Shahid said the Northbridge should be one of the priority DOT bridges to be replaced as many people have lost their lives trying to cross.

On a motion of Councilmember Shahid, seconded by Councilmember Griffin, the Committee on Ways and Means voted unanimously to approve a small construction contract with Howell & Howell

Contractors, Inc, in an amount not to exceed \$50,000 for completion of work at Savannah Highway Fire Station #11 to meet substantial completion.

There being no further business presented, the Special Committee on Ways and Means meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Velvett Simmons  
Assistant Clerk of Council