

City of Takoma Park
Takoma Junction Task Force
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 14, 2011

The City of Takoma Park Takoma Junction Task Force met on Wednesday, September 14, 2011, in the Hydrangea Room of the Takoma Park Community Center, Takoma Park.

Members Present: Billy Coulter, Kay Daniels-Cohen, James DiLuigi, Seth Grimes, Andy Kelemen, Howard Kohn, Barbara Muhlbacher, Katrina Oprisko, Lorraine Pearsall, Susan Robb, Roger Schlegel, and Jeffrey Trunzo,

Members Absent: Hailu Aichehi, Lorig Charkoudian, Steve Dubb, Megan Gallagher, Linette Lander, Dan Seligman, Jennifer Sisane, and Ellen Zavian

Staff Present: none

Others Present: J.J. Smith, Patch; Gary Geck, resident

1. Call to Order and Agenda Review

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. A quorum was present at 7:40 p.m.

No meeting minutes were distributed.

No other documents were distributed, and the draft Agenda was presented, discussed, and agreed to by consensus.

2. Meeting Minutes

No meeting minutes were available for action.

3. Monday, September 19 Meeting Presentation to Council. Discussion.

Seth Grimes suggested the following topics be presented to Council:

1. Process for evaluation of the City lot
2. Summary of the TF's outreach efforts

3. Outline of possible near-term steps for improvements
4. Creation of a slide deck of content for the Council
5. Extension of the TF to allow for presentation to the new Council in January 2012

The TF discussed this proposed content and agreed in general to this structure. The TF then discussed each of these points in more detail.

4. Re-appointment / Extension of the Task Force

Members generally accepted that extension of the TF term in official status will be necessary to engage the next Council. Options for extending the TF term were discussed, including only a limited number of current members, different configurations, and either a 60- to 120-day extension. The merits of each of the options were presented and discussed.

Members strongly supported continuing the intense focus on producing the draft written report on schedule by the end of September. Several members stated that engagement of the City staff is critical at an early juncture, and the TF generally agreed that staff should be informed as early as coherent draft written recommendations are available. TF members also stated that spending sufficient time with staff to ascertain that they fully understand the recommendations is a very important function of the TF. Upon further discussion the TF decided that asking for a 120-day extension through the end of January 2012 was the most feasible option, with the first 60-days to be working extension to finalize the draft report, and the latter 60-days for the communication and Work Sessions with the City staff and new Council.

5. Presentation to City Council

TF members contributed their perspectives on the upcoming presentation to Council on Monday, September 19. After considerable discussion, the TF members agreed that explanation of processes for the evaluation of options will be very useful to the audience at this juncture. By way of example, the traffic situation and some of the various low-cost possible interventions and more long-term interventions were discussed.

As a concept, the TF agreed to follow “process-centered” recommendations. For the current traffic signal configuration, that would mean taking these steps:

- i. Stabilize the current phasing and timing of the signals, and record this configuration accurately.
- ii. Measure the traffic, pedestrian, and cyclist impacts given the stabilized situation. This can involve ‘expert consultation’ to get accurate current data.

- iii. Decide which scenario evaluations merit consideration. Then conduct the simulations necessary to obtain 'decision support' information about the expected and unexpected impacts of the multitude of possible variations to the Junction.

The TF unanimously agreed that a strategy to improve and solidify the relationship between City staff and SHA is the most critical element to pursuing all improvements to traffic and pedestrian management at the Junction. This strategy includes internal communication between departments at the City level. The inability to obtain information from SHA is a substantial impediment to maintaining the dialog necessary to pursuing any possible improvements to the area. Inclusion of the State Delegation is recommended. This point about communication with SHA will be emphasized at the September 19 presentation.

6. Content of Report to City Council – City Lot

The TF discussed what content about the City lot should be presented to Council on Monday, September 19. There was extensive discussion of how to advance an evaluation of the environmental condition of the site. It was conveyed through the discussions with the developers, that the best use of the property, and the value of the land, are currently difficult to assess without knowing as precisely as possible the extent of previous usage and associated possible environmental impacts.

The TF discussed how to reach consensus on a recommendation about the process to determine the present environmental condition of the area. It was determined that the engagement of experts would be necessary to formulate a rational plan. Another process-centered recommendation on this topic will be provided by the TF in the final report.

For the September 19 presentation, the TF agreed to present options for evaluating the impacts of the current dual entrances to the lot, suggesting a process for a 'non-invasive' evaluation of the environmental status (by commencing with a records review, aerial photography search, and other investigations), as well as other near-term possible improvements to accommodate multi-purpose usage to enhance the overall livability and vitality of the Junction.

7. Content of Report to City Council – Traffic

The TF discussed what content about traffic should be presented to Council on Monday, September 19. Katrina led the discussion of traffic options which are included in the current draft report.

The TF discussed possible recommendations which could qualify as ‘near-term’ or ‘low cost’ to present to Council now. For the September 19 presentation, the TF agreed to present the following options:

- i. Change Sycamore Avenue to a one-way street for incoming traffic from Ethan Allen Avenue
- ii. Permit only right turns into and out of Sycamore Avenue
- iii. Adjust pavement markings to allow the left lane of southbound Carroll Avenue to turn right OR turn left
- iv. Incorporate a left-turn lane on eastbound Carroll Avenue at the intersection with Philadelphia Avenue in front of the fire station
- v. Create a signalized crosswalk from Grant Avenue to the City lot

Next Topics

The next TF meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 27, at 7:30 p.m., in the Lilac Room of the Community Center. The draft report will be circulated prior to this meeting. Identification of any gaps and further editorial reviews will commence immediately thereafter.

An additional TF meeting will be scheduled for early October to complete the review of the draft report and discuss strategy for the engagement of City staff during the interim period before meeting with the new Council in January.

The TF website is www.takomajunction.org

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:25 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeff Trunzo, Secretary

Roger Schlegel, Secretary