**UNIVERSITY CITY COUNCIL**

**STUDY SESSION**

5th Floor of City Hall

6801 Delmar

**January 23, 2017**

**5:30 p.m.**

1. **MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

The City Council Study Session was held in the Council Chambers on the fifth floor of City Hall, on Monday, January 23, 2017. Mayor Shelley Welsch called the Study Session to order at 5:30 p.m. In addition to the Mayor, the following members of Council were present:

 Councilmember Rod Jennings; *(Arrived at 5:35 p.m.)*

 Councilmember Paulette Carr Councilmember Steven McMahon

 Councilmember Terry Crow

 Councilmember Michael Glickert

 Councilmember Bwayne Smotherson

Also in attendance was Acting City Manager, Charles Adams and the Director of Public Works and Parks, Sinan Alpaslan.

**AGENDA**

1. Additions to the draft agenda of Regular Council meeting

Hearing no requests to amend the agenda, Mayor Welsch proceeded as follows:

1. **Washington University Pedestrian Bridge/Ramp Proposal Forest Park on Greenway South**

Mr. Adams stated that the Department of Public Works and Parks is here tonight to provide Council with an update on Washington University's improvements to the pedestrian ramp located approximately, at the 6600 block of Forest Park Parkway.

Sinan Alpaslan, Director of Public Works and Parks, stated that the proposal before Council is to replace the pedestrian bridge over Forest Park Parkway, and connect the southern end of Greenway South to the Danforth Campus. The proposal has received public input; been reviewed by several of the City's Commissions, and comes before Council tonight for approval of the easement needed to access a portion of the City-owned parkland known as Greenway South.

Rose Windmiller, Associate Vice Chancellor of Government Community Relations at Washington University, introduced several individuals in attendance at tonight's meeting, who, along with herself, can answer any questions Council may have.

Ms. Windmiller stated the existing pedestrian bridge was rebuilt in 2006, after the construction of the Cross-County Metro-Link. The University has maintained the bridge for the past eleven years, and it is now in need of repair. The proposed plan will reconstruct the bridge and the ramp that leads to the bridge; a portion of which is located on U City property, with the objective of improving safety for all users.

**Proposed Improvements:**

* Bryan Hall; located on the south portion of the bridge
* Separate bike and pedestrian pathways
* Accessibility for all user groups
* Reduction of cyclist speeds
* Aesthetics
* Minimum design standards; *(Currently the existing bridge services 6,000 trips annually)*

**Project Description:**

* Widen the bridge from its current 8 1/2 feet to 18 feet
* Shorten the ramp by 60 feet to eliminate neighborhood intrusion
* Curb separated lanes for pedestrians/cyclists; *(8 feet for pedestrians; 10 feet for cyclists)*
* Ramp switch-back or elbow to reduce cyclist's speed
* Irrigation, landscaping, hardscaping and walkways for the public space adjacent to the ramp

Mark Glenn, Chief of Campus Police, provided Council with the proposed safety and security enhancements.

* Separation of bikes from pedestrians
* Enhanced lighting from the campus throughout walkway
* Additional CCTV surveillance cameras located on the bridge, stairwell and public space
* Built-in blue light phones with direct connection to campus and U City police departments
* Three additional campus officers

Mr. Glenn stated in the past, only one security officer was assigned to cover the walkway from the campus to Delmar. His department is now in the process of hiring additional officers to ensure they are in place by the time the bridge opens. Two officers will be assigned to areas where there is a high concentration of foot traffic, and a third officer will be assigned to cover the evening hours. Any overlap will be provided by U City police officers.

Mayor Welsch stated that until she read the information contained in her packet, she was unaware of any problems associated with bicyclists and pedestrians. She then asked Mr. Glenn if he would provide Council with details about the type of problems his department had experienced? Mr. Glenn stated the vast majority of these incidents are associated with the conflict created by this mixed-use population, especially in the area where the ramp goes downhill. It's a straight shot where cyclists build up speed, and that creates a lot of safety issues. And in spite of the fact that extra patrols have been placed in the area and cautions regarding bike safety have been clearly posted, these problems still exists. Mayor Welsch asked if any of these actions had resulted in people getting hurt? Mr. Glenn stated that all of his information had been obtained through various outside sources, like Washington University's Residential Life Program, and not from reports written by his department.

Councilmember Glickert asked how many blue light phones would be installed, and if they would be accessible to everyone? Mr. Glenn stated that everyone would have access to the phones, which will be located by the elbow depicted on the site plan, on the ramp, near the bottom of the ramp, and at Bryan Hall.

Mayor Welsch asked if there would be two officers on the walkway at all times? Mr. Glenn stated there would be two security officers and a police officer overlap.

Councilmember Glickert questioned why the green space depicted on the plan was designated for pedestrians? Frank Freeman, Project Manager for Washington University, stated the portion identified by Councilmember Glickert houses a ramp that provides access for people with strollers, et cetera. And with respect to the number of cameras, there will be four cameras located to the north and south; a camera that looks over a portion of the bridge, and three cameras on the other end of the bridge.

Mayor Welsch stated one of her constituents had expressed concerns about the safety of the curb between the pedestrian and the bike lanes. Does this represent a state-of-the-art design for these types of shared facilities? Mr. Freeman stated it is similar to what they have seen in other situations, which is very much like a curb on the street that bicyclists ride next to. Mayor Welsch asked if the curb would be painted? Mr. Freeman stated that the color of the pavement for both lanes would be different; one darker than the other.

Mayor Welsch asked if someone could indicate where the easement in question was located on the plan? Ms. Windmiller asked if they could finish the remainder of their presentation and then return to this question? Mayor Welsch agreed that they could. Ms. Windmiller stated that the wider lane for bicycles, along with the different aggregates, meet the current safety standards associated with grade separation.

Ted Spade, Landscape Architect for SWT Design**,** stated what is currently before Council is an analysis of the existing trees performed by an urban forester. A lot of the trees are in fair to poor condition and consist mainly of Sweet Gum.

**Proposed Landscape Improvements:**

* 16 trees removed
* 43 native trees added to produce seasonal color; (*Ornamental trees will be planted around power lines)*
* Increase biodiversity by adding a variety of 3-inch calipers
* Soil remediation; addition of prepared soil mix to stimulate vibrate growth, permeate water, and produce a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere
* Ground covers required by MSD to facilitate stormwater mitigation
* Automatic irrigation system; both drip and sprays

Councilmember Crow questioned whether this proposal had been reviewed and voted on by the Urban Forestry Commission? Mr. Spade responded that it had.

Mr. Alpaslan informed Councilmember Crow that the proposal had been reviewed by three of the City's Commissions.

Councilmember Crow questioned whether the trees located on the east side of the project represented the best possible option? Mr. Spade stated that he could not plant canopy trees at that location because of Ameren's tree trimming policy, which is not good for a tree's structural stability. So, the best option was to use lower ornamental trees that would not impact the power lines.

Councilmember Carr stated that the issue of runoff is near and dear to her heart. And since residents claim that the current trees in this area absorbs runoff and prevents their properties from flooding, she is a little concerned about the ornamental trees being used to replace the existing trees since they do not offer the same root structure. So, how would the University address this issue, in the event it does become a problem? Mr. Spade stated that there is going to be no net gain of impervious surface. That said, Councilmember Carr's point is well taken with respect to large, healthy, mature trees, having the ability to absorb gallons of water. However, the combination of new soil; versus the old compacted soil; new trees and ground cover, will certainly result in increased improvements as it relates to stormwater management. He agreed that the smaller trees would require more maintenance. But, since it is the University's desire for this project to meet campus standards in terms of aesthetics, they are fully committed to perform the corrective pruning and trimming needed to properly maintain these trees. And if a tree dies or reaches its life capacity, it will be replaced.

Ms. Windmiller stated that although the Associate General Counsel will likely have something to add, she is confident that the University is ardent about maintaining good relationships with its neighbors. And if they are deemed responsible for the creation of additional flooding as a result of this new plan, they will absorb their portion of the costs and not leave residents holding the bag.

Tom Blackwell, Associate General Counsel for Washington University, added that although the specifics on how complaints would be addressed might vary, the University would have a legal obligation to do something about it, based on their promise to maintain the property. Under Missouri Law, an entity that maintains a property is considered to be the owner of that property. So, if one owner does something that causes water to run off onto another person's property, the owner of that property is held responsible.

Ms. Windmiller asked Mr. Freeman if there was anything about the new piping system that would affect the runoff? Mr. Freeman stated the water that falls on the bridge; which will now be almost twice as wide, will be collected and directed to a sewer. The water that falls on the ground will percolate into the ground much more readily than it does currently.

Councilmember Carr asked if the City had established a precedent which allowed outside entities to landscape and maintain its parks? Mr. Alpaslan stated that excluding U City in Bloom, there was no precedent. Councilmember Carr stated the City's Charter establishes a protection for its parks that states, *"The City may not sell, lease or otherwise give any of its parkland without a vote of the people"*. So, while she does think that the overall landscape design is lovely, her assumption is that at some point this regulation will have to be addressed.

Mayor Welsch advised Mr. Adams that before Council moves forward staff would have to look at the Charter concerns. Which as she understands the amendment, is that if the City wants to dispose of an acre or more of parkland property it has to go to the vote of the people.

Councilmember Glickert stated based on his understanding, it's less than an acre; i.e. the pocket park on Clemons and Westgate.

Ms. Windmiller stated although she is not familiar with the language contained in the City's Charter with respect to easements, this proposal only refers to utilization of the City's easement and not the purchase of or changing of hands. The landscaping, safety, and security are affixed to the easement and the University has offered to take care of the property once the easement is in place. However, she is sure the University would be open to negotiations if a situation arises where the City no longer feels it is appropriate for the University to maintain the property.

Mayor Welsch asked Ms. Windmiller what the south side of the bridge would look like? Ms. Windmiller stated the entire bridge is being rebuilt, and the curb separated lanes will extend across the bridge into a new plaza located next to Bryan Hall. The plaza opens up into an attractive area for pedestrians and cyclists to connect to the University, and eventually to the bike path on campus. Mayor Welsch asked if it was correct that the current path located at the end of the ramp on the U City side would not be widened? Ms. Windmiller stated that was correct. Concerns expressed by neighbors indicated a desire for the sidewalk to be maintained at its current width of 8 1/2 feet.

Councilmember McMahon asked what would happen if the University was unable to gain access to the easement? Ms. Windmiller stated while they would proceed with renovating the bridge, without approval to implement the proposed improvements, the bridge would only be extended up to the 8 1/2 foot existing ramp located to the north of the Metro-Link tracks.

Mayor Welsch asked if someone could indicate where the easement in question was located on the plan? Mr. Blackwell stated that the easement was indicated by the shaded area. Mayor Welsch asked if the easement was located by the curve? Mr. Blackwell stated the entire colored area on the sketch depicting the ramp, represented the easement. Mayor Welsch questioned whether the City had provided an easement for the current walkway? Mr. Blackwell stated the University is not aware of any easement or legal documents to that effect. He stated that a title search was conducted of the area to determine who might have interest in the property, which did not disclose anything related to the ramp. Mr. Blackwell presented a sketch adapted from that title search illustrating a cross-hatched area of the easement consisting of everything U City owns on both sides of the private property. The southern boundary is where the Metro-Link right-of-way runs north beyond where the ramp terminates.

Ms. Windmiller stated the last thing she wanted to discuss is construction planning and management.

* Construction for both the bridge and ramp will take approximately 4 months.
* If the easement is granted, staging of the replacement will occur in front of the Academy building and Ames Place.
* Two additional easements impact this project; Metro-Link and Ameren. The University has been working to subordinate these easements and has had good luck with both of entities.
* One 50 hour weekend of severe construction is anticipated when the bridge is replaced.
* Metro-Link would be closed; the University is working with them to determine a practical date.
* Forest Park Parkway will be closed in both directions.
* Alternative routes for bridge users will be developed during construction, specifically as it relates to U City, Ames Place and Great Rivers Greenway.

Ms. Windmiller stated she imagines that there would be a considerable amount of nightly noise during that 50 hour period of construction. Councilmember Crow asked about putting residents in hotels for this period. Ms. Windmiller did not directly respond, but stated that they would try to mitigate it (the impact on residents) as much as possible. But, the reason she brought this up, is because this aspect of the construction cannot be done any other way; even if the ramp as configured does not move forward.

Mayor Welsch asked what had caused the current condition of the bridge? Ms. Windmiller stated the original bridge was built by the Cross-County Metro-Link Project and not the University. But as she mentioned earlier, 600,000 is the approximate count for users of that bridge, which is much higher than the University or Metro anticipated when it was built. So, a lot of use, as well as the fact that it probably was not built to the standards adopted by the University. Mayor Welsch stated that you could begin to see signs of deterioration within a year or so after the bridge was erected.

Councilmember Crow questioned why the letter from a resident dated January 12th, was just making its way to Council? Mayor Welsch stated that the letter had been on her desk this morning, so it probably came in on Friday.

Councilmember Glickert stated that the individual who wrote this letter was currently in Europe, and has been there for some time.

Councilmember Glickert asked Ms. Windmiller if the University had exchanged any dialogue with the two private subdivision's residents or trustees? Ms. Windmiller stated she was going to ask Cheryl to answer this question because she deals with all of the neighborhood issues and arranged the neighborhood meetings. She noted that comments from those meetings had been included in Council's packet.

Cheryl Adelstein, Government Community Relations for Washington University, stated they had met with agents from Ames Place and Parkview, and both entities had placed a notice about the project in their newsletters. Ames Place and Parkview were supportive of the project but did not feel as though they had the authority to take a position.

A public meeting was held in April of last year where approximately 35 people were in attendance. At that point, the University was looking at two options; one to include the elbow feature, and the other to just widen the ramp. Feedback from that meeting indicated that the majority preferred the option with the elbow because it involved a traffic calming device to slow down and separate the cyclists. She stated while there are certainly some folks that were not interested in the project, the majority were supportive.

Presentations were also made to U City's Parks, Urban Forestry, and Green Practices Commissions.

Councilmember Smotherson asked for more details on the alternative routes and how the University planned to accommodate the additional traffic being placed on those routes? Ms. Windmiller stated the alternative routes were still being discussed and did not want to get into any details about this issue until they were further along in the process. However, she does not believe there will be the same magnitude of crossings during the summer months when the bridge will be closed.

Ms. Adelstein stated the University does not provide neighborhood housing for their students during the summer, so that would reduce some of the traffic. They will be working with GRG, U City, and the City of St. Louis, to establish signage on Delmar that prohibits individuals from coming down the walkway. And will also be working with Ames Place to get pedestrians, as well as cyclists, across Kingsbury to Big Bend, where they can walk across safely or utilize the newly installed off-street cycling path. People living in The Lofts will be detoured to Skinker because what they really want to avoid is what they call the "Frogger," located at Trinity, which is very dangerous. Councilmember Smotherson stated he was especially concerned with adding additional pedestrians and cyclists to Skinker, which is already congested. Ms. Adelstein informed Councilmember Smotherson that over the next couple of years, the University will be making numerous improvements to the intersection of Skinker and Forest Park Parkway, as part of its East-End Project.

Ms. Windmiller stated the University shares Council's concerns about safety at Big Bend, Skinker, and Forest Park, and the one saving grace is that Forest Park will be closed; as it is now, for several months. So this has greatly reduced the vehicular traffic, which is another plus for this project.

Mr. Alpaslan asked Ms. Windmiller if she would provide additional information about the lighting being proposed for the area under the bridge owned by U City?Mr. Freeman stated that the University is working with project planners to ensure there is ample lighting to eliminate hiding spots and permit clear and easy access to images by the CCTV. Downward based lighting will be used to prevent flooding into adjacent areas, and provide a more concentrated focus on areas underneath the bridge. He stated that the lighting would be evaluated once it is installed, and adjustments would be made to increase lighting where needed.

1. **Adjournment**

Hearing no additional questions or comments, Mayor Welsch thanked Ms. Windmiller for her presentation and adjourned the Study Session at 6:20 p.m.