

Work Session

The Mayor and City Council of the City of Norfolk, Nebraska, held a work session by teleconference, Pursuant to Executive Order No. 20-03 Coronavirus Public Meetings Requirement Limited Waiver, on Monday, April 6, 2020, beginning at 12:00 p.m.

Mayor Josh Moenning called the meeting to order.

Roll call found the following present: Mayor Josh Moenning and Councilmembers Shane Clausen, Cory Granquist, Gary L. Jackson, Jim Lange, Rob Merrill, Thad Murren, Dick Pfeil, and Fred Wiebelhaus. Absent: None.

Staff members present were City Administrator Andy Colvin, City Clerk Brianna Duerst, City Attorney Danielle Myers-Noelle, Public Works Director Steven Rames, IT Director Jim McKenzie, Risk Manager Lyle Lutt, Public Safety Director Shane Weidner and Police Chief Don Miller.

1st Street and Braasch intersection design

Public Works Director Steven Rames introduced the discussion on 1st Street and Braasch Avenue and said a decision needs to be made on how to terminate Braasch Avenue and 1st Street. Rames said he hopes to have a decision in order to limit any removal of new construction in the future. A roundabout at 1st Street and Braasch Avenue would be single lane.

Mike Malone, JEO, said the daily volume on 1st Street is around 12,000 vehicles. Approximately 1,000 vehicles per hour during peak hours, and 500-800 vehicles per hour the remaining hours. Malone discussed the railroad crossing study that showed 6 trains per day, with 4 of those between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Each train had approximately 22 cars and lasted about 2 minutes. The simulation in the agenda accounts for a 2-minute delay.

Councilmembers asked how far north on 1st Street would be two lanes. Rames said the single lanes would not need to go past Johnson Park if wanted, but could go all the way to Georgia Avenue. Rames said the road diet could be painted and tested, and could go back to four lanes in the future if two lanes and designated turn lane did not work, but noted that was not a decision that needed to be made this day.

Malone compared 13th Street in Lincoln that has slightly higher traffic counts that recently had a road diet completed that has been well received.

Clausen asked when 1st Street was expanded from one to two lanes.

Wiebelhaus said he believed 1st street was expanded sometime in the mid 1990's. Wiebelhaus asked if the roundabout would be built this year.

Rames said the roundabout wouldn't be constructed until 2021-2022, but we need to know how to terminate Braasch reconstruction this year to save on future costs. Rames explained that the geometry of a roundabout is different and that not knowing could have an impact of \$30,000-\$40,000 in demolition costs.

Moenning clarified that the roundabout is not a part of the Braasch reconstruction, but part of the Johnson Park project.

Granquist expressed concerns over additional traffic that the redevelopment of the old Alco building may bring to the area and the effects of a single lane roundabout.

Clausen said residents of Ward 4 use 1st Street to get to the middle school and high school and has concerns of slowing this traffic down.

Rames discussed why a roundabout was proposed and the long-term goal of the road diet. Rames said the primary conflict on 1st Street is left-turn movement, and based on the traffic counts, a center turn lane will handle the conflict.

Malone said that the inside lane of a four lane road, by default, functions more like a turn lane during peak traffic and there is an increase in rear-end and sideswipe accidents. Malone also said four lane undivided roads are the most unsafe and are not designed as frequently today as they were in the 1990's.

Councilmembers expressed concerns with explaining a road diet to the public without a clear vision for the future and discussed the Riverfront/Johnson Park project, timeline and how it ties into the Braasch Avenue reconstruction project.

Moenning stressed the importance of getting the word out to the public of the long term plans of the projects in this area of town.

Lange moved, seconded by Merrill to proceed with the roundabout design as presented at 1st Street and Braasch Avenue.

Roll call: Ayes: Clausen, Jackson, Lange, Merrill, Murrn, Pfeil and Wiebelhaus. Nays: Granquist. Motion carried.

Benjamin Avenue and Riverside Boulevard intersection design

Public Works Director Steven Rames reviewed the process with stakeholder and public meetings for the design of the intersection at Benjamin Avenue and Riverside Boulevard and said we are at a point where a decision needs to be made. Rames said the cost of a roundabout with right of way acquisition would be in the \$400,000-\$450,000 range. A traditional lighted intersection would cost less and the other money could be used elsewhere in the corridor.

Merrill asked about the crash rate percentages specific to the Benjamin Avenue and Riverside Boulevard intersection. Lange said the majority of crashes occur near the intersection at business entrances closely east and west of the intersection and noted that those entrances disappear with both the proposed designs.

Rames discussed the center turn lane and modernized signals that will improve safety in and around the intersection.

Pfeil asked about the cost savings of the traditional intersection.

Merrill expressed concern with a roundabout, which would require purchasing land from Bank First, and feels a roundabout simply does not fit.

Moenning said he feels roundabouts are a better option, but do not always fit in every instance. Property acquisition is a reality of this project that may make a roundabout not feasible as it could increase costs and delay the project.

Lange said the project needs to move forward and could not support a roundabout at this location.

Granquist moved, seconded by Wiebelhaus to proceed with a traditional intersection at Benjamin Avenue and Riverside Boulevard.

Clausen asked about the design of the five-lane road from the area of the YMCA east. Rames said those conversations still need to happen.

Merrill clarified that the agenda item only speaks to the intersection at Benjamin Avenue and Riverside Boulevard and the motion also only includes a decision on the intersection.

Roll call: Ayes: Clausen, Granquist, Jackson, Lange, Merrill, Murn, Pfeil and Wiebelhaus.
Nays: None. Motion carried.

There being no further business, the Mayor adjourned the meeting at 1:52 p.m.

Josh Moenning
Mayor

ATTEST:

Brianna Duerst
City Clerk

(S E A L)