

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY BOARD
COMMITTEE MINUTES

OLYMPIAN-LINCOLN SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Tuesday, October 28, 2010

Highway Department Building, Meeting Room

1605 East Main Street, Urbana

11:30 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Lorraine Cowart, Greg Knott, Ralph Langenheim, Alan Nudo
C. Pius Weibel (Chair)

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Jeff Blue (County Engineer), Kat Bork (Administrative Assistant), Deb Busey (County Administrator), Alan Kurtz (County Board Member), Mike Munson (Urbana Mayor Chief of Staff)

CALL TO ORDER

Weibel called the meeting to order at 11:31 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Bork called the roll. Cowart, Knott, Langenheim, Nudo, and Weibel were present at the time of roll call, establishing the presence of a quorum.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by Knott to approve the October 5, 2010 minutes; seconded by Nudo. **Motion carried with unanimous support.**

APPROVAL OF AGENDA/ADDENDUM

MOTION by Knott to approve the agenda; seconded by Cowart. Weibel announced Blue had requested to switch the order of agenda items 7 and 8. There was no objection from the committee. **Motion carried with unanimous support.**

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Laura Huth of Do Good Consulting said she would forego comments now if she would be allowed to speak later in the meeting as was done at the last meeting. Weibel said it was her decision, he could not say what would happen later in the meeting. Huth asked the committee that she be allowed to participate in its discussions. Langenheim objected to her request. Weibel said public participation was not the time for discussion.

COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications.

REPORT FROM COUNTY ENGINEER ON PROPERTY AVAILABILITY

Weibel said Blue had indicated he would like to go into closed session on this item.

MOTION by Nudo to enter into closed session for the purpose of the lease or purchase of real property for the use of the public body and for the purpose of discussing whether particular parcels should be acquired. He further moved the following individuals remain present: the County Engineer, the County Administrator, the Recording Secretary, and County Board members. The motion was seconded by Cowart. **Motion carried with a roll call of 5 to 0.** Cowart, Knott, Langenheim, Nudo, and Weibel voted in favor of the motion. Weibel asked anyone not named in the motion to exit the room. The committee entered into closed session at 11:34 a.m. and resumed open session at 11:45 a.m. The general public was informed they could re-enter the room.

Weibel announced that Blue had informed the committee that Ms. Squire's house was not for sale. Nudo suggested keeping the Lincoln Avenue attachment strictly on the Squire property to avoid inconveniencing other families. It appears to him a hybrid route could be built between the Squire property and another property. Blue pointed out there was another home the road would go through if moved. Weibel explained Nudo was suggesting moving the alignment to the north and west to keep it on the Squire property. Weibel noted the road would then cross the tributary twice and require another bridge.

Blue spoke about the right-of-way and how it relates to the document Laura Huth presented to the committee at the last meeting. He provided a list of the impact of Lincoln Avenue on property owners. He went through the farmland property and clients' homes that were represented on Huth's document. The estimated study right-of-way was prepared by Hanson Engineering. Using Huth's system of numbering the properties, Blue explained the Lincoln Avenue would have no impact at all on L1-Ziegler Farm. Two of three owners of L2-Squire Farm are in favor of the construction project. Blue has a document he received from the City of Urbana that show the preliminary plat from Berns Clancy for the possible subdivision. The plat shows the alignment of the proposed Lincoln Avenue alignment on the L3 property-Cope Kalantzis. There was clear knowledge that Lincoln Avenue may someday cut across that property. He had a diagram given to the Cope family from the City of Urbana and it does show the proposed right-of-way acquisition through the northwest corner of the property. Nudo asked about the owners' new home. Blue explained it was off the picture, farther to the south. The Cope family was informed of the proposed Lincoln Avenue right-of-way prior to their acquisition of that property and building a home there. The new road follows the existing alignment on L4-Grierson Farm and the right-of-way lines were held on the east side of old Lincoln Avenue, so there will be no land impact on the Grierson Farm. The L5-Jarrell-Cooperband-Prairie Fruit Farms will have no impact because it is north of the proposed Olympian Drive. There will be no impact to the H1-Bill & Virginia Ziegler, H2-Mark & Cindy Ziegler, H3-Gene & Mary Ziegler, H4-Wes Jarrell & Leslie Cooperband, H5-Steve & Kathy Dyson, H6-Howard & Margaret Erlandson & Steve Garrison, H7-Dave & Gayle McKay, H8-Bill Cope & Mary Kalantzis, and H9 Harold & Janet Scharlau homeowners. The new road cuts across the northwest corner of the H10-Joe Behrends & Mary Rose

Atkinson property. It was Blue's understanding that Joe Behrends and Mary Rose Atkinson were informed how the alignment of Lincoln Avenue would take off the northwest piece of their acreage prior to the building of their house. Beyond those owners who are represented by Do Good Consulting, there are people represented on the right-of-way map who are not represented in the impacts of Olympian Drive study. MACC of Illinois Inc. is a willing seller to this project. Blue has talked to Bill Gray about the owners shown on the map who are not represented by Do Good Consulting and whether the City had any conversations with those owners. Mr. Gray spoke with William Gayer who had purchased his land recently with the hope to hunt deer there. He purchased the property not knowing of the Lincoln Avenue alignment, but it was Mr. Gray's opinion that Mr. Gayer would be amenable to a sell and swap for land elsewhere that he could hunt deer on. Larry Corum was not opposed to Project A or X, which is Lincoln Avenue and Olympian Drive. Mr. Gray had not been able to have a conversation with Carol Dison, but only 1/10 of an acre of her property is impacted. These are the people who are land impacted by the proposed Lincoln Avenue alignment. Some owners are opposed to the project and there are a number of owners who are not opposed to the project or had information about it prior to purchasing property or building homes there. He was reporting on this because the committee wanted to look at the property availability along Lincoln Avenue.

Kurtz was not happy affecting all of those properties. They were talking about possible litigation from different people and he would prefer an independent impact study and a needs-based study if they were moving forward with Lincoln Avenue. Kurtz wanted to find a way to swoop around the second option and not impact the house and still come closer west. This would move the road east of all the properties to go through one person's property. Blue explained one of the biggest impacts considered by FHWA and IDOT for a road project is whether it impacts someone's home, specifically the structure of the home. Blue pointed out where the houses were on the map. Kurtz suggested cutting between the two houses. Blue said two other houses would be impacted in lieu of impacting the two homes that were impacted before. Kurtz said at least the alternative were not impacting a whole bunch more homes and it was just impacting two different homes. Nudo noted less of Cope's property would be used. Kurtz said that is a stumbling block. Nudo said they kept coming back to the approved alignment and the votes are not there on the County Board to get this done. He did not know why they would not consider moving the road. Blue was told by Hanson Engineering that one of the reasons the road was taken farther to the west was because there is a lot of floodplain. To move the road farther to the west would create an environmental impact on a floodplain, which would not be well liked by people at FHWA or IDOT.

MOTION by Nudo to suspend the rules to allow Laura Huth to speak as her hand was raised; seconded by Knott. **Motion carried.** Cowart, Knott, Nudo, and Weibel voted in favor of the motion. Langenheim voted against the motion.

Huth said Ms. Squire lives at the front of the three-acre property so there is a lot leeway with acquiring property, but not impacting her home directly. She wanted the committee to keep that in mind.

Weibel said Nudo's suggestion to move the alignment north between the Squire property and Carol Dison's property. The problem would be where to connect Lincoln Avenue to Olympian Drive. This relates to the other item on the agenda and Weibel suggested they move on to it.

REPORT FROM COUNTY ENGINEER ON POSSIBILITY OF OFFSET ON LINCOLN AVENUE

Weibel asked Blue to talk about impacts about having an offset on the Lincoln Avenue intersection. Blue explained that when roadways are built, they do not want to have intersections that are very close together because of the traffic impact. If the alignment were to have only one intersection with Lincoln Avenue, then they would have to build another piece of Lincoln Avenue going farther north to hook back in with the existing Lincoln Avenue on the north side. This would involve the purchase of more land and the construction of more roadway. One of the factors in determining the alignment was the reuse of a portion of the existing Lincoln Avenue and not needing to have a total alignment of Lincoln Avenue or possibly having two intersections close together should the roadway continue farther east someday.

Knott asked how the north-south country roads, like Willow Road, would be impacted if the road goes to US-45 eventually. Blue estimated there would be an intersection with Olympian Drive. The idea of building Lincoln Avenue as an arterial road is to take that traffic up to Olympian Drive from the south. Lincoln Avenue is shown in the Urbana Comprehensive Plan as a minor arterial road. It cannot be a minor arterial road in its current state with all the zigs and zags it has. Part of project's purpose was to make sure Lincoln Avenue met minor arterial status.

Huth asked why a certain section of the road would even exist if Lincoln Avenue comes up in a compromised plan, when the old Lincoln would still exist to service those homeowners. Blue expressed that they need to be realistic about what will exist in the future. Huth talked about the current reality of needing to plan for something right now that takes into account the real need for economic development in that area and that some landowners are fighting this project. She said now is the time to start thinking creatively if they wanted something to be developed in this area rather than establishing roadblocks. Huth said this is a feat the community is able to accomplish because it has one of the greatest engineering schools in the world. She wondered why they were saying they could not figure out a way of making two stoplights closer together than the recommendation from the Department of Transportation. Blue explained that the different alignment brings Lincoln Avenue up into a fill section coming off the bridge. That type of alignment was studied in the original design study and not a lot has changed within that area. That alignment was taken out of the running based on the fact that when a car is coming off the bridge it would come down a slope. Roadways meeting on an embankment are a very difficult thing to engineer. Huth interrupted to ask if it was very difficult or impossible. Weibel told Huth she was interrupting Blue. Huth claimed she had the floor when Blue interrupted. Weibel informed Huth she was not chairing the meeting. He did not mind a back and forth discussions as long as there were no interruptions. He let Blue continue with his statement. Blue said that alignment would mean semi-trucks traveling the road would come down off a bridge and having to brake for a stoplight. It is not good for the user or for an engineer to design a road where semi-trucks would have to sit on a slope and wait for other semi-trucks coming up on a slope. This slope would have to be filled out to build an intersection large enough to accommodate the traffic. The intersection would be five to ten feet up in the air versus at grade coming into a roadway. This would require more land be used. Blue said it would be more impact on landowners and long-term impacts of the users of the intersection.

Huth said the committee was formed to develop some sort of compromise agreement in order

to push this project forward in a means that everyone can agree on as much as they can. All she has heard so far today are reasons why the sweeping S is the only thing that should be considered. She did not find this to be a compromise position. At the last meeting, ideas were flowing about different ways of bringing this road up that would not impact so many homeowners. Huth wanted that possibility still on the table. Huth state she was frankly not happy with the idea that there was eighteen reasons why nothing other than the sweeping S can possibility be considered. She thought there was a lot of ingenuity in the community and there are a lot of things that can be done with engineering. She said it was time they think a little bit outside the box for this project. Huth wanted the committee to continue to explore the options that pull the sweeping S closer towards the railroad tracks to minimize the impacts on landowners, whether they are willing to sell or not.

Weibel asked if the intersection up on the grade that was discussed would be much more expensive. Blue answered yes.

Knott said he was not an engineer and did not know how much more the committee could realistically suggest. He suggested throwing it back to Blue to come up with options.

Langenheim remarked that he was not an engineer of Blue's caliber or the caliber of engineer that Huth planned to bring in, but he had worked as an engineer and done surveying work. He said there is no way to connect Lincoln Avenue with Olympian Drive without impinging on someone's property. That being accepted, the engineering aspects are incontrovertible. They want to keep the roadway away from the big fill area, do not want to have an intersection ten feet off the ground, and do not want two intersections that close together. These are good, solid engineering practices. The notion that Olympian Drive will not reach US- 45 is speculative in Langenheim's opinion when looking at the urban community's growth. Planned projects are in the margin of land that is already well-developed. Langenheim thought this is the best possible compromise that can be reached and apparently there is no severe conflict with landowners on the line of it. If this does not have the votes to pass this at the County Board then the existing Board is not the one that will make the decision. There will be a new Board soon. It may be some of the political maneuvering in regards to this project will disappear after the election.

Knott said that was why the committee directed Blue at the last meeting to talk to the landowner. There is not much space if they are trying to avoid all those houses and it makes a huge difference on the options that can be laid out.

Weibel asked Blue about moving the northern end of the sweeping S to north to the west so it would meet with the future Olympian Drive west of Lincoln Avenue. The other possibility was describing by Huth of having that arm of Lincoln Avenue just go to Olympian Drive and not connect with Lincoln Avenue where it now is. Weibel wanted to know if this was something IDOT would agree to. Blue explained that if the County Board was not going to use one of recommended alignments that came out of the design study, then it would start from base one. Weibel asked what that means. Blue answered it means we would go back through everything that they went through in the two-year process from 2007 to 2009. It would mean basically starting over. The other alignments that have been discussed were general recommended as one of the alternatives back when the study was done and were not chosen for a multitude of different reasons. To reopen this up would require looking at all the socio-economic impacts, environmental impacts, and traffic impacts. They would be

going back through the whole process again of whether or not any suggested alignment will work. Weibel asked if there was any guarantee what that result would be. Blue said FHWA or IDOT could very well say other alignment is not a preferred versus the alignment that was chosen before. Weibel asked if only IDOT gives the final approval on the alignment. Blue stated FHWA, the Federal Highway Administration, must approve the alignment. This is why when the question was asked about doing an independent assessment, FHWA said they had the proper expertise within FHWA and IDOT to review these types of documents. They would not approve an independent assessment and do not want to spend the money to pay for an independent assessment.

Kurtz asked what the cost difference would be to move the road to the east. Blue estimated the cost would be \$1 million as a very gross estimate. Kurtz recalled the original study had ten different options, one of which ran off Lincoln Avenue and then swept over. If that was true, he asked why they could not use that alignment. Weibel thought one of the arguments against that alignment was that it did not use any of the existing Lincoln Avenue. Blue did not recall an alignment coming north of the Squire property. Huth handed a document to Blue, who reviewed it. Nudo and Kurtz said this route would save road and avoid several properties. Blue suggested bringing in Bill Gray or Hanson Engineers, the original engineers, to explain why these options were not selected if the committee wanted to talk in detail about a multitude of different alignments. Blue was not employed at the County when these alignments were developed and the original engineers could provide more detailed explanations than he could. Weibel concurred with the idea to bring over Jim Maul from Hanson Engineers, who did the original engineering.

Nudo wanted to fork the road going to I-57 and Lincoln Avenue. Blue estimated the fork would cost \$2 million.

Weibel asked if the committee was interested in hearing from Hanson Engineers to discuss the options. The committee agreed to place this on the agenda for the next meeting. Huth asked if it would be more appropriate to ask an independent engineer to come in because she considered Hanson Engineers as having a conflict of interest in this project. Weibel said the committee was asking the original engineer to explain the decisions he made. Huth wanted an additional engineer to be brought in. Weibel said they would have to pay another engineer and he does not know where that money would come from. Huth stated the \$5 million Illinois Jobs money could be used. Blue said that money cannot be spent on that expenditure. Huth apologized for trying to throw out good ideas that might actually help us find solutions. Weibel told Huth that she did not need to apologize for good ideas, but if they cannot spend money on that source then it could not be done. Cowart suggested Huth bring in an engineer since she seems to have an engineer in mind. Weibel agreed that Huth could bring in an engineer. Huth said now they were talking about finding solutions and thanked Weibel. She asked when the next meeting would be held. Weibel said it had not been set. Busey noted it would probably be dependent on the availability of the engineer. Cowart asked about bringing someone else in from the cities. Blue thought it would be appropriate to ask Bill Gray to the next meeting because he was here at the time of this decision-making process. Weibel agreed, but said he would mostly like to hear from the Hanson Engineers who actually did the study.

Huth requested they find out when the next meeting was scheduled as soon as possible. Busey confirmed they would comply with the Illinois Open Meetings Act. Weibel concurred the meeting date would be posted after Blue contacted Hanson Engineers.

Huth said one of her clients would like to address the committee.

MOTION by Nudo to suspend the rules; seconded by Knott. **Motion carried with only** Cowart, Knott, Nudo, and Weibel voted in favor of the motion. Langenheim voted against the motion.

Janet Scharlau stated that property L2-Squire Farms now has eight owners. Helen Squire passed away and the land passed to her five children, along with Scharlau, her brother, and her aunt. She did not know the positions of the owners about selling. All the owners have to agree in order to sell the land.

REVIEW OF PAST LINCOLN STUDIES

There was no other discussion.

OTHER BUSINESS

Weibel announced the next meeting would be set when the availability of Hanson Engineers could be determined. They would aim for the second week in November for a meeting date in the same location. Blue would try to arrange something for November 10th. Weibel said the "Review of Past Lincoln Studies" would be on the next agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

Weibel adjourned the meeting at 12:27 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kat Bork
Administrative Assistant