

**DeFuniak Springs City Council  
Special Meeting Minutes  
Council Chambers  
June 21, 2021**

The following Council members were present: Mayor Bob Campbell, Mayor Pro-Tempore Todd Bierbaum (Seat 1); Councilmember Robert McKnight (Seat 2); Councilmember Kevin Crystal (Seat 3); Councilmember Henry D. Ennis (Seat 4), and Councilmember Anthony Vallée (Seat 5). Staff present: City Manager Robert Thompson, City Attorney Clay Adkinson, City Clerk Maryanne Schrader, and Finance Director Debra Gibson.

Mayor Bob Campbell called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. stating the purpose of the meeting is to discuss long-range transportation needs by focusing on what the city needs.

Cliff Knauer, Dewberry, said the intent of the workshop is to determine what the Council priorities are in relation to transportation. He said he will put together a map with the city priorities which will include roads and sidewalks offering to assist the Council in putting together a plan.

Mayor Campbell announced that Councilmember A. Vallée and he distributed maps to the Council with their recommendations at the beginning of the meeting.

Councilmember R. McKnight mentioned adding a second exit on I-10, as it is important for economic development. He mentioned potential conflict of need between FDOT and the city, as their job is to move traffic swiftly and as safely as possible. He added we already have eight stoplights with an additional two stoplights in the plan. FDOT will want routing around the town, and ten stoplights are too many. He mentioned he likes the idea of extending Bruce Avenue west of Hwy 331.

Councilmember K. Crystal countered we do not have enough land mass to have another exit. His main concern is to relieve the congestion at the school. Another concern is getting a light at Highway 83 and Walton Road, as well as a turning lane at Coy Burgess Loop intersection. He said in 2024 we will have the I-10 interchange lights installed. He agrees with the layout of the map of the overpass on Bruce Avenue. He asked about the flyover from the Lakeyard to downtown, and Councilmember A. Vallée mentioned the Baldwin Avenue pedestrian flyover is under TIF and TP funds.

Councilmember K. Crystal said we need more lanes. If we can get extra funding, we may be able to encourage people to annex into the city, if they do not have to pay for hookups to sewer and gas.

Councilmember T. Bierbaum addressed the extra exit and thought it was a good idea adding we should think of South 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, as the County is building a connector Road at County 280A. He also supports the Bruce Avenue extension. He said we have two major roads with Highway 83 and US Hwy 331, so we need to advocate to widen the highways.

City Attorney Clay Adkinson said when DOT had looked at widening US Hwy 331, however the Governor of Alabama signed a bill rejecting the funding, so DOT is not going to widen US Hwy

331 with four lanes. The only viable option is Highway 83, as it does not require a massive realignment at the State line.

Councilmember T. Bierbaum said his priorities are the connector at Bruce, the extra exit, and the outer roads. He added the businesses on US Hwy 331 said their success depends on traffic count, so we do not want to divert traffic away from the city. We cannot have US Hwy 331 cut through the airport, as the terminal project is finalized. We have the Walton Road project and sidewalks rolling, as these projects will help connect our city.

Councilmember K. Crystal said we need to create 4-lane roads and veer from two lanes.

Councilmember H. Ennis said we may need to be careful regarding the new I-10 exit, but his priorities are the Bruce extension and a light on Walton Road.

Councilmember T. Bierbaum mentioned during delivery trucks cannot get from the intersection at US Hwy 331 and the next light without being stopped. The same issue is on Bruce. On Coy Burgess Loop, the light causes traffic backups on US Hwy 331. We have obvious traffic flows on the weekends and end of workday. This is a perfect opportunity for us to have better input with DOT. We want the traffic signals to work together. We need to be a "Smart City".

Councilmember H. Ennis added without a light on Bruce Avenue, you would never get out.

Mayor Campbell said traveling northbound on US Hwy 331, the left turn signal going south bound is triggered whether a vehicle is there or not. He mentioned Nathan has a license and could take care of the issue. After FDOT does the lights, they need to coordinate with Nathan.

Councilmember T. Bierbaum added we need to ask FDOT to coordinate the lights.

Councilmember A. Vallée said we need to provide guidance to Dewberry. He prepared a package with bike routes on Hwy 90 showing how valuable Hwy 90 is to our city. In 2019, a Master Plan was done for Hwy 90. The TPO is working on a new plan, but it does not include DeFuniak Springs. He mentioned the bike accidents along the business roads in the crash map that he distributed. He said the DOT has a program that looks at the capacity of users not just vehicles, which is part of the Complete Streets program. He added Hwy 83 is becoming locked, and it could take eight years to correct the issue. The TPO is looking at a temporary solution and could look at the traffic signal as a mitigation while they are working on the plan. We have signal issues and flooding issues on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, so they will do the survey for safety considerations. He is interested in expanding to 4-lanes on Hwy 83. We are connecting Walton Road and mentioned that on the map there are a lot of accidents on the corners near schools. When we do the 4-lanes, it should include bicycle paths, adding we can have wider sidewalks or share the road activity. On both Hwy 90 and Hwy 83, we have started the Complete Streets, so DOT still has to address the intersection. The map shows a back route around.

Councilmember A. Vallée added the County has done a historic study which is being replicated by the TPO. He is excited about Hwy 83 and the I-10 connection adding we need to discuss where we are going to align it.

Councilmember K. Crystal suggested adding a service road.

Mayor Campbell mentioned traffic alternatives on the map he distributed. He said he did not know of any funding for State Hwy 83, but he will consider it. He discussed FDOT and their considerations for traffic routing at the airport. He suggested traffic alternatives by routing by the Country Club property and coming out at Bob Sikes, so a light would be needed turning into Lowe's. He said that flow would provide an opportunity to connect to I-10. We need two or three miles between exits. He would also like to see a second exit, however. He added we do not want a six-lane highway going through the city. He also provided option for the airport and said an overpass at Bruce Avenue would be beneficial with school also benefitting with that option. He mentioned the Industrial area would be tied in, the school, and a proposed ball field complex. There are some dry areas where it is designed for walkability. We would not need to do much infrastructure, as the lines are already there. He would like to look for money for this and has spoken to the commissioners.

Councilmember H. Ennis suggested the interstate exit to be placed on the east side of the city and Councilmember K. Crystal suggested a road parallel to I-10 connecting to Hwy 90.

Councilmember R. McKnight said when DOT came here five years ago, they planned to take US Hwy 331 and Hwy 90 and have a flyover by Wayside Park. He suggested one way to avoid the right hand turn on Hwy 83, is by the parking lot of the fairgrounds from the north, as it separates Hwy 83 and US Hwy 331 and avoids two traffic lights. It would ensure we have traffic from Hwy 83 to continue on US Hwy 331 for business traffic. He added housing should not be approved in this area.

Councilmember A. Vallée said it is splitting the area and makes the area more neighborhood friendly. He suggested two alternatives on the larger map that he distributed. He suggested working with zoning to ensure that nothing large is built in that area. Councilmember T. Bierbaum agreed with tying in the roads on south 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.

City Attorney Clay Adkinson said the trend is looking at areas where roads should be, acquire the right of way (ROW), so that when you go to the State, we can show that the ROW has already been done and the land is ready to go. This could be a City/County joint road project by asking for specific land dedications up front.

City Manager R. Thomas said timelines of completions should be factored in. Councilmember K. Crystal agreed on the long-range planning.

Discussion ensued on traffic flow at the airport, routing to Woodward Road, traffic flow on Hwy 83 for traffic flow from Alabama and providing for locals to have an option for moving around the city.

Chief Hurley suggested reaching out to Google for mapping to assist in getting the people on the right road. They need to find an efficient route. He said when they did the recount on US Hwy 331, DOT said GPS was bringing the traffic around. Mayor Campbell said the maps will give alternatives and even send traffic around DeFuniak Springs.

Bruce Naylor, resident, confirmed that DOT ran the report last year showing that Hwy 83 has higher numbers than US Hwy 331. We have to have a light at Walton Road and Hwy 83. Councilmember K. Crystal added there is a lot of pedestrian traffic there.

Councilmember R. McKnight said we should encourage DOT to provide better signage. There is no guidance on routing people to the correct lane. This would solve some of the congestion.

Councilmember A. Vallée mentioned Chief Sheffield's recommendations and noted that the Council was given his memo tonight, as well.

Councilmember T. Bierbaum wants to reiterate that we need to add everything that the city wants to do, but we do not have to have it included on the mobility plan. We have the ability to represent ourselves on the TPO.

Mayor Campbell asked Cliff Knauer what was needed, and C. Knauer said he wanted to go over the Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) where all lights are interconnected by fiber and every light is controlled real time. He mentioned Bay County has this system and someone comes in and adjusts the time on the weekend by maximizing the traffic by adjusting the timing to maximize flow. This enables real time monitoring of where the backups are occurring. He said the County would like to synchronize the lights on Hwy 98.

Councilmember K. Crystal asked if it could be done in conjunction with Freeport, and City Attorney Clay Adkinson said it could be done. Cliff Knauer said the study has to be done and an ITS study with DOT would be the first step. Genesis is doing the study in South County adding the study could be placed in the plan suggesting sending the request to the TPO directly. The cost is about \$10,000. He said the study could be piggybacked with the County on the Genesis project to reduce the cost. He added the city could tie in with the County to manage the system, as it takes a lot of infrastructure.

Councilmember A. Vallée asked for a process to get the information to the TPO. We could talk about short term mitigation. Cliff Knauer said he will produce a list of projects, then break out cost and timelines to provide to the Council to review.

Mayor Campbell added the median from Bruce Avenue to Walmart is slated to be torn out and would like conduit to be laid down at the same time.

Mayor Campbell asked for public comment.

Chelsea Blaich, Executive Director of Main Street, said the Main Street projects that are mutually beneficial to the city are the Downtown Streetscapes that encourages pedestrian usage, the Complete Streets that connects the north and south business districts that encourages walkability, and a bike and pedestrian park which runs along the railroad track across Baldwin that also promotes health and wellness activities.

J.B. Hillard, citizen, said he was impressed with the conversation today adding his main concern was the bypass issue.

Cliff Knauer reviewed his list stating he had the I-10 exit and improved signage. For Councilmember R. McKnight, he had service roads, relieve congestion in schools, light at Walton, turn lane at Coy Burgess Road and getting across the lane on south end. For Councilmember K. Crystal, he wants to look at parcels for annexation, and ROW for four lanes. For Councilmember T. Bierbaum, a second exit at I-10, possibly having 280A as an option, the Bruce Avenue extension, widen Hwy 83 to the County line at US Hwy 331, arterial roads, and

the ITS system for control on traffic. For Councilmember A. Vallée, he will add the maps for bicycle connectivity for safety issues, mitigation for police and fire access roads, mitigation measures on US Hwy 331 flooding, guidance on dangerous intersections, traffic signal coordination, seasonal and morning congestion, school connector, multi-modal path, Complete Streets, and the County/City Historic Corridor.

Mayor Campbell mentioned Highway 83 4-laning, options for west side routes at US Hwy 331, exit for I-10, second US Hwy 331 bypass map, Bruce Avenue with Right of Way and adding sidewalks by the airport for walkability.

Councilmember K. Crystal said to make sure fiber or conduit is laid during projects.

Councilmember T. Bierbaum added the Council needs to budget dollars for these projects mentioning the city did not have money for conduit for the last project. Councilmember A. Vallée said it could be included in the design. Cliff Knauer said conduit was added to the SRF project, as it was permitted, but not added to the alternates.

Councilmember R. McKnight asked if the city could impose a gas tax, but City Attorney Clay Adkinson said he would have to check if the city was maxed out.

Councilmember T. Bierbaum said there are additional avenues, and we should speak to the County to tap into more funding. City Attorney Clay Adkinson said we could work with Chelco, as they have access to the conduit.

Councilmember T. Bierbaum asked whether we could oppose the median removal, and Councilmember A. Vallée said he can reach out to DOT. City Attorney Clay Adkinson suggested calling the Secretary at the Regional Planning Office. Mayor Campbell suggested asking them to go back to the five-year plan adding they did not have room for the sidewalk and bike path.

Councilmember R. McKnight said he was opposed to tearing down the greenery, but at the time no one else spoke in opposition.

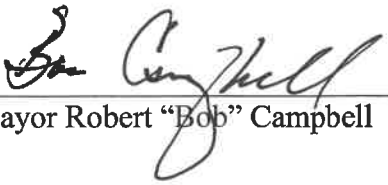
Cliff Knauer said he will put the list and maps together and bring back a draft. There are funding opportunities, so we know where to look for dollars. City Manager R. Thompson said he will compile the package and provide a timeline and will present it to Council. Councilmember K. Crystal asked about the County, and City Attorney Clay Adkinson said we need to bring the list back by the end of July because it needs to be given to the County by October.

In response to Mayor Campbell, Cliff Knauer said they put together a map on the sidewalks depicted by the purple line on the large map.


Other suggestions were looking at the gaps in the sidewalks, no curb cuts on 11<sup>th</sup> Street, flow of traffic on Bruce Avenue from Chaffin Street to US Hwy 331, acquiring property along Bruce, a turn lane along 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, purchasing property on the north side of Bruce to open it up for sidewalks and additional lanes, and purchasing homes to accommodate the additional traffic along the connector road at Veterans Lodge.

Mayor Campbell adjourned the meeting at 5:47 p.m.

Approved:

  
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Mayor Robert "Bob" Campbell

Attest:

  
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Minutes submitted by Maryanne Schrader, City Clerk  
*Proper notice having been duly given*

