

LWVEA – OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

CITY OF AUBURN – WARD MEETING

February 4, 2019 @ 5:30 CST (Chamber of Commerce)

Ward # 5 – Councilor Steven Dixon (334) 707-3091 sdixon@auburnalabama.org

Ward # 6 – Councilor Bob Parsons (334) 704-3657 bparsons@auburnalabama.org

TOPICS OF INTEREST:

A. **Presentation by Public Works Director:**

Public Works Director, Scott Cummings, P.E. (334).501.3001 scummings@auburnalabama.org provided a substantive overview of the Public Works Department, which Department is divided into five (5) separate and distinct Divisions (note that Water and Sewer related operations are under a separate department):

1. *Administration:* Major goals of the Department are to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of Auburn’s infrastructure by extending the life of the Work as much as possible. Following is an illustration of the extent of PW’s responsibility: 300 miles of rights-of-way (total of 1300 acres); 136 miles of storm lines and appurtenances thereto; 150 miles of walkways and paths; 14 public facilities, less those operated by Parks and Recreation; and 40 landscape locations.
2. *Construction:* Sidewalk construction, including retrofitting for ADA compliance. Examples include sidewalk improvements along Hamilton, Shell Toomer, Glenn Avenue, among others; Downtown parking lot for merchant employees;
3. *Facilities and Maintenance:* Work includes seal coating asphalt paving to extend life of the paving work; street sweeping; milling and resurfacing asphalt paving; sewer line and structure rehabilitation; building assessments, limited remodeling to include contract administration and supervision of subcontractors.
4. *Landscape and Sustainability:* Streetscape element to include working with the Beautification Council; urban forestry including inspection and planting (Moore’s Mill and East University). Water resource management and sustainability are important components of the Work.
5. *Rights-of-Way Maintenance:* Street mowing; addressing sight distance issues; cleanup of Toomer’s Corner and environs after athletic events; litter control, often with assistance from prison crews.

B. **Questions and Answer Period:**

1. *Alabama Power:* Concern was raised over Alabama Power’s apparent indiscriminate pruning of trees along power lines. Director Cummings commented that the to-be-hired urban forestry technician is to coordinate with Alabama Power on matters pertaining to right-of-way pruning and related work.

Technician will review the health of trees. Cummings noted that trees planted under power lines should be such as to not interfere with the lines; this helps ensure that tree pruning will be minimized. Furthermore, Cummings commented that Alabama Power should notify property owners/residents of impending tree pruning prior to performing the Work.

2. *Standing Water and Mowing in Vicinity of Wrights Mill Elementary School and Town Creek Park:* Interdepartmental coordination is needed to address the continuing problem along and near a storm sewer easement. Public Works appears to be responsible for maintaining eight (8) foot strip along the line, and neither Parks and Recreation nor the School Board appear to have equipment to maintain the balance of the affected area. Councilman Parson offered to assist in the matter.
3. *Trash and Construction Debris on Bicycle Paths:* It was noted that motorized vehicles tend to cause trash and construction debris to collect within designated bicycle paths and, generally, along edges of pavement. The waste tends to remain there for some duration. At the same time, it's been observed that select residential streets are swept where there is no accumulation of waste material. It was suggested that an option would be to perform reconnaissance missions and establish priorities to include cycling considerations.
4. *Street Paving and Resurfacing Priorities:* Question arose as to how said work is prioritized. Cummings commented each year priorities are set based on established metrics; e.g., physical characteristics of the pavement; traffic volumes, etc. Currently, the metrics are being assessed to better ensure work is prioritized pursuant to those metrics. Subsequently, projects are prioritized and budgeted. A goal is to prepare an interactive mapping system for citizens to see firsthand established priorities, and to, possibly, offer comments.
5. *Sidewalk Construction:* Question arose as to the status of the five (5) foot wide sidewalk proposal for Moore's Mill extending from East University to Samford Avenue. The design has been approved and construction work will be administered by Engineering Services. Apparently, the project is being bid with a portion of the contract to be let circa late March 2019. Work is scheduled to commence circa May and to be completed by year's end. The project has been in the works for the past five or so years. The project will include curb and gutter; storm; landscaping, street lighting and related work. The City received a grant in the amount of \$400,000 and the Work is budgeted to cost approximately \$800,000. The goal is to link schools, churches and neighborhoods together.
6. *Median Improvements on East University at South Donahue to Woodfield:* The Project is being administered by Auburn University in consultation with Engineering Services. The Work is being performed in conjunction with the Auburn University Performing Arts Center scheduled to open August 2019. Road improvements are scheduled to be completed circa April 2019, with final landscaping to be completed Fall 2019.
7. *Compliance with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Device (the "MUTCD"):* A comment was made regarding what appears to be a general relaxed compliance by public agencies and contractors in general with the

MUTCD. Cummings commented that PWs is evaluating compliance and intends to promote a better understanding and enforcement of the requirements.

8. *Lighting Crosswalks:* An individual expressed hope that more of the crosswalks in town would be lighted. Assistant City Manager commented that select streets have been targeted for improvement; e.g., Gay Street (e.g., at Town Creek and East University).
9. *Single Stream Recycling:* All bins are scheduled to be delivered by end of February.
10. *Board Announcements:* See City's website for openings. At present, there are four (4) openings to which attendees were encouraged to apply. Additionally, Steve Dixon noted he, Councilor Connie Fitch Taylor and other Task Force members of the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force are meeting Thursday at 5:30 p.m. CST at the City's Meeting Room 122-B on Tichenor Avenue.
11. *Short Term Rental Task Force:* Councilor Bob Parson commented that he, Councilor Brett Smith and other Task Force members are in the process of collating information, including responses from attendees at the two previously held Task Force meetings. Announcements will be made regarding future meetings.
12. *State of the Proposed Downtown Hotel:* A question was raised regarding the state of the proposed hotel. Assistant City Manager reported that the developer appears to have withdrawn the proposal from further consideration. It was noted that the change in building height was, in part, generated to accommodate the hotel. Whether the question of height is reintroduced remains open to discussion. Also, the withdrawal raises the question as to whether to construct a 300 or 600 +/- space parking garage.
13. *Renaming Mike Hubbard Blvd.:* A general discussion ensued regarding renaming the street. A point was made that the street was named after Representative Hubbard for the significant contributions made for and on behalf of the citizens of Auburn, and that any decision need be postponed until the legal process has run its course. A comment was made that in the future it may be in the community's best interest to remain nonpartisan in the naming of streets and other public facilities.

END OF REPORT

Prepared by Bruno O. Ulrich, February 6, 2019