

CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA CITY COUNCIL AGENDA



Agenda Date: February 5, 2007
Action Required: Decision on Old Lynchburg Road Closure
Staff Contacts: James E. Tolbert, AICP, Director
Jeanie Alexander, P.E., Traffic Engineer
Reviewed By: Gary O'Connell, City Manager
Title: **Old Lynchburg Road Closure and/or Improvements**

Background: In September 2006, City Council authorized staff to proceed with a project for improvements to Old Lynchburg Road. This is in response to numerous requests from neighborhood residents who desire drainage improvements, sidewalks and bike lanes and traffic calming or safety improvements to Old Lynchburg Road. A copy of the Council action memo from September is attached. Since Council action, staff has been actively pursuing a design firm for this work. We have narrowed the selection process to one firm and are currently negotiating a project which when signed will be in the neighborhood of \$350,000.

Recently, Council was approached by Old Lynchburg Road residents requesting that Old Lynchburg Road be closed at Azalea Park. Council asked that staff provide additional information so that Council could make an informed decision. There was also discussion at that meeting of the status of the Granger Property development and the Southern Area B Study.

Discussion: This issue will be broken into three parts for discussion in this memo.

- **Old Lynchburg Road Improvements:** The improvements contemplated by the RFP were expected to result in a construction a cost of an estimated \$1.5 million. After interviewing engineers we believe that the actual cost may be double that amount. We are approaching this as a comprehensive project with drainage improvements, new sidewalks and bike lanes and road safety

improvements, the focus. We believe that we are able to proceed with the drainage improvements because the road/sidewalk/bike lane project is progressing. The drainage system that runs through the yards of the Old Lynchburg properties is a private system, installed by a private developer, and never accepted by the City. It is not an easement and is very similar in nature to the North Berkshire Road situation, although not as severe. Were it not for the fact that we can make drainage improvements as part of this more comprehensive project, we do not believe that we can satisfy legal requirements for this work. However, by approaching this in a comprehensive plan and in obtaining necessary easements, it is envisioned that the drainage system here will become a publicly maintained drainage improvement. Because Old Lynchburg is a collector street, it presents many design issues if we are to improve its safety and functionality as a street serving a neighborhood. The bike lanes and sidewalk improvements are integral to creating a more residential feel to this roadway.

- **Granger/Southern Area B Project:** Attached is a memo that was provided to the City Manager earlier this week regarding the status of the Southern Area B Study and the Granger property rezoning. This is an important issue because it is the process through which the Sunset/Fontaine Road connector will be realized. As you can see from the attached information, the rezoning of the Granger Property is moving through the County process with the first step being an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. The attachment includes the County Staff Report which indicates County staff support for the Comprehensive Plan amendment and subsequent rezoning with the inclusion of the Sunset/Fontaine Road connector. Once that connector is included in the County Comprehensive Plan, and a rezoning request is submitted by the Granger Property, the road improvements can be proffered as part of that zoning process. The second property along the connector is the Fontaine Research Park. Although not yet submitted, the University Real Estate Foundation has plans to proceed with a rezoning request to increase the density of the Research Park. In the past, we have indicated that we would be supportive of that rezoning request if it includes the construction of that portion of the Sunset/Fontaine Road connector through the Research Park.

These processes are currently underway. This improvement is important because it is projected to remove a great deal of the projected traffic growth on Old Lynchburg Road by providing a direct access to

the University of Virginia from properties developed south of I-64. This road improvement has been suggested by some as a subject of proffers for the Biscuit Run Development. We do not believe that it is practical to link this project with the Biscuit Run development for a number of reasons:

- Proffers are voluntary contributions offered by a developer that are directly related to the impact of the proposed development. In this case, the developer has not expressed an interest in proffering this substantial road improvement which is estimated between \$12 and \$15 million and their traffic study shows no direct link to the Sunset Connector.
- This road project is not yet included in the County Comprehensive Plan, therefore, it is very difficult for the County to even request a proffer for a road which has not been approved and included in the plan.

While we recognize that the Sunset/Fontaine Road connector is probably several years from construction if it can be built through the development process, it will also be a number of years before development impacts are felt from Biscuit Run. One way that we have asked the County to help mitigate and delay those impacts is by requiring the development of the eastern portion of the property first and not allowing a connection to Old Lynchburg Road until the Sunset/Fontaine Connector Road is constructed.

- **Old Lynchburg Road Closure:** As stated above, the residents approached City Council at the last Council meeting requesting the closure of Old Lynchburg Road at Azalea Park. This was viewed by residents of Old Lynchburg Road as a way to shut off traffic that originates or has a destination in the County. Those proposing the closure see it as a minor inconvenience and one that they would tolerate to have the reduced traffic volumes on Old Lynchburg Road. Council has asked staff to review this request and provide information. Below is the information collected to date. Additional traffic counts are scheduled for next week and a supplemental memo will be provided to Council prior to the meeting.
 - Old Lynchburg Road has been classified for years by the City as a collector street. It serves the purpose of connecting many smaller residential streets to an arterial roadway, Jefferson Park Avenue. It's current average daily traffic is 5,300 vehicles per day which in broad planning terms, gives

it a volume to capacity ratio of approximately 0.32. This is a very low volume to capacity ratio and indicates that the road can handle additional traffic.

- Closure of Old Lynchburg Road will direct traffic to other neighborhood streets. The attached map outlines where those impacts are anticipated to occur. As you can see, those streets impacted would be Harris Street, Willard, Moseley Drive, and Cleveland. While not all current trips or projected new trips would utilize these streets, a substantial percentage is projected to use them. As the map shows, this causes the following specific issues:
 - Shifting traffic from collector road to local streets.
 - Increasing traffic volumes immediately adjacent to Jackson Via Elementary
 - Eliminating a key connection.
 - Setting a precedent of road closure as a viable transportation safety solution.

Alternative: The alternative to closure of Old Lynchburg Road is to continue with the previously outlined study. Sidewalks, bike lanes and road safety improvements would make a tremendous difference in the quality of life for the residents of Old Lynchburg Road, while maintaining the roadway for traffic use.

Budgetary Impact: The impact to the City budget is estimated to be at approximate one and half million dollars to proceed with the Old Lynchburg Road improvements. No estimate of the cost for closure of the road has been made.

Recommendations: Staff recommends that Old Lynchburg Road remain open to traffic, but that we proceed immediately with the road improvement design project and that we continue to push the County to move the Sunset/Fontaine connector forward. We also recommend that we continue to ask the County to condition Biscuit Run approval on the receipt of proffers for the road improvements on Old Lynchburg Road as previously submitted to them and to require phasing of Biscuit Run so that development occurs on the eastern half of the property first. While we recognize the issues associated with traffic on Old Lynchburg Road, we do not believe that it is appropriate to shift that traffic to other neighborhood streets and degrade that quality of life of other City residents in order to improve the quality of one neighborhood

street. Hopefully, the improvements contemplated will serve and not negatively impact other neighborhood streets.

Attachments: Council Action Memo for September 5, 2006 Council Meeting

Southern Urban Area B memo dated January 23, 2007