Environmental Quality & Public Works Committee

October 23, 2018

Summary and Motions

Chair Farmer called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. Committee Members F. Brown, Moloney, Stinnett, Gibbs, Evans, Worley, Mossotti, Bledsoe, and Plomin were present. Council Members Kay and Smith were also in attendance as non-voting members.

I. Approval of October 23, 2018 Committee Summary

A motion was made by CM Mossotti to approve the October 23, 2018 Environmental Quality & Public Works Committee Summary, seconded by CM Evans. The motion passed without dissent.

II. Solarize Lexington

CM Gibbs provided a brief statement explaining the work that was done since this item was discussed at the last meeting. CM Gibbs said we have a proposed resolution of support for solar energy in the community and encourages LFUCG to embrace it.

CM F. Brown commented on language in the resolution that describes grant opportunities to assist lower-income families to participate in the solar energy initiatives. He asked how this came up in discussion, adding that we promote this throughout the government. Chair Farmer said this was an act to show support for solar energy across all parts of the government and the community. CM Moloney said the reason the language was put in there is because after CDBG repairs are complete, utilities are still high which defeats the purpose. CM F. Brown said while this helps the lower-income families, there does not appear to be assistance for anyone else. Farmer said there are group discounts intrinsic in the work they are doing.

CM Mossotti commented on the discussion that took place at the last meeting where it was stated that the advantage for group discount would be open to anyone within Lexington, not just lower-income families. Chair Farmer said he is not aware that this is precluded; he requested an opinion from Law Department or Solarize Lexington. Alex Smith, with Solar Energy Solutions, said there is nothing in the resolution specific to being for low-income, it is for anyone who is interested. Michael Cravens, Attorney in the Law Department, said CM Henson asked for something along these lines at the last meeting. CM Mossotti said she just wants to make sure this is offered to everyone, not just specifically lower-income because everyone should have the opportunity to get grant incentives. CM Gibbs said Section 2 of the resolution states that this is for public and private solar energy campaigns to promote the expanded use of solar energy in Lexington-Fayette County. CM Mossotti said she is more concerned about Section 3 and wants to make sure every socio-economic group has the opportunity if there is a grant available.

CM Evans said grant opportunities should be going to those who are of low economic situations because solar panels are so expensive and they will not have the same means as people with higher economic standards who might be able to participate in some other campaign. She said we are not trying to eliminate anyone but grants tend to be focused on certain types of population. She said we would be seeking grants to supplement a program like this.

CM Bledsoe said solar panels cost upwards of $15,000 and even if you have CDBG money, you are still spending $9,000 which is still a lot of money. She said the city should support 2 options: grants that specifically hit certain opportunities and subsidies that might be available to meet the gap between the two. She said grant opportunities might be used for particular programs that have specific income levels addressed. She said maybe there is a way to express both goals in Section 3.

CM Moloney explained that the intent behind this was to get a group of people together so the price would drop 30%. He said he wanted to be sure that grant opportunities are referenced in the resolution because he does not want them to spend a lot of money and have the house go under because they cannot afford utilities. He said the intent was to provide subsidies and we would want to isolate CDBG projects in low-income areas.

A motion was made by CM Gibbs to approve the resolution of support for solar energy initiatives (as amended) and move it forward to the full council, seconded by CM Mossotti, the motion passed without dissent.

CM Plomin said the resolution seems broad and vague; she asked how it will be managed. Barbara Szubinska, spokeswoman for Solarize Lexington, said in Bloomington, IN where this project flourished, it is a group purchase that lowers the cost by about 20% and encompasses a library, school, or fire station, homes and small businesses. She said it is limited by the size of the roof, but it can be installed free-standing as well. She said the group is formed by whoever wants to join in. CM Plomin asked if the criteria for people to join would be based on income level. Szubinska said no, anybody can join and they will have an info session and promotions around town.

CM Mossotti asked about the residential component and Szubinska said most of the people who join will be homeowners, based on previous campaigns. CM Mossotti asked if there was a certain level of income across the board and Szubinska explained there was a mix across different income levels. CM Mossotti asked if Bloomington or Cincinnati offered grants or incentives. Szubinska said the Bloomington Group helps find grants, particularly for low income households.

Cravens suggested that we add language to the resolution so that Section 3 reads " That the Council of the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government expresses support for grant opportunities to assist lower income families to participate in solar energy initiatives and encouraging other solutions to make solar energy more affordable in Lexington-Fayette County."

A motion was made by CM Mossotti to amend the Solarize Lexington resolution, so that Section 3 reads "That the Council of the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government expresses support for grant opportunities to assist lower income families to participate in solar energy initiatives and encouraging other solutions to make solar energy more affordable in Lexington-Fayette County", seconded by CM Bledsoe, the motion passed without dissent.

(At this time, the original motion (as amended) was voted on and approved)

III. Annual Leaf Collection Plan

Robert Allen, Deputy Director of Streets and Roads, presented the item. He discussed the 2018 Leaf Collection Program which includes using a private contractor for leaf collection which will be deployed in 25% of the zones. He reviewed the leaf collection guidelines including where to rake and where not to rake the leaves. He discussed the alternative leaf disposal methods and explained the leaf collection schedule and how they cover the city by zones. He stressed the importance of the communication plan and the support they get from other divisions to communicate this effort to the community.

CM Bledsoe expressed appreciation for the outreach being utilized to inform residents that this is happening in advance. She asked what the total cost for leaf collection is and Allen said we pay $115,000 for the contractors. Charlie Martin, Acting Commissioner of Environmental Quality and Public Works, said they will provide the city's total cost for leaf collection to council.

CM Worley said he would like additional explanation when the cost information is provided. He asked why we do this and what benefit the city gains by providing this service. Allen said this provides the opportunity to promote the urban canopy and this helps with water quality by diverting a certain percentage of leaves from the stormwater system. Martin explained they researched this in the past and it did not make sense to get rid of the program completely, which led the city to the current contracting partnership. He said rather than investing in

additional resources such as personnel and capital, it made more sense to use contractors. CM Worley asked how it is handled when leaves get blown into the street. Allen explained that the street sweeping efforts follow the leaf collectors. CM Worley asked how we discourage people from doing this the wrong way as far as enforcement or notification. Martin explained that the approach used right now is to educate people and we use social media and neighborhood forums to get the message out. He said we do not want to be too hard on those people who do not know or were not paying attention.

No further comment or action on this item.

IV. State to City Street Speed Limit Study

CM Gibbs provided a brief background on the item, saying it came into committee after completion of the road exchange earlier this year. He said the road exchange gave us control of several streets in the city core that are pedestrian sensitive. Jeff Neal, Director of Traffic Engineering, presented the item and provided a history of recent resolutions relative to speed limits and the road exchange with Kentucky Transportation Cabinet. He explained the benefits of reducing speed limits, such as fewer crashes, better livability, and improved pedestrian safety. He highlighted the streets they reviewed in this effort and discussed the recommendations.

VM Kay asked what streets remain under the state's control where we have requested a reduced speed limit. Neal reviewed the list of state-owned streets. VM Kay commented on fatality statistics and asked if they apply to those streets as well and Neal said they would. VM Kay said he is in support of this proposal, but he would also like for us to go back to the state and make an additional request to lower the speed limits and he would like constituents to know that it is the state preventing us from lowering the speed limits.

CM Gibbs said he is supportive of all the recommendations with the exception of the section of Tates Creek that runs along schools and he asked why it was decided to leave that at 35 mph. Neal said it was judgment call. He said the houses are set back and the speed limit is 35 mph when school is in session. Neal said enforcement is a factor in this as well and without adequate enforcement people will continue to drive at speeds they are comfortable with.

CM Bledsoe expressed concern about enforcement and if speed limits are not enforced, drivers will go well above the limit because they feel they can. She said they get calls about this often and it is one of the largest complaints. She said she is supportive of lowering the speed limit but if there is no partnership with enforcement, we are setting expectations we are not going to meet and the problem does not get resolved. Neal explained that police is supportive of the changes they have recommended. Bledsoe said we should be thoughtful and look holistically at all streets that are 35 mph, not just streets around downtown.

CM Mossotti expressed concern about consistency. She said there are a lot of residential streets where a petition has requested a reduction in speed. She said this should be based more on safety and not amount of traffic. Neal explained that they have been looking at residential collector streets over the last year trying to come up with a better way to evaluate them so it is not so arbitrary. CM Mossotti questioned how the city achieves consistency and Neal explained we are attempting this currently by looking at the streets holistically and creating parameters. CM Mossotti asked what weight the neighborhood association has in the decision making. Neal said it would be by request and we would look at density, number of driveways within a mile and the building offset is another factor. CM Mossotti asked how we respond to requests and Neal said as requests come in, we make a request to the councilmember for that district who can take our recommendation or go against it.

CM Evans said she is not supportive of making these changes today because lowering the speed limit gives a false impression of what we as a city can do to address speeding issues within Lexington. She questioned why we would have a speed limit that we cannot enforce.

CM Moloney referenced a proposal he brought forward to make the speed limit in residential areas 25 mph. He asked about the ordinance that made all residential streets 25 mph, except for the main roads. Neal said all local

streets and cul-de-sacs are 25 mph. He said the residential collector streets were left at 35 mph and they are dealt with on an individual basis.

CM F. Brown commented on collector streets having double yellow lines painted on them and Neal said generally speaking if there is a yellow line, it is a collector, but he cannot say that all collectors have a double yellow line. CM F. Brown said typically the double yellow line means the street is wider and the speed limit is 35 mph. He said we are not consistent and we need a better definition of residential and collector streets.

VM Kay said he would like to move forward with the recommendations before them and reduce the speed limit on streets where we have the opportunity. He said we should shift our thinking of complete streets and how they serve cars, bikes and pedestrians. He suggested reducing the speed limit on all city streets from 35 mph to 25 mph whether or not it is a collector because it is a safety concern.

CM Plomin said the easiest thing to do from a marketing standpoint is to have all streets at 25 mph, but she understands the need to focus on the proposal before us today. She said we should take a closer look at communication and understanding of the speed limit on roads throughout our city.

CM Evans said she thought the goal is to move people through downtown as quickly as possible, particularly while there is a lot of construction. VM Kay explained the state has an interest in moving people through the streets as quickly as possible, but we are discussing a different perspective. CM Evans said with construction going on, this is something we might need to be focusing on because people will want to get through downtown as quickly as possible.

CM Gibbs said he would like to move these streets forward and if someone wants to take a systematic look at at collector streets, it should be placed in committee. He said he agrees with councilmembers that there are enforcement issues and one of the most common complaints he gets from constituents is speeding and he has not received the response he would like from police.

A motion was made by CM Gibbs to amend the recommendation for Tates Creek Rd. from the Cochran/Sunset intersection to north of Cooper Drive to 25 mph, seconded by CM Mossotti, the motion passed with a 6 - 2 vote (Yes – Gibbs, Moloney, Mossotti, Plomin, Farmer, Worley; No- F. Brown and Evans; Stinnett and Bledsoe were absent from the vote).

A motion was made by CM Gibbs to approve the recommendations for consideration of a lower speed limit (as amended), seconded by CM Mossotti, the motion passed with a 5 - 3 vote (Yes – Gibbs, Moloney, Mossotti, Plomin, Farmer, Worley; No- F. Brown, Evans, and Farmer; Stinnett and Bledsoe were absent from the vote).

V. Review of Items Referred to Committee

A motion by CM F. Brown to remove Proposed Public Works Skills Academy item from committee, seconded by CM Mossotti, the motion passed without dissent.

A motion by CM Gibbs to remove the Solarize Lexington item from committee, seconded by CM Plomin, the motion passed without dissent.

A motion was made by CM Plomin to Adjourn, seconded by CM Evans, the motion passed without dissent.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

KT 11.7.18