The Safety & Public Properties Committee met at City Hall on the above date and time prior to Council Caucus in the Council Chambers

Present: Councilman Bell, Councilman Kraus, Councilman Russo

Also Present: Mayor Drucker, Traffic Engineer John Busch, Assistant City Engineer Keri Welch, Ryan Maver, and Acting Secretary Donna Bond

Chairman Russo presided.

TRAFFIC ISSUES:

Chairman Russo advised the committee will interview the following three consultants; URS, Euthenics, Inc., and GPD Group for the City’s Traffic Engineering Services and each will be given 20 minutes for an introduction and questions by the committee.

URS Consultants:

Mr. Kevin Westbrooks, P.E., P.T.O.E., stated he has been working with the City of Solon since 2006. Mr. Westbrooks said he uses a common sense approach and works well with the various city departments. He stated although he works with other cities, he is committed to the City of Solon and feels over the last 7 seven years he has been honest, loyal, and committed to the City of Solon. He said in regards to moving forward, he is taking a proactive approach and eager to work with ODOT to obtain funding opportunities for projects in the City of Solon.

Chairman Russo said he recently had an opportunity to speak with Police Chief Viland who said Mr. Westbrooks has been very responsive, he is always readily available, and has enjoyed working with him. Mr. Russo said he concurs with the Chief’s comments; however, he has one area he would like to address with Mr. Westbrooks. Mr. Russo said over the last two years Mr. Westbrooks has on occasion given his opinion instead of providing to the committee a professional opinion in order to appease as many people as possible. He said the committee is relying on the honest professional opinion of the Traffic Engineer. Mr. Westbrooks replied, on each project it is learning process and he continues to learn the direction on which the City would like to go on their projects.

Councilman Kraus and Councilman Bell concur with Chairman Russo’s concerns, and added there are times when initial contact is made by Mr. Westbrook to multiple individuals with an opinion and solution, and then at a later time, your opinions and thoughts go in another direction. Mr. Bell suggested you not respond quickly and gather all the information before making your recommendations. Mr. Westbrooks appreciated Mr. Bell’s feedback, and replied he will gather all the information before making his recommendation and thanked the committee for bringing it to his attention.
Councilman Bell stated the 422 exit ramps are a major concern for the city to resolve, and he is worried that ODOT has not addressed the City’s issues. Mr. Westbrook’s recommends the City needs to take a more responsible approach, and look at other options. He said from those projects, he would then take those findings to ODOT to bring it to their attention as ODOT will not address them on their own.

Mr. Westbrook stated he has been involved in the beginning of many projects for the City of Solon and we would like to continue on those projects until they are completed.

**Euthenics, Inc.:**

Mr. Richard S. Waskosky, P.E., P.S., Project Principal, Mr. Edward P. Sefcik, P.E., Assistant Traffic Engineer, and Mr. Alan R. Piatak, P.E., Design Engineer were present representing Euthenics, Inc.

Mr. Waskosky said his firm is currently doing work in Solon, and his firm has over 40 years of Service in Northeast Ohio. Mr. Waskosky is knowledgeable in project funding sources which include OPWC Issue 1 and Issue 2 Grants and Loans, Ohio EPA Water Pollution Control Loan Fund, HUD Community Grants, and ODOT Safety Funds. Mr. Waskosky stated Euthenics, Inc. is ODOT Prequalified in the areas of Roadway. He stated he was the Project Manager for Cochran Road/Carter Street Intersection Improvement Project for the City of Solon. Mr. Waskosky said he would be the one attending monthly Safety and Public Properties Meetings.

Councilman Bell asked Mr. Waskosky, in his expertise, to explain the biggest challenge to be addressed for the City of Solon over the next two to three years. Mr. Waskosky said the traffic flow on Som Center Road is an issue; however, the flow of traffic has improved since the departure of Geauga Lake and Sea World. If his firm is awarded the contract, he would need to review all the studies and current counts before making a recommendation on how to improve the flow of traffic on Aurora Road and Som Center Road. Mr. Waskosky suggested eliminating the split phasing at this intersection which would greatly improve the flow of traffic.

Councilman Kraus asked Mr. Waskosky how he will deal with ODOT and how he would address the exit ramps onto SOM Center Road going southbound during rush hour. Mr. Waskosky replied, the city has to show findings from a study of potential improvements to the area to give to ODOT. He said as a city there is a program called T.I.P., Transportation Improvement Program, that the City needs to be a part of in order to get funding, unfortunately, there are a lot of cities looking for funding from ODOT.

Chairman Russo asked how his firm will handle dealing with residents and individual requests that are made. Mr. Waskosky explained there are standard warrants in a state manual to follow, and if those individual requests are not warranted, it becomes a liability to the City which he has no control. He would also make a suggestion to having the police patrol the area as the presence of the local police department helps to slow traffic down. He said overall, once he reviews the studies and has numbers then he can make recommendations for the various projects the City of Solon and residents would like to address.

**GPD Group:**
Mr. Michael Hobbs, P.E., P.T.O.E., Mr. Mo Darwish, Principal, and Mr. Ryan Gillespie, P.E., P.T.O.E. were present representing GPD Group. Mr. Darwish said his group of engineers has experience in both the public and private sectors. He said they have worked with ODOT and have experience in obtaining funding for various cities. The GPD Group, which presented to the city on behalf of the Coral redevelopment, has worked in the city for various projects over the past decade which included the Solon Central Park project. The firm is city engineer for 14 northeast Ohio communities and traffic engineers in both Independence and Wadsworth.

Mr. Hobbs said he worked for the City of Akron and dealing with the public, and he has been involved with the private sector such as public affairs and planning commissions for residential communities.

Mr. Ryan Gillespie said he has worked with GPD Group for two years, and 8 years total in the Engineering field. He is involved in traffic studies and operations such as signal designs, and 2-D and 3-D Simulations which are both effective visual tools to show what a future project will look like. He has experience in field operations and implementations of traffic signals.

Councilman Kraus asked Mr. Hobbs what his analysis would be in addressing the 91 Corridor and the exit off 422 during rush hour. He recommends adjusting the traffic signals and also taking a look at the interchange design options. He suggested the Diversion Diamond Interchange design option where traffic drives in the wrong direction forcing all left turns to be eliminated, thus, creating only right turns so they are unopposed. By doing so, greatly increases the capacity of the interchanges. He said the interchange at SOM Center Road may be a good candidate for the D.D.I. design option.

Councilman Bell said he was interested in the complex simulations and the D.D.I. simulations as suggested by Mr. Hobbs. Mr. Hobbs said they have had a great deal of success with showing simulations at public meetings as it is a good visual tool. He said the City of Green would be comparable to the City of Solon. Mr. Darwish said his firm, GPD, is experienced in working with the public and helping them understand engineering issues. He said it is the safety of the public that comes first.

Chairman Russo asked Mr. Hobbs and Mr. Darwish how GPD would handle a recommendation from a resident, a council member, or the City administration that may conflict with their professional opinion. Mr. Darwish replied, a good example to discuss would be the roundabout on SOM Center Road in the City of Twinsburg. Mr. Darwish said it is important to remove the emotion behind the request, and convince the public that either the Mayor or Council are in support of the recommendation. He said in Twinsburg, the Mayor and Council were in support of developing a roundabout on Som Center Road, however, there were conflicts with a senior housing home nearby because of another roundabout recently built in the Village of Reminderville. He said there were members of the public that were not in favor of the roundabout in the Village of Reminderville.

Mr. Darwish said that roundabouts are fairly new to the Northeast Ohio Area, and the public initially is against them and usually have many concerns. However, after meeting with the public to educate them on the benefits of having a roundabout by
using visual tools either through 2D or 3D simulation models, etc. the public can see how the flow of traffic and safety issues can improve. He said, in the end the public did support the roundabout after their concerns were addressed. Mr. Darwish said the Mayor of Twinsburg approved the roundabout at Glenwood/SOM Center Road Intersection and the public accepted the project, thus, GPD, will be moving forward with the project.

Councilman Bell asked if Mr. Darwish he was their consultant on the roundabouts. He replied, yes, GPD are the consultants on the SOM Center Road project as the City of Twinsburg has full time City Engineers. Mr. Bell asked if there are plans for two roundabouts between Glenwood Drive and Lisa Lane in Solon and Mr. Darwish replied, yes. Mr. Bell asked if a roundabout at Ethans Green/Meadow Wood is appropriate and necessary, and both replied yes. Mr. Bell said even though there are just developments and that a street doesn’t go through there, Mr. Hobb said yes, putting a roundabout there is a good geometric fit.

Mr. Bell asked if either Mr. Darwish or Mr. Hobbs considered the impact it would have on the City of Solon before making your recommendation or did you suggest to the City of Twinsburg there should be discussions with the City of Solon. Mr. Darwish replied, there is enough distance between them, meaning Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the project, and that the roundabout for Ethans Green/Meadow wood is part of Phase 2, which will involve the City of Solon, which is not in the design process. Mr. Bell stated he has seen pictures of Phase 2, and Mr. Darwish replied; no, only of Phase 1 which includes the Glenwood Drive roundabout has been approved, and that Phase 2 has not been authorized. Mr. Bell asked if it is their recommendation to put a roundabout at the Ethans Green/Meadow Wood location, and Mr. Hobbs replied, yes.

Mr. Hobbs said in regards to Solon’s traffic on Som Center Road the problem is happening in the area of Glenwood Drive where the flow of traffic is two lanes, and the flow of traffic goes to four or five lanes entering or leaving the City of Solon. The roundabouts will provide a continuous flow of traffic as opposed to widening the roads and having traffic signals creating a giant platoon of cars being released at once and heading towards the Pettibone Road Intersection. The roundabouts would have less of an impact of traffic on the City of Solon as it would provide a continuous flow of traffic.

Mr. Bell asked if Mr. Hobbs is under the impression SOM Center Road is five lanes going to Twinsburg, and Mr. Hobbs replied, when Phase 2 is constructed it will be from Glenwood Drive going north having four lanes and two lanes for turning at the interestions. Mr. Darwish clarified it is four lanes, and will be four lanes.

Chairman Russo asked how they would handle strong personalities who feel they have a solution on a subject that was in conflict of their professional recommendation. Mr. Russo asked would you try to work with them, appease them, or would it be stated as your professional opinion. Mr. Darwish replied, it is addressed technically and financially, however, council is the elected official and they will work with the city. They would meet with residents to address their concerns and the safety of the public is important. Mr. Russo asked how they would handle if the members of the Safety Committee were not all in agreement. Mr. Darwish said every situation is different; however, they would look at the technical,
financial, and safety issues. He said the safety of the public is important as well as the members of the committee, and they serve the public.

Mr. Bell asked Mr. Darwish how he would handle the conflict of interest between the City of Solon and the City of Twinsburg regarding the roundabouts. Mr. Darwish asked what the concerns were because there were public meetings and to the best of his knowledge he was not aware of an elected official from the City of Solon who had a conflict of interest on the project.

Chairman Russo said for example, if Solon were to hire GPD as their traffic engineer, and you are already a consultant for the City of Twinsburg how would you address the areas of concern for the City of Solon. Mr. Darwish replied, he would need to meet with Solon and review their concerns. He said if there are safety issues with the City of Solon then he would have to go back to the City of Twinsburg but without knowing exactly what they are now it is hard to address Mr. Russo’s question.

Chairman Russo asked to hear comments from the Engineering Staff before going into the executive session and said the committee will not be making a selection following the executive session.

Mr. Ryan Maver, commented that Mr. Kevin Westbrooks has been very helpful, dependable, and easy to work with on various projects for the Solon Engineering Department. Mr. John Busch commented all three consulting firms are qualified and he would be willing to work any one of them. He said the current contract with URS is written until the end of the month of April, 2013 with actual dollar amounts ending at the end of the month of February, 2013. He said URS will extend their contract on a month to month basis if need be. He reminded the committee that this process selection is a quality based selection. Chairman Russo stated he would like go with the best qualified candidate.

Motion by Councilman Kraus, seconded by Councilman Bell, to move to executive session for discussion to begin at 6:40 p.m.
Roll Call: Aye: Bell, Kraus, Russo
          Nay: None

Motion Carried

Executive session ended, no decision was made and meeting adjourned at 6:53 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna M. Bond, Acting Secretary