

In the Pipeline for the PSJRA

Last week we received encouraging news from the USDA regarding the PSJRA's request for funds to improve Williams Avenue. For those keeping track, the cost for this project is \$179,000 and will provide several improvements to the street: constructing a sidewalk from Second to Fifth, adding and delineating parking spaces, addressing the drainage problems during rain events, and providing green space and streetscape. The work is scheduled to commence in the late summer and complete by the end of the year.

Williams Avenue is a wonderful district with emerging businesses, both retail and service. I would like to express appreciation to each business who contributed their time and effort toward this grant. They provided letters of support as well as additional documentation required by the USDA. The care and enthusiasm went a long way in preparing a (tentatively) successful application.

We would like to, once again, express appreciation to the City of Port St Joe for including the PSJRA in a grant-subscription service, enabling us to monitor availability of grants daily, both statewide and nationally. Last week, we located a grant that is available to nonprofit organizations, and I immediately called Jim Garth, Chair of the Waterfronts Partnership (a 501(c)(3)). We discussed the opportunities for partnering, and Waterfronts is enthusiastic to engage with the PSJRA in this effort to request funds for improvements to Martin Luther King Boulevard. A second component for this request would be hiring an economic-development professional to provide one-on-one economic development and planning for redevelopment-area businesses. Details and public meetings to this end will be forthcoming.

We recognize that the 98 corridor between First and Fifth is a top priority for many reasons (not the least of which is the scheduled state improvements to 98 in this area) and will be the next area of focus for enhancement and the elimination of detractors.

With the new city leaders in place, we would like to warmly welcome Commissioner Stephens, Commissioner White and Mayor Magidson. We applaud Mayor Magidson's promise to "Work together to make the changes needed to make this city one we are proud to call our home." We have challenges ahead and we have more needs than we can fund. As "CC" Holloman of the Legacy Community Initiative states, "There is enough when you share. When you don't share, there is never enough." We would be wise to add the words "communicate" and "coordinate" to the mix. As we all come to the table, our ability to accomplish is magnified. As much as we would like to improve everything all at once, comprehensive planning and coordinated implementation will get us there...but only over time. That's why common and shared goals need to be the focus, rather than each special interest demanding priority at every moment.

So take an interest, and be sure to show up at the workshop on visual preferences (as part of the development of design guidelines) this Friday. After attending the same presentation, Mayor Magidson indicated that this is extremely important, and more people should have the opportunity to share their opinions. Please come to the Fire Station at Noon on Friday, June 20 to view designs and cast your vote. It will take a mere half-hour, and feel free to bring your own lunch.

The PSJRA Advisory Committee will meet on Thursday, July 5, at 7 PM at the Washington Gym. The PSJRA Board of Directors' regular meeting will be held on

Thursday, July 12, at 5 PM at the Fire Station. Questions or comments? Please email me at gail@CelebratePortSaintJoe.com or call at 850-229-6899.