Minutes
Master Campus Facilities Planning Committee
June 26, 2008
TCC 228
3 pm

1. **Words of Appreciation**
   Dr. Conville thanked Tricia Linton and Sheri Rawls for their help setting up the meeting and listserv. He also thanked Mary Beth Applin for agreeing to be the committee’s secretary this year.

2. **Approval of Agenda**
   Agenda was approved unanimously with the addition of one item “5c. Design Review Committee Report.”

3. **New Business**
   a. **Listserv** - Dr. Conville reported that the closed listserv for the committee members is up and running ([mcfp@usm.edu](mailto:mcfp@usm.edu)). Members were asked during the meeting to identify themselves if they had not received listserv email confirmation. Sid Gonsoulin reported that he has not yet been added. Mary Beth Applin has notified Sheri Rawls to add Sid.

   b. **Q & A** - There were no questions or comments from members about the list.

4. **Old Business - Proposal on Electronic Billboard**
   a. **Presentation** – Chief Financial Officer Joe Morgan introduced to the committee the second presentation of a proposal for an “Electronic Billboard.” Mike Herndon and David Bounds gave the Powerpoint presentation on the proposal and answered questions from the committee.

   b. **Discussion** - The committee discussed the proposal at length.

   c. **Vote** - The vote “Shall the MCFP committee recommend the proposed project (an electronic billboard at Hardy Street and 31st Avenue) to President Saunders?” yielded a count of 10 nays and 2 ayes. A list of concerns and considerations were written and will be submitted to Dr. Saunders with the vote [see Appendix 1].
5. Other items of business
   a. Housekeeping issues
      None at this time.

   b. Procedural issues
      None at this time.

   c. Design Review Committee Report
      Sid Gonsoulin will send the report of the last DRC meeting to committee members via the new listserv.

6. Adjournment
   Meeting was adjourned at 5:05pm.

**Members present:**
Mary Beth Applin, Secretary
Pattie Brantley
Rita Hailey Burke
Dick Conville, Chair
Skeeter Dixon
Cynthia Easterling
Suzy Hebert
Bob Hopkins
Sid Krhut
Mike Pruitt
Dawn Smith
Diane Stark
Fred Varnado
La'Keylah White
Sheri Rawls

**Guests:**
David Bounds
Mike Herndon
Joe Morgan
Rusty Postlewate

**Ex-Officio members present:**
Sid Gonsoulin

**Members absent:**
Ken Busby
Melissa Cirino
Chris Crenshaw
Margaret Firth
Angie Godwin
Lisa Reid
David Walker
Appendix 1

To: Martha D. Saunders, President
    The University of Southern Mississippi

From: Richard L. Conville, Chair
       Master Campus Facilities Plan Committee

Re: A Proposal from Joseph Morgan, CFO

Date: July 7, 2008

The Committee met on Thursday, June 26 at 3:00 p.m. in TCC 228

Mr. Morgan, Mr. Bounds and Mr. Herndon made their presentation and afterward responded to many questions. After that portion of the meeting the Committee engaged in its own deliberations (Presenters were informed they were welcome to stay if they liked, but they chose to excuse themselves).

After a thorough discussion that lasted over an hour, the Committee voted on the question: Shall the MCFP committee recommend the proposed project (an electronic billboard at Hardy Street and 31st Avenue) to President Saunders? The vote was 2 in favor of recommending and 10 not in favor (that is 12 votes, whereas 14 members were in attendance [out of a total voting membership of 22]); the Chair did not vote, and one member had to leave shortly before the vote).

The Committee requested that the chair convey the concerns they voiced about the project. These concerns reflect the Committee’s discussion apart from its final vote.

Concerns related directly to the Master Campus Facilities Plan

1. Location and size of the sign. A number of issues coalesced under this heading.

   a. Thirty-first Avenue and Hardy Street is one of the five major gateways into the campus designated in the Master Plan (see p. 61 under the heading Connect to the Community). How shall we mark these gateways, specifically this one? With a large commercial billboard? It seems out of character for one of the three comprehensive institutions of higher learning in the state. Planning Principle 3 (p. 43) states: Create and Promote Environments for Learning, Research and Social Engagement.

   b. On that same p. 61 is indicated a plan that has been in process for several years for a mixed use area that encompasses 31st Avenue to Hwy 49 and Hardy Street to Arlington Loop: single family and multi-family residential, condos, professional offices, restaurants, clubs, small businesses—an area that is pedestrian friendly, well lighted, attractive and safe. Such an area would have the potential to become a destination for work and entertainment, an economic engine for the immediate area and for the city as
well as an attractive addition to the broader University-Medical district. Three meetings have been held in the last year among university, hospital and clinic representatives, city and county planners, the Hattiesburg mayor, a Forrest County supervisor, neighborhood association representatives and major land owners in the area. Such a billboard would be inconsistent with these plans, plans that are being written into the city’s new Comprehensive Plan (to be completed this summer) as an overlay district.

c. Were the University subject to city ordinances, no billboards of any kind would be allowed at the corner of 31st Avenue and Hardy Street. The zoning would not allow them. The billboards that do appear along Hardy between 31st and Highway 49 were grandfathered under the land code of 1989. The City’s vision for that portion of Hardy Street is that of the small town or village, pedestrian friendly and small of scale with ample green space (in contrast, for example, to Hardy Street starting at 34th Avenue and going west).

d. A final issue under the heading of size and location is that the neighborhood most directly affected was not informed of such plans or brought into the planning process. The neighborhood is represented in the city by the University Heights Neighborhood Association. To many on the Committee, this was the most important concern. In any case, the Master Plan is rife with the assumption, both explicitly and implicitly stated, that the University should not act alone but should be keenly aware of its connection to the community in which it resides and the effects of its actions on the surrounding neighborhoods and the city as a whole.

2. Planning Principles specifically. I’ve mentioned Planning Principle 3 above. Two other Planning Principles concerned the Committee:

**Planning Principle 2:** Extend and Enhance the Character of the Campus through the Contextual Design of Future Buildings and Open Spaces (p. 43)

A concern of the Committee was that an electronic billboard does not “extend and enhance the character of the campus,” but rather is foreign to and contradicts the existing “character of the campus.” For example, imagine a family coming with their son or daughter for a campus visit. They are driving east on Hardy intending to enter the campus at 31st. As they approach this campus gateway, they encounter a large electronic billboard. But they are not turning in to a shopping mall, but rather entering a place of “learning, research and social engagement” (PP #3, p. 43). The key question is how the University wants to present itself to its publics.

**Planning Principle 1:** Protect Historic Open Spaces and Buildings (p. 43)

A concern of the Committee was the proximity of 31st and Hardy to the historic core of the campus. Brett Fare could throw a football from that corner to George Hurst, a historic building, and nearly to College Hall. How close is too close? For example, if Central Park were 80 acres instead of 800 acres, it would not be the refuge that it is from New York’s rush and racket, a place of solitude and peace. (The same concern goes for the
neighborhood [see above, 1.a. & d., *Connect to the Community*]. Parts of the neighborhood have been in place over 50 years, newer parts over 30 years. “Historic” suggests longevity, stability and durability. The neighborhood is “historic” and therefore worthy of respect. The University must be sensitive to who and what it intrudes upon.) Other Concerns that the Committee deemed relevant

3. Safety

Another concern of the committee was the potential for the sign to distract drivers on Hardy Street, already a high traffic area. With 8 small signs on a side each changing every 8 seconds, all in bright, full color, driver inattention to driving is quite possible and could be dangerous.

4. Cash Flow

Another concern was that all the costs, e. g., for electricity to run the billboard daily and for taking power to the site, had not been factored in to the projected revenue. Therefore the projected revenue was over-estimated.

5. Depiction of the sign in the presentation

The billboard, as depicted in the power point presentation to the Committee (it was explained when questioned), was about half the size it would be in reality. The depiction was not drawn to scale. The height, it was explained, would be approximately the same as the street light pole that stands behind the billboard, i. e., about 30 feet. In its actual size, the proposed billboard would dominate the corner of Hardy Street and 31st Avenue and the surrounding area.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard L. Conville, Chair
Master Campus Facilities Plan Committee