

URBANA TRAFFIC COMMISSION
Tuesday, November 10, 2015

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Craig Shonkwiler, Assistant City Engineer
Pat Connolly, Police Chief, Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT BY PHONE:

Michael Madigan, City Council Member, Ward 6

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

OTHERS PRESENT:

Pat Shae, 708 West Florida Avenue
Gary Shae, 708 West Florida Avenue
John Collins, Operations Manager
Itai Seggev, 410 West Florida Avenue
Christine Schuetz, 612 West Florida Avenue
Phil Gable, 407 East McHenry Street
Bill Gray, Public Works Director

The meeting began at 4:00 p.m. Pat Connolly assumed the chair.

Approval of Minutes:

Craig Shonkwiler moved to approve the minutes of the October 13, 2015 meeting. Michael Madigan seconded the motion. The Commission voted 3-0 to approve the minutes of the October meeting.

Additions to the agenda:

There were no additions to the meeting.

Public Input

Those wishing to provide input preferred to do so at the time the topic was discussed.

Unfinished Business

Item #1- Update on the sign policy.

Craig Shonkwiler reviewed additional modifications made to the draft sign policy as a result of recommendations made at the last meeting of the Traffic Commission. He stated that examples of

specific types of roadway signage, references to MUTCD, the Local Traffic Code and Urbana Public Works Department Policy and Procedure Manual, and actions required by the Urbana Traffic Commission had been included in the policy. He said that the policy will be helpful for the Traffic Commission when dealing with traffic issues. He recommended that the sign policy be posted on the City's website once approved.

Mr. Shonkwiler moved to approve the sign policy as presented.

Michael Madigan seconded the motion.

The motion was approved 3-0.

John Collins asked if the policy addressed on-street accessibly parking and not accessible parking in parking lots.

Craig Shonkwiler said that the sign policy only addressed on-street signage.

Item #2- Request for the installation of parking restrictions on the north side of Florida Avenue between Race Street and Busey Avenue.

Craig Shonkwiler explained that after the October Traffic Commission meeting, he assessed the condition of the pavement to determine if another configuration with vehicle lanes and parking could be installed on Florida Avenue between Race Street and Busey Avenue. After looking at the south edge of the pavement, Mr. Shonkwiler determined that the distressed areas on the south side of Florida Avenue were greater than the patched areas and the pavement could not withstand the continued use of vehicles. He stated that if vehicles continued to use the south side of Florida Avenue, the resulting damage could require that the road be completely blocked to all traffic. He explained that to preserve the pavement, it was recommended that the current 12-foot lanes be reduced to 11-foot lanes; parking on the north side be removed temporarily until permanent repairs could be made; and five-foot buffers be installed on the north and south sides of Florida Avenue. He said that the buffering was added to the north side to keep westbound vehicles from travelling on the north side next to the curb, which would limit visibility for those pulling out of driveways along Florida Avenue. He added that some minor repairs would be required.

Pat Connolly asked how that buffer would be identified.

Craig Shonkwiler said that hashed line would be painted in the buffered area.

Bill Gray said that the area would not be designated or striped as a bike lane.

Pat Shae asked how much it would cost to do temporary repairs on the street and how long the temporary repairs would last.

Mr. Shonkwiler said the repairs would not be intended for traffic uses. He added that the temporary repairs that the temporary repairs would cost at least \$100,000.

John Collins said that the patches last for a long time, but the edges of the road near the patches would continue to deteriorate along the edges of the pavement.

Craig Shonkwiler stated that the outside edges of the street were not built to new road standards.

Christine Schuetz asked if bus traffic could be re-routed to nearby streets.

Bill Gray said that Florida Avenue was built to handle more traffic than the nearby residential street. He stated that moving bus traffic to other streets that were not built to handle the heavier traffic would result in additional deterioration on other streets.

Ms. Schuetz asked if there would be room on the street to help those backing out of their driveways.

Mr. Shonkwiler said that if traffic were to be moved to the center of Florida Avenue, there would be a buffer that would allow motorists pulling out of their driveways to see traffic when pulling out.

Ms. Shae expressed concern about a major street not having parking.

Mr. Gray explained that the parking restrictions would be temporary for multiple years, but that the plan was not intended to completely eliminate parking.

Craig Shonkwiler recommended including the words, "temporary removal of parking," in the ordinance.

Mr. Gray said that the project was not included in the Capital Improvement Plan, but City staff would look aggressively for any federal and state funds that might be used for this type of project. He stated that with limited local dollars it would be difficult to complete the project on Florida Avenue within the next three years.

Mr. Shonkwiler said that a preliminary review of the project revealed that there was a lack of drainage on Florida Avenue. He said that the drainage work would be very expensive. He added to Mr. Gray's discussion regarding the limited local dollars by saying that the local gas tax went toward the bond for the Windsor Road project, which reduced money to be spent on other local projects. He stated that the public could address the City Council when the CIP was brought before the Council next spring.

Mrs. Shae asked if the entire width of Florida Avenue between Busey Avenue and Race Street was constructed at the same time.

Mr. Shonkwiler said that it appeared as though the roadway was widened and the outside lanes were installed after the center of the roadway was constructed. He stated that the outside area was a weaker layer than the center of the roadway.

John Collins said that any money invested in patching the outside area of the roadway would be lost as the outside of the roadway was in poor condition.

Itai Seggev stated that political level should not overrule professional level and that he thought that directing traffic to the center of Florida Avenue would be the best solution. He asked if eliminating bus traffic or placing weight restrictions would help slow the deterioration of the roadway instead of eliminating parking.

Mr. Shonkwiler said that the repetitive traffic in general was detrimental to the life of the pavement, but redirecting bus traffic would place busses on streets not constructed for that type of traffic.

Mr. Seggev asked when the changes were to be made.

Mr. Shonkwiler replied that if the Traffic Commission recommended the removal of parking, the ordinance would go the City Council on Monday, November 16, 2015, at 7:00 p.m. He added that staff would like to have the street striped before the onset of winter.

Gary Shae thanked the commission for listening to input from last meeting and considering different alternatives. He said that he contacted a majority of residents within his block along the area of Florida Avenue. Mr. Shae said that the residents would prefer parking on the south side. He said they were concerned about moving traffic to the north side of Florida Avenue.

Ms. Shae said that the neighbors were concerned that the parking would not be returned.

Mr. Gray stated that if parking were moved to the south side of Florida Avenue, then the traffic would be along the north curb of Florida Avenue. He said that the recommendation was to move traffic to the center of Florida Avenue and to remove parking on the north side. He confirmed that the removal of parking on the north side of Florida Avenue was a temporary action to occur until repairs could be made to the street from Busey Avenue to Race Street.

Mr. Collins added that the intent was to return parking, but until then, a buffer was needed to provide a safe roadway for travel and for pulling out of driveways.

Mr. Seggev felt that allowing a buffer on the north side would be better than allowing parking on the south side and moving traffic up to the curb on the north side.

Mr. Shonkwiler stated that staff did not wish to have traffic next to the curb on the north side since visibility for those pulling out of driveways on the north side would be limited by that configuration.

Chief Connolly agreed that the ordinance should include language to indicate that the parking restrictions on the north side of Florida Avenue would be temporary until construction could be scheduled for Florida Avenue between Busey Avenue and Race Street.

Michael Madigan sympathized with the residents and suggested that those who wanted to discuss the parking restrictions could address the item before the City Council when the item was brought to them for consideration on November 16, 2015. He agreed that the inclusion of language that the restrictions were temporary.

Craig Shonkwiler moved to temporarily restrict parking on the north side of Florida Avenue between Busey Avenue and Race Street and that parking be restored when construction was completed at a later date.

Michael Madigan seconded the motion.

The motion was approved 3-0.

This item will go to Council for consideration.

Ms. Shae wanted to have this construction prioritized and asked how she could get that done.

Mr. Gray said that she could attend the City Council meeting when the Capital Improvement Plan was discussed before the Council and offer input at that time.

New Business

Item #3- Discussion of traffic concerns on Windsor Road between Philo Road and Race Street.

Phil Gable discussed his concerns about the safety for residents crossing Windsor Road to access Meadowbrook Park. He conceded that there was a median to reduce the area for crossing Windsor Road, but he felt that vehicles were travelling too fast to allow for a safe crossing. He suggested a four-way stop to slow traffic and wanted to know if there were other solutions that might avoid future accidents.

Craig Shonkwiler stated that Windsor Road was the major road on the south side of Urbana designed to carry a large volume of traffic along the east/west corridor. He explained that various options for the treatment of the intersection had been studied using guidelines and national standards. He said that consultants had looked at the intersection and there had not been enough volume of pedestrians to recommend a specific solution. He continued by stating that the intersection did not meet the standards to warrant the installation of a four-way stop at Windsor Road and Vine Street. He explained that the City had adopted guidelines to provide consistent messages to those using the roadways in Urbana. Mr. Shonkwiler said that if those standards were not applied, the City could be exposed to liability and breed indifference from the public. He stated that the City had been working with a consultant for solutions and the consultant recommended installing rectangular rapid flash beacons (RRFB), which could be activated by pedestrians to provide additional warning to motorists as pedestrians crossed Windsor Road. He added that studies had shown that the RRFBs were effective at locations with traffic similar to that at Windsor Road and Vine Street. He mentioned that traffic signals were being installed at the intersection of Windsor Road and Race Street, which would provide pedestrian count-down timers for crossing the intersection. He emphasized that the City did not want to encourage mid-block crossings by installing crosswalks at other locations on Windsor Road and mid-block ramps were removed as part of the construction. In response to the concern about speeding on Windsor Road, Mr.

Shonkwiler said that the speed trailer had been set along Windsor Road periodically to remind motorists of the speed limit. He said that the speed trailers had been effective in reminding motorists how fast they were travelling.

Mr. Gable said that he would not allow his children to go to the park by themselves. He hoped that the solution would allow residents to use the park more often since he felt it was difficult to get to the park. He added that he did not understand why there were traffic signals at the Meijer's entrance and not signals at Windsor Road and Vine Street.

Mr. Shonkwiler further explained that Meijer's was a large generator of traffic and that the volume out of Meijer was much greater than the volume from Meadowbrook Park and Vine Street. He mentioned that the current 30-mile-per-hour speed limit on Windsor Road between Race Street and Vine Street was installed because the location was a construction area. He said that after construction was completed, the posted speed limit would be 40 miles per hour, as it was prior to construction. He commented that posting a speed limit lower than what a speed study would recommend would result in speed limits being disregarded. He further explained the process for establishing speed limits. Mr. Shonkwiler explained the difference between neighborhood parks and regional parks. He added that neighborhood parks were located within residential areas, offered very limited parking and were most often used by those who lived in close proximity to the park. With regional parks, Mr. Shonkwiler explained that those parks were designed to provide recreation for the entire community. He said that regional parks, such as Meadowbrook Park, were not typically located within a residential area, provided off-street parking and were most often frequented by those both within and beyond the immediate area.

Pat Connolly stated that for those who were concerned about the safety of crossing Windsor Road at Vine Street, there would be a controlled intersection at Windsor Road and Race Street.

Bill Gray said that the signals on Windsor Road at Race Street and at Philo Road might provide gaps in traffic at Vine Street, which would make crossing at Vine Street easier.

Mr. Shonkwiler said that once the RRFBs are installed, the City would continue to monitor traffic along Windsor Road and that he would appreciate feedback from those crossing that intersection.

With no other business at hand, the meeting was adjourned at 5:02 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled Traffic Commission meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 8, 2015, at 4:00 p.m. at the Urbana Public Works Department, 706 South Glover Avenue, second floor conference room.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Stiehl
Recording Secretary