

URBANA TRAFFIC COMMISSION
Tuesday, November 12, 2013

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Michael Madigan, City Council Member, Ward 6, Chair
Joe Smith, Senior Civil Engineer
Pat Connolly, Police Chief

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

OTHERS PRESENT:

Craig Shonkwiler, Senior Civil Engineer
Steve Summers, 24 Montclair Road
Nicole Allen, 23 Montclair Road
Chris Menard, 23 Montclair Road
John Collins, Operations Manager
Diane Marlin, City Council Member, Ward 7
Peter Hood, 1303 East McHenry Street

The meeting began at 4:07 p.m.

Additions to the agenda:

There were no additions to the agenda.

Approval of Minutes:

Pat Connolly moved to approve the minutes of the October 8, 2013 meeting. Craig Shonkwiler, as representative in Mr. Smith's absence last month, seconded the motion. The Commission voted 3-0 to approve the minutes of the meeting.

Public Input

Nicole Allen discussed her concerns about speeding vehicles on Montclair Road. She said that vehicles were going over 30 miles per hour and using Montclair Road as a through street between Race Street and Vine Street. She added that there was a steady stream of traffic that had no regard for pedestrian traffic and that there were no streetlights on the street.

Steve Summers said that there had been had been a study conducted in the past and that 30 m.p.h. speed limit signage was installed and temporary traffic enforcement was scheduled. He stated that the problem with speeding vehicles had been an on-going problem.

Unfinished Business

Item #1- Discussion of parking restrictions on Lincoln Avenue from Somer Drive to the end of Lincoln Avenue.

Pat Connolly reviewed concerns about semi trailers parking at the northern end of Lincoln Avenue following an accident that occurred when a motorist ran into a parked trailer. He continued by saying that there were Jersey barriers located at the end of Lincoln Avenue but that the parked semis obscured the view of the barriers and the warning signs.

John Collins mentioned that the semis blocked the No Outlet signage located to the north of the Saline Court intersection.

Craig Shonkwiler summarized the October meeting where moving the Jersey barriers south to the northern edge of the Saline Court intersection was recommended. He suggested that parking restrictions be considered after the extension of Lincoln Avenue to Olympian Drive was completed.

John Collins felt that the street markings on Lincoln Avenue indicated there were two lanes of traffic with no parking so vehicles parked there would be parked in traffic lanes.

Pat Connolly stated that it would be important to communicate that parking was not allowed before beginning to issue tickets. He expressed concern that restricting parking on Lincoln Avenue would move the problem to another area.

Michael Madigan suggested contacting Super Value staff to ask them to discourage drivers from parking on Lincoln Avenue.

Pat Connolly said that having the area north of the Saline Court intersection open for traffic made truck drivers comfortable parking there. He recommended moving the Jersey barriers to restrict parking on Lincoln Avenue to the north of Saline Court.

Michael Madigan asked if restricting the use of Lincoln Avenue would impact farmers or other property owners by eliminating access to that section of Lincoln Avenue.

Joe Smith stated that there would be no impact to other property owners.

Craig Shonkwiler said that Joe Smith and he would assess the signage needs on Lincoln Avenue. He asked if the installation of parking restrictions would require Council action.

Barb Stiehl said that the parking restrictions would require Council action, but that the Public Works Director had the ability to perform experimental traffic control for a 90-day trial period.

Pat Connolly recommended having parking restrictions posted on a temporary basis, if approved by the Public Works Director, in combination with adding more warning signage and moving the Jersey barriers to the south, which would be to the north of the Saline Court intersection.

Joe Smith agreed and asked that the barriers be relocated to allow room for vehicles to turn around

Pat Connolly said that an officer would ask Super Value representatives to recommend that drivers not park on Lincoln Avenue while waiting to enter their facility.

Michael Madigan asked if left-turn only signage could be installed.

Craig Shonkwiler stated that usually that signage was used where there was a dedicated lane for left-turns only, which would not be the case at this location.

Pat Connolly moved to request temporary parking restrictions on Lincoln Avenue through the Public Works Director, install additional warning signage, and relocate the Jersey barriers to the south.

Joe Smith seconded the motion.

The motion was passed 3-0.

Barb Stiehl asked if this would come back to the Traffic Commission after 90 days.

Michael Madigan asked if the Public Works Director could take the recommendation directly to Council if the restrictions were working.

Craig Shonkwiler suggested relocating the Jersey barriers without implementing the parking restrictions and wait until the entire project on Lincoln Avenue was completed to Olympian Drive before recommending the parking restrictions.

Pat Connolly agreed to wait on the parking restriction.

Joe Smith said that relocating the Jersey barriers would not require Council consideration.

The Traffic Commission approved moving Item #4 ahead of Items #2 and #3 on the agenda.

Item #2- Discussion of a speed study on Montclair Road.

Joe Smith summarized the results of the speed study conducted between the dates of October 29, 2013 and November 6, 2013, excluding Saturday and Sunday, on Montclair Road. He reported that there was a total of 2,368 vehicles during that time, which was equal to 395 vehicles per day. He added that the average speed was 27.9 miles per hour; the 85 percentile was 34.4 miles per hour; the maximum speed was recorded as 57.7 miles per hour; most vehicles over the speed limit were travelling 40 miles per hour. Mr. Smith stated that traffic speeds were at their worst between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m., with 125 vehicles travelling over 30 miles per hour, followed by the hours between 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. and between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00

p.m. He said that those times were typical hours for speeding with traffic travelling to and from work.

Chris Menard asked if the city would close Montclair Road.

Joe Smith said that the city had looked at various options before, but the residents were not in favor of any options for which they would have to pay. He added that the city used available tools, such as posting speed limit signage, setting the speed trailer on the street and assigning STEP (Strategic Traffic Enforcement Patrol) to enforce speed limits. He stated that closing the street would move traffic problems to other streets.

Barb Stiehl said that the closure would impact emergency response times.

Joe Smith indicated that a chicane had been discussed before to reduce the width of the road in certain locations as a way to reduce speeds, but the residents on the street were not in favor of paying for the project.

Nicole Allen mentioned that parking her car on Montclair Road had created a similar situation with vehicles slowing down to move around the parked vehicle. She felt that Montclair Road was less equipped to handle pedestrian traffic than other streets since there were no sidewalks on the street. She asked about the cost for installing a chicane.

Mr. Menard asked if the city would install speed bumps.

Joe Smith stated that the city did not install speed bumps because they slowed the response time for emergency vehicles and winter maintenance and created a liability issue for the city.

Steve Summers asked if the city could consider a traffic calming device similar to one used on Mayfair Drive in Champaign.

Joe Smith stated that the City of Champaign had a policy in place with criteria for installing traffic calming devices, which the City of Urbana did not have.

Michael Madigan asked if staff could research the policy.

Joe Smith said that he would check on the policy.

Michael Madigan asked if there was an annual budget for traffic calming devices.

Ms. Allen stated that she was less concerned about the sidewalks and more concerned about the vehicle speeds and motorists' visibility since there was a hill in the middle of Montclair Road.

Pat Connolly asked if reducing the posted speed limit would solve the speeding problem since motorists slowed down in school zones.

Barb Stiehl pointed out that with children present, motorists saw the reason for slowing down and that there would not be a visible reason for motorists to travel slower in those areas.

Joe Smith stated that national studies indicated that motorists travel as fast as they feel conditions allow, regardless of posted speed limits.

Pat Connolly concluded by saying that it was more effective to control conditions than to control speed limits.

Joe Smith explained that the chicane would change the conditions, which would cause the motorists to change their speeds.

Diane Marlin asked if markings could be painted on the streets to create the illusion of traffic lanes being narrow. She suggested painting the streets to show parking spaces, similar to striping used for bicycle lanes, as a way to slow traffic.

Joe Smith mentioned that the width of Montclair Road would prohibit marking parking on both sides of the street. He continued by saying that the chicane would require parking restrictions for approximately three properties on each side of the street where the traffic control devices would be located. Mr. Smith said that the chicane would allow emergency vehicles to travel in the middle of the chicane to somewhat lessen the impact of time delays caused by reducing the width of the traffic lanes.

Michael Madigan asked if the plan for the chicanes on Montclair Road could be revisited, including the costs.

Joe Smith said that the chicane would be a more permanent feature. He said that he would look into pricing for installing two chicanes on Montclair Road.

Nicole Allen asked where the chicanes would be located.

Mr. Smith said that he would need to study the street since the location of the chicanes would eliminate on-street parking spaces for approximately three properties. He added that as part of the design work, he would need to look at drainage on the streets and driveways.

Steve Summers said that police presence was helpful. He recommended the use of the driveway at 23 Montclair Road for the police car to park while running an enforcement detail.

Pat Connolly said that STEP could be assigned on Montclair Road and McHenry Street, but he said that resources are limited.

Mr. Summers asked if the city used photo enforcement.

Chief Connolly explained that communities within certain counties, including Champaign County, were not allowed to use photo enforcement.

Craig Shonkwiler asked if the Police Department could use the speed trailer.

Pat Connolly said that the Police Department would use the speed trailer and enforcement.

Diane Marlin asked if there had been any accidents on these streets.

Joe Smith and Pat Connolly said that they were aware of none.

Ms. Allen asked if lowering the speed limit would increase the fine that had to be paid.

Pat Connolly explained that the motorist would have to travel 21 miles or more over the speed limit to receive a higher fine for speeding. He added that there was only one vehicle that would have been within that category.

Mr. Menard asked if the city would install Children at Play signage.

Joe Smith stated that the city does not install Children at Play signage since studies have shown that the signage was not effective in reducing speeds or in increasing awareness of motorists when driving in residential areas.

Nicole Allen asked if signage for special needs children could be installed.

Mr. Smith stated that signage for blind and deaf children had been installed. He added that he would look at the possibility of conducting a study to determine if there was any significant reduction in speeding by posting the speed limit temporarily at 25 miles per hour.

Pat Connolly believed that the reduction of the speed limit in the University District reduced speeds.

Nicole Allen asked if the neighbors on Montclair Road could see the estimate for the installation of chicanes.

Michael Madigan asked Joe Smith to look into the estimate for the chicanes and to report to the commission.

Item #3- Discussion of a speed study on Mumford Drive.

Mr. Smith reviewed the results of the speed study conducted between the dates of October 29, 2013 and November 6, 2013, excluding Saturday and Sunday, on Mumford Drive, west of Cottage Grove Avenue. He said that there was a total of 3,976 vehicles travelling on Mumford Drive during that time, which is an average of 660 vehicles per day. He stated that the average speed was 25.4 miles per hour; the 85 percentile was 31.5 miles per hour; the maximum speed recorded was 50.8 miles per hour. He added that the worst time period for speeding was between 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. He summarized that speeding on Mumford Drive was not too bad with fairly low violation rates. He concluded that the school speed limit nearby impacted the traffic speeds in the morning.

Item #4- Discussion of a speed study on McHenry Street.

Joe Smith discussed the results of the speed study conducted on McHenry Street, east of Pond Street, at Wheatfield Park for two days. He said that the total number of vehicles was 1,292 or 646 vehicles per day. He mentioned that the average number of vehicles had increased by 90 since the opening of the Meijer's store six years ago. He continued by stating that the average speed was 28.5 miles per hours; the 85 percentile was 34.2 miles per hours; and the maximum speed was 49.8 miles per hour. He noted that the worst times for speeding were between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m., and 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Smith recommended STEP and the installation of the speed trailer in the different locations (locations discussed in items #2, #3, and #4) during the worst time frames on these three streets.

New Business

Item #5- Discussion of school zone signage for Circle Academy on Division Street.

Barb Stiehl discussed a request for school zone signage for Circle Academy on Division Street. She mentioned that the city had installed similar signage for other private schools, such as Canaan Academy and Little Hearts and Hands.

Pat Connolly said that there would be no need to install signage about cell phone restrictions since hand-held cell phone use would be restricted for all after January 1, 2014.

Joe Smith moved to install school zone signage for Circle Academy on Division Street.

Pat Connolly seconded the motion.

The motion was approved 3-0.

This item does not require Council action.

Item #6- Discussion of the installation of stop signs on Walnut Street at High Street.

An employee from Health Alliance had sent a request for the city to look at the possibility of installing a 4-way stop at the southeast corner of Lincoln Square Village (Walnut Street at High Street).

Joe Smith mentioned that there were stop signs on High Street at Walnut Street.

Michael Madigan said that the location of the loading dock and the dumpster on the northwest end of the intersection made it difficult for southbound traffic to see.

Joe Smith stated that the lack of sidewalk area would make it difficult to locate signs. He recommended setting up cameras to monitor the traffic at that intersection and then determine what action would be helpful to control traffic.

Michael Madigan asked the recording secretary to notify the Health Alliance employee of the action.

The meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on December 10, 2013 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