

URBANA TRAFFIC COMMISSION
Tuesday, March 6, 2007

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dennis Roberts, City Council Member
Mike Bily, Chief of Police
Joe Smith, Senior Civil Engineer

OTHERS PRESENT:

Shawn Crowley, Parking Enforcement
William Gray, Public Works Director
James P. Quisenberry, 209 Pell Circle

The meeting began at 4:03 p.m.

Additions to the agenda:

There were no additions to the agenda.

Approval of Minutes:

Dennis Roberts asked that under, "Additions to the agenda," the second sentence be changed to read, [Mike Bily requested that Item #4 be revised to read, "Deaf Child at Play" sign' instead of "Blind Child at Play" sign'.] Mike Bily moved to approve the minutes as corrected. Joe Smith seconded the motion. The Commission voted 3-0 to approve the minutes of the February 2007 meeting as corrected.

Bill Gray asked the Commission if they would move Item #2 ahead of Item #1 so the concerns of Mr. Quisenberry could be heard first.

The Commission agreed to change to order of the agenda.

New Business

Item #2- Discussion of parking on Race Street, south of Florida Avenue.

Joe Smith discussed some concerns that were brought before the Traffic Commission in 2003 regarding commuter parking on Race Street. He said that motorists traveling northbound on Race Street crossed over the center lane to enter into the left turn lane during the peak morning hours. He stated that during that time of the day seemed to be the only time that there was significant congestion. He added that parking was currently allowed along the east side from Meadow Drive to 1706 South Race Street, where the right, center and left turn lanes begin.

Mr. Quisenberry stated that he lived on Pell Circle and while traveling through the intersection on his commute to Champaign was bothered by the traffic backup that went almost to Meadow Drive. He mentioned that the only time he noticed the problem was around 8:00 a.m., Monday to Friday.

Dennis Roberts suggested that parking be eliminated in that area.

Mike Bily asked that the residents impacted by the parking restriction be notified.

James Quisenberry asked if a stop light was planned at that intersection.

Joe Smith stated that a stop light was not planned for the intersection. He stated that he would measure the area. He agreed that the residents should be notified and asked that the item be brought to the April 3rd Traffic Commission meeting for discussion.

Old Business

Item #1 - Discussion of 40 mile-per-hour speed limit on Race Street from Windsor Road to southern City limits.

Bill Gray spoke to the Commission to explain the process for determining appropriate speed limits on City streets. He stated that ignoring the process would make enforcement difficult. Mr. Gray said that the measures used by the Engineering Division to determine speed limits were fairly consistent across the country.

Mike Bily said that he agreed to the suggestion to lower the proposed 40 mile an hour speed limit to 35 miles per hour because he thought the Traffic Engineer could live with that change.

Dennis Roberts stated that he thought Mr. Smyth made compelling arguments that the speed limit should not be set at the recommended 40 miles per hour limit. He stated that Mr. Smyth felt that bicyclists would not be comfortable with traffic traveling at that speed. Mr. Roberts felt that the compromise of a 35 mile an hour speed limit seemed reasonable. He said that he was not sure why the 40 mile an hour speed limit would be consistent. He asked Chief Bily if enforcement of the 35 mile an hour speed limit would be difficult.

Chief Bily said that he did not have the resources to enforce the speed limit in that area except on a complaint basis. He stated that if a speeding concern was expressed, he would address the situation at that time.

Mr. Roberts stated that he felt the arguments were significant.

Mike Bily stated that if there were guidelines used to establish speed limits, then the Commission should follow the guidelines.

Bill Gray stated that setting speed limit too low created problems because motorists would begin to disregard all signage.

Joe Smith stated that he yielded to the two Council members at the February Traffic Commission meeting since he felt that they would only approve a 35 mile an hour speed limit when the recommendation went to Council. He said that he took into account the points mentioned by Mr. Smyth when recommending the 40 mile an hour speed limit.

Mike Bily suggested that approving speed limits established using scientific methods would be appropriate.

Mr. Gray stated that the Council had approved unwarranted signage in the past, but he wanted to make certain that the Commission understood the methodology for establishing speed limits—that it was based upon national standards.

Mike Bily asked why the speed limit change was brought to the Traffic Commission.

Bill Gray stated that a missing speed limit sign was reported and Champaign County asked for a speed study to determine what the signage should be. He added the study recommended a 40 mile an hour speed limit.

Joe Smith moved to approve the 40 mile an hour speed limit on Race Street from south of Windsor Road to the southern City limits.

Mike Bily seconded the motion based upon the outcome of the speed study conducted by the Engineering Division.

Joe Smith added that the report would be submitted along with the recommendation and would show the reasons for reducing the speed limit to 40 miles an hour, such as accidents, driveway approaches, bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

Dennis Roberts stated that he felt the theory of basing speed limits on what the traffic was doing was flawed. He questioned why it would be appropriate to set a speed limit at 90 miles an hour just because the motorists were traveling at that speed.

Mr. Gray stated that there are many factors that are used to determine speed limits in addition to the speed of those using the roadway.

The motion passed 2-1.

This item will go to Council for consideration.

Joe Smith said that as conditions change on any roadway, speed limits may be re-evaluated.

New Business

Item #3- Discussion of “Right Turn Only” lane for southbound traffic on Lincoln Avenue, north of Florida Avenue.

Dennis Roberts mentioned that currently southbound traffic had one left-turn only lane and two through lanes.

Joe Smith stated that the City had received some requests to convert one of the through lanes to a right turn only lane. He noted that a large number of motorists in the far right lane use the lane to make right turns onto Florida Avenue. He added that the traffic patterns would support the recommendation.

Dennis Roberts confirmed that the right lane is basically used for turns onto Florida Avenue.

Joe Smith stated that he favored trying this configuration. He added that if it was successful, the traffic signal could give traffic a green arrow for right turns.

Joe Smith moved to create a right turn only lane for southbound traffic on Lincoln Avenue north of Florida Avenue.

Mike Bily seconded the motion.

Dennis Roberts stated that he thought the change would benefit the traffic pattern.

The motion passed 3-0.

This item does not require Council approval.

Meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

The next meeting will be held April 3, 2007 at 4:00 p.m. at the Urbana City Building, 400 South Vine Street, second floor conference room.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Stiehl
Recording Secretary