

URBANA TRAFFIC COMMISSION
Tuesday, April 1, 2008

MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

OTHERS PRESENT:

Debi Montgerard, 1809 Trails Drive
John Douglas Bassett, 509 West Springfield, Champaign
Brigitte Pieke, 311 West Springfield, Urbana
Jennifer Selby, City of Urbana, Civil Engineer

The meeting began at 4:08 p.m.

Additions to the agenda:

There were no additions to the agenda.

Approval of Minutes:

Joe Smith moved to approve the minutes as read. Dennis Roberts seconded the motion. The Commission voted 2-0 to approve the minutes of the December 2007 meeting.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

Item #1- Discussion of parking in the 300 block of West Springfield Avenue.

Brigitte Pieke stated that when she started her business at 311 West Springfield Avenue, she was under the impression that on-street parking would provide adequate parking for her customers. She mentioned that during the summer her customers had no difficulty finding parking spaces on the street. She noted that once school was in session, residents from the nearby apartments were parked on the street for up to three days at a time. Ms. Pieke said that the underground parking lot provided for renters at a cost was never full. She added that there are additional rental and commercial units under construction at present that would need parking for their tenants and clients.

Joe Smith asked Ms. Pieke when on-street parking was needed for her business.

She said that her business operated from 10:30 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. everyday. She felt that on-street parking was not a problem on week-ends.

Joe Smith said that when he drove by during work hours, there were spaces available.

Dennis Roberts mentioned that the section of Springfield Avenue was popular for those working in downtown Urbana and for those attending the University of Illinois.

Ms. Pieke said that the residences on the north side of Springfield Avenue had an alley that could be used for parking. She asked if parking could be limited to two hours on Springfield Avenue to create more short-term parking for the businesses along Springfield Avenue.

Mr. Smith stated that a parking study was underway in the downtown area and even though it did not immediately impact this area, the Public Works Department was reluctant to restrict parking on Springfield Avenue until the study was completed. He did recommend restricting parking on Birch Street, which runs along the side of the business at 311 West Springfield Avenue, to allow two short-term parking spaces.

Ms. Pieke was concerned about businesses considering locations on Springfield Avenue in the future. She felt that the long-term parking would hinder parking for those wishing to go to those businesses.

Joe Smith moved to restrict parking to two hours from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday on the east side of Birch Street from Springfield Avenue to the alley south of Springfield Avenue.

The motion passed 3-0. This item will go to Council for consideration.

Item #2- Discussion of the enforcement of school speed limits within the school zones.

Joe Smith discussed a concern brought to him by Ms. Montgerard. He explained that Illinois statutes considered the school zone speed limit in effect on school days, which would be 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, when children were present. He further explained that the law stated that if children were behind a fence the school zone speed limit would not be in effect.

Ms. Montgerard mentioned that the locations of the school zones were not very clear near the schools in Urbana.

Mr. Smith said that the City of Urbana had been awarded a grant to add or upgrade 296 signs to improve signage around schools within the city and that the new signage would define the school zones more clearly. He mentioned that this would include signage ahead of each school zone to warn motorists of upcoming school zones.

Jennifer Selby added that eight flashing beacons and electronic speed indicators would be permanently located at Urbana Middle School, Thomas Paine Elementary School, Wiley Elementary School and Prairie Elementary School.

Ms. Montgerard was concerned that many motorists were not clear about when the school zone speed limit was in effect and where the zones began and ended within Urbana. She felt that the phrase, "When children are present," was not clearly understood by law enforcement or by motorists.

Joe Smith stated that the City would be reviewing the signage in front of all Urbana schools to provide uniform signage in front of each school.

Ms. Montgerard asked about the limits of the school zone on Vine Street near Oregon Street.

Joe Smith explained that temporary stop signs were located on Vine Street at Oregon Street in the mid-70's to accommodate students crossing from the east of Vine Street to attend Leal Elementary School. He mentioned that the temporary stop signs are no longer legal under Illinois law so the signs were replaced by school zone signage.

Debi Montgerard suggested that the City find ways to inform motorists how to behave when approaching school zones so they would know when to slow down and when to drive at the posted speed limit.

Jennifer Selby mentioned that it would be beneficial to involve the media once the new signs were installed and old signs moved to provide uniform school zones in Urbana.

No action was taken on this item.

Item #3- Discussion of parking restrictions on the north side of Main Street between Grove Street and Glover Avenue.

Jennifer Selby discussed plans to apply for a grant from the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). She explained that the grant money would be applied to the construction of a bicycle path on the north side of Main Street from downtown Urbana to the Main Street Spur. Ms. Selby stated that to implementing this grant would require the elimination of parking on the north side of Main Street from Grove Street to Glover Avenue.

Mr. Bassett stated that his business, located at 804½ East Main Street, did not have any off-street parking. He felt that traffic on the street was too busy to ask customers to park on the south side and cross.

Ms. Selby said that the parking restriction was needed to provide a bicycle path on one side of Main Street. She added that most of the addresses on the south side of the street were residential and on the north side were commercial with off-street parking.

Dennis Roberts asked Mr. Bassett if he could contact the adjacent property owner and ask for use of off-street parking in that lot. Mr. Roberts said that the bicycle lanes would be part of the City's Master Bicycle Plan and that the bicycle lanes would be an important amenity to the community.

Jennifer Selby said that the grant application was due on May 5, 2008. She mentioned that if the grant was approved, the City would find out in October. She added that if approved, work would not begin until 2010.

Dennis Roberts moved to approve parking restrictions on the north side of Main Street from Grove Street to Glover Avenue contingent upon the construction and marking of bicycle lanes.

Mike Bily seconded the motion.

The motion passed 3-0.

This item will go to Council for consideration after the grant status is known.

The meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

The next meeting will be held May 6, 2008 at 4:00 p.m. at the Urbana City Building, 400 South Vine Street, second floor conference room.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Stiehl
Recording Secretary