

URBANA TRAFFIC COMMISSION
Tuesday, October 9, 2012

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Pat Connolly, Chief of Police
Bill Gray, Public Works Director/City Engineer for Joe Smith

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Dennis Roberts, City Council Member
Joe Smith, Senior Civil Engineer

OTHERS PRESENT:

Brad Bennett, Senior Civil Engineer
Mike Dilley, Fire Chief
Jerry Barrett, 1608 Adams Street
Mary Van Cleave, 806 South Urbana Street
William Van Cleave, 806 South Urbana Street
George K. Francis, 801 South Anderson Street
Bettina Francis, 801 South Anderson Street
Mary Ellen Sronce, 1001 East Florida Avenue
Lynn Kelly, 1001 East Florida Avenue
Charles Klar, 1502 East Florida Avenue
Kanittha Fay, 1105 East Florida Avenue
Mike Wallace, Lieutenant, Urbana Fire Department
Chad Hensch, Division Chief, Urbana Fire Department

The meeting began at 7:00 p.m.

Additions to the agenda:

Pat Connolly recommended that the agenda items be switched to allow the firefighters present to be able to resume their duties following the discussion of parking on Urbana Avenue, Maple Street and Grove Street.

Bill Gray agreed with the recommendation.

Approval of Minutes:

Pat Connolly moved to approve the minutes as read. Bill Gray seconded the motion. The Commission voted 2-0 to approve the minutes of the September 4, 2012 meeting.

Public Input

Pat Connolly stated that he and other members of the Traffic Commission received phone calls, e-mails and letters regarding the two items on the agenda.

Unfinished Business

Item #1- Discussion of parking restrictions on Urbana Avenue, Maple Street and Grove Street between Washington Street and Oregon Street.

George Francis asked why Lynn Street, Anderson Street and Webber Street were not included in the discussion since those streets were considered the last time the Traffic Commission discussed parking restrictions in the area.

Bill Gray stated that Urbana Avenue, Maple Street and Grove Street were the narrowest of the streets in the area. He added that those streets were on the agenda since the safety concerns were on these streets so the discussion would be restricted to those streets.

Mr. Francis explained that some of the parking congestion on Urbana Avenue and Maple Street were the result of parking restrictions on Washington Street. He said the restriction moved parking to the side streets, which put a burden on Urbana Avenue and Maple Street. He said that the congestion would not be a reason for restricting parking.

Bettina Francis mentioned that when this item was discussed at a previous meeting of the Urbana Traffic Commission, the Fire Chief stated that there were no problems with vehicles blocking the street.

Mr. Francis stated that the decision to restrict parking on these streets was arbitrary and not justified. He said that he knew there were many issues, but he wanted to know the reason why parking restrictions were being considered.

William Van Cleave said that parking was recently a problem while work was done on a home on Washington Street. He added that the apartment complex on Vine Street contributed to parking congestion on Urbana Avenue. He said that garbage trucks have been able to maneuver between parked vehicles without problems. He saw the fire truck back up when it was reported that the truck could not pass through. He said that there was enough room since a UPS truck had just gone through.

Mary Van Cleave asked if the Traffic Commission would be willing to place restrictions on the side of the street that would provide longer spaces so trucks with trailers would be able to park. She was concerned that restrictions on the east side would reduce the number of spaces available.

Pat Connolly said that there had been earlier concerns about parking on these streets following an incident where a snow plow was unable to pass through the street with vehicles parked on both sides. He mentioned that the Fire Department indicated that they had not encountered a life safety issue at the meeting when this issue was first discussed.

Mike Wallace said that the incident occurred on Maple Street and the truck backed up and tried to go down Urbana Avenue and was unable to go through that street. He mentioned that the

delay added four to five minutes to their response time. He said that the van and truck parked across from each other made it impossible for their vehicle to travel through.

Mr. Francis said that the fact that a fire truck could not get to an emergency was not a good enough reason to restrict parking. He suggested that if the vehicles were parked closer to the curb that the problem would be eliminated.

Mike Dilley said that if the truck had been unable to pass through to respond to a house on fire, the response could be delayed by four or five minutes. He added that as Fire Chief public safety was his top concern and the reason for bringing this issue to the Traffic Commission.

Ms. Francis argued that if it was a public safety issue, the restriction should apply to all of the streets, including those streets east of Anderson Street.

Pat Connolly asked if the widths of the streets to the east were different than Urbana Avenue, Maple Street and Grove Street.

Bill Gray stated that the Public Works Department had trouble plowing the streets and had to use smaller equipment.

Barb Stiehl mentioned that a snow plow had hit a vehicle when trying to maneuver through one of the street before this item was heard by the Commission earlier.

Bill Gray stated that Urbana Avenue, Maple Street and Grove Street were narrower than the other streets in the area.

Mr. Van Cleave expressed concern about speeding if the parking was restricted on the street.

Chief Connolly said that emergency vehicles needed to access properties. He felt that getting emergency vehicles to those in need of emergency assistance was a top concern.

Mr. Gray stated that if this type of street was placed in a new subdivision, parking would not be allowed on both sides of the street so emergency vehicles would have access to residential properties. He said that Savannah Green subdivision was an example of an area with parking restrictions based upon the width of the streets.

Mr. Francis stated that the reason for not implementing restrictions before was that the City didn't want to put up the signs. He stated that arguments for public safety were good ones, but that the restrictions were arbitrary and excessive. He asked if lines could be placed on the street so vehicles would park closer to the curb.

Ms. Stiehl stated that the reason for not implementing the restrictions was that there was no agreement upon the times for temporary restrictions.

Chief Dilley commented that even if the cars parked against the curbs, vehicles parked on both sides of the streets across from each other made it difficult for firefighters to remove apparatus

from their vehicles. He added that the vehicle that had problems was not the largest vehicle used to fight fires.

Lynn Kelly asked why the City was not approaching this issue on a City-wide basis.

Bill Gray stated that this area was placed on the agenda as a result of specific concern and that the Commission would act on parking restrictions for the three streets listed on the agenda. He added that if the restrictions were approved, the item would go the Committee of the Whole meeting on Monday, October 22, 2012.

Ms. Van Cleave said that if restrictions were imposed, she would prefer that parking would be allowed on the east side of Grove Street.

Brad Bennett said that the Operations Division would prefer placing the restrictions on the side of the street where the street lights were located since the signs could be placed on the street light poles instead of on separate poles.

George Francis asked that parking be restricted to residents as it was in West Urbana.

Mr. Gray stated that the parking in West Urbana requires a permit which costs \$135 each year.

Bill Gray said that he would ask staff to look at Maple Street to determine which side would have the most spaces and place the restrictions on the other side.

Pat Connolly moved to restrict parking on the west side of Urbana Avenue and Grove Street and to restrict parking on the side with the least number of spaces on Maple Street.

Bill Gray seconded the motion.

The motion was approved 2-0.

This item will go to Council for consideration.

Pat Connolly suggested that the Traffic Commission look at other streets with similar widths to determine whether or not parking restrictions were needed.

Item #2- Discussion of parking restrictions on Florida Avenue between Race Street and Kinch Street.

Lynn Kelly asked for clarification about the exact locations of the restrictions.

Brad Bennett reviewed the City of Urbana Master Bike Plan and Safe Routes to School grant as it pertained to the requested parking restrictions. He added that parking restrictions west of Philo Road would be on the north side of the street and the restrictions east of Philo Road would be on the south side of the street. He mentioned that the restrictions on the north side begin at Hillcrest Drive and continue east to Philo Road, including Wiley Elementary School.

Bill Gray asked if Wiley School administrators were going to ask parents to drop off students at a different location.

Brad Bennett said that he would check with the school district to see what they have planned.

Kanittha Fay stated that she did not see how parents would let their children ride their bikes on Florida Avenue since she allows her children to ride their bikes to school, but did not feel that Florida Avenue was safe for them to use. She was concerned that students would not benefit from the bicycle lanes. Ms. Fay asked if the school was involved with the bicycle plan since the principal did not want parents parking along the south side of the Florida Avenue and yet the bicycle path for Wiley School would eliminate parking on the north side near the school.

Brad Bennett confirmed that the school district had been included in the discussions when the Master Bicycle Plan was developed. He added that students can ride on the sidewalks if they choose to do so. He said that bicyclists were safer on the street than on sidewalks as motorists are pulling out or into driveways.

Bill Gray mentioned that the addition of bicycle lanes on local roads was consistent with the objectives of the Master Bicycle Plan.

Ms. Fay felt that Pennsylvania Avenue would be a better route than Florida Avenue since Florida Avenue has more vehicular traffic on it than Pennsylvania Avenue. She said that she was not aware of the plan and the objectives of the Bicycle Master Plan.

Mr. Gray explained that every school has a safe route to school map that designates preferred routes. He added that the bicycle lanes benefit all citizens of Urbana by connecting portions of the Master Bike Plan.

Mr. Bennett continued by saying that parking was created on the north side of Florida Avenue just east of Philo Road along the side of Florida House. He added that east of James Cherry Drive parking would be removed on both the north and south sides of Florida Avenue, near Thomas Paine Elementary School.

Ms. Fay asked if the Philo Road bicycle path was being surveyed to determine the number of users. She said that she thought that the path was scary.

Mr. Gray said that the City was monitoring the use of the bicycle lane. He said that the Master Bike Plan was not fully implemented since all of the bicycle lanes had not been connected. He mentioned that four to five miles of bike lanes network were planned to be completed within the next year, making the system easier for bicyclists to use. He discussed plans for bicycle lanes to be installed on Washington Street and Main Street.

Pat Connolly said that the Traffic Commission was discussing parking restrictions. He added that the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC) was the body that proposed the

bicycle plan. He suggested that the BPAC meeting would be a more appropriate body to discuss concerns about the bicycle plan than the Traffic Commission.

Brad Bennett said that the next meeting of the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Commission would be held on Tuesday, October 16, 2012.

Pat Connolly said that he had received many calls from residents at Florida House. He said that many of them were concerned that parking spaces would be eliminated. He wanted to make sure that the residents understood that the parking would not be eliminated along

Jerry Barrett asked about the possibility of allowing parking near the Pointe from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. for those visiting the apartment complex. He was concerned about visitor parking from the complex spilling into the AmVet subdivision.

Ms. Francis stated that it was dangerous to have variable times for parking restrictions in bicycle lanes.

Mr. Bennett said that there were some locations in low traffic residential areas where parking was allowed in bicycle lanes. He added that parking was not allowed in striped bicycle lanes.

Bill Gray moved to restrict parking in the areas along Florida Avenue as recommended by City staff.

Pat Connolly seconded the motion.

The motion was approved 2-0.

This item will go to Council for consideration.

New Business

None

The meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

The next meeting will be held November 6, 2012 at 4:00 p.m. at the Urbana City Building, 400 South Vine Street, second floor conference room. ¹

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Stiehl
Recording Secretary