

URBANA TRAFFIC COMMISSION
Tuesday, July 14, 2015

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Michael Madigan, City Council Member, Ward 6, Chair
Craig Shonkwiler, Assistant City Engineer
Pat Connolly, Police Chief

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

OTHERS PRESENT:

K.S. McKinn
Lisa Treul, 1105 South Orchard Street
Marianne Downey, 503 East California Avenue
Diane Marlin, Council Member, Ward 7
John Collins, Operations Manager
John W. Hurd, 504 East Mumford Drive
Scott Woods, Urbana School District #116

The meeting began at 4:00 p.m.

Additions to the agenda:

There were no additions to the agenda.

Approval of Minutes:

Craig Shonkwiler moved to approve the minutes of the May 12, 2015 meeting. Pat Connolly seconded the motion. The Commission voted 3-0 to approve the minutes of the May meeting.

Public Input

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

Unfinished Business

Item #1- Discussion of speed study on Orchard Street and Ohio Street.

Craig Shonkwiler explained that a speed study was conducted in response to concern about vehicles speeding near this intersection. Mr. Shonkwiler asked if those in attendance wanted to discuss any concerns about this item.

K.S. McKinn discussed her concerns about traffic on Iowa Street and Orchard Street. Ms. McKinn stated that motorists used Iowa Street as a shortcut during the school year and that speeding seemed to escalate since work was done on Race Street. She added that there were seventeen children in the neighborhood.

Lisa Treul said when they moved to Orchard a couple of years ago, it was very quiet and then speeding seemed to pick up during the construction of Race Street. She added that this issue had been mentioned during WUNA (West Urbana Neighborhood Association) discussions. Ms. Treul relayed an anecdotal account of traffic situations in the neighborhood.

Ms. McKinn stated that those who used the street were familiar with the street and knew that travel on that street was faster than travelling a route closer to the high school campus. She said that during the summer, the problem did not exist.

Ms. Treul said that those using Iowa Street were not local residents, but were commuters.

Craig Shonkwiler said that the speed study and stop sign request were for Orchard Street and Ohio Street, which did not include the area mentioned by Ms. McKinn and Ms. Treul.

Ms. McKinn added that delivery drivers, Jimmy John's drivers, didn't stop at the stop sign at Iowa Street and Orchard Street.

Ms. Treul agreed with Ms. McKinn that many motorists did not obey the stop sign since the motorists didn't expect a stop sign there. She said that she personally observed four times when side traffic did not stop at the sign.

Mr. Shonkwiler asked if there was a specific time of day when the speeding occurred on Iowa Street.

Ms. Treul said that speeding occurred during the rush hours and when events were occurring at school.

Ms. McKinn stated that a driver of a red BMW regularly sped down the street.

Craig Shonkwiler continued with a summary of results of the speed study conducted on a Tuesday in April 2015 between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. He explained that the mode (most frequent) for speeds was 25 miles per hour for the morning traffic and 23 miles per hour for the afternoon traffic for a street with a posted 30 mile an hour speed limit. Further, Mr. Shonkwiler explained that the mean (the average) for speeds was 23.6 miles per hour in the morning and 24 miles per hour in the afternoon. He defined the 85th percentile as a measurement used to determine a safe speed for traveling on a particular street, which was based on guidelines outlined in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). Based upon the definition, the 85th percentile, or the speed under which 85 percent of traffic felt safe to travel, was 25.8 miles per hour in the morning and 29.2 miles per hour in the afternoon. He added that the violation rate (speeds above the posted speed limit) was 3.7% for morning travelers and 10.1% for afternoon traffic. He concluded by stating that speeding was not a serious problem on this street relative to speeds around the City.

Lisa Treul stated that most motorists were reasonable, but there were a few who drove recklessly.

Craig Shonkwiler recommended that periodically the Selective Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP) detail be assigned to the area to discourage speeding. In addition, Mr. Shonkwiler suggested that WUNA representatives use their listserv to ask motorists to obey the posted speed limits and to be aware that STEP enforcement would be assigned to the area.

Pat Connolly explained that STEP program as a program where police officers would be called back on overtime to monitor areas where specific speeding problems were noted.

Lisa Treul asked for a stop sign at Iowa Street and Orchard Street to slow traffic.

K.S. McKinn asked if a slow children at play sign could be installed or what other measures could be implemented to slow traffic.

Mr. Shonkwiler explained that stop signs were installed to guide motorists so they were aware of who had the right of way when approaching an area where roadways intersect, but stop signs were not used to slow traffic. He continued by stating that there were guidelines for installing roadway signage listed in the MUTCD. He further explained that the City followed the guidelines in the MUTCD so the signage used in the City of Urbana conveyed a consistent clear message for motorists. As an example, he mentioned that unwarranted stop signs were often ignored and that children at play signs don't provide enough information to warn motorists of an immediate danger. As suggested ways to reduce speed, Mr. Shonkwiler suggested parking cars on the street since the presence of the parked cars slow motorists. He added that brick streets reduce speeds as do streets with tree canopies. He suggested monitoring the situation.

Pat Connolly recommended a strategy for speeding concerns. First, Chief Connolly suggested using the WUNA listserv to review the discussion at the Traffic Commission meeting. As part of the review, he asked that those receiving WUNA e-mails be made aware that STEP details will be assigned to the area (Iowa/Orchard/Ohio corridor) to monitor speeds for the safety of children and issue tickets. He asked that residents let him know the times and locations where speeding has occurred. He said that vehicle descriptions and license plate numbers would be helpful. He added that the beat cars could locate in that area to reduce speeding and then STEP could be assigned if there were still problems.

Craig Shonkwiler reviewed vehicle crash data between Iowa Street and Indiana Street on Orchard Street from 2010 to 2015. He stated that within that time, four accidents had occurred; three were weather-related and one was a delivery truck that hit a parked car. Mr. Shonkwiler said that those numbers were very low compared to other streets in Urbana. He mentioned that he had received a complaint about speeding at the intersection of Busey Avenue and Iowa Street and that he would be investigating that concern. He noted that the resident at that intersection also mentioned Jimmy John's drivers as those who were speeding. Mr. Shonkwiler said that he would contact Mr. Laskowski, who initiated the request, regarding the discussion at the meeting.

Item #2- Discussion of speed study in the 500 block of East California Avenue.

Marianne Downey discussed concerns about vehicles rolling through stop signs at Maple Street on California Avenue, which resulted in a couple of crashes within the last ten years. She said that motorists use California Avenue to avoid bricks on Illinois Street. She mentioned that there were little children on the block and there were many bicyclists using California Avenue.

Mr. Shonkwiler asked if there were problems during Market at the Square.

She said that speeding happened during work hours. She said that parking was more congested on the north side of California Avenue and the only stop sign was located at Anderson Street. After listening to the recommendations for informing neighbors on Orchard Street, she said that she would discuss the results of the

Traffic Commission meeting on the Historic Urbana East Neighborhood Association (HUENA) listserv. She added that the congestion with cars parking along the street made it difficult to pull in and out of her driveway.

Craig Shonkwiler stated that the complaint received was for the time during the Market at the Square. He reviewed results of the speed study completed on a Saturday in May 2015 for California Avenue and stated that the results were very similar to those on Orchard Street. He reported that the mode was 24 miles per hour and that the speed of the 85th percentile was 30.4 miles per hour. He reviewed the crash data for the last five and one half years and reported that there were only two crashes during that period, which was a very low rate. He summarized that in comparing this information with the information for the City overall, the two crashes within five and one half years and the low speeds would categorize the street as not problematic as far as speeding was concerned. He added that if there were other times when speeding was a problem, a study could be conducted during those times.

Pat Connolly said that if Ms. Downey or other residents notice a recurring problem, then they should notify him. He also agreed that notifying the residents about the discussion at this meeting on the HUENA listserv would be an excellent way to let residents know about plans for dealing with speeding.

Item #3- Discussion of warning light on Vine Street at Oregon Street.

Craig Shonkwiler updated the Commission on the status of the repair to the warning light on Vine Street at Oregon Street. He reviewed the earlier discussion about changes in Ameren's policies that prohibited the connection of the warning light to Ameren's service pole. He stated that one flashing warning light was already operational using solar power and that the other one would be operational by the time the school year began. He added that the warning light and the crossing guard were needed at that location.

New Business

Item #4- Discussion of pedestrian crosswalk on Vine Street at Fairlawn Drive (Urbana Middle School).

Scott Woods said that the Urbana School District was interested in improving safety at the crosswalk, not only during school times, but it was interested in improving safety before and after the crossing guard was posted at the location. He commented that several incidents between students and busses had occurred. He added that the new signage with the flashing speed had been helpful, but he thought in-street signage and lighting at the intersection of Vine Street and Fairlawn Drive could be better.

Craig Shonkwiler mentioned that he and the Public Works Director, Bill Gray met with Mr. Woods and the Urbana School District Superintendent, Don Owen and had reached consensus regarding steps to improve safety. He stated that he observed traffic around the school in May and would continue to look at the location when school resumes in the fall. He noted that he did not observe any conflicts and that the crash data only indicated one crash in the last five and one half years.

Scott Woods stated that in two separate incidents a bus went over the curb and a bicyclist went over the curb. He didn't know if police reports were filed.

Mr. Shonkwiler said that the crash data would only include incidents where the police were notified.

John Collins reported that the new in-street signage for the crosswalk would be delivered to the school.

Craig Shonkwiler stated that the crossing guard at that location was very effective. He mentioned that before the City would install flashing lights at any other locations, criteria would need to be developed. Mr. Shonkwiler said that currently there was one location with the rapid reflective flashing beacons (RRFB) (Grainger Library). He mentioned that plans were underway to install RRFBs on Windsor Road at Vine Street and the entrance to Meadowbrook Park. In reference to school safety, Mr. Shonkwiler recommended that the Urbana School District resurrect its School Safety Committee dealing with safety issues around Urbana's schools.

Scott Woods said that he would let the district office about the request to revive the School Safety Committee. He said that bus pick up and drop up at the Urbana Middle School was under review. He supported the plan to continue observing traffic at Fairlawn Drive and Vine Street and suggested that the observations might also include observing traffic on Vine Street from Washington Street to Michigan Avenue.

John Hummel said that he noticed parents were having difficulty making left turns exiting the school parking lot north of Fairlawn Drive at the end of the school day. He also noted that the flashing lights with the speed limit were left on even when school was not in session. He was concerned that leaving them on would decrease their effectiveness.

Mr. Woods said that the school district was looking at possible solutions for the parking lot, but he said that most student pick up was on Michigan Avenue.

John Collins mentioned that the timing on the flashing lights was not programmable for singular events, but he added that the lights were shut off during the summer.

Item #5- Discussion of speed study on Mumford Drive between Vine Street and Anderson Street.

John Hummel discussed his concerns about speeding vehicles. He stated that since he had moved to the area in 1976, there had been four incidents, but that warning signs had been added to the curve since that time.

Craig Shonkwiler stated that there were plans to resurface Mumford Drive from Anderson Street to Zuppke Drive which might increase speeds due to the street being smoother. Mr. Shonkwiler discussed the results of a speed study conducted on Mumford Drive. He said that the mode was 30 miles per hour; the 85th percentile was 32.8 miles per hour in the morning and 31.5 miles per hour in the evening. He reported that the violation rate was 31.9% in the morning; 21.1% in the afternoon. He added that violation rates over 50% were signs of serious speeding problems. He said that although there were a few high speeds recorded on Mumford Drive, he would recommend the use of STEP details to monitor traffic and ticket those speeding. Mr. Shonkwiler said that it appeared to be a cut through for traffic.

John Collins mentioned that the Operations Division had installed warning signs near the curve and stop ahead signs for westbound traffic.

Mr. Shonkwiler reviewed crash data for the eight crashes that had occurred within the last five and one half years on Mumford Drive. He said that there were a couple of crashes that might have resulted from failure to reduce speed, but he didn't see a prevalent problem.

Diane Marlin suggested that residents along Mumford Drive contact the Police Department and give descriptions of vehicles and the times of day when motorists were speeding.

Mr. Hummel stated that he didn't notice any particular vehicle or any particular time of day when speeding occurred. He did mention that many motorists roll through the stop sign on Mills Drive since there was a clear view of the intersection. He added that some motorists and bicyclists preferred to use Eliot Drive to avoid school traffic around Yankee Ridge Elementary School.

Pat Connolly asked if a message could go out on the South Urbana Neighborhood Association (SUNA) listserv to let residents know that STEP enforcement would be assigned to enforce speed limits in the area.

Item #6- Discussion of parking restriction across from 1306 West Eads Street.

Mr. Shonkwiler asked the Recording Secretary to contact Mr. Chris Hayes regarding his request for parking restrictions across from 1306 West Eads Street since Mr. Hayes was not present at the meeting. Mr. Shonkwiler said that he would like to talk to Mr. Hayes about a possible solution to the concerns expressed on Mr. Hayes' request form. He explained that the resident asked for parking restrictions across from his driveway, which typically the City did not do.

Upcoming items were discussed.

With no other business at hand, the meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 11, 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