
DATE: Monday, November 4, 2019
TIME: 7:00 P.M.
PLACE: Urbana City Council Chambers, 400 S. Vine St, Urbana, IL 61801

The City Council of the City of Urbana, Illinois, met in regular session November 4, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at the Urbana City Building.

ELECTED OFFICIALS PHYSICALLY PRESENT: City Council Members (CM) Maryalice Wu (Ward 1), Eric Jakobsson (Ward 2), Bill Brown (Ward 4), Dean Hazen (Ward 6), Shirese Hursey (Ward 3), Jared Miller (Ward 7), Dennis Roberts (Ward 5), Charles A. Smyth (City Clerk), Diane Wolfe Marlin (Mayor)

ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE: none

ELECTED OFFICIALS ABSENT: none

STAFF PRESENT: Carol Mitten, Jim Simon, Vince Gustafson, Andrew Murphy

OTHERS PRESENT: News Media (News-Gazette), Rev. Dr. Evelyn Underwood, Steve Ross, Dan Newman, Cynthia Hoyle, Evan Alvarez, Jason Rock, Wayne Williams, Chaundra Bishop

A. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

There being a quorum present, Mayor Marlin called the meeting of the Urbana City Council to order at 7:32 p.m. following a Cunningham Town Board meeting.

B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

City Council Member (CM) Roberts made a motion to approve minutes from the October 21, 2019 regular meeting and October 21, 2019 Special Meeting, seconded by CM Hazen, and passed by unanimous voice vote.

C. ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

D. PRESENTATIONS

Deputy Director of Operations Vince Gustafson introduced Andrew Murphy, Operations Supervisor and they reviewed the annual Snow Removal manual using a PowerPoint presentation. Mr. Murphy discussed treatment versus plowing as a case by case scenario, and how roads are prioritized as high volume, Downtown/Philo business districts and then residential streets. He noted that there are 12 personnel on 12 hour shifts at a time using 23 pieces of equipment. He then reviewed maps of the four primary routes where plowing begins, the secondary routes at the outer edges of town, listed the eight State and township routes and the residential zones, the order of which changes on a yearly rotating basis. He stated that the goal is to complete residential plowing within 20 hours after the end of snowstorms with dead end and cul-de-sacs being done as equipment becomes available. City owned sidewalks are also cleared. He stated that current challenges include filling four positions due to transfers and retirements, large plow trucks that are 10 years old, and a dramatic increase in salt prices. Questions followed.

In response to CM Brown, Mr. Murphy stated that the snow manual is on the city website and printed copies were being prepared. In responding to how snow is measured for purposes of invoking required snow removal procedures, he stated that snow is measured on the pavement where two inches exist over an extended period of time causing a hazard for driving. He also responded that the fleet of plow trucks was bought at the same time and replacements were being

purchased this year. In response to CM Roberts, he stated that we have stock salt at the county dome but we order 1100 tons yearly and gets delivered within a two-day span. In response to CM Wu, City Administrator Mitten indicated that the snow removal requirement is sent by press releases as the city does not have real time contact information for all affected. The presentation concluded with a video produced by UPTV reviewing the staff involved in snow removal. Mr. Gustafson added that with our staffing levels, snow removal becomes an all hands priority.

E. PUBLIC INPUT

Rev. Dr. Evelyn Underwood did not wish to speak but wanted the record to reflect her continuing concern for the Dr. Ellis subdivision sewer issues.

Mr. Steve Ross added to his comments from last week stating that his main objection to required snow removal on Green Street is that it's unfair to target only Green and University. He noted Chapter 11 of city code concerning nuisances that the home owner has to deal with that has no geographic limitations. He stated that having all the sidewalks cleared would be the safest alternative. He also thought that for the most bang for the buck, getting snow removed around schools. He also noted that even with Green and University cleared, pedestrians would still be marching through snow to get there to a bus stop. In response to CM Jakobsson, he indicated he would support snow removal if it applied to all like the vegetation ordinance.

Mr. Dan Newman stated that he has lived on Green Street for over 11 years. He reviewed three core values – safety, fairness, and efficiency. He expressed concern about grossly different penalties for not removing snow if only some are required to. He stated that Green Street doesn't have more pedestrian traffic than some other streets and that it doesn't seem fair that streets with more pedestrians are not being required to remove snow. He asked if there is data on how pedestrians use streets and said that if pedestrian safety is of concern, then the required corridors should be those with the most pedestrian traffic. He noted the major investment of MCORE with the potential of creating more future traffic on Green Street, but this is not based on actual or future data. He considers the decision to enforce on one street and not another as an extra tax. He reviewed the efficiency of having a single contractor with a snow blower than having separate contractors. CM Brown said he would go into detail on the safety issue during discussion, but pedestrian counts exist for a few dozen intersections in the city. He thinks the 740 people who get on or off buses on Green Street should count as pedestrians and should not have to wait in the street. In response to CM Brown asking about his statement of Illinois having more pedestrians, Mr. Newman said that he does not have data, but that he uses Coler to Illinois to get to campus as it is more pleasant to walk.

Cynthia Hoyle stated that she would favor extending snow removal requirements to all of the city but bus corridors and Safe Routes to School (SRTS) are high priority. She presented a number of pictures of issues related to snow around the community including Lincoln Avenue, Washington, at ramps, and at bus stops. She reviewed the Champaign staff report from 2007 and noted that where she lived in Oklahoma, snow removal was required. She compared snow removal to mowing grass and like with grass, arrangements can be made when out of town and so on. She provided information on the Snow Angel program which helps the elderly and disabled. She noted that some are city based, others volunteer based, and gave some examples from other communities. Some include equipment volunteers. She stated that she has a Safe Routes to School grant for this year that helps support the local program and showed routes currently being done. In response to CM Hursey, Ms. Hoyle indicated that it is all SRTS and bus routes including the north side. CM Jakobsson noted that Burlington, Vermont had a city sponsored program established by a former mayor who thought that the city should clear all sidewalks in a college town. Ms. Hoyle added some additional information about the local Snow Angels operation.

Evan Alvarez from the Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District (CUMTD) read a statement from Karl Gnad, Managing Director and CEO supporting expansion of the snow removal

district. The letter stated that MTD is an advocated for improving the safety of our roadways for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders. It noted the upcoming improvements on University Avenue by IDOT, the MCORE improvements to Green Street that will include new bus stops and sidewalks, and that expanding the snow removal district will help close the gap in access to sidewalks for pedestrian and transit riders during snow events in these multimodal corridors where waiting for buses in the street is not safe. The letter noted receiving calls because of sidewalk obstructions and other difficulties getting to bus stops as well as CUMTD support to SRTS and Snow Angels.

Jason Rock stated that he supports expansion of the snow removal district noting that even as a young able-bodied individual, he has trouble with iced covered sidewalks and that for the elderly the lack of snow removal can present an impassable situation. He stated that the reality is that there is widespread walking in the road. He considers snow removal no more onerous than mowing the yard. He pointed out that snow removal companies started up after a 2015 ordinance was enacted in Chicago. He also noted that certain streets are safer for walking on when not cleared and Green Street is not one of them but better where there is less traffic like Illinois Avenue.

Ms. Chandra Bishop did not wish to speak but supports the snow removal ordinance. Mr. Wayne Williams did not wish to speak but thought that snow removal should be required city wide.

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was none.

G. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

1. Committee Of The Whole – (Council Member Shirese Hursey)

a. Ordinance No. 2019-10-060: An Ordinance Amending Urbana City Code Chapter 11, Section 11-65 (Removing Snow from Sidewalks and Other Areas)

For the committee, CM Hursey introduced Ordinance 2019-10-060 without a motion. CM Hazen stated that he wanted to see the ordinance tweaked to come to better agreement and moved to send Ordinance 2019-10-060 back to committee, seconded by CM Roberts. Discussion followed.

CM Jakobsson said that he supported the motion and that he was prepared to extend a snow removal ordinance to city wide but maybe there would be a constituency for the Burlington plan. CM Brown, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC) Chair, stated that this item has been discussed for at least three meetings at BPAC for the past year. BPAC is advising council for practical, achievable goals short term, conscious of staff burden and time involved in enforcement, narrowed to the minimal level of expansion that would have impact. He noted that MCORE is spending \$5M to rebuild Green Street with bus shelter kiosks, and new sidewalk and ramps, and it will be the only bike connection between Race Street and Lincoln Avenue. He stated that with the bus stops, you do not want people standing in the bike lane, and that BPAC was really careful about which areas to expand to with north campus having the highest residential density outside of the residence halls. He noted that the vehicular traffic on Green Street is double that of Illinois Avenue. He reported that pedestrian counts at Lincoln and Green and Lincoln and Illinois have between 100 and 400 pedestrians but that the 740 bus riders on Green should count as they walk to the bus stop making Green St. a good candidate for snow removal, particularly with the improvements. He stated that it would be nice to have a city-wide snow removal requirement but BPAC is focusing on safety because of pedestrian fatalities, five in Urbana versus two in Champaign in recent years. He stated that he sees no reason to delay this ordinance but that we could postpone enforcement for a year while the construction is done in these two corridors. He didn't think this is unfair as we've removed parking for safety reasons and there have been accidents and serious injuries at these locations.

CM Hazen stated that his motion was not about deciding for city-wide snow removal or not but is interested in removing Green Street from the ordinance or developing incentives. CM Wu thanked City Administrator Mitten for all of the provided information in answer to questions from the previous week noting the parcel maps, maps of sidewalks cleared by city, and the number cleared by university. She stated that since the city clears around the township and library, her suggestion is to bid out the rest of Green Street as well and that we can have this conversation now or later. She also noted that many pedestrians don't necessarily know what bike lanes are.

City Administrator Mitten stated that the \$1K/mile figure for the cost of snow removal for sidewalks came from a report from 2011 and that it was an estimate. She added that when we put this out for bid, the alternative is to bid out per mile as well, though it is unknown if it will get bid and what the cost will be. The city uses staff for the city owned sidewalks shown and that we have more to learn about services.

CM Hursey noted that when the snow plows go out they totally cover sidewalks in her neighborhood due to the little right of way between streets and sidewalks so people have to wait for the plows to finish before they can go out to shovel. She noted other differences between subdivisions that would have to be dealt with. She added that it will be a couple of years before MCORE is completed, and we don't quite know how the end result will affect the pedestrian traffic. She stated that she would put off doing this for next year and have more discussion.

CM Miller asked City Administrator Mitten if the City has consulted with the University of Illinois describing the extensive efforts they make in clearing sidewalks. He indicated that he doubts there is city wide support for a city-wide snow removal ordinance with a fee without advertising a tax. He didn't think there was any reason to send this ordinance back to committee and just vote it up or down tonight.

Mayor Marlin noted that no council member seems to have an issue with the non-University or Green Street areas and asked if there was support for these as described in the ordinance. CM Roberts responded that he didn't have a problem with extending requirements on commercial and business corridors, the east side of the map or the west side. He noted his observation that University is car corridor that people are crossing but not traversing. As the improvements have not even broken ground and university is happening yet, he didn't think important to include these two streets at this time. He stated that BPAC addressing SRTS as more important.

CM Brown stated that BPAC did consider SRTS but in reviewing those maps, decided it would be hard to enforce and understand. He added that SRTS has a very good program to encourage people to shovel. He also noted that in most cases the children are going to school by daylight and this is a different issue at night on campus. He stated that BPAC is concerned about safety, that he would be disappointed to take these two streets out of the ordinance, and he cited injury accidents on Green. He noted that the new paradigm is trying to use past experience to predict what will happen rather than wait for accidents to happen.

CM Wu moved to amend the motion on the floor splitting the ordinance into two parts sending the sections related to Green Street and University Ave back to committee and moving forwarded with the remaining two areas of downtown and north campus described in the ordinance. The motion was seconded by CM Miller. Mayor Marlin clarified the motion for the record. With no further discussion the amendment passed by voice vote with CM Brown dissenting. Additional discussion of the amended motion followed.

CM Jakobsson stated that he had interpreted the original motion to go back to committee so that the issue could be discussed more broadly. CM Hazen noted that he was looking for a positive way to encourage homeowners. CM Roberts supported the amendment as giving the city an opportunity to look at extending the city's sidewalk plowing to Green Street. CM Brown noted that the fine is \$150 if you don't do anything for 2 or 3 days and that the sidewalk is 60

feet, not as big as a driveway. He also discussed special service areas and stated that his block is already 80% compliant. He was concerned about sending this back to committee another month or so delaying implementation and that's why he favored delay of enforcement while we come up with solutions. CM Hursey was concerned that about the \$150 fine.

Ms. Mitten clarified that the fine is \$25, that there is an administrative fee, and there is the cost of the snow removal. City intent would be to pass through the cost for the property and no administrative fee. CM Hursey approximated this as \$75 and thought this could be financially burdensome for some as well. With no further discussion, the amended motion passed by roll call vote (6-1): Brown – No; Hazen – Aye; Hursey – Aye; Jakobsson – Aye; Miller – Aye; Roberts – Aye; Wu – Aye.

Cynthia Hoyle was provided an opportunity to speak again and stated that University Avenue is the problem corridor for safety where there have been many fatalities and where there are a number of bus routes. Ms. Mitten asked the council for time to confer while they gathered useful information before returning with the topic to council and council agreed.

b. Ordinance No. 2019-10-061: An Ordinance Amending Urbana City Code Chapter 2, Section 2-27 (Rules for Deliberations/2019)

For the committee, CM Hursey moved passage of Ordinance 2019-10-061, seconded by CM Jakobsson. Questions and discussion followed. CM Hursey noted that tonight was a perfect example of mixing presentations and public input. City Clerk Smyth and council members discussed some scenarios based on past experiences with public input and presentations. CM Roberts requested that if a presentation is known, to list that on the agenda. With no further discussion, the motion passed by roll call vote (7-0): Brown – Aye; Hazen – Aye; Hursey – Aye; Jakobsson – Aye; Miller – Aye; Roberts – Aye; Wu – Aye.

H. REPORTS OF SPECIAL COMMITTEES

There were none.

I. REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Deputy Director Gustafson provided council with two informational items. He noted that city purchasing policy requiring emergency approval was used regarding a boiler failure Oct 8. He stated that replacement of the boiler was necessary and having both replaced simultaneously as the best recommendation to mitigate the risk of having the other boiler of equal age and use fail in the near future. The cost is \$78,750 dollars and installation will be complete by winter season of December and January. CM Hursey asked if there were any other bids besides A&R. Mr. Gustafson noted that the emergency policy bypasses the bid process and they chose to use the vendor who regularly services the boiler system. He noted the options choosing to replace both at the same time because if the second boiler were to have the same problem in January, the city wouldn't have enough capacity to keep the building warm. He also explained that following the bid process would not have allowed time to get the work done before expected very cold weather. He also stated that there is complex plumbing and A&R did the same work in 2012 for the other portion of the city building. In response to CM Hursey, Mr. Gustafson noted that the new equipment will be high efficiency (90%) which will result in savings. However, this requires new intake and exhaust plumbing so is a challenge.

He informed council that the city received a letter this morning from the Morton Arboretum awarding the city a \$14,250 Urban and Community Forest grant. He gave kudos to City Arborist Sanderson for his quick work on the grant and noted that this will get the backlog of tree plantings back to a one-year replacement schedule. Mayor Marlin congratulated all involved.

J. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

K. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come before the council, Mayor Marlin adjourned the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Charles A. Smyth
City Clerk

This meeting was video recorded with website link (viewable on demand):

<https://www.urbanaininois.us/node/7703>

This meeting was broadcast on cable television (UPTV) and streamed live:

<http://urbanaininois.us/uptv>

Minutes Approved: November 18, 2019