

URBANA TRAFFIC COMMISSION

Tuesday, February 6, 2001

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Carolyn Kearns, City Council Member
Joe Smith, Senior Civil Engineer
Eddie Adair, Chief of Police

OTHERS PRESENT:

Glenn Berman, Administration and Engineering Division Manager
Shawn Crowley, Parking Enforcement
Ruth Ann Fisher, 1214 Lanore Drive
Dale M. Steffensen, 2102 South Race Street
Margaret Steffensen, 2102 South Race Street
David DeWeese, 401 Beringer
Nancy Jo Merz, 1502 Kinch Street

Additions to the Agenda:

There were no additions:

Meeting began at 4:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Eddie Adair moved to approve the minutes. Joe Smith seconded the motion. The Commission voted 3-0 to approve the minutes of December 2000.

Item #1 - Discussion of the traffic study on Main Street at Cottage Grove Avenue.

Joe Smith discussed the results of the traffic study on Main Street at Cottage Grove Avenue. He said that traffic counts were heavy for eastbound and westbound traffic on Main Street turning southbound onto Cottage Grove Avenue and suggested eliminating parking on the north and south sides of Main Street to accommodate a turn-lane for southbound traffic. Mr. Smith added that all of the affected residents had been contacted by mail for input and that all residents had off-street parking on their property.

Joe Smith made a motion to restrict parking on Main Street for westbound traffic from 144 feet east of Cottage Grove Avenue to the centerline of Cottage Grove Avenue and for eastbound traffic from 176 feet west of Cottage Grove Avenue to the centerline of Cottage Grove Avenue.

Chief Adair seconded the motion.

Mr. Smith stated that the street markings would not be installed until spring of this year.

The motion passed 3-0.

This item will go Council.

Item #2 - Discussion of speeding vehicles on Race Street south of Florida Avenue.

Eddie Adair discussed the results of STEP and traffic enforcement on South Race Street. (See attached reports.) He stated that the Police Department would continue to monitor the area.

Mr. Steffensen said that the problem with speeding vehicles was worse between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. He expressed concern about students from other countries who were not familiar with traffic laws and asked about the possibility of a four-way stop at George Huff Drive and Race Street.

Ms. Steffensen stated that there have been several serious accidents at that intersection.

Joe Smith stated that a study conducted at the intersection of George Huff Drive and Race Street did not show enough traffic on George Huff Drive to warrant a four-way stop at that intersection. He stated that he would look at the accident report to see if those numbers would warrant a stop sign on Race Street.

Glenn Berman added that stop signs control speeds at the intersection but do not control speed down the street from the signs so stop signs are not used to control speeding.

Carolyn Kearns suggested that the Public Works Department look at the accident records at the intersection to see if those numbers might warrant a four-way stop.

Item #3 - Discussion of illegal on-street parking on West Illinois Street.

Mr. Gonzalo Barquero sent a letter to Mr. Jack Waaler expressing concern about receiving parking tickets for parking in an area marked "No Parking From Here to Corner." He stated that he parked there because other vehicles had not parked as close together as they should have so he had to park illegally to park on the street. He suggested that the City paint marks on the street so motorists know where to park and that the City ticket those who took up too much space.

Joe Smith suggested that the City look at the area and see if the yellow zone could be expanded to restrict parking so cars would not try to squeeze into spaces.

Shawn Crowley stated that Mr. Barquero's tickets were not voided since the motorist parked illegally.

Glenn Berman said that he would look at the situation, but the City does not recommend painting parking spaces on residential streets. He stated that he would bring the issue back to the Traffic Commission if Public Works recommended any further action.

A letter will be sent to Mr. Barquero that explains that the Public Works Department will observe the situation to determine if there was problem and if there are solutions to the problem.

Item #4 - Discussion of the installation of a stop sign at Kinch Street and Vermont Street.

Nancy Merz discussed her concerns about speeding vehicles on Kinch Street. She added that she was concerned about elementary school students walking on the street in areas where there were no sidewalks. Ms. Merz stated that she was concerned that traffic would increase once Kinch Street was opened to traffic from Florida Avenue. She asked that the Traffic Commission consider installing a four-way stop at Kinch Street and Vermont Street.

Glenn Berman stated that there are no plans for installing a four-way stop at Kinch Street and Vermont Street at the present. He stated that the usual procedure for signing a side street and a through street would be to place a two-way stop signs on the side street such as was done on Vermont Street at Kinch Street. Mr. Berman added that the best way to control speeding was through enforcement. He continued saying that the City was conducting a feasibility study to determine if sidewalks could be added in subdivisions without sidewalks on collector streets such as Kinch, and with high volumes of pedestrian traffic on school walking routes.

Nancy Merz asked if the City would consider widening Kinch Street south of Vermont Street.

Glenn Berman stated that a developer had plans to build houses in the area east of Kinch Street and south of Michigan Avenue. He added that the developer would be required to widen Kinch Street as part of the subdivision development.

Chief Adair stated that the Police Department would perform STEP enforcement on Kinch Street.

Carolyn Kearns asked Ms. Merz when she noticed speeding on Kinch Street.

Ms. Merz stated that speeding was worse between 4 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Ruth Ann Fisher asked when the connection between Florida Avenue and Kinch Street would occur.

Joe Smith stated that it should occur by the end of the summer.

Carolyn Kearns stated that the Police Department would increase patrol to monitor speeding and the City would look at sidewalk installation for the area.

Joe Smith stated that there would be a stop sign for southbound traffic on Kinch Street at Florida Avenue once the streets were connected. He added that the stop sign would be two blocks from Vermont Street and Kinch Street so installing a stop sign for Kinch Street traffic at Vermont Street would not be necessary since vehicles would not be able to accelerate as easily.

Items #5-9 were added to the Traffic Commission agenda as a result of a neighborhood meeting conducted at Urbana High School with area residents.

Item #5 - Discussion of the installation of stop lines at Indiana Avenue and Carle Avenue, Race Street and Michigan Avenue, Race Street and Indiana Avenue, and Race Street and Iowa Street.

Glenn Berman stated that there are already stop lines on the east and west legs of Indiana Avenue at Carle Avenue; the east and west legs of Iowa Street at Race Street; and the east leg of Michigan Avenue at Race Street.

Carolyn Kearns stated that the residents were concerned that the lines were fading.

Glenn Berman stated that the Operations Division paints the lines on the streets every year; thermoplastic markings are redone every five years. He stated that of those areas suggested for stop lines, the only locations without stop lines were on the west leg of Indiana Street at Race Street and on the west leg of Michigan Avenue at Race Street.

Joe Smith moved to install stop lines on the west leg of Indiana Street at Race Street for eastbound traffic and on the west leg of Michigan Avenue at Race Street for eastbound traffic.

Eddie Adair seconded the motion.

The motion passed 3-0.

No Council action is required.

Item #6 - Discussion of repainting yellow curbs at Iowa Street and Race Street, Indiana Avenue and Race Street, and Michigan Avenue and Race Street.

Glenn Berman stated that yellow curb markings were painted every year by the Operations Division.

Carolyn Kearns asked if Public Works would look at the yellow curb markings on Iowa Street, east of Race Street to see if they match with the location of the “No Parking from Here to Corner” sign.

Glenn Berman stated that he would check that location.

Shawn Crowley stated that the sign would take precedent over the yellow markings whether the paint had worn away or not.

Joe Smith stated the City would not paint curbs where there were “No Parking” signs, but would paint curbs where there are “No Parking from Here to Corner” signs.

Item #7 - Discussion of the installation of a crosswalk on Race Street at Michigan Avenue.

Glenn Berman discussed the results of a pedestrian count at the corner of Michigan Avenue at Race Street for the east-west crossings between 7:30 and 8:30 a.m. and 2:45 p.m. and 4:15 p.m. He stated that the number of pedestrians crossings (9 and 16, respectively) were not very high.

Carolyn Kearns stated that area residents were concerned about the number of Urbana Middle School students crossing the intersection of Race Street and Michigan Avenue.

Mr. Berman suggested redoing another pedestrian count when the weather was better. He asked the Traffic Commission to consider criteria for determining where crosswalks would be installed so decisions could be based on the criteria.

David DeWeese asked what type of criteria would the City consider.

Joe Smith stated that the Illinois Department of Transportation has standards that are too high to use in Urbana since the numbers are averages that include the Chicago metropolitan area. He added that the City used criteria such as time gaps between vehicles and the number of pedestrians crossing. He stated that the City could consider criteria such as crosswalks should be installed at intersections adjacent to school property.

Carolyn Kearns stated that STEP enforcement results might be used as criteria.

Glenn Berman stated that the installation of crosswalk would not affect speeding.

David DeWeese stated that pedestrian traffic was higher on Vine Street. Dr. DeWeese added that pedestrian traffic would increase next year since the parking lot on Washington Street and Vine Street would no longer be available for high school student parking. He stated that the students would not be able to use the parking lot at the north end of the high school property because contractually faculty and staff are guaranteed parking spaces. At present, Dr. DeWeese said that he was working with the Urbana High School Student Senate to determine if any remaining spaces on that lot might be available to students as a reward. He asked if the students might be able to purchase spaces in the Lincoln Square parking lot.

Carolyn Kearns stated that the school district had asked for spaces in the Illinois Street lot and that no students had purchased a space.

Dr. DeWeese stated that the culture of the students needed to be changed to make parking in those areas more acceptable to students.

Glenn Berman stated that the school district should take responsibility for the parking needs of its students. He stated that the school district had envisioned that the properties on Iowa Street would be used for parking facilities.

Dr. DeWeese stated that since that plan became public, the value of the properties went up. He stated that Urbana School District was experiencing a lack of building space and that school district taxpayers would be outraged if the school district used tax dollars to build parking lots. He stated that he hoped that City would help provide the parking needs for the students.

Glenn Berman stated that the problem would not go away until adequate off-street parking was made available.

Dr. DeWeese suggested that the Lincoln Square parking lot be used as an option.

Carolyn Kearns stated that parking was an issue which was constantly a problem.

Ruth Ann Fisher suggested that spaces be painted on the street.

Shawn Crowley stated that enforcement would not be possible without meters.

Glenn Berman stated that painting spaces on the street was a maintenance issue. He said that the City did not have the manpower for the on-going maintenance necessary to paint spaces on the street. He added that more vehicles could be squeezed into on-street parking if the spaces were not defined by parking lines.

Carolyn Kearns stated that criteria would be considered for installing crosswalks, especially around schools.

Glenn Berman stated that Joe Smith and he would make recommendations of criteria for crosswalks near schools to the Traffic Commission at a later meeting.

Item #8 - Discussion of additional or more prominent stop signs at Indiana Avenue and Carle Avenue and Iowa Street and Carle Avenue.

Glenn Berman stated that there are no obstructions to prevent motorists from seeing the stop signs or the "Stop Ahead" signs at Indiana Avenue and Carle Avenue and Iowa Street and Carle Avenue. He added that he believed the reason motorists are not stopping at these signs because they are unwarranted, not because motorists do not see the signs. Mr. Berman stated that double facing the stop signs was not recommended since there were only two lanes of traffic and the current signage was appropriate for that street width. He continued by saying that double facing stop signs was done when situations hindered the visibility of the normal near-right stop sign (i.e. a stopped MTD bus blocking the visibility of the sign for an approaching vehicle in the same direction).

Carolyn Kearns stated that a resident in the area believed that motorists traveling on Indiana Street were not stopping because they do not expect the sign next to the park.

Glenn Berman stated that the City was considering the installation of new "Stop Ahead" signs with a picture of a red octagonal instead of the verbiage on it.

Carolyn Kearns agreed that the signs were very visible.

Glenn Berman stated that the City would look at the possibility of installing "Stop Ahead" signs on Iowa Street to determine if they were warranted. He said that Public Works would install the signage if it is warranted.

Item #9 - Discussion of more prominent signage for the school speed limit around the Urbana High School and Urbana Middle School campuses.

Carolyn Kearns stated that the Police Department had increased STEP enforcement of the school speed zone around the school. She added that some motorists were not paying attention to the school speed limit since the high school students were older.

Glenn Berman said that the City would add more speed limit signage around the Urbana High School and Urbana Middle School campuses. He suggested the addition of signs on Race Street (a speed limit sign for northbound traffic on the first lightpole even with the north end of the football field and a speed limit sign for southbound traffic on the first lightpole north of 1101 South Race) and on Vine Street (a speed limit sign at Fairlawn Drive at Vine Street for southbound traffic high enough to be seen above busses parked at the school).

Joe Smith moved to install school speed limit signs at the locations suggested above.

Eddie Adair seconded the motion.

The motion passed 3-0.

Glenn Berman said that he would forward Dr. DeWeese's suggestion for high school parking in Lincoln Square parking lot to Pat Pioletti, Parking and Public Facilities Manager.

Item #10- Discussion of STEP report.

Chief Adair discussed the STEP report for January and a report of traffic enforcement around the Urbana High School. (See attached reports.)

Meeting adjourned 5:05 p.m.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday, March 6, 2001 at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Stiehl
Recording Secretary