

URBANA TRAFFIC COMMISSION
Tuesday, February 6, 2007
revised

MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

OTHERS PRESENT:

Shawn Crowley, Parking Enforcement
Charlie Smyth, Council Member, Ward 1
Theodore Gray, 602 West Oregon Street

The meeting began at 4:05 p.m.

Additions to the agenda:

There were no additions to the agenda. Mike Bily requested that Item #4 be revised to read, “‘Deaf Child at Play’ sign’ instead of “‘Blind Child at Play’ sign’. The Commission approved the requested change.

Approval of Minutes:

Mike Bily moved to accept the minutes as read. Joe Smith seconded the motion. The Commission voted 3-0 to approve the minutes of the December 2006 meeting.

Old Business

Item #1 - Discussion of 40 mile-per-hour speed limit on Race Street from Windsor Road to southern City limits.

Joe Smith spoke with the Public Works Director, Bill Gray who wanted to proceed with the implementation of the 40 mile-per-hour speed limit on Race Street since the engineering speed study indicated that the speed should be set at 40 m.p.h.

Mike Bily discussed the contents of a letter received from a resident of the Yankee Ridge subdivision who opposed the increase in the speed limit along Race Street, even beyond the City limits.

Mr. Smith stated that the current speed limit for the part of Race Street south of Windsor Road to the southern City limit was 30 m.p.h. He added that the speed limit beyond the City limit was established by Champaign County at 40 m.p.h. Mr. Smith said that setting the 40 m.p.h. speed limit would be consistent with the speed limit on Windsor Road and the county speed limit on Race Street and with 90% of the traffic traveling along that stretch of Race Street.

Dennis Roberts commented that there were houses along Race Street that might impact the established speed limit.

Joe Smith said that there was one house and some driveways, but the structures were set back from the road. He continued that those structures and driveways were considered in the speed study. Mr. Smith reviewed the original rationale for establishing a 30 m.p.h. speed limit was because of the one-lane bridge that went across the McCullough Creek. He stated that the bridge was replaced with a two-lane bridge that can accommodate traffic without slowing to yield to approaching vehicles crossing the bridge. Mr. Smith requested establishing the 40 m.p.h. speed limit on Race Street as determined by the engineering study and the Public Works Director's recommendation.

Dennis Roberts suggested that the park district driveways and elderly housing might have an impact on the speed limit.

Joe Smith stated that those uses were considered in the speed study. He added that if there were no driveways along that area, the recommendation would have been for a 45 m.p.h. speed limit.

Charlie Smyth stated that as a bicyclist, he felt that the speed limit for motor vehicles should be 35 m.p.h. on Race Street, south of Windsor Road. He stated that the road was narrow for bicyclist and that cars go up and down the road. He mentioned that a lot of elderly people used that road and that the park district used it. He felt 40 m.p.h. was a little fast for a road that was 25 feet wide.

Mike Bily stated that it was similar to Windsor Road.

Charlie Smyth stated that the Windsor Road was four-lane.

Dennis Roberts stated that if the speed limit was set at 40 m.p.h. that motorists would drive faster than 40 m.p.h.

Joe Smith stated that would not necessarily occur and that logic had shown that motorists drive at speeds at which they feel in control. He added that Race Street was 45 feet wide, in an area with few driveways, and a bicycle path that was away from the motorized traffic, which made motorists more comfortable to drive at higher speeds.

Dennis Roberts stated that Race Street was an important north/south bike route into town with no shoulder.

Charlie Smyth stated that the road changed to the south of the bridge.

Joe Smith stated that the Champaign County had increased the speed limit to 40 m.p.h. south of the bridge.

Mike Bily asked if the speed study indicated that the speed limit should be set at 40 m.p.h.

Joe Smith responded that it did.

Dennis Roberts said that then motorists would go 45 m.p.h.

Joe Smith stated that was not correct; that motorists could safely travel at 40 m.p.h.

Dennis Roberts suggested that a graduated speed limit be implemented in this area. He asked if it would be possible to establish a 35 mile an hour speed limit.

Joe Smith said that it was possible.

Dennis Roberts moved to set the speed limit at 35 m.p.h. on Race Street from Windsor Road to the southern City limits.

Mike Bily seconded the motion.

The motion was approved 3-0.

This item will go to Council for approval.

New Business

Item #2- Discussion of installation of a stop sign for southbound Orchard Street at Oregon Street.

Charlie Smyth discussed the current situation at the intersection of Orchard Street and Oregon Street. He stated that the house on the northwest corner of the intersection was built onto a part of what was the City street, restricting Orchard Street to a width that would be considered an alley. He asked if parking could be eliminated in front of 600 West Oregon and the curb and gutter be built out as part of the Safe Routes to School program.

Theodore Gray stated that work had been done to restore the old approach to Orchard Street and that the sidewalk was repaired making it more difficult for young children on bicycles to slow down when riding on the sidewalk.

Charlie Smyth added that there were four driveways that accessed the street by using Orchard Street. Mr. Smyth added that if the street were blocked, those residents would be unable to back out of their driveways.

Theo Gray stated when his children are riding their bicycles on the sidewalk he cautioned them to slow down at the alleyway more than he would for the driveways because they cannot see the vehicles as easily in the alley.

Joe Smith stated that he had no problem recommending the installation of a one-way stop sign on Orchard Street at Oregon Street for southbound traffic. He said that the visibility for motorists made the installation of the stop sign warranted.

Joe Smith moved to install a stop sign on Orchard Street at Oregon Street for southbound traffic.

Theodore Gray asked if a speed bump could be installed.

Dennis Roberts stated that the City did not use speed bumps as a traffic calming device.

Mr. Gray asked if the City could put some type of bump in the sidewalk to slow the children on bicycles.

Joe Smith stated that the sidewalk was constructed to conform with the Americans with Disabilities Act, which prohibited a bump or any unexpected rise in the sidewalk.

Mike Bily seconded the motion.

Charlie Smyth asked if a stop bar could be added to let motorists know where to stop.

Joe Smith said that a stop bar could be added and the brick would be removed and the parkway restored at the northwest corner of Orchard Street and Oregon Street.

The motion passed 3-0.

This item will go to Council for consideration.

Chief Bily cautioned that even though a stop sign would be installed, children riding bicycles on the sidewalk would still need to exercise care when approaching the intersection. He said that motorists sometimes move past the stop bar to clearly see the road.

Item #3- Discussion of parking concerns in the 1600 block of Golfview Drive.

A resident from 1608 Golfview Drive had contacted the Recording Secretary about a concern regarding on-street parking at 1607 Golfview Drive. Mr. Fred Palmer said that his son rode a

school bus that stopped in front of 1608 and that vehicles were parked on the opposite side of the street making the roadway narrow to only one lane of traffic. Mr. Palmer asked if the Traffic Commission would recommend that no parking be allowed in the 1600 block of Golfview Drive to avoid narrowing the street with parked vehicles.

Mike Bily stated that motorists would be unable to pass the school bus from either direction when it was stopped so the parked vehicles would not have any impact on access around the bus.

Joe Smith noted that there were no cars parked in that area when he looked at parking in that area.

Shawn Crowley stated that their office (Parking Enforcement) had received calls complaining about the parking on the street and had not found any violations when they had investigated the block.

Mike Bily said that any time the City imposes parking restrictions to avoid an inconvenience for one resident; others on the street would be inconvenienced.

Joe Smith requested that the resident be contacted and informed that the City cannot eliminate parking in just one area in town when no problem is observed by the Police Department or by the Public Works Department.

Dennis Roberts suggested explaining that parking restrictions were not warranted at this time and the City did not restrict parking in one spot for an individual school bus stop.

No further action was recommended.

Item #4- Discussion of the installation of a “Deaf Child at Play” sign at 1102 West Hill Street.

Mike Bily stated that he spoke with Kristin Fisher of the Lutheran Social Services, who was the guardian for a child living at 1102 West Hill Street. Chief Bily explained that the child was hearing impaired and Ms. Fisher was requesting a “Deaf Child at Play” sign be installed at that address to warn motorists that the child may not hear the vehicles when playing outside of the child’s home.

Joe Smith stated that the City had placed signage similar to the one requested at various locations within the City.

Mike Bily asked what the process was to have this done.

Joe Smith stated that if the Traffic Commission approved the request, a work order would be issued to install the signage. He stated that the Public Works Department would send an application to have the signage renewed annually so signage would remain current.

Mike Bily moved to approve the installation of a “Deaf Child at Play” sign at 1102 West Hill Street.

Joe Smith seconded the motion.

The motion was approved 3-0.

Dennis Roberts asked if signs would be placed on both sides of the street.

Joe Smith stated that they would be placed on both sides and in advance of the home.

This item does not require Council action.

Meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

The next meeting will be held March 6, 2007 at 4:00 p.m. at the Urbana City Building, 400 South Vine Street, second floor conference room.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Stiehl
Recording Secretary