

URBANA TRAFFIC COMMISSION
Tuesday, August 7, 2012

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dennis Roberts, City Council Member
Pat Connolly, Chief of Police
Joe Smith, Senior Civil Engineer

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

OTHERS PRESENT:

Kathy Wallig, 2211 Fletcher Street
Craig Shonkwiler, Senior Civil Engineer
Bryan Carel, 2306 Whitson Circle
Jacqueline Hannah, 803 East Washington Street
Kali Wolf, 208 East California Avenue
John Collins, Operations Supervisor
Diane Marlin, 2203 Boudreau Circle
Wade Franklin, 201 Lincoln Square

The meeting began at 4:00 p.m.

Additions to the agenda:

There were no additions to the agenda.

Approval of Minutes:

Joe Smith moved to approve the minutes as read. Pat Connolly seconded the motion. The Commission voted 3-0 to approve the minutes of the June 19, 2012 meeting.

Unfinished Business

Item #1- Discussion of left turn lane only on Philo Road between Amber Lane and McHenry Street.

Kathy Wallig discussed her concerns about the left turn lane on Philo Road between Amber Lane and McHenry Street. She said that traffic movement was dangerous since Amber Lane and

McHenry Street did not align. She added that southbound traffic on Philo Road, turning onto Amber Lane, entered the left turn lane well in advance of the intersection, blocking northbound traffic attempting to turn onto McHenry Street. She mentioned that many people use Amber Lane to avoid traffic signals.

Diane Marlin stated that she had experienced that problem but she had room to move back into the through lane of Philo Road.

Pat Connolly reported that the Police Department had recorded 4 accidents in that area; one accident was in 2011. He stated that there were no reported accidents between January and April of 2012. He stated that statistically the number of accidents in that area was not an overwhelming concern when compared to other intersections.

Craig Shonkwiler said that the left turn lane was installed in 2006. He stated that before the installation of the left turn lane, there were 5 rear-end accidents between January 2004 and the installation of the turn lane. He continued by stating that during the time between the installation of the turn lane until June of 2012 there were no accidents in that area attributable to left-turn movements on Philo Road. (*One accident involved a stopped vehicle on Amber Lane being rear-ended by another vehicle on Amber Lane while waiting to turn left; two accidents involved vehicles backing out of their driveways into traffic.*) He mentioned that the City had been vigilantly monitoring the segment of roadway since 2009 and had not seen a pattern of accidents that could be reduced by changes in traffic flow. He explained another option would be to make the turn lane a dedicated lane for southbound traffic, but that change may cause more rear-end collisions for those in the northbound lane. He said that an all-way stop in that segment would be difficult because of the offset and that there would need to be a pattern of accidents (3 to 5 accidents per year for a 5-year period) to warrant the installation of an all-way stop.

Kathy Wallig asked if there were any other alternatives that could be used to prevent left-turning vehicles from entering the left turn only lane too early. She wanted southbound traffic to be aware that they did not have the right-of-way when entering the turn lane. She asked if a warning light could be installed.

Joe Smith recommended the installation of solar-powered amber beacons for northbound and southbound traffic on Philo Road and the installation of a warning sign, "Watch for Stopped Traffic." He said warning signage was needed to explain why flashing lights were located at that segment. He mentioned that the problem seemed to be prevalent during the afternoon rush hour. He noted that once he reviewed traffic video of that segment he would have more information about traffic patterns and early entry into the turn lane.

Pat Connolly said that he didn't observe any problems with cars refusing to move. He asked if rumble strips could be installed to keep vehicles from entering the turn lanes too soon.

Kathy Wallig said that more people were using Mumford Drive and Scovill Street since it was so hard to use McHenry Street.

Diane Marlin asked where the 5 rear-end accidents during the 2004-2006 time frame occurred.

Craig Shonkwiler stated that those occurred on Philo Road while vehicles were turning on either Amber Lane or McHenry Street. He pointed out that there were only two lanes of traffic at that time.

Joe Smith expressed concern that changes in the turning patterns might increase the number of rear end collisions. He said that there were no reported accidents at this time.

Pat Connolly mentioned that in 2011 there were 10 accidents within the Meijer parking lot; 5 accidents have occurred since January 2012.

Dennis Roberts pondered the possibility of adding an additional traffic lane but stated that the project would be very expensive.

Craig Shonkwiler stated that access could be closed for northbound traffic on Philo Road turning onto McHenry Street and for left turn movements from McHenry Street onto Philo Road, but there was not a pattern of accidents that would support those restrictions. He mentioned that when suggesting adjustments to traffic patterns, the City looked at the danger of the segment in comparison to other areas in town. He said that the City would continue to monitor traffic on that segment of Philo Road. He responded to the suggestion of the installation of rumble strips by pointing out that there was not enough area to provide an adequate taper. He assured Ms. Wallig that the City would continue to monitor that segment to observe traffic patterns and accident reports.

Dennis Roberts moved to install warning signs and solar-powered amber beacons for northbound and southbound traffic on Philo Road.

Pat Connolly seconded the motion.

The motion was approved 3-0.

This item does not require Council approval.

Joe Smith said that he would give Ms. Wallig a link to a website where she could watch the camera.

Item #2- Discussion of parking restrictions on Whitson Circle.

Joe Smith reviewed an earlier discussion from the May 1st meeting of the Urbana Traffic Commission. He said that the Operations Division had completed work which reduced the size of the landscaped area in the center of the cul-de-sac, increased the traffic lane, and allowed sufficient room for parked vehicles and moving traffic. He added that the parking restrictions were no longer needed with the widening of the lane.

Joe Smith moved to remove the parking restriction on Whitson Circle.

Pat Connolly seconded the motion.

The motion was approved 3-0.

This item will go to Council for consideration.

New Business

Item #3- Discussion of the installation of traffic control in front of Common Grounds in the Lincoln Square parking lot.

Jacqueline Hannah discussed her concerns about conflicts between pedestrians accessing Common Grounds Cooperative and motorists leaving Health Alliance, particularly around 5:00 p.m. on weekdays. She said that many of their customers had reported near misses and some cases where vehicles had bumped shopping carts. She asked if the City could install stop signs and a crosswalk at the entrance of Common Grounds. She mentioned that the store was expanding, which could possibly increase the amount of pedestrians shopping there.

Joe Smith said that he was not sure how effective the stop signs and crosswalk would be within a parking lot. He said that he would prefer the stop sign at an intersection of High Street and Walnut Street instead of at an entrance. He recommended televising the area to observe pedestrian and vehicular movements during September to include students and then suggesting possible traffic control measures. He asked that this item be placed on the October 2nd Traffic Commission agenda.

Diane Marlin relayed a message from Gil Kitterman of Sunnycrest Manor stating that the residents at Sunnycrest Manor were very happy with the crosswalk that was installed on Cottage Grove Avenue.

The meeting adjourned at 4:39 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Stiehl
Recording Secretary