

**MINUTES
BLOOMINGTON TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 17, 2018 4:00 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL
109 EAST OLIVE STREET
BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Angela Ballantini, Ms. Jill Blair, Ms. Maureen (Reenie) Bradley, Ms. Katherine Browne, Mr. Michael Gorman, Ms. Elizabeth Kooba

MEMBERS ABSENT: Ms. Kelly Rumley

OTHERS PRESENT: Mr. George Boyle, City Attorney; Mr. Jim Karch, Director of Public Works; Mr. Kevin Kothe, City Engineer; Mr. Philip Allyn, City Traffic Engineer; and several members of the public.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Gorman called the meeting to order at 4:01 pm.

2. ROLL CALL: Mr. Allyn called the roll. With six members in attendance, a quorum was established.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT:

No Public Comments were heard.

4. MINUTES: Reviewed and approved the minutes of the March 20, 2018 regular meeting of the Bloomington Transportation Commission. Ms. Bradley motioned to approve the minutes. Ms. Ballantini seconded the motion. The motion was approved by the Transportation Commission unanimously via voice vote.

5. REGULAR AGENDA: No Items

6. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Commissioner Question Follow-up: Status of Alley between Taylor and Olive

Mr. Allyn indicated that there was a question regarding the Alley between Taylor and Olive, Allin and Morris, known as Lang's Alley, during one of the previous Code Updates. The current reading of the City Code in the section prohibiting through traffic section implies that no traffic is allowed on the alley. Staff reviewed previous documents to determine intent. It appears that the original intent in 1977 was to restrict through traffic rather than all traffic in response to requests from citizens living along the alley at the time to close the alley completely. It is currently not signed with any restrictions so there is currently a discrepancy between the Code and the in place signage. We have not received any complaints or comments on the alley in the past number of years. Staff we re-evaluate and likely update the code to match the current signed condition rather than add signage to satisfy the request from approximately 40 years ago. If complaints are received in the future regarding closing the alley to traffic, we'll respond appropriately at that time. Staff will also be looking at the Code language in this section to clarify the overall intent.

Mr. Gorman asked about the phrase, "it shall be illegal for any person to drive..." used often throughout the Code. Does this language need to be updated to include autonomous vehicles to remove a potential loophole? Mr. Allyn agreed this is a great point that will likely need to be addressed sooner rather than later given recent pace of technology advancements. Staff has not discussed specifically updating the code to address future use of autonomous vehicles, but one solution could be to add a simple definition along the lines of "reference to persons driving a vehicle shall include autonomous vehicles" rather than updating all mentions through the Code.

Ms. Bradley mentioned that at this particular location – and there may be more on the other restricted blocks listed in the code – there are residents whose only garage access is from this Alley. There could be a number of situations that will need to be addressed and the wording could get complicated. Mr. Allyn indicated that the likely clarification (to be reviewed and approved by the legal department) would be to reference Chapter 29: Section 201 (a) in each subsection. Section (a) allows travel on a block only to people accessing property on that particular block. This would restrict through traffic without restricting access to properties. The final wording will come back to the Commission in a future Code update.

B. Commissioner Question Follow-up: Implementing Parking Restrictions at Bus Stops

Mr. Allyn indicated that there was a previous question regarding creating tow-zones at regular bus stops in addition to the specific locations listed in Code such as for the transfer area on Front Street where buses are sitting for longer periods. Staff contacted Connect Transit to see if they have had any issues with parked cars at bus stops. Connect Transit indicated that they have not had problems at the bus stops on the routes around town. The bus drivers are able to negotiate around any cars that may be parked. They will let us know in the future if issues arise for which towing rights would be advantageous and we will move forward if needed at that time.

7. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Information: March Citizen Comments/Complaints Summary

Mr. Allyn indicated a summary of the complaints/comments received since March 1 was provided in the agenda packet. This list is typical of what we receive each month, both in number and types of complaints. Mr. Allyn requested feedback on the format and level of detail provided. More details were provided this month to show the Commission typical responses to help build a trust level with the Commission that Staff is responding appropriately. Mr. Gorman asked what level of detail Mr. Allyn would like to provide to decrease time spent on this task. Mr. Allyn felt that a simple one-line summary could be appropriate and reminded everyone that all decisions of significance involving changes would be coming before the Commission as part of Code updates. Mr. Allyn also indicated that when a decision is made by Staff that is not in the favor of the requested, the written response explains the decision and includes the following language:

“We realize that this is not the response you were hoping for when you submitted this request and you may disagree with this decision. If you disagree with the Staff’s decision, you may submit a request in writing to the City Traffic Engineer to appeal the decision to the City of Bloomington Transportation Commission. Please submit this request for appeal to Mr. Philip Allyn at 115 E. Washington St., Bloomington, IL and indicate your points of disagreement. If we do not received an appeal request within 60 days, the case will be closed.”

This informs people that there is process available to appeal to the Commission if they disagree with the outcome or response.

Ms. Bradley thought the summary was very helpful based on the previous month’s discussion, but wasn’t sure that the level of detail provided was needed. Several of the items were very routine (insurance request, question related to how the traffic signals work). Non-route items are of more interest to the Commission. She tends to agree with the short turn lane situation on Washington at Mercer. If the homeowners have an issue, staff has looked into the request and all are happy with the outcome, or if the matter is routine, we maybe don’t need this much detail if it means taking time away from Staff’s other duties.

Mr. Gorman indicated that these could be separated into two groups: requests for information and requests for modifications. He is more interested in the requests for modifications. He wants to know the requested changes and the general response. Mr. Allyn asked if the Commission even wanted to hear about the requests for information. Mr. Gorman and Ms. Bradley indicated no.

As an illustration, Mr. Allyn expanded on the Dunraven request for a parking restriction along the west side of the street. When this request was made, Staff thought there was good potential for a split preference among the residents since the parking is widely used. With mixed feedback, staff anticipated bringing this request to the Commission. However, once the results of the resident poll were received, there was only one response opposed to the parking change. Since there was general concurrence with the change, Staff implemented the change rather than bringing it to the Commission. However, this could have been an example of a controversial situation when Staff would proceed to the Commission for assistance with a decision rather than just making the decision.

Mr. Gorman confirmed that there was not a motion for approval needed. Mr. Boyle confirmed that the item was just presented for feedback. Mr. Gorman mentioned he appreciated this level of detail and thought that a shorter summary of the larger items may not be sufficient. Mr. Allyn added that there would obviously be the opportunity for Commission members to ask for an expansion of detail on any of the items to be provided verbally at the meeting.

Mr. Boyle indicated that the Legal Department would be providing next month a short summary on Legal's construction on the ordinance and the role of the Commission. We need to make sure that the powers being adopted by the Commission are properly based as we work to refine the role of the Commission.

B. Information: Potential Jefferson Street Modifications (Center to Main)

Mr. Allyn indicated that the City Council and Staff are discussing potential changes to Jefferson Street specifically and the larger Downtown in general coming out of the Downtown Task Force Report. One such recommendation is to transition from a Street-Sidewalk model to a shared space model in the Downtown core and look at how our streets and right-of-way areas are used. Council had a discussion with Staff last night on this recommendation. There are lots of different options. The question was pertaining to spending money resurfacing this street now or if the money should be shifted to other areas if the intent was to reconstruct this block into a more pedestrian-focused area. The general direction received from Council was to overlay this block of Jefferson as part of this year's annual resurfacing since it is in dire need of resurfacing. However, there may be more discussion coming over the next months and maybe years of what the downtown streets should look like moving forward.

Mr. Gorman asked for a high-level overview of the proposal is for this year that Council approved last night. Mr. Allyn indicated that the work would be typical of the other resurfacing we have been doing around town and include milling and overlaying with asphalt and sidewalk curb ramps would be replaced when out of compliance. We are also looking into constructing sidewalk bump outs in locations where practical in the downtown area similar to what was constructed at Main and Mulberry. Bump outs are also being constructed along Front Street. The Jefferson overlay work is planned from Lee to Prairie.

Mr. Gorman mentioned that the block of Jefferson between Center and Main has a short curb along the south side and asked if this was going to remain. Mr. Allyn indicated that this curb would remain and the pavement would be going back at roughly the same grade.

Ms. Bradley asked why curb bump outs were planned. Mr. Allyn indicated that the bump outs would shorten the crosswalk lengths making it easier and safer for pedestrians to cross the street. The downside is that it does make it more difficult for larger cars and trucks to turn. They also add a positive aesthetic benefit with additional landscaping. All bump outs will be limited to the corners so there will not be loss of parking along the block. There may be a loss of a single parking space at some of the corners. Mr. Gorman added that the bump outs also help the slow vehicles in the downtown areas where speeds should be lower and help remind drivers to stop at stop signs.

Ms. Bradley asked if the intention was to shut down the block of Jefferson between Center and Main to vehicle traffic. Mr. Allyn indicated that is something still to be worked out. There was a recommendation

from the Downtown Task Force to convert this block into a shared use space. There are many examples of what this could look like. It is possible this could mean only pedestrians/bicycles or maybe just a widening of the sidewalks or something in between. Over the next year or two, this block will be looked at closer and a direction will be determined. It is still very early in the process. There will be an element of public outreach, likely during which this Commission becomes involved as well. Funding needs to be determined if there is a large change.

Ms. Bradley indicated that closing the street to vehicles would not be bad to create a larger usable area. There would be some loss of parking, but it should not greatly impact traffic flow and could be a benefit. Mr. Allyn mentioned that it is currently closed for the Farmer's Market and we agreed it would not be overly problematic to close the street. There is still a lot of work to be done, not the least of which is to discuss with the businesses on this street. Ms. Bradley mentioned it makes more sense to eliminate vehicle traffic rather than a shared car/bike/pedestrian use, but that is a discussion for later. It is not that different that closing Beecher Street by Wesleyan. Mr. Allyn also mentioned Fulton Street in Peoria just down from City Hall, which was closed a number of years ago. He also mentioned that one of the criticisms of converting to pedestrian-only is that unless there is already a large number of pedestrians to use it, it does not always attract like you think it would. For example, Peoria has been discussing the last couple years about re-opening that same block of Fulton. The current trend around the country is to start converting these pedestrian only blocks into a shared use space model. There are lots of options that will be worked out in the upcoming months.

8. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Ms. Bradley mentioned that she is hearing a lot of positive comments about the current resurfacing on Center and Clinton through town. The complaints have always been about those streets and it is great to get them paved. Mr. Allyn indicated that the City has been discussing with the higher levels at IDOT about how terrible those roads are and it is good to see them getting addressed. IDOT had some end of year emergency funds become available that they were able to use. They are not upgrading sidewalk curb ramps. It is not a complete fix, as it is just a mill and overlay, but it should give a good driving surface for the near future. Mr. Gorman asked how long the resurfacing should last. It is necessary, but not a real fix and a most extensive project is still not listed IDOT's 5-year plan. Mr. Allyn indicated that he was not sure of most of the design details, but it appeared to be a minimal overlay that would be more of a band-aid than a fix. It is similar to the Center Street resurfacing that was done around 2009-2010 that is now needing resurfaced again. The currently resurfacing could be expected to have a similar life.

Mr. Allyn mentioned that everyone should have received an email from the County about completing a Statement of Economic Interest form. Please let him know if you have not received this email. It needs to be completed to identify potential conflicts of interest. There is a \$15/day penalty if forms are not submitted by May 1st, a \$100/day penalty if forms are not submitted by May 15th, and you are removed from the Commission if not submitted by May 31st. Mr. Gorman mentioned that he received an email with regard to being on the Regional Planning Commission, but not the Transportation Commission. Mr. Allyn indicated that he should list both positions at the top, but that only one form needs to be submitted. Mr. Boyle indicated that if anyone has questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to the City Legal Department for assistance.

8. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 4:40 pm unanimously by voice vote; motioned by Ms. Blair and seconded by Ms. Browne.

Respectfully,

Philip Allyn
City Traffic Engineer