

Parking and Traffic Committee Meeting Minutes

Date of Meeting: Thursday, January 16, 2014, 5:30 pm., in the Council Chambers at City Hall
Members Present: Abitz{C}, Kellbach, Winters, Mielke, Nutting
Others Present: Lt. Pekarske, Alfonso, Groat, Wesolowski, Lang

In accordance with Chapter 19, Wisconsin Statutes, notice of this meeting was posted and sent to the Daily Herald in the proper manner. It was noted that there was a quorum present and the meeting was called to order by Chairperson Abitz at 5:30 pm.

(1) Minutes of the Prior Meeting – 11/21/2013

Motion by Mielke, second by Winters, to approve the minutes of the November 21, 2013. Motion approved 5-0.

(2) Discussion item only: Discuss the traffic concerns brought forth by the Forest Park Neighborhood Association.

Discussion: Dick Rayborn represented the Forest Park Neighborhood Association. The association was established in October of 2013 and there are approximately 100 members. There were 80 to 120 people that attend their first meetings. The main concerns are heavy traffic flow and speeding. The association is suggesting stop signs on the long stretches of road that lead to/from the schools and a 15 mph sign near the school along with more police presence at the school's start & end times.

Marie Schmidt lives on Parker Street; in her opinion she doesn't see that extra stop signs would be more helpful; speeding is a behavior. Every intersection in the area is controlled in some manner and the drivers are just ignoring the signs. Police presence would be a great help, more stop signs will just irritate the residents.

Lt. Pekarske explained the purpose of a stop sign is to control the intersection for safety purposes and is not a speed control device. Enforcement is difficult, the police officers do target the different neighborhoods when problems and complaints come up, but there is not enough staffing to regulate all the neighborhoods and all the schools zones all the time. School zones are a priority of the police department and officers are directed to school zones but they also have service calls to attend to as well, especially in the afternoons when calls for service increase. Enforcement in school zones is done on a regular basis; however, this is a balancing act.

ACA Alfonso stated that officers do catch a lot of the school zone violators because she prosecutes them in Municipal Court. Officers can't be at the school zones all the time but they do catch a good portion of them.

Wesolowski entered a letter signed by Brad Marquardt. The letter expresses the City is against installing stop signs as a means to control speed. In looking at the map presented at the meeting, the intersections that are marked, do not meet the criteria for lights or signs. The City can perform a traffic study in spring when the snow is gone but does not want to waste the time if the committee plans to go against the City's recommendation.

It is also the recommendation of the City to leave the speed limit at 35 mph on N. 6th Street.

Winters asked for more data (other than crash data) to be gathered regarding the above traffic situations. He is not happy with the City's response to these problems and stated that the citizens want something done.

Rayborn asked the City to perform a traffic/speed study in the area of 13th and Spring Street.

Winters wants this topic to be put on a future agenda – Traffic speed study at 13th between Spring Street and Sylvan for future recommendations. To be done in May.

It was discussed that performing traffic studies at Wausau East High School and Horace Mann Middle School would not be a good use of resources as these areas do not meet the criteria for signs.

Abitz asked if there was any feedback regarding the stop signs that had previously been installed on 1st Ave./Bos Creek and Woodland Ridge Rd. The feedback was speeders continue to speed in that area; the signs may have calmed the problem but did not fix the problem.

Nutting stated that he agree with both sides. Stop signs should not be used to control speeding. Nutting felt that the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices should be looked at as a guide but at times we need to go above and beyond the statutes and guidelines. This area needs to be looked at more closely.

Mielke stated that we need to listen to the residents and City staff. He believes the root of the problem is ignorance. He feels for the residents but leans towards City staff's recommendations.

Kellbach is asking for more police presence instead of stop signs.

(3) Discussion item only: Discussion regarding concerns about semi-truck traffic on S. 84th Avenue.

Discussion: Lois Bauer, resident on S. 84th Avenue, expressed safety issues with semi trucks using the ¼ mile road of S. 84th Avenue. South 84th Avenue is not a designated truck route but is heavily traveled by semi trucks. The problem is not with local businesses. The problem is with semi trucks that do not utilize the businesses on the end of the road, but use the road as a short cut throughway. Residents are asking that this road be posted 'no truck route', for more police enforcement between 3-5 pm, and to reduce the speed limit on the road to help deter the trucks.

Lt. Pekarske read a section from W.M.C. regarding permitted deviations from truck routes, 'if deviating you must use the shortest distance'. Most trucking GPS software shows this as the shortest distance and that is why the truckers are traveling this road. Since the ordinance allows the shortest distance, the trucks traveling on S. 84th Avenue are often following the rules set forth in our ordinance. Lt. Pekarske stated that he has no expertise in delineating truck routes and will have to look into it.

Wesolowski stated he will work with the City Attorney's Office to see about designating truck routes for the whole industrial park area.

Future agenda item, recommendation for Allen Wesolowski to move forward to distinguish a truck route for the industrial park. A speed/traffic study will be put on hold until the truck route is determined.

(4) Discussion item only: The timing change to the traffic lights at S. 3rd Avenue and W. Thomas Street was completed the week of November 4, 2013. Information to be provided to the committee by the Engineering Department.

Discussion: Wesolowski talked with Todd, City Electrical Department, and moved the signals off their night-time flash cycle one hour earlier and this seems to have helped with the problem.

(5) Discussion and possible action: review and possibly approve a RFP for a downtown parking analysis.

Groat distributed a draft RFP for the city's parking analysis. The RFP was crafted to analyze parking regulations in the downtown area but allow for additional future parking needs. The Economic Development Committee is also interested in the parking RFP. The purpose of the RFP is to study and evaluate meters, pay by rate analysis, signage, and recommend up to date technologies which will improve the overall parking experience in the downtown area.

Mielke stated the RFP is in the right direction and is in favor of universal parking. He also wants higher penalties for violators.

Winters agrees with Mielke and would also like to include transit service in the RFP.

Abitz agreed with including downtown transit. She also asked about looking at and taking into consideration the stores that are closing in the mall and how that will affect parking.

Winters asked Groat to finalize the RFP and bring it back as an agenda item to the next meeting.

(6) Discussion item only: Continue discussion on downtown parking

The First Presbyterian Church and the YMCA came to an agreement and entered into a parking contract. The City opted out and is no longer involved concluding with a net savings for the City.

(7) Future Agenda Items

First and Scott traffic, the consultant is working on it.

Fourth and Callon, nothing.

Congested Intersection at Jefferson and 7th Street by the Red Eye tavern/restaurant.

(8) Communications

Nothing

(9) Adjournment

Adjourn

Motion by Nutting, second by Mielke, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Parking and Traffic Committee

Sherry Abitz, Chair