

Minutes of Traffic Commission

February 18, 2020

Members present: Mr. Thomas, Mr. Feliciano, Mr. Daniels, Director of Public Works Bischoff, Safety Director Caryer, Assistant Law Director Swartz designee of Mark Russell, Chief Collins

With a quorum present, Mr. Thomas called the meeting to order at 7:09 PM.

Mr. Daniels nominated Mr. Thomas as chairperson for the Traffic Commission, Mr. Feliciano – 2nd; Mr. Caryer made a motion to close nominations, Mr. Daniels 2nd. All in favor signified by saying “aye”. No opposition. All in favor of Mr. Thomas as chairperson signified by saying “aye”. No opposition.

Mr. Thomas elected chair of Traffic Commission.

Item 1. Request to consider traffic issues around Benjamin Harrison Elementary School

Many residents of area around Benjamin Harrison Elementary School were in attendance. There had previously been a meeting at the school with residents. A detailed letter, as well as a petition signed by residents was submitted. A large percentage of the audience were not in favor of additional sidewalks, although there were members in attendance who were.

A group of residents is asking for a traffic study because they feel that the problems are traffic issues and that they create a safety issue. It was acknowledged that some students may get dropped off precisely because there are no sidewalks. Marion Public Health is working with ODOT to do a travel study on each one of the K-8 schools, including all forms of travel (walking, biking, automobile, bus).

During the development of this area, sidewalks and streetlights were not a requirement. They have already worked with the city and had a sidewalk built in the Shadyside area to help with safety. There is pedestrian access along the school side there. Parking in that area for 30-45 minutes at the beginning and end of school is very congested along all of those routes. Bischoff explained that they are pursuing funds and need to develop “travel plans” for each of the schools. This is an ODOT funded program to establish “safe routes to school”.

Various residents and school staff confirmed that traffic in and around the area, especially before and after school, needs to be studied and addressed.

Maureen Pace (472 Forest Street) spoke out as a resident that felt that more sidewalks are needed. She stated that perhaps children are not walking because there are no sidewalks. It is a safety concern. There has been at least one accident last year where a child was hit on Forest Street where there were no sidewalks.

Bischoff explained that there are a number of different things to look at. They have to look at obstructions and what will be impact. They may not need sidewalks on both sides. Brightwood is not in the center of the right of way, so there is more room on one side. A lot of this depends on the results of the study. The City does not install streetlights. Ohio Edison does, and the city pays that. It is not part of any of the projects that they currently do.

Christian Dunson (211 E Fairground) confirmed that there was an accident on 03/25/2019. The child was crossing a road to get to a sidewalk, and he was hit on Forest.

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Debbie Carr (651 Brightwood) is part of the group requesting the study. There is a group of citizens with a strong objection to sidewalks. They were told in the beginning that if the neighborhood did not want sidewalks, they would not be imposed upon them. Perhaps this is more of a Marion City School issue rather than a City issue with the parking. That parking lot is taken up primarily by staff. There is no room when they have events, so people park in neighboring yards. So called "Indian Mounds" area might be an option to be cleared to create a drop off lane (looper line) or to extend a parking lot. Shadyside is being used as an entrance to school. Drivers become hostile with each other. They have counted pedestrians on Brightwood from Virginia to Benjamin Harrison. There were no walkers. They have talked to the Marion City Schools Superintendent and other staff. The schools are waiting on a parking study to be conducted.

Bischoff said that they have talked about posted "no parking" areas and enforcement.

Amy Garrison (1330 Montego Drive) spoke as a teacher at the school and encouraged the commission to have a traffic study completed. She confirmed what residents had stated. There are almost 500 students and they do not expect that to go down. "Looper Lane" is lined up all the way down to Presidential and Brightwood. If parking spaces are removed for parents, the "looper line" will get longer.

Woody Barry (641 Brightwood) spoke about Shadyside Circle. They have talked with the school several times and the school has taken measures to try to improve situation. There are 6 no parking signs on the right. They have now changed Shadyside Circle into another "looper lane". They cannot get in or out of their houses. He believes that a lot of the problem is the over enrollment and overcrowding and the schools.

Bischoff said travel plan encompasses 2-mile radius around all the schools. He would not do a traffic study, because they are already doing it.

Mayor Schertzer talked about Safe Routes to School. They are in the process of moving towards a study. No study has been done yet. Once done, they will come back with all kinds of recommendations. They have used funding through Safe Routes to School to build a bridge for walkers. Also, these neighborhoods were built before subdivision regulations (Regional Planning). If they were built today, they would have lights and sidewalks. It is cost prohibitive to go back and retrofit those features. The City did not plan the parking, drop off, etc. at the schools. There is an open line of communication between the city and the schools, however this topic has not come up in any of the meetings that he has been in. He anticipates that it will be discussed in future meetings.

Mr. Daniels cited chapter 1153 section of Marion Codified Ordinances regarding "loading and parking standards." If he were to build an apartment building, he has a requirement of two parking spaces per unit. That might be something to look at with the school board.

Tom Pannett (681 Brightwood Drive) expressed that residents have made improvements on their own, specifically curbs that he has installed. Bischoff explained that they do not overlay streets that have curbs.

It was suggested that residents continue to communicate with school and school board, specifically on continuing open enrollment that is contributing to overcrowding.

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Chief Collins stated that their busiest time is 3-5PM. They handle majority of their calls then and they would not be able to commit an officer every day. It would take overtime to commit to something like that. He has had discussions with school resource officer. They will look at how they can address based on the workload.

Thomas clarified that they would wait until the travel plan study is completed and then meet again. He feels that all of the schools are having these types of problems.

Robert Morris (Regional Planning) explained that ODOT District 6/Safe Routes to School provides infrastructure, education and encouragement for schools for kids K-8. To be eligible for funds, they have to have a school travel plan. They are asking for technical assistance with the school travel plan from ODOT. They should be able to apply for those funds next year. It may take a couple of years for the project to complete.

ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Mr. Daniels made a motion to accept the minutes of 07/16/2019; Mr. Feliciano 2nd. All Ayes
Minutes of 07/16/2019 Meeting Approved

There being no further business, Mr. Thomas adjourned the meeting at 8:12 PM.

Chairman Thomas

Clerk of Council