



TRAFFIC AND SAFETY COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

CITY OF ALBANY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
1000 SAN PABLO AVENUE
CITY OF ALBANY
MAY 24, 2007

1. Call To Order and Roll Call

The meeting began at 7:10 p.m. by Richard Treat, Chair.

2. Roll Call

Members present: Richard Treat, Ray Anderson, David Madson , Marsha Atkinson, Lubov Mazur.

Staff: Ann Chaney, Lt. Daniel Adams, and Aleida Andrino-Chavez.

3. Consent Calendar

4. Approval of Minutes

Treat asked if there were any corrections to the minutes to the April 26, 2007 minutes. Being none, Atkinson moved to approve the minutes. Mazur seconded, the vote was 4 in favor, and 1 absent.

5. Public Comment - None

6. Public Meeting—Request to install a Disabled Parking Space (Blue Curb) in front of 405 Kains Avenue

Chavez explained that because of the City Hall retrofit project, it is proposed that the City Administrative and financial offices relocate to the 405 Kains. Because the City offices need to accommodate the needs of the disabled, one disabled on-street parking space needs to be provided. The site length between the two driveways is about 63 feet. Mazur asked if there have been any comments from the public in regard to this petition. Chavez said that there have been none. She mentioned that demand for parking is high during the weekends, but that during the weekdays there are always one of two spaces available.

Treat asked if the City acting to accommodate one disabled parking space satisfies the requirement for the owner to provide one.

Chavez explained that because the parking inside the property is so minimal, the owner does not have enough spaces to provide a disabled parking on site. Therefore, the on-street parking will satisfy the requirement.

Treat asked if the disabled parking is permanent. Chaney explained that when this is done in residential areas and if the house is sold, City policy states that the blue curb space be reverted to a regular parking space. However, because this area is a mix of commercial and residential, the disabled space could stay.

Treat called for a vote. Mazur made the motion to approve the request for a blue curb space in front of 405 Kains Avenue. Atkinson seconded. Vote was unanimous.

7. Discussion and Possible Actions on Matters Related to the Following Items

- 7-1. Study session on the type and process for the requests regarding future traffic calming measures.

Chavez presented a Power Point summary of what the City of Albany has done to date and what other cities have done in terms of implementing traffic calming measures. She explained that when the City of Albany developed its Traffic Management Plan, the City Council approved a list of capital projects aimed at improving pedestrian and bicycle safety. The project list is about 40% completed, with 14% of the projects in the progress of being completed. Chavez explained the different policies and programs that other cities use. She has researched the Cities of El Cerrito, Ventura, Pinole, and Berkeley, and the town of Danville in California, as well as Gresham in Oregon, and Seattle, Washington. She explained that some cities have neighborhood traffic control programs, others have established traffic calming policies, and others have speed watch programs, and still others have a policy just to address the request for speed humps.

Anderson asked if through a neighborhood speech watch program, police could issue a warning letter. Lt. Adams said that in California he believes that sending a warning letter as part of the speed watch program would not be allowed by the state because the police are restricted from using information generated by the state database. Chavez explained that the cities that are using this system are Grisham, Oregon, and Seattle, which were approved by their councils.

Chavez said that the challenges the City faces in regard of traffic calming implementation are:

- Developing criteria for the new traffic calming requests, or continue the former process
- What to do with the 15% of drivers who speed
- Creating and disseminating effective traffic safety information
- Developing and implementing educational programs

Chaney restated that the basic parameters that trigger the implementation of traffic calming measures are volume and speed. She explained the issue of warrants, such as in the stop sign system in Albany that a location has to meet at least two warrants to be equipped with a stop sign system. She said that the Commission should take a look at the project list and provide direction as to which projects should be changed and what should stay on the list. One issue to consider for example, is whether or not Adams Street should be pursued as a two-way street, or whether or not

the City should pursue the Marin Avenue Phase II. In addition, she asked the Commission to address the issue of the new requests, how priorities should be set, and to consider other policy issues other cities have in place, such as paying for the requested traffic measures. At this point the meeting was opened for questions.

Sol Strand commented on the requirement that 60% of residents of a street should petition for changes on their street, while none of the residents on Pierce petitioned for having a bike path on the street. In response to a question about whether any neighborhood has not wanted a speed hump, Chaney referred to one of the Commission's last meetings where residents in the 500 block of Curtis Street where the majority present did not favor speed humps.

Madson said that he reviewed the plan and found the information to be very reasonable. He asked if those who made the request for speed humps for example, were accepting of the information when they found out that the speeds and volumes on their street does not trigger the requirements for change. Chavez responded that they are usually satisfied. Madson recommended following the established criteria and schedule.

Chavez asked how the Commission felt about the idea of the residents of paying for the changes, rather than wait for the City budget process. Mazur suggested developing a parallel list; one for City sponsored projects, and the other for improvements made by the residents. Anderson did not agree because it would not encourage equality among the City's neighborhoods. Madson said that he agrees with Anderson because it is a service that the City provides. Mazur said that the Mayor at one point suggested the creation of special assessment districts in Albany. Chaney said that the discussion shows the dilemma presented by the issue. From staff's point of view, she is concerned with the logistic of collecting the money, and what would happen if someone does not want to pay. Treat said that he does not like the idea of having two lists with one for projects paid for by the City, and another list for project paid by the residents. One solution is that the neighborhood organizes the request for traffic calming measures and then collect the money, the neighborhood lead deposits the money to the City account and when there is certain amount, the City can take over.

Chaney said that the original list of projects was prioritized based on its level of a neighborhood or citywide benefit. Treat reiterated that the projects should be ranked ignoring the cost and when a particular project is up, either it is funded through a grant, or paid for by neighborhood-generated funds, or by city funds. It is understood that the proposed project should meet the criteria.

Chaney said what would help in this discussion is to see the actual policy from other cities.

Atkinson said that it seems that the City of Albany had a policy. Chaney said that the criterion used by staff sets the threshold for a possible speed hump at a point when the posted speed exceeds 6mph (similar to the stop sign warrant policy). However, this criterion has not been formally approved, nor has an average daily volume threshold been set.

Treat suggested that this item be placed again on next month's agenda, as well as the idea of using art as traffic calming. Mazur suggested revising the introduction of the petition, to include whether the request meets the initial criteria.

7.2 Follow up on School District Meeting regarding traffic and safety issues and information about the TALC about how to start a walking bus program.

Chavez explained that she contacted TALC (Transportation and Land Use Coalition) regarding its program for Safe Routes to School, and she invited TALC staff to make a presentation at next month's meeting. In summary, TALC received a grant from Alameda County Measure B program to develop a Safe Routes to School program in Alameda County. Phase I will include one school district in Oakland, and another in Berkeley. TALC applied for federal Safe Routes to School Program for Phase II. If successful, the City of Albany has formally requested to be included in Phase II.

Anderson mentioned that Albany once had a Block Parent program where a designated parent living on a block served as the block parent for children to go to if they needed assistance walking home from school. However, sometimes the designated parent was not home and the program was not entirely successful.

Madson suggested that we find out what intersections/routes are the safest to take when walking to and from school. He said this might require a professional evaluation and putting money aside for hiring a consultant.

Atkinson requested that School Board members be invited to the TALC presentation.

Anderson also said that the City had a program where the business community offered an block parent program. Treat suggested that there are many childcare centers in the neighborhood that could be approached if the program is reinstated.

Mazur asked Anderson what he found out in regard to the crossing guards. Anderson said that they are working on the problem and that he would report at the next meeting.

8. Reports

8.1 Speed survey on the 900 block of Carmel Avenue and 700 of Key Route Boulevard northbound

Chavez said that Key Route along with Masonic are included in the TMP project list, and therefore qualify for traffic calming measures. With regard to Carmel, survey data collected showed the 85th percentile as 28 mph, which is less than the threshold of 6 mph over the speed limit. Given the results, the street does not meet this criterion. Key Route however, carries three times the volume of Carmel Street, but its 85th percentile speeds are within the 6 mph threshold. Judging only for speed, the street does not meet the criteria, but speed treatments were recommended in the approved Traffic Management Plan.

Chaney said that when the TMP priority list was assembled, "engineering judgment" was included as one of the criterion in determining whether to install traffic calming measures. Chavez then clarified that although Key Route does not meet the criteria, the project was included because it met the engineering judgment criteria. Chaney said that the TMP was adopted in 2000, and it may be time to revisit the list of projects at a future meeting. Any change would require City Council approval.

Treat said that based on the results of the surveys, the Commission will not recommend speed treatments at this time. However, Key Route speed treatments are included in the list of projects and this issue may come back to the Commission during the priority process.

8.2 Pierce Street Restriping Status

Chaney said that Council considered the restriping proposal for Pierce Street and recommended that before making a final decision, the issues of safety and loading/unloading area for Bridgewater be evaluated, while maintaining the Class I bicycle path concept. A meet with the residents will be scheduled to discuss this once the engineers have determined whether some of their new ideas are feasible. She also said that they are included to revisit the option where parallel parking on the east side was retained.

Atkinson asked why the project is being referred to as restriping rather than repaving. Chaney said that repaving has already been decided and is not a decision that this body has to make. How the street is restriped is a decision pertinent to this body.

Sol Strand stated that there are several complications and he would like to see different parking angles by different sections of the street, because the 11 parking stalls that would be lost were under the 30 degree angle. He said that by changing the angle along different sections could gain more parking stalls. He hoped that the homeowners had an opportunity to give suggestions before the consultants presented a final plan. Chavez said that she mentioned this concept to the City engineer, and he has concerns with varying the parking angles on the east side of Pierce

Treat suggested to bring this item back to the Commission when the next steps develop.

8.3 Police Reports

Lieutenant Daniel Adams reported that since April 26, 2007, there had been 16 reported collisions in Albany. Three of which were injury collisions, eleven were non-injury collisions, and the remaining two non-injury collisions were classified as hit and runs. Three of the collisions were on Marin Avenue; one was a right of way violation at the intersection of Kains Avenue. The other two were rear-end, relatively slow, stop and go collisions. One collision was between Evelyn and Talbot, and the other was near Kains Avenue. One of the hit and run collisions occurred on the 900 block of Stannage Avenue in the afternoon. The driver was intoxicated and hit a parked police car. The officer was conducting an investigation, so the car was empty.

There were no bicycle/auto collisions during this period. There was however, one bicycle-scooter collision on the 700 to 900 block of Pierce Street. A bicyclist was riding on the east sidewalk and struck the rider of the scooter who suffered abrasion injuries. Because the location of the collision was the sidewalk, the California Vehicle Code does not treat it as a vehicle collision and it does not get reported.

Anderson asked if the Commission could get the citations generated by the speed radar for next month. Lt. Adams said that Police does not track activity by citations alone, and that providing radar information alone involved intense labor. Lt. Adams also stated that there is an enforcement campaign called "click it or ticket," and officers are encouraged to look for violations during this campaign.

Chaney asked if SWITERS database still includes cell phone use as the cause of the accidents? Lt. Adams stated not anymore, however, three years ago there was a study to determine if cell phones and other distractions are a factor in collisions. Mazur commented that the study had some effect apparently because as of January 1, 2008, cell phone conversations while driving will be prohibited, with the exception of the hands-free system.

9. Announcement/Communications

9.1 Letter from Murray Bruce requesting signage prohibiting overnight parking in front of commercial property located at 1061 Eastshore Hwy.

Treat suggested putting this item on the agenda for next month and inviting Mr. Bruce to the meeting

10. Future agenda items

- a) Continue discussion on setting a traffic calming measures policy
- b) TALC presentation on Safe Routes to School
- c) Overnight parking on all commercial streets

Chaney said the Council adopted a resolution that there would not be meetings in August, and that the Commission would be meeting in the new location in September due to the Civic Center seismic retrofit project.

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 pm. The next meeting is June 28, 2007 at 7:00 pm.