

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS TRAFFIC COMMISSION

Monday, June 7, 2021

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Schluender at 5:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members present: Ciesynski, Davis, Finkelson, Nekora, Schluender

Staff present: Kathy Young, Assistant City Engineer
Captain Markham, Police

Council Liaison: Amáda Márquez Simula (present 45 minutes)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motioned by Davis, seconded by Ciesynski, to approve the minutes of May 3, 2021, as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING

DESIGNATE “NO PARKING” ON SULLIVAN DRIVE FROM 7TH STREET TO WASHINGTON STREET IN CONJUNCTION WITH ADDING BIKE LANE STRIPING ON SULLIVAN DRIVE AND A CROSSWALK FROM SULLIVAN PARK TO SULLIVAN DRIVE

Present: Gary M. Olson, 5129 7th Street
Cookie Sorensen, 5129 7th Street
Klaus O Steinke, 5128 Washington Street

Mr. Olson lives at 5129 7th Street on the corner of 7th Street and Sullivan Drive. He has lived there for 36 years. There are two homes, his home being one of them, and two duplexes on Sullivan Drive. All the driveways face Sullivan Drive, which they use for visitor parking. He has room for three cars in his driveway, the other home has one, and the duplexes have no room for extra parking. If they have visitors there will be no place for them to park. Washington Street only has parking on one side. There are two duplexes across the street that use Washington Street for parking when they are full. Cars park on Sullivan Drive daily as it's the only place to park. Very few bikes go down Sullivan Drive so to take away resident parking for a bike path makes no sense. Of the ten homes that will be affected, 8 of them have BIPOCS living in them and he believes taking away the parking will be a hardship for some of these people. He understands it's about a crosswalk that needs to go somewhere so it goes into a bike lane that they don't need. He suggested pedestrian signs with a button to push and flashing lights to alert drivers someone is crossing. There's more foot traffic than vehicle traffic on Sullivan Drive. Also, if you put the bike lane on the south side, it's flat and easy to walk on. If you put it on the north side there's a big crown in the road making it difficult to walk on. He does not want to have to walk a block or two to get to his home.

Schuelender asked if a lot of people cross Washington Street to get into the park. Mr. Olson stated yes and he hears tires screeching once in a while, but, because of the native plantings, drivers going north to south can't see people coming out of the park unless they're standing right in the gutter. For south to north traffic, many drivers will stop and others will blow their horn. There's not much traffic control in this part of town. Davis asked where the bikes coming from the park typically go. Mr. Olson stated they go north and south on

Washington, very few use Sullivan Drive. Mr. Olson asked if it's illegal to walk in a bike lane, because if the bike lane is only open to bikers then you're forcing pedestrians to walk in the middle of the street. Davis stated he also had some concerns about pedestrians having to cross again north-south on Washington to get to the other half of the bike lane.

Mr. Olson suggested designating the parking spot on the south side of Sullivan Drive by the telephone pole as no parking and using it as a place to go when you cross, that way you're not taking away all the parking.

Nekora questioned the trees on the north side of the path. Mr. Olson advised the trees come right up to the street. Young explained that area is owned by Sullivan Shores and they are in charge of the trees. Nekora asked about clearing the brush to increase visibility. Young advised we could clear the right-of-way.

Mr. Olson stated it's a long stretch down Washington, asked about putting up the speed trailer as it gets pretty bad and the kids don't look. States in 36 years nothing has happened but it still gives him gray hair. Schluender agrees the bike lane is not very valuable but we do need a crosswalk and it needs to go somewhere. However, lack of a crosswalk is not stopping people from crossing the street. Per Mr. Olson, the same cars drive Washington Street every day because there are no stop signs. Perhaps if there was a button to cross the street drivers would understand, because they're the same cars.

Schluender asked Young, aside from a bike lane, if there is anything smaller that would be a permissible landing spot for a crosswalk. Young advised it is the City Engineers opinion that it needs to be a sidewalk or a bike lane. Finkelson feels trimming the trees would have the most impact. Young stated we can trim the trees or contact Sullivan Shores to either trim them or give us permission to trim them.

Motion by Finkelson to deny "No Parking" on Sullivan Drive from 7th Street to Washington Street in conjunction with adding bike lane striping on Sullivan Drive and a crosswalk from Sullivan Park to Sullivan Drive. Second by Ciesynski Motion passed unanimously.

Staff will look into getting the tree trimmed back.

OLD BUSINESS

REQUEST FOR NO PARKING DURING STUDENT ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL TIMES ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF 42ND AVENUE AND THE WEST SIDE OF 4TH STREET FOR PRODEO ACADEMY

Commissioners tabled this item until the next meeting pending input from Captain Markham and the traffic flow diagrams from Mr. Elsenbast. The morning and afternoon traffic flow diagrams were provided. From back of curb to back of curb, 42nd Avenue is 24' wide and 4th Street is 31' wide.

At the last meeting commissioners felt that 42nd Avenue was narrow enough to consider no parking along the south side. Young researched what no parking actually means and it varies from city to city. Many cities clarify this in their codes. Columbia Heights does not distinguish whether a driver can stop in a no parking zone even if they don't leave their vehicle. She knows commissioners felt that if we post no parking they don't want vehicles even stopping. According to the dismissal diagram for student pickup, should 4th Street be designated as no parking or as a loading zone? And then what about 42nd Avenue, do you assign that as no parking thinking parents will still wait in their cars to pick up the students. Currently Prodeo has the taxis line up on 42nd Avenue and the parents on 4th Street. Captain Markham and Young did walk through the

process with the Prodeo representative. There is only partial bussing so that's why taxis are dropping kids off. The parents line up on 42nd Avenue to drop the kids off but are not parking. They line up on the south side of 42nd, make a right turn onto 4th Street and pull into the horseshoe area. There are only two houses on 42nd Avenue with driveway access. If vehicles stack up, it would affect these residents with getting in and out of their driveways. Pickup time is when the cars park on 4th Street. Davis stated Prodeo asked for the loading zone from 7 am to 4 pm, but he doesn't understand why they need it in the morning. Feels we need to hear from the representative. Young advised we can table this item until July and still have time for a public hearing before the school year starts. Schluender would also like to hear from the representative from Prodeo.

Davis asked what problems Prodeo is currently having without the signage. Captain Markham advised the problem is cars stacking up and parked cars on the street during parent drop off and pickup. On the aerial, no parking on 4th Street is designated in red, so someone could park in the remaining area and remain parked all day, meaning during the parent pickup time there could be parked cars on 4th Street. Davis stated he would want Prodeo to use the loading zone for both arrival and dismissal; otherwise we're designating a no parking zone for only a half hour. Ciesynski asked what's stopping people from parking where the taxis drop off. Young advised there's nothing, meaning cars could be blocking other vehicles from getting through or in and out of their driveways. There are still a lot of unanswered questions. Commissioners feel we need to table this item until the next meeting in July.

Motion by Davis to table this item until the next meeting in July. Seconded by Schluender. Motion passed unanimously.

REQUEST FOR TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES ON RESERVOIR BOULEVARD FROM 37TH AVENUE TO 40TH AVENUE

The data collector was put on Reservoir Boulevard for one week without the speed trailer and then for one week with the speed trailer. The first set of data is with the speed trailer facing south. The average speed was 29.6 mph with 678 vehicles during that time and maximum speed was 53 mph. The 85th percentile speed was 36 mph. Young advised that when setting the speed limit on a road you usually use the 85th percentile speed.

Young will discuss this with the City Council to see if they would like to pursue bike lanes on this road. Reservoir Boulevard is wide enough and traffic volume is low enough that we would be able to keep parking on both sides and add a bike lane on both sides. The traffic lane would be narrow. Parking would be 7 feet, bike lanes 5 feet, and travel lanes 10 feet. The bike lanes would extend from 37th to 40th Avenue as part of the park connector and the project on 37th Avenue. In 2016 traffic volume ranged between 1,400 and 1,750.

NEW BUSINESS

REQUEST FOR SIGNAGE AND SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS NEXT TO 4003 STINSON BOULEVARD

Residents Present: James Denman, 4003 Stinson Boulevard
Thomas Mogen, 4004 Stinson Boulevard
Dean Prekker, 2401 Silver Lane

Mr. James Denman has requested safety improvements for the curve on Stinson Boulevard, north of 40th Avenue/Silver Lane (St. Anthony). There have been several instances where vehicles have lost control while going around the curve and damaged property. Mr. Denman has requested a flashing yellow light on the warning sign and a guard rail.

Mr. Denman lives at 4003 Stinson Boulevard. He understands this is an issue that deals with two cities and two counties as it's right on the border but he's lived at this property 13 years and there's been approximately nine instances where drivers have come around the curve and ended up in his yard. Four of these occurred within the last year. The last one involved a car that came around the curve and totaled a parked car in his driveway causing a financial loss. People have hit trees and they've had to take them down, the lawn gets chewed up, and both city signs and his personal address signs have been knocked down as well as a telephone pole. That side of the road is also a walking and bike trail. The cars have no slow down from 37th Avenue all the way up to that curve unless they have a red light on 39th Avenue. People come around the curve very fast and/or don't see it. No one has been seriously injured but the car that recently totaled his parked car totally flipped over. He feels this curve is a danger to the drivers as well. He is suggesting stop signs at 40th Avenue on Stinson Boulevard both ways, even though it's a little awkward due to Silver Lane. He also feels a flashing yellow light on the 20 mph curve sign may have some effect. Mr. Denman also suggested a guardrail to keep vehicles on the street if they come around too fast. He had sent pictures of a plastic coated, decorative guardrail. Young advised the concern with the plastic guardrail is that once its hit the plastic coating scrapes off. Schluender stated that per the street view it looks like the driveway lines up almost perfectly with Stinson Boulevard when going northbound. Mr. Denman advised that is his neighbor's driveway and he also has had several cars damage his property. The vehicle that totaled Mr. Denman's car jumped the curve and went air born, hit the back of his car and flipped. Most of the drivers he's encountered have been drunk.

Mr. Mogen lives at 4004 Stinson Boulevard. He's been there for 34 years. Speed and drinking have been the issue and it's gotten much worse over the last couple of years. There are signs with arrows along Stinson Boulevard just before his driveway and they've been knocked over when people miss the turn. The signs are reflective, asked if there's something that could make them even more reflective or make them stand out more. Does not feel flashing lights are a good option for the neighborhood, most accidents occur around 2 am. Mr. Denman stated the sign he took a picture of would not flash into anyone's yard due to its location. Mr. Mogen feels the issue is time of day, speed, and being inebriated. Mr. Denman asked if stop signs at 40th Avenue is a viable option. Young advised staff would need to look at traffic accidents at that intersection. Mr. Mogen stated the bike path on the north side of road is wide but it's narrow on the south side. The distance from the centerline is not the same on both sides of the curve. He does not feel a flashing light will help because the drivers are intoxicated, that's the only time he sees people not make the curve. They know the curve is there and anticipate it, but then overcorrect and end up on the other side of the road tearing up his lawn.

Mr. Prekker lives at 2401 Silver Lane. He advised there are other neighbors that would like to be involved with giving input. Mr. Denman stated that Doug Jones at 4015 Stinson also has some interest because of the guardrail. Mr. Mogen feels the guardrail will only keep the cars on the road; it will not protect pedestrians or bikers.

Young advised we have flashing lights on a number of stop signs. She did check with the street foreman and

there have been no complaints from residents. She suggested putting the flashing lights on the 20 mph curve sign, north of Silver Lane, for a short time to see if it's an issue for the residents.

Mr. Prekker inquired about a speed bump. Young advised that per City policy, residents are required to pay for speed bumps. She would need to see what properties would be affected and most likely get the City of St. Anthony involved. In the meantime we'll put up the yellow flashing lights. She advised another thing we've done in a similar situation was to put reflective strips on the posts. This was just done last fall so it's unknown yet if it was helpful or not, but we can add these to the posts—when headlights flash on them they become more reflective.

According to the aerial, even with a guardrail, it looks like if a car misses the turn it would go straight into the driveway of 2401 Silver Lane. Mr. Prekker states he has had three incidents. The last one came through his yard and hit a tree. Finkelson asked if we could add one or two more curve signs. Feels the current signs portray more of a gradual turn versus a sharp turn. Davis suggested moving the sign further south so there's more time to react. Captain Markham advised some residents put up privately built barriers such as landscaping, boulders, etc. so cars are stopped before destroying property or hitting the house. These natural landscape barriers are quite common for houses on corners or T-sections. However, he did suggest checking with the insurance company first.

Mr. Mogen stated the sign says 20 mph for that curve; he keeps testing it out and feels that's too fast. The entire city of St. Anthony is 25 mph; the curve should be 15 mph. Also when traveling south on Stinson Boulevard there's somewhat of a blind intersection making it difficult for drivers to see pedestrians on that side of the road. Davis asked if it's possible to move the curve warning sign to the south side of Silver Lane. This would give more warning and time to anticipate the curve. The character of Stinson changes drastically at the curve. A stop sign at 40th Avenue or Silver Lane for northbound traffic on Stinson Boulevard would be problematic for southbound traffic; a single stop sign at 40th Avenue would be confusing for drivers.

Schluender feels a phased approach starting with adding flashing lights and reflective tape would be the best alternative until we receive more reports. Young would like to look at this again out in the field. Her concern is if we move the warning sign south of Silver Lane, drivers will be looking at the intersection not signage. When you're approaching an intersection you're less likely to see a sign because you're looking for cars at the intersection. Finkelson would like to add more signs starting north of Silver Lane and the flashing light on the current sign. Ciesynski feels two of the signs are covered by the trees, trimming the trees may help with visibility. Davis feels the current chevron sign depicts a gentle curve not a sharp curve. Perhaps a bigger, rectangular sign would work better. Mr. Mogen agrees the chevron signs aren't doing any good. He likes the idea of moving the curve sign south of Silver Lane. Young will look at the area again and check into the recommended distances for signs. Mr. Denman agrees with looking at blockage from the trees.

Staff will take a phased approach starting with signage improvements. Will look into a larger warning sign and will install a flashing yellow light on the curve warning sign, provided the neighbors agree. In addition, reflective strips will be added to the posts to increase visibility. Young will look into feasibility of moving the warning sign forward.

Davis questioned the bike lane being on the east side of the road versus the west side. Young advised there were a lot of public meetings but it was many years ago. Mr. Denman advised it was because if you're at the lake you would be on that side and can continue along that lane and then around the lake up to the park.

Young stated this was actually put in more for pedestrians than bikers.

REPORTS

CITY ENGINEER

Staff received the information from the traffic collector for 51st Avenue by Sullivan Lake Park. It was placed west of Central Avenue facing east. The average speed was 26 mph; the fastest speed was 113 mph. The 85th percentile speed was 33 mph.

Staff provided photos of the signage and striping at Silver Lake Beach. The red and white “Do Not Enter” sign was added. Ciesynski asked about the 20 mph sign. Young advised this is part of a larger discussion with surrounding cities.

Young advised the change of day and time for Traffic Commission meetings will be taken to the City Council for approval, so the July meeting will be on the third Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m.

Davis asked if the playground signs have been installed on 51st Avenue. Young stated they have not been installed yet but they are either in or on order.

POLICE CHIEF

COMMISSIONERS

Ciesynski advised that the corner of 51st Avenue and Washington Street cleared up very nice when the bushes were trimmed. There’s now clear visibility for a long way down.

ADJOURNMENT

Motioned by Davis, seconded by Schluender to adjourn the meeting at 7:03 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Schmidtbauer
Administrative Assistant