



TRAFFIC COMMISSION

City Hall—Council Chambers, 590 40th Ave NE

Tuesday, June 21, 2022

6:00 PM

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Davis at 6:02 p.m.

Members present: Commissioners Ciesynski, Davis, Finkelson, Nekora

Absent: Commissioner Schluender

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

Council Liaison: Amáda Márquez Simula (absent)

APPROVE MINUTES

1. Motioned by Finkelson, seconded by Ciesynski, to approve the minutes of May 17, 2022 as presented.
Motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

2. Request for NO PARKING on North Side of 41st Avenue from Monroe Street to Jefferson Street

Residents Present:

Kt Jacobs, 4104 Monroe St

Dan Spriggs, 3331 Stinson Blvd

Kt Jacobs has requested No Parking on the north side of 41st Ave from Monroe St to Jefferson St. The concern is that the width of the street cannot accommodate two-way traffic with parking on both sides.

41st Ave is a primary route for emergency vehicles from approximately Jackson St to Jefferson St. The following No Parking restrictions are in place on 41st Avenue:

- Monroe St to Quincy St – No Parking on the north side.
- Quincy St to Jackson St – No Parking on the north side next to the Public Safety Building. No parking on the south side, except for funerals.
- Jackson St to Van Buren St – No Parking on either side of 41st Ave.
- Van Buren St to Central Ave – No Parking on either side, except for a short distance next to Wargo Park.

41st Ave is 30' wide from Monroe St to Jefferson St, which is typical for residential streets in Columbia Heights. It is 36' to 37' wide east of Monroe St.

Kt Jacobs, 4104 Monroe St, stated she has nothing more to add to her request except that she did meet with Lenny Austin, Chief of Police, and Dan O'Brien, Assistant Fire Chief, to get their input. They were both quick

to point out that they are used to making the zigzag across the city. They would not request the no parking but would not be unhappy if it was implemented. There is an impairment of view coming up the hill on 41st Ave and if cars are parked on the north side they obstruct the view of the alley. At the end of Jefferson St people do tend to park close to the corner. Both chiefs did agree there should be no parking signs from the corner. When coming around that corner at night you are committed to making the turn wide and into the other lane before being able to see if cars are coming. No one is losing any parking with this request; the homes all have driveways as well as street parking on the north-south streets. Davis agrees this makes sense, there's already no parking to the east and the road does narrow, plus it's used as a main thoroughfare for safety personnel.

Finkelson stated that the pictures show few parked cars or congested parking. He feels that in this case the parked cars provide traffic calming and removing parking may have the effect of widening the road which increases reckless driving. He understood that per state statute it's prohibitive to park near the corner. Young advised the red car in the photo is parked legally. Per state statute you can park up to 20' from an intersection except where there is a marked crosswalk or traffic signal. Finkelson thought it's any crosswalk not just a marked crosswalk. Young will need to seek clarification, it's her understanding that it's 20' from a marked crosswalk not any intersection. Kt stated there are areas in the city that have posted no parking from here to corner signs and that is what she would request. In response to the photos of parked cars, the amount of traffic is not consistent throughout the day, it just depends. These photos were taken in the middle of the day, traffic and parking are heavier in the evening. She agrees narrower roads can help restrict speeding, but this street is not wide enough to accommodate two vehicles forcing drivers to drive in the middle of the street to get through. If there are two cars parked across from each other drivers it may force you to slow down but you still don't know what's coming up the hill, it's unsafe. Eastbound traffic on 41st Ave has a better view of what's coming up the hill but it's not uncommon for drivers to stop when cars are parked on both sides of the street before continuing.

Finkelson stated eastbound traffic would still need to cross the centerline due to parked cars. Kt advised eastbound drivers have a better view of what's ahead of them—that's the difference. Westbound traffic needs to come up the hill. She feels parking should be on the south side not the north side because of the hill. She's had a couple of calls on this from neighbors. There are also a lot more walkers and dog walkers in the neighborhood, which is another reason to increase safety. Davis questioned moving the centerline. Young advised it's something that can be looked at, unfortunately this type of striping needs to be ground off in order to cover it which is quite expensive but shifting the centerline would be the best alternative. This would be an administrative decision that could be done at a future date.

Nekora lives on 40th Ave and Washington St so frequently uses this road a lot coming off Central Ave. The only issue she's run into is north-south vehicles not stopping or barely stopping. She's also noticed several cars at 41st Ave and Quincy St that have been parked in the no parking zone a couple days in a row. Kt advised she also sees many drivers going the wrong way on a one way. The sign on Monroe St is only a red yield sign. There's a litany of issues in this area but she feels this one would be the best to fix.

Motion by Davis to hold a public hearing to request No Parking on the north side of 41st Avenue from Monroe Street to Jefferson Street and no parking 30 feet from the southeast corner of Jefferson Street. Roll call vote: Ciesynski Aye, Davis Aye, Finkelson Nay, Nekora Aye. Motion passes.

A public hearing will take place in July.

OLD BUSINESS

3. Traffic Speed Update for Reservoir Boulevard from 37th Avenue to 40th Avenue

In 2021 the Traffic Commission requested a speed comparison be obtained for Reservoir Blvd from 37th Ave to 39th Ave before and after restriping to add bike lanes and narrow the travel lanes.

Traffic patterns were obtained by the Police Department from May 18-22, 2021 with radar and from May 25-28, 2022 after Reservoir Blvd was restriped with bike lanes and narrower traffic lanes.

Comparison between the two data sets shows the 85th percentile speeds, which is the speed that 85% of motorists drive, were within 1 mile of each other. In 2021 it was 35 mph and in 2022 it was 36 mph. The average speed in 2021 is unavailable due to an equipment malfunction. The average speed in 2022 is 30 mph. Finkelson stated it seems the bicycle path has had zero effect on traffic speed. Finkelson feels if we do bicycle paths in the future we may want to use the plastic sticks to add a buffer. Bicyclists he spoke with stated that just painting bicycle lanes does not provide any safer feeling.

Young also handed out another set of data at the meeting that showed the speeds on Reservoir Blvd near 40th Ave are a little slower. The 85% percentile speed was 34 mph and the average speed was 24.5 mph.

REPORTS

City Engineer

Young advised that she included the simplified version of the Roberts Rules of Orders provided by the City Clerk in the agenda packet.

She received three emails concerning traffic issues and these were all handled administratively as follows:

- *Request for 4-way stop signs at 50th Avenue and Jefferson Street*

The concern is traffic not stopping at the stop signs at 49th Ave and Jefferson St (4-way stop) as well as the signs stopping traffic on 50th Ave at Jefferson St (2-way stop) and the speed of traffic.

Currently traffic stops on 50th Ave at Jefferson St. There is a flashing light on the stop sign. The threshold to put in a 4-way stop sign per the MMUTCD guidelines is "Five or more reported crashes in a 12-month period that are susceptible to correction by a multi-way stop installation."

The Police Department reviewed the accident records for this intersection and there have been five reported accidents since 2018. One reported accident in 2020, one in 2019 and three in 2018, with one being due to snow and the other alcohol. Davis asked if there are any other options for a multi-stop traffic light such as high traffic counts or pedestrian counts. Young stated the answer is yes, these can also contribute. The Police Department did obtain some traffic counts but they were not high enough. She also advised the purpose of a stop sign is to establish right-of-way at an intersection and that's already being done with the 2-way stop.

The resident was informed that the intersection at Jefferson St and 50th Ave did not meet guidelines for multi-way stop.

- *Request for flashing pedestrian crossing at Columbia Middle School*
A parent has requested a flashing pedestrian light at the crossing by the middle school. Staff passed this request on to Anoka County. They will study the crossing in the fall to determine if it meets the criteria to install a pedestrian light. The light would only activate when the button is pushed, it would not flash continuously.
- *Request for speed humps on St. Moritz Drive*
The concern was traffic speed. Resident was informed that speed humps are not an option as St. Moritz Dr is shared by both the cities of Columbia Heights and Fridley.

Police Chief

None

Commissioners

None

ADJOURNMENT

Motioned by Finkelson, seconded by Ciesynski to adjourn the meeting at 6:39 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.