



**CITY OF
ASHLAND**
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
Thursday, July 21, 2011
Council Chambers, 1175 East Main Street

Minutes

Attendees: Tom Burnham, Eric Heesacker, Shawn Kampmann, Steve Ryan (Chair), Julia Sommer, Colin Swales, David Young and Corinne Vieville

Absent: Brent Thompson

Council Liaison: David Chapman

Staff Present: Mike Faught, Jim Olson, Betsy Harshman

Ex Officio Members: Steve MacLennan

- I. CALL TO ORDER:** Meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by Chairperson Steve Ryan.
- II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Commissioner Kampmann moved to approve the minutes of June 23, 2011 as amended, the motion was seconded by Commissioner Young and it passed unanimously.

III. ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA:

Car Free Day, non action item A was moved to position E and the N. Main/Hersey/Wimer Intersection realignment item E was moved to the A spot.

IV. PUBLIC FORUM:

Mark Knox, 485 W Nevada Street, introduced an application in which Planning staff and the Historic Commission recommended he bring before the Transportation Commission. Richard Katz, manager of the Ashland Food Coop asked him to start a dialogue with the community about modifying land use planning to allow underground drive ups. Knox explained that current drive ups in the downtown historic district belong to corporations/banks. These drive ups have been grandfathered in as non-conforming use. If the City makes amendments to allow underground drive ups, the above ground spaces could be turned into vibrant streetscapes and hopefully encourage economic stimulation.

Knox stated there are traffic and parking issues at the Coop. The Coop would like to purchase the Umpqua Bank site and relocate the bank to the old Copeland Lumber or the Northlight space. The bank would be removed and replaced with a neighborhood park. Customers of the Coop would use the existing Umpqua parking spaces.

In the future, Knox will demonstrate to the commission what is underground, as well as addressing ventilation, stacking and other issues. They'll be looking at how to penetrate underground and reduce the regulations to make the sites more user and pedestrian friendly.

Commissioners were receptive to seeing the bigger picture and hearing more about the proposal at a later date. Faught told the commission that this would be considered through a Type III land use process, which staff would have to look at. Then it would have to be processed through the Transportation Commission which would in turn provide recommendations to the Council.

V. ACTION ITEMS

A. Parking Prohibitions on E. Nevada St.

Olson explained that this item is part of an ongoing examination of some of the City's narrow streets. The

Fire Department asked that the commission take a look at these narrow streets and would like to have parking prohibitions put in place where they need to be as soon as possible. Nevada Street from Bear Creek to Mountain Ave. is unusual in that it is a collector street although not developed as such. It was made a 24' wide Avenue that is normally required to be at least 32' and contain bike lanes under Ashland's street standards. At 24' it should not contain parking on each side. Staff recommends that parking is prohibited on the north side primarily because that side has only 3 accesses at this point and there is a very steep bank on the north side. Staff notified everyone on Nevada Street that was abutting and have not received any feedback except one that was in favor.

Motion and vote

Young moved to approve staff's recommendation, Heesacker seconded and the motion was approved unanimously.

B. Request for Stop Sign at Starflower and Larkspur

Joan and Allen Vogel from 462 Thimbleberry Lane requested a stop sign at the intersection of Larkspur. If a stop sign wasn't available, they suggested that a yield sign be considered. Olson stated that there is about 250 vehicles per day on Larkspur and about half of that on Starflower. The intersection is a 4-leg almost perpendicular intersection, but not quite. All of legs are at a different approach grade which promotes a vision problem when looking at approaching traffic. In some of those legs the elevation helps you, but in others, it does not. This intersection does not warrant a stop sign. The Municipal Uniform Traffic Control Device (MUTCD) handbook does not have volume restriction for a yield sign, although there is in the City's code. In special conditions, an engineering review has shown that a yield sign may help to decrease problems. Olson spent some time monitoring traffic at this intersection and did not see a problem; traffic seemed to flow pretty well and most cars were going through the intersection slowly. There was also discussion regarding a roundabout. Staff recommends that yield signs be installed at the intersection on Starflower at both sides of Larkspur.

Motion and Vote

Young moved that staff's recommendation be approved and Vieville seconded. Following a voice vote, the motion was approved 5 to 2.

C. Budget and Expenses for FY12

Sommer asked that this item be placed on the September agenda for discussion and that new ideas be brought forth by commissioners and staff for monies proposed to be spent between September and June 30, 2012. Faught stated that next year staff will be processing a 2-year budget.

Swales agreed that this item should be added to the September meeting and in the meantime, forward ideas to staff. Faught clarified that any of these items must be forwarded to staff, and not sent between commission members. No motion was made.

D. A Street Shared Road Discussion

Burnham requested that sharrows be installed on A Street from 8th to Oak Street in the same configuration as Oak Street. Per Burnham, this is a heavily used bike route and sharrows would be a great indicator that bikes are on the street. Faught stated that in a past meeting the group made a motion to wait until the TSP is done, although there is probably enough data that has been collected if the commission wants to go ahead with it.

Burnham said that in the September meeting the motion was passed. Burnham asked if he needed to make another motion. Burnham read from a motion that he made back in October. He restated his motion.

Burnham motioned to install sharrows and the accompanying signs on A Street from Oak to Eighth Street. Young seconded the motion.

Young was willing to wait, but he rides the route almost daily and said that it is a major connector for bikes. Young feels that the sharrows on Oak have made bicycling safer. His presence on a bicycle there

has gained more respect from the presence of the thermoplastic. Sommer is generally in favor of shared road sharrows, although A Street is the only street in Ashland that is truly shared. She feels that drivers already look out for bicycles and pedestrians. Discussion followed.

Motion and Vote

Burnham motioned that sharrows and accompanying signs be installed on A Street from 8th to Oak Street in the same configuration as Oak Street. Motion was approved 7 to 1.

E. Draft Memorial Marker Policy

Olson said that the policy will be sent to legal for review if the commission approves. The cost for each sign would be about \$150 each. Per Olson, staff will work with the applicant on appropriate messages. Ryan clarified that the Transportation Commission is approving the messaging of the signs. Swales voiced concern over the cost of the sign, and some people would not be able to afford them. Olson stated that it was possible that the City may contribute to the cost if the City so chooses. He informed the commission that this policy would be approved by resolution and recommended that commissioners make any changes now rather than later. Sommer questioned section 3C regarding placement of signs in a commercial district.

Burham felt that the resolution was sufficient as it is, simple and to the point.

Sommer felt that markers should be allowed in the commercial district and be placed where the person has died. Heesacker suggested putting the signs up higher than others. Kampman felt that the sign was meant to send a message and could be placed on the outskirts of town. Permission would have to be granted by landowners anyway. He agreed with Olson that the City did not need any more signs that might distract.

Motion

Kampman made a motion to approve resolution as is. Burnham seconded the motion.

Swales did not want to limit the policy as it was written in Recital B section 1 regarding the type of motor vehicle. He also voiced concern over limiting the placement of the signs in the commercial district.

Motion

Vieville moved to amend the main motion to take out the commercial areas. She wanted to put a period after construction zone in 3C and strike everything following it. She also wanted to replace the list in SECTION 1. She proposed to remove “a motor vehicle, pedestrian, or skateboard crash” and replace that language with “as a result of a vehicular accident.” Sommer seconded.

3C would then read: Memorial markers shall not be placed within an active construction zone.

Heesacker suggested that Vieville change the language in Section 1 to read: Personal or public mobility device.

Olson suggested that the commission let staff come up with a substitution. Heesacker voiced concern that the commission would then have to come back to staff.

Vieville asked if she should withdraw her motion. Vieville’s motion had already been seconded so Ryan instructed that she could not withdraw it at that point.

Ryan restated the state of the motion and amendments. He suggested that they run the amendment, vote it down if they didn’t like it and then get to the main motion, deal with that, vote that down and they’d be clear.

Ryan asked if all were in favor of the amendment to the main motion.

Harshman asked for clarification of the motion. Ryan answered to put a period after the word zone in section 3C and strike everything after that and replace the list of “a motor vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle or skate board crash” with “as a result as of a vehicular or pedestrian accident” can be memorialized.

Ryan stated that the committee was back to the main motion.

Motion and vote

Kampmann asked to amend his main motion to change recital B to read: The City further seeks to develop a program where those who have died as a result of a vehicular or pedestrian accident can be memorialized. Ryan stated that it would also replace the language in section 1. Burnham seconded.

Ryan called for a vote on the amendment, all AYES, main motion was amended.

Ryan stated the committee was now on the main motion and back on the discussion of the commercial district.

Ryan clarified Vieville’s motion to the amendment to section 3C. 3C would be changed to read: Memorial markers shall not be placed within an active construction zone.

Chapman asked if that amendment hadn’t just been voted on. He said that if Corrine wanted to vote on the main motion, you are back on the main motion again. Ryan stated that was correct, the amendment was to the main motion that was just amended.

Julia seconded. Ryan called for a voice vote and the amendment carried.

Young voiced his concern regarding sign pollution. Olson suggested taking out commercial district out of the resolution and to insert central business district instead. Vieville did not see why it would be so bad to put another little sign in a busy place. Olson said it is just too busy and explained that most signs are regulatory and the City did not need additional signs that are not absolutely necessary, especially in the downtown commercial area.

Kampmann said that this is not a safety sign and he feels that there are too many signs. If you add more, people wouldn’t notice the safety signs. It would delude the effectiveness of all the signs. Olson advised the commission to at least keep the signs out of the central business district.

Heesacker said that no one can remember the last time a person died downtown. The plaque will be placed as a temporary, 2 year sign and will not be a permanent safety issue for the downtown area. Heesacker would defer to staffs expertise, although he didn’t see it as a distraction.

Olson advised that the signs would be a distraction. There are 3 lanes of traffic and if you notice a new sign that you hadn’t seen before, you’ll look to see what it is. You have a lot of pedestrian traffic. There are banners that are very high which causes a distraction. He doesn’t feel that they want people looking at signs instead of keeping the focus on traffic and pedestrians. The City shouldn’t have any more distractions in the downtown area.

Swales generally agrees with Olson on sign pollution and the fewer the signs the better, but looking at all of the signs, he feels this has an equal importance. Burnham agreed.

Olson made it clear that the commission’s recommendation would be forwarded to legal and to planning. There still may be some changes to the resolution after further review.

Motion and Vote

Ryan called for a vote on the main motion to approve the language as amended

Recital B would be changed to read: The City further seeks to develop a program where those who have died as a result of a vehicular or pedestrian accident can be memorialized.

Section 1, Purpose would be changed to read: The purpose of this program is to establish guidelines for the placement of standardized streetside memorials for people who have died as a result of a vehicular or pedestrian accident on city maintained rights of way within the city limits of Ashland. The program will also serve as a means to enhance awareness of the need to drive safe and sober, to obey traffic laws or other similar safety messages.

Section 3, Procedure, C would be changed to read: Memorial markers shall not be placed within an active construction zone.

The motion passed 6 to 2.

VI. NON ACTION ITEMS

A. 6E. Main/Hersey/Wimer Intersection Re-Alignment

Olson stated that this project # 2002-05 is an old one, and that staff has been working on it since that time. A great deal of staff time has been spent trying to obtain state STP funds and grants for this project. If this project is developed through ODOT, it is a \$2mil project or \$1.2 mil depending on how you work it out. The alignment is causing a problem that can be resolved fairly easy without a great deal of cost if the City provides the moving force. Prior discussion addressed the questions of whether or not this project would be a hinge point of the road diet and the commission decided that it was not. The feeling was to bring realignment of this intersection up as quickly as possible. The largest element involves relocation of power poles. The poles at the corner of Hersey and N Main Street need to go away. The high voltage, tension power line has to be moved at an approximate cost of \$100,000 or so. Even if the commission is to look at anything else such as a signal, roundabout, or anything else, that has to be done. Olson stated that it is important to move forward and fast track the project. An engineering firm has been hired to help the city move forward on this.

Sommer felt that staff was against the road diet if they went ahead with this project. Olson said that this is a project that needs to be done regardless of the road diet because the intersection is unsafe now.

Swales would like to see the pilot program given a chance before moving forward with the project and see if eliminating the left turn on Wimer would actually improve the situation. He felt that the intersection may not need to be aligned, and would give the City a vacant lot next to Coldwell Chiropractic.

Kampmann said that some of the biggest objections were coming from the neighbors that are being affected. He didn't feel it was right to push traffic into smaller, non-collector streets like High and Manzanita which couldn't handle it. Wimer is a collector street. If you show consideration to people that object to rerouting traffic through residential areas, it would help people to accept the road diet.

Heesacker said that this was an astute observation. If enough people show up and complain at council, he does not think that road diet will ever be considered again, experimental or not. If the commission doesn't come up with a way to placate these people, their objections could be loud enough to kill the project. He doesn't want to see that happen.

Vieville agreed with Heesacker. She said that if staff installed a signal at the Wimer intersection, it would give pedestrians one more place to cross North Main. It is a horrible street to cross, especially if you are blind or disabled. You can cross at the hospital now or you have to go all the way downtown to Laurel. She felt it would be helpful to have the light and the left turns.

Burnham thinks that going to the City and saying that the commission is working on the issue will increase support if you want approval of the road diet. If people see that staff is improving the Wimer street

intersection, it would have a favorable affect on the road diet.

Young supports moving ahead with road diet and feels that the project is critical to the road diet.

Swales said that citizens would get used to traveling the streets that were left open to use and that habits would change accordingly. He said that Wimer is not a place that a left turn should be encouraged. He said that two left turns wouldn't help at all and felt it more important that the traffic moves through without stops. He doesn't think that straightening the intersection would make things safer for pedestrians.

Olson said that there has been a lot of time spent on this project and cannot see any objection. It improves safety and the ability to add cross walks. Any traffic engineer would tell you that this kind of off set is deadly and shouldn't be tolerated any longer.

Kampmann stated that the people that live near the project area are going to suffer or gain by the commissioners decisions. It is extremely important to him that the commission considers the people that live in the affected areas when making decisions.

Ryan asked if this discussion should be bundled with the road diet, commentary B. Faught felt that they should both be kept open. Faught explained his intention was not to circumvent the commission's decision and would present council with the following options.

1. Begin restriping the middle of September during this year with the knowledge that staff would move ahead as quickly as they can with the realignment of Wimer,
2. Approve the road diet now, but not implement it until there is a realignment of Wimer.

Faught stated that funding for the project would remain available even if the project were delayed. There will be a motion to approve an IGA with ODOT that he has a draft of. They will continue the funding within the IGA which will need to be tweaked a bit.

Heesacker voiced concern that in delaying the project Council may bow to neighborhood pressure and rescind their approval.

There was discussion on the manner in which the commission might present their conclusions to the Council. Burnham's insight was that the Council will want to know what brought the commission to their decision. He would like someone from the commission to speak to the City Council so they understand all of the work that was put in to their conclusion.

Sommer hoped that the City Council would respect all of the work that the commission has done. Chapman said that they need support to articulate the work and explain why the commission wants to do the project now. Young would personally vote for option #2 if he was sitting on the council. Chapman said that he will make his arguments as to why they should proceed with the project now. Ryan encouraged the commission to communicate with officials as private residents to persuade them in a unified way.

Faught encouraged commissioners to attend the meeting to articulate the study very clearly and let the Council know that they had heard the people's concerns. He suggested sending one or two commissioners to join him in the presentation to Council, and have the rest of the commission in the room for support.

Heesacker agreed with Sommer that commissioners have worked on this project a long time and he didn't want to see it go down the drain. He'd like to be one of the people sitting at the table to promote it. He asked if the approval was based on the Wimer/Hersey intersection completion, how long the project would take.

Swales said there was a short and long term plan for this intersection and that installing a traffic signal was highlighted in bold in the packet for next Tuesday's meeting. He suggested that perhaps they throw the

road diet out if the City was moving toward the traffic light, then they won't need the road diet.

Burnham would like to see Eric represent the TC. He does not want to see the road diet voted down.

Sommer felt it was absurd that the director of public works disagreed with the commission's vote. It struck her as odd that everyone knew that Faught disagreed with the motion that they had approved. She feels that the TC is in conflict with Faught.

Chapman said that it was important to a lot of citizens to wait a year and explained that staff had responded to opposition with another option that satisfies folks. It is the transportation commission's job to defend and send a message.

Ryan agreed with Burnham and formally nominated Heesacker as presenter. He felt that the #1 recommendation to do the project now and for staff to move as quickly as they can on the implementation of Hersey and Wimer is more convincing than saying do the striping and don't think about the realignment. Burnham felt that the key is to achieve approval from City Council first. If it takes another year, so be it.

Chapman does not think that a light will work at the Hersey/Wimer intersection and feels that doing the diet will show what really needs to happen there. Whether it's a roundabout or light or no light and the road diet works, that realignment should happen in all 3 cases.

Swales said that he is concerned that if we go ahead with the realignment, the City may commit a large sum of money that wouldn't have been necessary if the road diet works. The commission has not had any factual data from consultants showing what would happen with a mini roundabout which may solve the problems. Two consecutive turn lanes have never been brought as an option by consultants. He was surprised that there had been 809 traffic citations along North Main in the last 12 months.

Kampmann didn't think that there would be so much opposition to realign the intersection and appease some folks. If the Council approves and says let do it in a year, then everyone would get what they want.

Heesacker said that the realignment would cost a lot of money and asked how much. Olson responded, probably \$500,000. He sees a half a million dollars as a way to expedite approval of the road diet. He wants to show Council that they have been listening to industry experts, people who deal with public infrastructure on a daily basis, Colin's statistics about tickets, and data from the Chief of Police.

Faught responded that they should give details and present their rationale to the council very concisely. The rationale is that the road diet will reduce accident frequency, increase public health, and it fits in with the TSP multi-modal goals. It is important to show that the commission did listen to citizens input and the facts and that the commission's conclusion is based on these items. Ryan agreed that commissioners would provide feedback to Eric's letter. Faught recommended that the letter be sent to staff and that comments would be sent back.

Burnham suggested that the commission work with Heesacker on the letter and that Heesacker does the presentation. Ryan said that Heesacker is imminently qualified and would be respected, that people will respect his role with the MPO and will trust his planning experience and his expertise.

B. TSP Update

Faught announced that the City was awarded another \$40,000 for the TSP update. This is in addition to the \$175,000 grant and will offset the City's portion of the expense.

C. Car Free Day Planning

Ryan provided a very brief update on this event. He has submitted a permit for the event and RVTD is already advertising the event.

VII. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Burnham announced that the Siskiyou Vello awarded the City their request. Faught reminded the commission that the next Council meeting is next Tuesday at 7:00 p.m.

VII. ADJOURN: 8:45 PM

*Respectfully submitted by Betsy Harshman,
Public Works Administrative Supervisor*