

MINUTES
BLOOMINGTON PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14, 2017 4:00 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL
109 EAST OLIVE STREET, BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. J. Balmer, Mr. Kevin Suess, Ms. Nicole Chlebek, Mr. Ryan Scritchlow, Mr. James Pearson, Mr. John Protzman, Ms. Megan Headean, Mr. Justin Boyd, Mr. Eric Penn, Chairman David Stanczak

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Mr. Tom Dabareiner, Director of Community Development; Ms. Katie Simpson, City Planner; Mr. George Boyle, City Attorney; Mr. Michael Hill, Public Works; Mr. Jim Karch, Public Works Director.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Stanczak called the meeting to order at 4:01 PM

ROLL CALL: Mr. Dabareiner called the roll. With ten members in attendance, a quorum was present.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

MINUTES: The Commission reviewed the May 24, 2017 minutes. Mr. Scritchlow moved to approve the minutes; Mr. Boyd seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously by a voice vote.

REGULAR AGENDA:

Z-17-17 Public hearing, review and action on a petition submitted by the Bloomington City Council (Resolution 2017-21) requesting the rezoning of 204 N. Allin St, 801 W. Washington St, 803 W. Washington St., 800 and 802 W. Washington St., and 804 W. Washington St., from C-2, Neighborhood Shopping District to B-2, General Business Service District., and the rezoning of 806 W. Washington St., from R-2, Mixed Residential to B-2, General Business Service District.

Chairman Stanczak introduced the case and Ms. Simpson provided the staff report. She provided an overview and noted that nothing had changed since the prior presentation on these properties, but that a processing error required reconsideration by the Planning Commission.

Mr. Balmer moved to approve the petition; second by Mr. Protzman. The item passed unanimously with the following roll call vote: Mr. Balmer—yes; Mr. Protzman—yes; Mr. Suess—yes; Ms. Chlebek—yes; Mr. Scritchlow—yes; Mr. Pearson—yes; Ms. Headean—yes; Mr. Boyd—yes; Mr. Penn—yes; Chairman Stanczak—yes.

Z-18-17 Public hearing, review and action on an amendment to the City of Bloomington 2015 Bicycle Master Plan.

Chairman Stanczak introduced the case. He stated his intention to allow everyone to be heard but asked participants to try to limit their comments to 3 minutes. He clarified that the item relates to a change in the plan along Washington Street, not the entire plan itself. He continued that he held a number of speaker cards and would hear from them first.

Jim Karch, Public Works Director, provided the staff report. He clarified that the proposed amended extends beyond the pop up bike path lanes. He provided a brief history of the bike master plan and discussed the new interest in Complete Streets. He explained why the bike lanes were currently under consideration, noting that portions of the street will be resurfaced this summer so timing is right to consider bike paths. He noted that a single lane can still handle the vehicular traffic along Washington Street. He stated that bikes provide more than recreation and adding a bike path would better accommodate commuting and other travel. He mentioned the two public meetings already held on the topic.

He summarized the 217 comments received to date. Washington Street residents tended to oppose the bike paths while those outside of the corridor tended to support the new paths, he concluded. This information is included in Exhibit 1.

Mr. Scritchlow asked why the path was shifted from Grove Street just a couple years after the plan was passed; Mr. Karch stated originally staff was not supportive of a path on Washington but the Council direction has broadened to include more consideration of bike paths and other modes of transportation.

Mr. Balmer asked about cost; Mr. Karch answered, about \$25,000 per mile of striping. Mr. Karch added support from the Bloomington Fire Chief. Mr. Suess asked about parking and Mr. Karch noted the parking demand is not high along the stretches under consideration so the loss of a few spaces was not deemed significant.

Mr. Suess asked about the road diet done elsewhere and expressed concern about congestion; Mr. Karch explained this is not a case where the City is dropping a lane, but instead the lane width is being reduced.

Mr. Pearson asked if the 19 parking spots lost would be between Lee and Prairie; Mr. Karch confirmed this as the location. Mr. Pearson asked about emergency vehicles and Connect Transit. Mr. Karch noted letters of support received from the Fire Chief and the acting director for Connect Transit. The referenced letters were recorded as Exhibit 2, which included a third letter of support from the YMCA.

Mr. Balmer expressed concern over vehicle speed, noting that when lanes are narrowed traffic slows; Mr. Karch confirmed this tendency.

Mr. Pearson asked if bicycle rules required helmets or limited ages of riders; Mr. Karch stated he did not believe there is a helmet requirement but that these lanes were not

intended for kids on tricycles. Mr. Pearson asked about widening the sidewalk instead; Mr. Karch stated that studies show it is safer to be on the road at intersections than off the road on sidewalks due to visibility.

Mr. Karch provided a new handout, which includes new email comments and a petition. This was marked as Exhibit 3.

There was general discussion about whether a shortened path or a longer path would be beneficial. Mr. Karch explained that Lee Street made a logical terminus, but some have suggested going farther west to Allin. There was discussion about the Complete Streets policy.

Mr. Boyd asked if 11 feet wide traffic lanes was adequate; Mr. Karch stated it is acceptable. Mr. Karch noted the bike path is five feet wide.

Chairman Stanczak asked to clarify the average daily traffic number; Mr. Karch explained it is not an origin-destination study and added that the traffic volumes vary based on where in the corridor you look. Chairman Stanczak added that he was concerned about the number of vehicles during rush hour; Mr. Karch replied the concerns comes down to the intersections and turn movements, which may cause a back-up.

Ms. Headean asked about the road cross sections and whether a bi-directional center turn lane could be accommodated; Mr. Karch responded that a center turn lane could fit in some stretches but not throughout the corridor.

Mr. Pearson clarified whether Grove Street will remain in the plan; Mr. Karch responded in the affirmative.

There was general discussion about the approval process for the amendment.

Chairman Stanczak introduced the members of the public who submitted speaking request cards. All speakers were sworn in at the time they spoke. First, R.J. Whitworth spoke in favor of the amendment due to safety. Lola Augsand spoke in favor because of a family accident along the street that occurred in the past. Michael Gorman spoke in favor after providing some history of the topic and speaking about Bike BloNo's role, noting surveys and the large amount of support for bike paths on Washington Street; he added that concern over loss of parking was the largest negative, but the packet contains a negotiated recommendation. Mr. Gorman noted that the City saved money on the test project because Bike BloNo personnel installed the test lanes. Diane Benjamin spoke in opposition after noting the concern for emergency vehicle traffic travelling with more congestion; she also noted the selection criteria in the plan for identifying candidate streets for bike lanes and suggested Washington Street does not meet the criteria. Julian Westerhout spoke in favor after noting he represented Friends of the Constitution Trail, stating that members seek more ways to access the Trail. Gary Lambert spoke in opposition noting the large turnout of residents opposed to the bike path at the Mayor's open house and he noted Washington Street was not included in the original plan because it is an arterial roadway; he reiterated that those opposed live largely along Washington. Trevor McGuire noted he is a new

university professor and is a bicyclist as his sole mode of transportation, therefore he is in favor of the bike lanes as Washington Street is the primary east-west road in the middle of the community; he also described the different kinds of drivers and their reactions to bicyclists and his belief that a defined lane will improve safety. Greg Bonham stated he favors the amendment and believes that if it becomes a problem a bike path can easily be removed. Mike McCurdy represents Connect Transit and asked for questions; Ms. Headean asked how many use the bus as the sole method of transportation, and Mr. McCurdy noted that bikes help provide access to the bus routes. Mr. McCurdy added the bus pulls to the curb to pick up passengers, Neil Gridley stated he favors the bike lane and lives near Washington School and stated his belief that sidewalks will be safer with more of the bikes in the street. Chairman Stanczak noted this exhausted the pre-filled out cards.

Stacey Tutt spoke in favor on behalf of the West Bloomington Housing Collaborative because it will connect west and east Bloomington; she asked that it go farther west to Allin Street and added a couple personal bicycling stories. Bruce Meeks spoke in opposition, noting that the original reasons for opposing adding a path along Washington Street should still stand, then asked for an impact study; he also believes more training is needed, along with possible licensing of bikes. Mr. Meeks also questioned the extensive access Bike BloNo had to Public Works. Commissioner Chlebek suggested training may also be need for drivers of cars. Amanda Hoganson stated she previously wanted to ride her bike along Washington for commuting purposes and supports the amendment for future users. Sue Feldkamp is opposed to the bike lane because she believes it is unsafe, plus she opposed to the cost, and she is concerned about left turns bicyclists will want to make; she added that bicyclists should have lights if they travel at night. Dan Stedman spoke in favor, as a regular bicyclist who commutes to work in Bloomington from Normal. Cydney Williams spoke in opposition because Washington is a busy street and because congestion will increase; she added concerns about possibly losing turning lanes and about waiting to pull out of her driveway. Tyson Moore spoke in favor of the amendment because the new path would connect his house to the Constitution Trail and he believes it will improve safety. Larry Hinyard spoke in opposition for safety with more cars; he called attention to the petition and added concerns with costs. Mr. Karch discussed how long road paint lasts, which depends on the type of material and costs. Jason Huber spoke in favor of the petition as an avid cyclist, believing that the appearance of a bike lanes alerts drivers of its potential use. Mike McCurdy, as a bicyclist, spoke in favor of the amendment and believes narrow lanes slows traffic and noted the amount of potential damage cause based on various higher speeds of cars; he believes there is room for all users, referred to the Complete Streets policy, and repeated that Washington is one of the few compete east-west streets in Bloomington. Commissioner Scritchlow sought a comparison of cost for ride by bicycle versus cost per ride for cars. Diane Benjamin noted Mr. McCurdy is a member of Bike BloNo board and mentioned an accident that occurred on Washington recently.

Chairman Stanczak closed the public hearing.

Mr. Pearson spoke in opposition because of the loss of traffic lanes on an arterial street, the 19 parking spaces downtown, and added that the path should be shorter. Mr. Scritchlow likes the idea of taking the path to Allin; he noted the Constitution Trail opposition years ago. Mr. Boyd clarified the purpose of the amendment, whether it aligns with the plan and

makes things safer. Ms. Headean expressed concern for the adjacent residents but stated owning a car should be a barrier to travel in the community; she believes the path aligns with the comprehensive plan. Mr. Balmer noted the residents' concerns between Mercer and Towanda and believes the bike paths will slow traffic and make it safer for bicyclists; he added the intersections of Washington with Mercer and Regency should be addressed regarding turn lanes and he would like to see those two intersections be further evaluated. Mr. Suess stated he sees the concerns every day that were raised during the hearing and believes the bike lanes will make it safer and slow traffic, adding that he sometimes commutes by bike to work; Mr. Suess favors the amendment. Chairman Stanczak noted we need safe bicycle traffic but he is concerned about removing traffic lanes. Ms. Chlebek agrees with what she heard so far and believes that drivers will adjust to the loss of lanes and added that cyclists will be there anyway so we should improve their safety.

Mr. Boyd moved in favor of the amendment; seconded by Mr. Suess. Mr. Balmer asked for an amendment calling for a study of the Washington/Mercer and Washington/Regency intersections; Ms. Headean concurred, and added that she would like to the bike lanes to extend west to Allin. After some discussion it was decided that the extension to Allin was not part of the original hearing and could not be added to the amendment but could be highly recommended to the Council. The amendment then was limited to the intersection studies and passed 9-1 with the following votes: Mr. Balmer—yes; Ms. Headean—yes; Mr. Protzman—yes; Mr. Suess—yes; Ms. Chlebek—yes; Mr. Scritchlow—yes; Mr. Pearson—no; Mr. Boyd—yes; Mr. Penn—yes; Chairman Stanczak—yes.

Regarding the main motion, as amended, the proposal passed 7-3 as follows: Mr. Boyd—yes; Mr. Suess—yes; Mr. Balmer—yes; Ms. Headean—yes; Mr. Protzman—yes; Ms. Chlebek—yes; Mr. Scritchlow—no; Mr. Pearson—no; Mr. Penn—yes; Chairman Stanczak—no.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Election of Chair and Vice Chair. The election was introduced by Chairman Stanczak who opened the floor for chairman. Mr. Protzman nominated Mr. Boyd to be the new Planning Commission chairman; seconded by Mr. Balmer. Mr. Pearson nominated Mr. Scritchlow for chairman; second by Ms. Headean. Based on a show of hands, there were three votes for Mr. Scritchlow and five for Mr. Boyd, however more than five votes is needed according to Commission rules. A second vote was taken by secret ballot, ending in a 5-5 tie. Several options on how to proceed were discussed. A third secret ballot was conducted, resulting in a 7-3 vote in favor of Mr. Boyd.

Mr. Scritchlow was named vice-chairman, following a unanimous vote after receiving a nomination from Mr. Pearson; seconded by Mr. Suess. The vote by acclamation was moved by Mr. Pearson; seconded by Mr. Suess.

ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Protzman moved to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Balmer, which passed unanimously by voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 PM.

Respectfully,

Tom Dabareiner AICP
Community Development Director