

*UNAPPROVED*  
**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS**  
**COLUMBIA HEIGHTS TRAFFIC COMMISSION**  
MONDAY, October 5, 2020

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 5:31 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

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

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

Council Liaison: Amáda Márquez Simula

**APPOINTMENT OF NEW CHAIRPERSON**

Adam Davis and Joe Schluender both volunteered for the chairperson position so a vote was taken. Davis received 2 ayes and 3 nays; Schluender received 3 ayes and 2 nays. Schluender was appointed chairperson.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion by Davis, seconded by Nekora, to approve the minutes of October 5, 2020 as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

**OLD BUSINESS**

REVISE STOP SIGN LOCATIONS ON 51<sup>ST</sup> AVENUE BETWEEN WASHINGTON STREET AND CENTRAL AVENUE;  
ADD CROSSWALKS AT THE PARK ENTRANCES

Mark Matzke requested revisions to the traffic control along 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue as well as installation of crosswalks near Sullivan Lake Park. At the October 5, 2020 meeting Traffic Commission members requested the following items be discussed at a future meeting:

- Crosswalks at the entrances to Sullivan Lake Park on Washington Street and 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue.
- Review visibility and traffic accidents on 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue at Washington Street and Jefferson Street to consider whether the 3-way stop at Jefferson Street should be eliminated and a 4-way stop installed at Washington Street.

Washington Street at Sullivan Park Entrance

Provide a painted crosswalk and pedestrian crossing signs on Washington Street and a pedestrian ramp on the corner of Washington Street and 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue.

There is no sidewalk on the west side of Washington Street. A crosswalk would direct pedestrians into the street, not a refuge from traffic. There is an alternative to possibly enhance pedestrian safety and free up visibility by eliminating parking on both sides of Sullivan Drive and add bike lane striping. This would require a public hearing with nearby property owners.

Davis and Finkelson are interested in a public hearing to hear feedback from property owners. Finkelson is unsure about residents giving up their parking spots for a bicycle lane on such a small section of street that

probably doesn't get a lot of traffic. There are very few sidewalks throughout Columbia Heights so we have to accept that there will be pedestrians walking on the road and cycling. People need to drive cautiously and defensively. He feels adding bicycle lanes in certain areas and not others gives people the impression that they can drive faster when no bicycle lanes are present. In this particular case it doesn't make sense to take away the on-street parking on this small stretch.

Nekora is unsure if anyone even parks on this street, but bike lanes would stop people from parking there. There are no homes facing Sullivan Drive. Putting in bike lanes and a crosswalk would make it a little more visible but it's such a short road. Currently there is parking on one side of Washington Street. She would be in favor of a public hearing. The estimated cost of \$650 seems minimal to put in a crosswalk to a road that's probably not being utilized for parking. She asked if this was a suggestion from the resident who sent the original letter. Young advised the request was for a crosswalk, not the bike lanes.

Schluender agreed this is obviously the lowest cost solution and reviewed parking guidelines with Young. She advised that vehicles must be parked 30' from a stop sign but can park as close as possible to any other corner. Schluender stated that aside from the bike lane he would like to have no parking on the corners of Sullivan Drive and Washington Street for more visibility when pedestrians are crossing the street. Young advised that vehicles must park 20' away from a marked crosswalk. Davis asked where the crosswalk would be placed. Young stated there would be a slight diagonal on the crosswalk, it would extend to the south side of the intersection and the bike lanes would become the refuge. Davis questioned placing another crosswalk southbound on Sullivan Drive as people would be crossing it twice. Young feels we should get input from residents.

Motion by Schluender to call a Public Hearing for the June Traffic Commission meeting to designate "NO PARKING" on Sullivan Drive from 7<sup>th</sup> Street to Washington Street in conjunction with adding bike lane striping on Sullivan Drive and a crosswalk from Sullivan Park to Sullivan Drive. Seconded by Davis. Motion passed unanimously.

#### 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Monroe Street at Sullivan Park Entrance

Request was to relocate the park trail to be across from Monroe Street, provide a pedestrian ramp on the SW corner of Monroe Street and 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue, and install a painted crosswalk with pedestrian crossing signs on 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue.

There is no sidewalk on the south side of 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue. A crosswalk would direct pedestrians into the street, not a refuge from traffic. Another concern is winter maintenance of the pedestrian ramp without other sidewalk.

There is no trail that lines up with Monroe Street and to construct one would involve significant engineering and construction costs that are not in the budget. Davis agrees that having a crosswalk with no refuge is confusing. Finkelson asked if there is an option to have more generalized pedestrian crossing signage that doesn't change the overall structure of the pathways. The refuge idea is confusing. There are no sidewalks in that area but people are obviously walking to the park and walking on the street. He wants to make the area pedestrian safe somehow without designating where to cross. Young advised that a lot of our city parks have a PLAYGROUND sign followed by 20 MPH RECOMMENDED SPEED LIMIT posted. She stated these will be installed on 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue at each end of the park by Public Works. So, if you're a driver and aware of your surroundings, you will at least know you're coming upon a park area. The signs will be placed for eastbound

traffic around Monroe Street and westbound traffic Parkside Lane. We are not reducing the speed limit; the sign is suggesting a cautionary speed, like when you're going around a curve. It's a recommended speed, not an enforceable speed. Commission members agreed that no other action is currently necessary.

#### WASHINGTON STREET AND JEFFERSON STREET AT 51<sup>ST</sup> AVENUE

Mr. Matzke requested the 2-way stop on Washington Street be revised to a 4-way stop. The concern is visibility at this intersection.

Staff does not recommend stopping traffic on 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue at both Washington Street and Jefferson Street as this would be two stops too close together and drivers would be less likely to stop.

#### Washington Street at 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue

Currently traffic stops on Washington Street. Westbound cross traffic on 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue can be seen 140' to 145' from the intersection. Traffic has stopped at Jefferson Street and may be travelling at less than 30 mph.

Visibility is clear on 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue, west of Washington Street. The topography combined with vegetation along the north side of 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue limits visibility. Staff has contacted the corner property owner about removing the lilacs to the property line. Public Works staff will cut the shrubs if they are not removed by the owner.

#### 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue at Jefferson Street

Currently traffic stops in each direction. Westbound cross traffic on 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue can be seen 225' from the intersection and eastbound cross traffic can be seen 205' from the intersection.

Traffic on 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue would be approaching Jefferson Street at 30 mph. With the surrounding topography, it may be difficult for a northbound driver on Jefferson Street to stop on the hill and turn left or right unless the traffic on 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue also stops. This would be especially true during the winter months.

Ciesynski lives on 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Jefferson Street. He feels the corner of 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Washington Street would be a great place for a 4-way stop. When you're traveling southbound on Washington Street most times you need to pull out into the intersection to see beyond the cars. When driving northbound on Jefferson the intersection is clear to the east and west. He feels a 4-way stop on Washington Street is more beneficial than a 3-way stop on Jefferson Street.

Schluender agrees the visibility at Jefferson Street is better than at Washington, making Washington a little more difficult to cross. He does understand not having back to back stop signs. He feels if we're only going to have one stop it makes more sense to have a 4-way on Washington Street versus the 3-way on Jefferson Street.

Young stated the biggest concern is northbound traffic on Jefferson Street in the winter—will vehicles be able to stop on the hill and get going again if traffic on 51<sup>st</sup> doesn't stop. She asked Ciesynski if he's seen cars have issues on that hill. He said no, the City does an excellent job of plowing the roads.

Finkelson asked about the lilac bushes on 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue. Young advised we contacted the property owner and he was willing to cut them down. We requested they be cut down prior to leaf out but it hasn't been done

yet. If it's not done after one more request, the City will cut them. Ciesynski stated the resident did have equipment in his yard so may be working on it.

Finkelson requested clarification regarding the slope on Jefferson Street. Young explained northbound traffic on Jefferson Street is on an incline going up, so if traffic on 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue doesn't stop will vehicles on Jefferson Street be able to get out onto 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue during slippery conditions or when snow is piled up. Currently vehicles still need to stop and get going again, but 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue traffic also stops, giving drivers on Jefferson Street more opportunity to turn east or west. If 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue traffic does not stop, drivers on Jefferson must stop and then try to make the turn with moving traffic on 51st. The concern is really for drivers on Jefferson Street being able to make the turn in the winter while the traffic on 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue is moving. If you offer a public hearing you'll hear from residents that are familiar with the intersection in all types of weather.

Davis would prefer to first see if clearing the lilac bushes and other options work before calling a public hearing. Drivers are used to the stop sign and moving it may cause some confusion.

Finkelson likes the idea of moving the stop sign but feels we owe it to the property owner who tore out the lilac bushes to at least give that a try before moving the stop sign.

Motion by Davis to maintain the 3-way STOP signs at Jefferson Street and 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue and 2-way STOP signs at Washington Street and 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue. Seconded by Ciesynski. Motion passed unanimously.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

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

Present: Christopher Elsenbast, Network Director of Operations

Christopher Elsenbast has requested NO PARKING adjacent to Prodeo Academy on the south side of 42<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and the west side of 4<sup>th</sup> Street from 6:00 am to 8:00 am and from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm.

Mr. Elsenbast stated Prodeo Academy is a new building that just opened up on University Avenue. This request is to facilitate student drop off and pick up. Due to parked cars in the area it's been challenging for parents to drop off and pick up students quickly.

Davis asked if there is a designated spot where the parents are supposed to drop off and pick up. The designated drop off spot is in the loop of the Prodeo parking lot. In the morning parents line up on 42<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and once they start letting cars in traffic flows that way. The request for no parking is so cars have a clear pathway into the parking lot. For pick up in the afternoon they don't have parents come into the lot, students are picked up on the west side of 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Prodeo is requesting no parking so vehicles are not parked on the street when parents come to pick up their children. They need to have a clear space where cars can pull up and leave their engine run until the child comes to the car, which has not been the case. Davis feels a no parking zone may be misleading and perhaps a better option would be a loading zone sign during those hours. Young stated we can discuss this further with Prodeo. We need to be careful how much information is put on the signs and this would already be a lot with two different time frames.

Davis feels 42<sup>nd</sup> Avenue is already very narrow and perhaps it would be better to just make it no parking and

not worry about time periods. In regard to using 4<sup>th</sup> Street as a loading zone, if he were a parent and saw a no parking sign he would think that he couldn't stop there to pick up his child. Is there some other wording that would be more appropriate. Schluender agrees, also thinks residents may have some frustration if there is no parking posted and then vehicles are stopping/parking there during that time period. He has seen loading zone signs specifying a time period but not two time periods.

Mr. Elsenbast stated there are currently no parking signs on part of 4<sup>th</sup> Street that say 7 am to 4 pm. If there's a concern about how much verbiage is on the signs they could be consistent with those times. They were trying not to be intrusive on the neighbors by posting the two time frames but for consistency using 7 am to 4 pm would work for them. Davis would propose signage that would either say Loading Zone Monday through Friday 6 am to 3 pm or on school days. Elsenbast would be fine with either of those options.

Captain Markham asked if there is a diagram showing traffic flow. Mr. Elsenbast has one but did not submit it. Captain Markham would be interested in seeing how traffic flows compared to other schools in the city. Also questioned if residents on the east side of 4<sup>th</sup> Street across from the school will be affected by the signage. Mr. Elsenbast stated this would affect half of the street, but he generally sees plenty of parking on the east side of the street so doesn't see this posing a problem for residents to park in front of their homes. Captain Markham would be interested in being there in the morning and evening to see how traffic flows. Schluender would like the official diagram. If we do something now we would be calling a meeting in June which is late in the school year, so we do have time to research this before the next school year. Ciesynski asked if vehicles are stopped for loading on the west side and cars are parked on the east side, will there be enough room for vehicles to pass. Captain Markham would like to check out the area and see how the traffic flow goes to get a better idea. Fourth Street is approximately 32' wide.

Schluender feels it would be best to wait for input from Captain Markham and for the traffic flow diagram from Mr. Elsenbast.

Motion by Schluender to table this item until the next meeting pending more information. Seconded by Davis. Motion passed unanimously.

#### REQUEST FOR TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES ON RESERVOIR BOULEVARD FROM 37<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE TO 40<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE

Present: Carrie Gille, 3956 Reservoir Boulevard

Carrie Gille has requested traffic calming measures on Reservoir Boulevard from 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue. The concern is traffic speed. Suggestions include reducing the speed limit, adding parking bays to narrow the street, and install flashing speed limit signs.

The City Council is currently reviewing speed limit reductions in the City of Minneapolis and surrounding communities. Staff is preparing information for Council consideration on both striping for bike lanes and flashing speed limit signs.

Parking lane striping was added to Arthur Street from 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 44<sup>th</sup> Avenue to visually narrow the street for drivers. According to residents, this did not effectively reduce speed. In the past, physical narrowing of streets is only considered when a street rehabilitation project is done.

Ms. Gille states that cars consistently drive over the 30 mph speed limit on Reservoir Boulevard and at least once a day a vehicle exceeds 50-60 mph. Because of where their house and the sidewalks are located, they have been more concerned with southbound traffic from 40<sup>th</sup> to 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue. She has called to have the speed trap set up and has seen it more frequently than when she calls so knows other neighbors are also concerned. When the speed trap is near her house cars slow down but as soon as it's gone traffic speeds up again. Reservoir Boulevard is a very wide street with only one stop sign at 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue, making traffic north of 40<sup>th</sup> also an issue. Once northbound vehicles are past the stop sign it's like a straightway and cars blast down the hill. She has concerns that with the new City Hall traffic is going to be coming up Reservoir and then turning onto Gould to get there. Gould Avenue does not have any centerlines so when vehicles turn onto it they kind of fly around down the street. Feels the new City Hall will generate more traffic and this will become more of an issue. She would like some way to calm the traffic. The crosswalk at 40<sup>th</sup> and Reservoir has made crossing a little bit safer, but this is the only safe choice to cross the street. She has also tried to have the speed limit reduced without success.

Stinson Boulevard is 44' from curb to curb, so even with two 7' parking lanes and 4' of curb and gutter, driving width is 26' which is still fairly wide, making it seem like you can drive faster. Davis stated that with the houses being back further it makes this stretch feel more suburban. He has heard from other people on Reservoir that are frustrated with the speeding. Feels we need to increase enforcement but doesn't want drivers to veer off and use another road that's less equipped to handle speeding. He asked about the effectiveness of the speed traps. Captain Markham stated there is no data on the effectiveness of the speed trailers. When lights flash they do get more of a reaction and they are effective when they're out.

Ciesynski asked if the speed traps record the actual speed data. Captain Markham said they do not but he has a box that records data—it will count the cars and give the average speed. The box straps to a pole and only collects the data. It's currently facing east on 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue by the Sullivan Lake park entrance so he'll bring that data to the next meeting. He'll put it on Reservoir Boulevard next but will need to decide where to put it as there have been problems with accuracy on streets that incline.

Gille stated that the speed trailer is currently at 39-1/2 Avenue and this may not be the best place because as drivers turn onto Reservoir they're going slow because they had just come to a stop. Closer to 37<sup>th</sup> is also not too much of a problem. She suggested it be placed between Peters Place and Gould Avenue or another area north of 40<sup>th</sup> for both southbound and northbound traffic. She also feels it's currently not safe to bike on Reservoir Boulevard.

Schluender asked if it would be possible to put the data box out for a week and then put the speed trailer out with the box for a week to see if there's any notable change and compare the data between the two. Captain Markham stated he can do that.

Schluender stated commissioners will need to gather more information. He agrees Reservoir Boulevard is quite wide and sees how it can encourage speeding. A good first step is to get the traffic data and long-term effectiveness of the flashing speed signs.

Motion by Schluender to table this item pending more information and revisit it again at the next meeting in June. Seconded by Davis. Motion passed unanimously.

REQUEST FOR TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES ON STINSON BOULEVARD FROM 45<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE TO SILVER LAKE BEACH PARK

Present: Alexis James, 4320 Stinson Boulevard  
Alex Trumen, 4340 Stinson Boulevard

Alexis James has requested traffic calming measures on Stinson Boulevard. The concern is traffic speed combined with the amount of pedestrian traffic in the area. Suggestions include installing “current” speed signs, reducing the speed limit, and other signage on both Stinson Boulevard and in the park.

Stinson Boulevard is 25’ wide from back of curb to back of curb.

The City Council is reviewing speed limit reductions in the City of Minneapolis and surrounding communities. Staff is preparing information for Council consideration of flashing speed limit signs.

Mr. James states Stinson Boulevard is a narrow road with a fairly steep hill from 45<sup>th</sup> Avenue southbound to the park. He and his family moved into the last house at the bottom of the hill one year ago. He and his neighbor have noticed a lot of traffic with cars traveling at high rates of speed up and down the hill. The road splits at the bottom of the hill and cars are supposed to go around the roundabout and park. However, most times vehicles are going too fast to make the right hand turn and they end up going straight. He has not seen any accidents yet but feels one’s bound to happen. There are lots of children playing at the bottom of the hill and foot traffic with no sidewalks. He’s seen a lot of young families walking down to the beach from the road due to limited parking in the lot. He also has a young family and so do many of the neighbors. There are no speed limit signs along the street, he suggests 20 mph. Feels signage to “keep right” at the bottom of the road could be better. There’s currently a speed trap at the top of the hill but cars are still speeding by the time they get to the bottom of the hill. He did send a video that explains the dynamics of the street.

Mr. Truman reiterated this is a very narrow road with a high volume of traffic and limited parking at the bottom. This is also a high pedestrian route to the beach. The biggest issue is the behavior of the drivers coming down the road. They drive at very high rates of speed. Last Saturday his wife was taking their two year old to the park, and even with the speed trap at the top, a car came down the road at well over 40 mph and yelled you better move or I’ll hit you. It’s this type of behavior that’s very concerning. As we go into the summer months, vehicle and pedestrian traffic volume will increase. Anything we can do to mitigate the risk and make this a safe, accessible beach and park for everyone would be welcome. Ms. Gille stated she goes to Silverwood frequently and supports what they are saying. Her two small children were almost run over last summer. She states drivers use the bottom of the hill like a sling shot, they come down the hill and whip around it. She states because of this the parking lot scares her.

Ciesynski asked if speed bumps are a viable option. Young advised that City policy states speed bumps are put in at the expense of the property owners on the block and 75% of the property owners must agree. She would need to check the cost. Davis asked if this is a feasible option due to the grade and winter time. Young would need to research this also.

Schluender asked about seasonal speed bumps. Young advised the only place they’ve looked at these is for alleys, she’s unsure if it’s possible to get them wide enough for a street. Schluender asked if the City owns

any additional right of way on this road. Young stated no, we would need to approach the park district to put a sidewalk on the east side of the street. The road itself was built in the early 90's and the roundabout may have been modified since that time.

Mr. James advised that he googled information on speed bumps and found they can actually make things worse. Supposedly cities are moving away from them. Davis asked about street parking. Mr. James does not have an issue with the parking; he just wanted to mention the street gets very busy with people parking all the way up the street and then having to walk a long way to the park without sidewalks, so there are a lot of pedestrians on the street. Davis asked about the parking lot sufficiency. Mr. James stated that every weekend during the summer the street will be completely full as well as the lot and people will park wherever they can fit in around the roundabout.

Captain Markham said the issues they're describing are fairly accurate. He initially had the speed trailer closer to the houses at the bottom of the hill. But he drove it a couple of times and with the cars parked on the west side of the street it was not visible enough to get a reading. He moved it to the top of the hill to try to make it more visible to drivers as soon as they come off 45<sup>th</sup> Avenue. He really doesn't have any good ideas on how to control traffic with cars parked on the west side. It's common for cars to be parked on that side so he assumes the residents need that street parking. Silverwood has a lot more parking and trail access to the beach but this is not city property. Mr. James states there are not any official speed signs; he feels this would at least be good starting point. Schluender suggested park advisory speed limit signs at the bottom of the hill close to the park. A pedestrian pathway is really needed but there's no right of way on the east side, and eliminating parking all together is not an option. Finkelson is agreeable to a 20 mph speed limit and then maybe 10-15 mph in the parking roundabout area. Young advised the City Council is currently looking at citywide speed limits, not individual streets. The lowest limit we can currently go is 30 mph.

Mr. James stated there are painted arrows at the bottom of the road but they are very faded and suggested repainting these so they're more visible. Young advised staff will review signage and striping and where to place the park warning signs. Schluender asked if the curve would be eligible for a curve speed warning sign. There's currently only a white exit sign, he would like to see a red DO NOT ENTER sign to prevent cars from going the wrong way.

Motion by Finkelson to make a recommendation to the City Council to reduce the speed limit to 20 mph on Stinson Boulevard at 45<sup>th</sup> Avenue south to Silver Lake Beach Park. Second by Nekora. Davis Nay. Motion passed 4-1.

Motion by Schluender to look into a park warning sign and a curve warning sign, and to replace the EXIT ONLY sign with a standard size DO NOT ENTER sign at the Silver Lake Beach park entrance. Seconded by Davis. Motion passed unanimously.

At the park entrance, staff will replace the EXIT ONLY sign with a DO NOT ENTER sign and add reflective strips to the posts. Commissioners will discuss the park and curve warning signs.

## **REPORTS**

### **CITY ENGINEER**

Traffic Commission members need to choose a different meeting day and possibly time. Meeting on the first Monday of the month has caused conflict with other meetings that the council liaison needs to attend. Staff

is suggesting the third Tuesday of the month. The reason being, if we hold a public hearing for a Traffic Commission item, we can take the item to the very next council meeting. The meeting time is up for discussion. Commission members all agreed 6:00 pm is a better meeting time. This needs to go to the City Council for approval so we will still meet on Monday, June 7, and present this to the City Council as a change starting in July.

Young advised that 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue between Central Avenue and Stinson Boulevard will be reconstructed in 2023. An Open House is being held to discuss the final design. The plan design is currently at 30% so this will be the last opportunity for the public to make comments and/or changes.

**POLICE CHIEF**

None

**COMMISSIONERS**

Davis stated he remembers the parking lot at Silver Lake Beach being larger. He knows when they redesigned it they were working on water infiltration and other items which cut down the number of parking spots. However, he did see some spots where you could possibly add approximately six more parking spaces without intrusion. Feels it may be worthwhile to increase the parking if possible.

Ciesynski stated Silverwood has public parking, asked if it's possible to put up signage that says overflow parking at Silverwood. We would most likely need to check with Three Rivers Park District for this. Davis would like more information to see if this is a feasible option.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motioned by Schluender, seconded by Nekora to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Schmidtbauer  
Administrative Assistant