

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

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:26 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members present: Clerkin, Doty, Finkelson, Nekora, Schluender

Staff present: Kathy Young, Assistant City Engineer
Erik Johnston, Police Captain
Sue Schmidtbauer, Administrative Assistant

Council Liaison: Robert Williams (Absent)

APPOINTMENT OF NEW CHAIRPERSON

Leonard Olson decided to not reapply to the Traffic Commission. His term ended April 1, 2020. The Traffic Commission needs to appoint a new chairperson.

Motion by Doty, seconded by Schluender, to appoint Sean Clerkin as the new chairperson of the Traffic Commission. Motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Doty, seconded by Schluender, to approve the minutes of November 4, 2019 as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

None

OTHER OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

- A. REQUEST FOR STOP SIGNS AT THE INTERSECTION OF 6TH STREET AND 43RD AVENUE
REQUEST FOR STOP SIGNS AT THE INTERSECTION OF 7TH STREET AND 43RD AVENUE

Ms. Katy Hahn has requested stop signs at the intersections of 6th Street and 7th Street at 43rd Avenue. Her concern is accidents and near misses at these intersections.

The intersection of 6th Street and 43rd Avenue was reviewed by the Traffic Commission in December 2011. The request for stop signs was denied due to not meeting the MMUTCD guidelines.

On 6th Street traffic stops at 42nd Avenue and 44th Avenue. On 43rd Avenue traffic stops at 5th Street and Jefferson Street. Visibility at the intersection is somewhat limited on the south side due to higher ground elevations, similar to grade issues at many intersections in the city. There have been no *reported* accidents at this intersection in the previous five years.

The intersection of 7th Street and 43rd Avenue has been reviewed by the Traffic Commission several times, most recently in April 2017. The request for stop signs was denied based on the topography of the intersection. The concern being that stop signs at the top of the hill would make it difficult for vehicles to stop and start up in the winter months. An "Intersection Ahead" warning sign was installed for southbound traffic on 7th Street.

On 7th Street traffic yields at 41st Avenue and stops at 44th Avenue. On 43rd Avenue traffic stops at 5th Street and Jefferson Street. The intersection is at the top of a hill. Visibility is limited for southbound traffic and westbound traffic until near the intersection; then it is good. There has been one *reported* accident at this intersection in the previous five years.

Young advised that the City is in the process of changing out street signs. The new signs are larger and are white and green making them more visible. This may help the situation because when driving westbound on 43rd Avenue you can actually see the street name signs at the intersection.

Doty stated when he was there he didn't see any traffic, parked cars or issues that would be problematic, except for the hill. Captain Johnston stated he doesn't see any major concerns at this intersection. The one accident he cited was due to sleety weather conditions. Schluender stated he lives in the general area and due to the number of stop signs he doesn't feel that drivers can build up speed between intersections. Also, 43rd Avenue is fairly narrow and has the hill, and is in a residential area, which he thinks causes drivers to be a little more cautious. He supports the recommended motion due to not meeting the MMUTCD guidelines.

Motion by Clerkin to deny the request for stop signs at the intersection of 6th Street and 43rd Avenue and at the intersection of 7th Street and 43rd Avenue due to not meeting the MMUTCD guidelines, seconded by Doty. Motion passed unanimously.

B. REVISE STOP SIGN LOCATIONS ON 51ST AVENUE BETWEEN WASHINGTON STREET AND CENTRAL AVENUE; ADD CROSSWALKS AT THE PARK ENTRANCES

Mr. Mark Matzke has requested revisions to the traffic control along 51st Avenue as well as installation of crosswalks near Sullivan Lake Park.

The first request is for a crosswalk across Washington Street at the entrance of Sullivan Park, or at a minimum, to trim the trees/shrubs adjacent to the path so pedestrians are more visible. Young advised that we have steered away from crosswalks unless they're in an area that has sidewalk. The reason being, that you are directing pedestrians into the street, not to another sidewalk or a safe refuge. As there is no sidewalk on the west side of Washington Street, the Park Department will trim the trees/shrubs to make the Park Entrance signs and pedestrians leaving the park more visible.

Mr. Matzke requested the 2-way stop at Washington Street and 51st Avenue be revised to a 4-way stop. The concern is visibility at this intersection.

Currently traffic stops on Washington Street. The topography combined with vegetation along the north side of 51st Avenue limits visibility. Southbound vehicles on Washington Street must proceed

cautiously into the intersection before crossing into the westbound traffic lane.

Young advised there are some large lilac bushes on the northeast corner of the property on the north side that do block visibility somewhat, vehicles need to inch out at the stop sign to check for cross traffic before pulling out. Her first recommendation is to contact the property owner and request to have the lilac bushes trimmed back. If the owner refuses, the City will intercede. We do have approximately 9' of right-of-way along the north side of 51st Avenue.

If a 4-way stop were to go in at Washington Street and 51st Avenue, then Mr. Matzke is requesting the 3-way stop be removed at Jefferson Street for east-west traffic. Young feels it's worthwhile for staff to study both Washington and Jefferson Streets to determine which intersection makes the most sense for traffic control.

Mr. Matzke requested the 1-way stop be revised to a 3-way stop at 51st Avenue and Monroe Street, and a crosswalk be added. The concern is the speed of traffic near the park.

This is a T-intersection with northbound traffic stopping at 51st Avenue. Visibility at the intersection is good. There is no sidewalk on the south side of 51st Avenue. Once again, a crosswalk would direct pedestrians into the street, not a refuge from traffic. Staff suggests installing playground warning signs on 51st Avenue for Sullivan Lake Park.

Jefferson, Madison, Monroe and Jackson Streets are all approximately 300' apart. Traffic to the park could come from any of those intersections, not necessarily just Monroe Street. Doty stated Jefferson Street and 51st Avenue has a hill and with cross traffic vehicles could not start up again. He would like to keep the three stop signs at this intersection as it's difficult to get up hills due to weather conditions.

Schluender commented on the crosswalk. Stated he understands the concern of installing a crosswalk that directs pedestrians to no landing space on the other side. He recognizes if you have mobility concerns or are not familiar with the area how you could get stuck on the other side of the road. However, there are two pedestrian paths coming out of the park that, even without a crosswalk, are directing pedestrians into the street. Pedestrians are still hitting the street and are clearly crossing it if they're parked along 51st Avenue, or they are heading deeper into the neighborhood by walking along the streets that these paths butt up against. He suggested a study of what it would take to install a landing area on the other side of the park, whether it's a modest stretch of sidewalk or a corner curb cut set-out that doesn't go anywhere. This is not an ideal solution but feels a crosswalk and crosswalk signs would at least slow traffic down. He would also like to see the crosswalk aligned to Monroe Street. He thinks we should study this a little more in depth before we deny the request. Finkelson agrees with examining this in more detail. Young advised that we can put in the crosswalks and the signs, but this was done on 40th Avenue at 5th Street and Jefferson Street and the crosswalks are ignored so often that now we've tried putting up "Stop for Pedestrian" signs along centerline to try to grab the drivers' attention. Schluender stated he's seen some new approaches to crosswalk painting where they're painted in 3-D so they stand out more. Young advised they have this type of crosswalk at French Park. She will get some photographs to see how they've held up over the years.

Nekora asked where the playground warning signs will be placed. Young advised they will be positioned on each side of the park, approximately 200' from the entrance. We have these signs at the majority of our parks so should add them to this one as well.

Motion by Clerkin to deny the request for 3-way stop signs at 51st Avenue and Monroe Street, seconded by Doty. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Clerkin to direct staff to study the intersections on 51st Avenue at both Washington Street and Jefferson Street to consider which intersection should be controlled with an all-way stop, seconded by Schluender. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Schluender to study the feasibility of a sidewalk or alternate landing area for pedestrians on the opposite side of the street for crosswalks at both Washington Street and Sullivan Drive and 51st Avenue and Monroe Street, including possibly aligning the end of the pedestrian path on the north side of 51st Avenue with the intersection; and to also study best practices for painting crosswalks for better driver visibility. Motion seconded by Finkelson. Motion passed unanimously.

VII. OTHER NEW BUSINESS

None

VIII. REPORTS

A. CITY ENGINEER

As requested by owners, Disabled Parking signs have been installed at the following locations:

- 4010 4th St, Permit F29089
- 4141 4th St, Permit 1-017-995
- 1419 Parkview Ln, Permit J10787
- 4032 Washington St, Permit D56411

The City Council is requesting that the Traffic Commission choose a different night for their meetings. The City Council has meetings at 6:00 p.m. and sometimes earlier on Monday evenings. Because of this the Council Liaison is unable to attend the Traffic Commission meeting. This item will be on the next agenda.

B. POLICE CHIEF

Captain Johnston advised they have slowed down with being proactive due to COVID but will be bringing this back up on Central Avenue due to traffic safety issues, one being a pedestrian/vehicle accident.

The 2-6 AM parking ban is scheduled to start soon. Police distribute citywide flyers regarding overnight parking warnings and postcards about the ordinance on two separate weekends in October; these are placed on vehicles parked on the street. Parking permit requests increase every year, the Police Department is trying to be reasonable with issuing.

C. COMMISSIONERS

Doty stated that when he was at 51st Avenue and Washington Street today he had the right of

way but the other driver ran the stop sign so he stopped. The other driver then stopped halfway through the intersection. He cannot believe how many drivers run stop signs. He asked Captain Johnston if he's noticed this. Captain Johnston advised that if they focus on this it makes an impact, but once they stop the problem slowly creeps back up. It's a challenge to patrol all these locations and enforce violations. When they receive a complaint at a particular intersection, then they give it attention.

Doty asked the average speed of the speed sign on 49th Avenue. Johnston wasn't sure, he advised that sometimes they just put the speed signs out so they're visible but don't always pull a report. Doty felt it was excellent idea to put the speed sign by the school prior to school starting. Johnston advised they do try to keep them out and move them around.

ADJOURNMENT

Motioned by Doty, seconded by Shluender to adjourn the meeting at 6:04 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Schmidtbauer
Administrative Assistant