



Public Works Committee Meeting

Cravath Lakefront Room, 2nd Floor
312 W. Whitewater St.
Whitewater, WI 53190
*In Person and Virtual

Tuesday, October 08, 2024 - 5:00 PM

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The Public Works Committee Meeting was called to order by Hicks at 5:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Majkrzak, Hicks

Absent: Smith

Others: Marquardt

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was moved by Majkrzak and seconded by Hicks to approve the agenda for the Public Works Committee meeting.

AYES: All by via voice vote (2). NOES: None. ABSENT: Smith.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of minutes from September 10, 2024

It was moved by Majkrzak and seconded by Hicks to approve the minutes from the September 10, 2024, Public Works Committee meeting.

AYES: All by via voice vote (2). NOES: None. ABSENT: Smith.

HEARING OF CITIZEN COMMENTS

None

NEW BUSINESS

2. Discussion and Possible Action regarding changing winter parking restrictions to start December 1, instead of November 1.

Staff received a request from councilperson Brian Schanen to review the start date of winter parking restrictions. Currently, the winter parking ordinance restricts parking on all City streets between 2:00 am and 6:00 am, and goes into effect each year on November 1. The request is to move this date back to December 1. It was noted, if approved, there would be some cost associated in making and installing new signs.

Attached was a table of snowfall amounts for the month of November in Madison and Milwaukee. These two cities are the closest to Whitewater with online historical data available online. The table also included the coldest temperatures for the month of November in each city.

Staff recommended remaining with the November 1, start date for the winter parking restrictions. There were concerns with the potential for snowplowing around parked vehicles and the snowbanks freezing and remaining in place throughout the remainder of winter. Also, with the lack of a daily newspaper or a local TV station, getting the word out to residents for a one-day parking ban (snow emergency) would prove to be difficult.

In addition, Marquardt spoke with Chief Meyer regarding this possible change. Chief stated he recently met with the Finance Director and they looked at their revenue from issuing tickets, which has been down in recent years. If this parking restriction moved from November to December it could be another potential loss of parking ticket revenue. Marquardt stated the first two weeks only warnings are issued.

Majkrzak stated he could go either way on this topic. He asked Marquardt if he knew how many signs would need to be changed. Marquardt stated the signs that would have to be changed would be the signs on the main streets coming into the City that state the hours. He thought it would be about eight to 10 signs.

Hicks commented he could go either way as well. He mentioned the problem of getting the new information out there. It would be nice to have but it probably might not be in the best interest to change it right now.

Majkrzak agreed to do nothing. It is consistent with everyone else in the area.

After discussion, the Public Works Committee opted to not change the policy at this time. Marquardt stated he would put it on the next Council agenda as a staff report.

3. Discussion and Possible Action regarding request to paint traffic signal control boxes.

Marquardt stated Zeinert reached out to him regarding the request to paint traffic signal control boxes. Zeinert stated recently the Common Council asked staff to look into options for investing in public art. Due to this direction the Public Art Committee reemerged. At a recent Public Art Committee meeting Brienne Brown, a member of the Public Art Committee, asked if staff could explore painting either utility or traffic boxes. Zeinert met with Marquardt to ask if this was something they could pursue, and if so, what boxes were a good fit for this project.

Marquardt shared the traffic signal control boxes would be a great option for this project to come to fruition. Staff's recommendation was to allow the traffic signal control boxes to be painted by the Public Art Committee, with the designs brought to the Public Works Committee for final approval.

Hicks asked how many boxes were on Main Street? Marquardt thought there were eight boxes. Hicks said if the committee does move forward, he would like to see the design come to someone for approval with some limitations as to no political speech, no hate speech, and keep it generic. Hicks would also be interested in how they are going to paint the boxes. Are they going to coat them to last or is it just going to be two-year paint and then they would have to be painted again? Hicks didn't have a problem with it as long as the committee was okay with the project.

Majkrzak stated he would be interested if the chief had anything to say about the painted boxes being a distraction to drivers. Maybe not since other communities are doing this and he hasn't heard much of an issue with it. He agrees with Hicks and the same concerns with one addition. Could it just be the front of the boxes and no painting around seals or anything like that? He wouldn't want to jeopardize the integrity.

Marquardt will let Zeinert know the committee is open to the idea. Hopefully, the Public Art Committee can come back with what they are looking at doing, the type of paint, the life expectancy, etc., so the Public Works Committee has a better idea on the designs.

4. **Discussion and Possible Action regarding Bird Scooters.**

Marquardt stated at a recent Common Council meeting the use of Bird Scooters, particularly on sidewalks, was asked to be on an upcoming agenda for discussion.

Hicks stated he has seen scooters on sidewalks with residents acting stupid. He doesn't know how they can regulate or curb that behavior. Hicks think we should just continue to monitor it. He also hasn't heard of any other complaints.

Majkrzak said he agreed and hasn't heard any complaints either. He does like the service they offer. However, he is disappointed with the way they are stored at times. In general, he feels like management has done a better job with that issue than years past. He thinks we should continue to keep an eye on it. It could be added to the open session as a part of an agenda item or a staff report at a Council meeting.

Hicks thought it should be brought back to Council as a staff report just for additional questions.

Marquardt stated he will bring it back to Council as an agenda item or staff report.

5. **Discussion and Possible Action regarding pedestrians not crossing W. Main Street at designated crosswalks near the University.**

Marquardt stated at a recent Common Council meeting this item was asked to be on an upcoming agenda for discussion. The area in question is mainly adjacent to the University between Prince Street and Prairie Street. Students will sometimes cross mid-block, not using the traffic signals at Prince Street, Whiton Street, Prairie Street, or the pedestrian crossing at Cottage Street.

To deter students from crossing mid-block, some sort of deterrent would need to be installed, such as a fence. In Main Street's current lane configuration, the fence would need to be placed immediately behind the curb to have any deterrent; otherwise, students could still cut across and walk on the terrace instead of the sidewalk. And the fence would need to be placed on the north side of the street because of driveways on the south side. The location of immediately behind the curb would impede snow plowing operations.

Marquardt stated he travels Main Street quite often. He doesn't see many people crossing the street mid-block. However, the few he has seen cross seem to be paying attention because they are crossing mid-block and looking for cars, unlike the ones who cross in a crosswalk and think they are protected by two white lines. Those pedestrians think they can just cross and don't look for cars. He doesn't feel there is an issue or a need to do anything at this time.

Hicks agrees with Marquardt. Hicks stated he liked the idea of a fence but doesn't think we could do it with the property we have. Hicks recommended doing nothing right now. If it becomes more of an issue, and Starin Road is closed, it could be addressed at that time.

Majkrzak said, in general, a fence would look horrendous. If they end up doing something someday, it should be something more in the terrace. Majkrzak did agree with Marquardt that some people just don't look. He feels it something that should be monitored.

6. **Discussion and Possible Action regarding traffic concerns near Walmart and Aldi.**

Marquardt stated at a recent Common Council meeting this item was asked to be on an upcoming agenda for discussion. Marquardt said after the agenda was published he received a call from an elderly couple who live on the west side. They would like a crosswalk by Casey because they were almost hit while trying

to cross the street to get to Aldi. They cut through the sidewalk behind Casey's and then crossed Main Street to get to Aldi. Marquardt stated he didn't think the sidewalk behind Casey's was ever intended to be the public access to Main Street, across private property. Marquardt did reach out to Strand to get their thoughts on installing another crosswalk somewhere in the vicinity of Walmart and Aldi. Their response was mid-block pedestrian crossing on a four-lane undivided roadway is typically discouraged unless you have an active control, such as what we already have or adding a traffic signal. The nature of this area, with many driveways and few public intersections, would not leave vehicles to anticipate a pedestrian crossing. Marquardt said we do already have the crosswalk at Mulberry Glen and the hotel. In his opinion, that crosswalk was put there because it is the only residential area on the west side that is connected to the Main Street sidewalk. At the time, that's where a grocery was located. Right or wrong that crosswalk did get put in there. Their other thought was Main Street, in this area, has an annual average day traffic count of 8,700 vehicles a day. If there was a consideration made to restripe Main Street as a three lane, with a two-way left turn lane, a median refuge island could be added at crossing locations to improve and allow for crossing one direction of traffic at a time. Marquardt stated that would be taking the four lanes, two lanes in each direction, and taking it down to one lane in each direction. This would then let you create what is known as a suicide left turn lane with vehicles coming at you while trying to turn left in either direction. With so many driveways, at different locations, that could be a little dicey.

Since Aldi has only been open for about a month, Marquardt recommended if there are concerns with pedestrians crossing at the location that they wait until at least spring to see what traffic patterns evolve. If there are other people making the request about crossing in that area, it can be reviewed at that time. Putting in another crosswalk, at a non-public intersection, is not the right thing to do.

Hicks stated his only thought was about getting a cost of moving the flashing light crossing set up (at Mulberry Glen) to the west between Walmart and Aldi parking lot. He agrees that crosswalk was probably put there when we had a grocery store. Now we do have a grocery store but it's down further. If people from Mulberry Glen want to cross in that area, he feels it would be safer to walk on the south side of the road and cross over right before Aldi. He feels it would better moved west of where it is right now.

Majkrzak said he really likes the suggestion of moving it to the west. He is seeing more kids walking and there really isn't a great place to cross the street in that area. Majkrzak felt where the crosswalk is now is very hard to see. Maybe it's because of all the driveways and/or trees in that area. He doesn't know if a traffic light would be the best idea but does think moving the flashing light crosswalk would be a great compromise. It would be worth investigating it more.

Hicks agreed with Majkrzak that it is hard to see pedestrians when driving west on Main Street. He stated the tree canopy is covering it. It is also so close to the intersection at Elizabeth Street with the stop and go light that is controlled. Moving it to the west may help us avoid a stop and go light at Walmart at some point. He would like to get an initial cost estimate to move the flashing light to the west. He thought we could bring it back in the spring to Council.

Marquardt stated he will do a staff report on this discussion at the next Council meeting. That way they know the Public Works Committee is looking at possibly moving the flashing light, and could follow up with their thoughts and questions regarding this possible change.

- 7. Discussion and Possible Action regarding Public Participation at Public Works Committee meetings.** Marquardt stated at the last Finance Committee meeting, staff was directed to revise the proposed changes regarding public comments and distribute them to all committees for review and feedback.

The Finance Committee is seeking input on how these proposed changes may affect Public Works Committee meetings and asked for this item be added to the agenda for discussion. All comments will be forwarded to Financial and Administrative Services Director.

The goal is to bring these insights back to the Finance Committee in November, with the aim of presenting a recommendation to the Council in December.

Marquardt stated he felt there are only a few committees that have public participation and need to be controlled in a certain manner. The Public Works Committee does not get much public participation. So, do we want to go through the process of having people sign in and make sure they only talk for three minutes? At a committee level, when dealing with things that public works deals with there is going to be more back and forth discussion on items, where the public has interest, and you want that discussion at a committee level hashed out before it goes to Council.

Hicks generally agreed with Marquardt. It is not an issue with the Public Works Committee meetings. Hicks thought the idea behind it was that it is uniform across the board. Council is limited to three minutes and then you go to a Park Committee meeting and they offer seven minutes. However, Hicks stated it does allow, as referenced on page 24, last paragraph... "The presiding officer, with the concurrence of the Common Council/Committee, may extend or limit any of the enumerated time allocations based on the complexity of the item and the number of persons wishing to speak on the item." If there is a room packed full of people for a Council meeting, based on this sentence, ground rules could be set before the meeting. Hicks has no problem taking it back to Council and working through it there.

Majkrzak likes the formality and transparency of it. He agreed in general that he's liked most of the discussion had at the Public Works Committee meetings. He likes how they can just have the conversation. However, the CDA gets more participation with more sensitive or interesting topics and it could be beneficial.

Hicks stated it has been pretty black and white that it's been three minutes, and now the last paragraph gives you the change to adjust, as needed, with the approval of the rest of the committee/Council.

Marquardt stated he will take those comments back to the Finance Department tomorrow.

8. Discussion and Possible Action regarding WE Energies request for 15-foot easement on City owned property just north of 110 N. First Street.

Marquardt stated WE Energies is upgrading the gas service to the customer at 162 W. Main Street. The three gas meters currently located inside the building will be moved outside. In order to serve the building, a new gas service needs to be installed. WE Energies is asking for a 15-foot easement from the City so they can install a new gas service to the building across City property that is located immediately north of the building. The northern face of the building is on the property line, thus there is no room on their own property to install the gas service.

It was moved by Hicks to approve WE Energies request for a 15-foot easement on City owned property just north of 110 N. First Street and seconded by Majkrzak.

AYES: All by via voice vote (2). NOES: None. ABSENT: Smith.

Marquardt stated it will be on the Council agenda next week for formal action.

9. Open Meeting Law Training.

Marquardt stated this item was only on the agenda in case it needed to be done. Marquardt stated he was informed that Hicks, Majkrzak, and Smith attended this training. This will be noted in the minutes that all three members of the Public Works Committee have completed this training.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

None

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Majkrzak and seconded by Hicks to adjourn the Public Works Committee meeting at 5:38 p.m.

AYES: All by via voice vote (2). NOES: None. ABSENT: Smith.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Stoll

Alison Stoll, Administrative Assistant
Department of Public Works