

# TRAFFIC COMMISSION

City of Findlay  
March 21, 2016

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## MINUTES

### **ATTENDANCE:**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Service-Safety Director Paul Schmelzer, Police Chief Greg Horne, Fire Chief Josh Eberle, Councilman Ron Monday.

STAFF PRESENT: Mayor Lydia Mihalik; Matt Stoffel, Public Works Superintendent.

GUESTS PRESENT: Mike Reed, The University of Findlay; Holly Frische and Tom Shindledecker, City Council.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

1. Request of The University of Findlay, 1000 North Main Street, for a pedestrian activated light across North Main Street from new admissions office to the campus.

03/21/2016

Item remains tabled.

2. Request for additional signals at Sandusky Street and Main Street.

03/21/2016

Item remains tabled.

3. Request of Marathon Petroleum Company to install a crosswalk across East Sandusky Street at Beech.

02/15/2016

Smith stated that Marathon employees are using Beech Street to cross East Sandusky Street primarily at lunch and for after hours meetings/events.

Schmelzer stated that the intersection of Beech Street and East Sandusky Street is unsignalized. This request is looked at like a midblock crossing. If a crosswalk was installed, it would give pedestrians a false sense of security. It would definitely need to be signalized. Monday agrees with Schmelzer. Monday is opposed to midblock crossings. This intersection would need to have warning signs or signals. Schmelzer stated that the City's Engineering Department can take a look at vehicle and pedestrian traffic counts at this intersection and compare the results to the criteria in the Midblock Crossing Policy to see if it warrants a crosswalk. Schmelzer questioned as to whether an RRFB signal is permitted at intersections. Schmelzer stated that if the counts meet the midblock crossing requirements, then we will figure out how to signalize it. Stoffel stated that there could potentially be an issue with visibility of the signals due to onstreet parking in the area of the intersection. Stone stated that if you make the crosswalk on the west side of the intersection, there is better visibility for the signals/signs due to no parking in that area.

Motion to table request until Engineering Department can make an examination of the vehicle and pedestrian counts at the intersection of Beech Street and East Sandusky Street against the Midblock Crossing Policy.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

1. Request of Andrew Donaldson, 1908 Camelot Lane, to review signage at the intersection of East Main Cross Street just west of Osborn Avenue and restore it to the original signage-which was no signage and only a yield sign facing westbound traffic coming from under the Osborn Street bridge and add a sign for eastbound traffic on Main Cross Street stating that oncoming traffic does not stop; and remove dangerous intersection signage on Fostoria Avenue at Stonehedge Drive.

Discussion ensued regarding the safety of changing the stop sign to a yield sign at the intersection of East Main Cross Street and Osborn Avenue. The discussion concluded that it would not be safer. Mayor stated that the County is going to be removing the underpass in the next year.

Motion to deny request for signage changes at intersection of Main Cross Street and Osborn Avenue, by Director Schmelzer, second by Councilman Monday. Motion passed 4-0.

Stoffel stated that the request for the "Dangerous Intersection" sign was previously requested through Traffic Commission. Motion to deny request to remove the "Dangerous Intersection" sign, by Director Schmelzer, second Chief Eberle. Motion passed 4-0.

2. Request of Jack Cupples, St. Paul's UMC Trustee, 218 East Sandusky Street, to add a one-way sign at the exit of the St. Paul's UMC parking lot onto East Crawford Street.

Schmelzer stated that he has no objection to this request. Motion to install one way sign at the egress point for St. Paul's UMC, by Director Schmelzer, second by Chief Eberle. Motion passed 4-0.

3. Request of Councilman Tom Klein to review speed limit and signage on West Bigelow Avenue from North Main Street to Broad Avenue.

Stoffel reported in an email that in the early 1970s, a request came before the Traffic Commission to make the speed limit 20 MPH. It is assumed that it was made 20 MPH when there was no traffic light, only a crosswalk, for the school on Hillcrest Avenue. Chief Horne reported in an email that it was his understanding that it was near a school and children walked that way to get to the neighborhood south of Bigelow Avenue. There is no longer a need for the 20 MPH speed limit sign or for it to be marked as a school zone in that area. Discussion ensued regarding amount of pedestrian traffic across Bigelow. Motion to table by Director Schmelzer, second by Chief Eberle. Motion dies for lack of vote.

Monday stated that we should check on the legal requirements for a 20 MPH speed limit with restricted hours school zone. Monday stated that he understands why it was made 20 MPH. Mayor Mihalik stated that Bigelow Hill School is a pretty good sized school. They have a lot of walkers. It's a very populated neighborhood. Mayor suggested to contact the principal at the school to see how many walkers they have.

Monday read from ORC 4511.21(c). Schmelzer stated that based on ORC 4511.21(C), the area on Bigelow is too far from the actual school to be construed as a school zone. He is guessing that is why Traffic Commission, at that time, made the speed limit 20 MPH in the area. They wanted to create the safety of the school zone functionality. They knew that making it a school zone with 20 MPH during restricted hours was not enforceable for that section. Monday stated that he is not opposed to leaving it a 20 MPH speed limit for the safety of the kids. He believes it is just an unenforceable sign.

Motion to leave it a 20 MPH speed limit, by Schmelzer. Motion dies for lack of second.

Based on the City's inability to make it a restricted hour zone, motion to leave the 20 MPH speed limit zone because of the number of pedestrians and kids that use the crossing point, by Schmelzer, second by Councilman Monday. Discussion: Mayor stated that we should have the Law Director check the enforceability/legality of the 20 MPH speed limit. Motion denied 4-0.

Motion to have the Law Director look at the language in the ORC and give us a determination whether the restricted hours sign would be enforceable, by Chief Eberle, second by Director Schmelzer. Motion passed 4-0.

4. Discussion regarding North Cory Street.

Schmelzer stated that the premise for the discussion about North Cory Street is not specifically whether or not the City does a bike bath, but related to the question about whether or not if we are going to maintain two-way traffic whether we take that the two-way traffic south to West Main Cross Street.

Schmelzer stated that the City applied for a Transportation Alternative Plan (TAP) last year. Part of the plan has to do with pedestrian and alternate modes of transportation for bicycles. The goal was to get as many points as possible so that the City could redo Main Street and Cory Street. During discussions the conversation around Cory Street centered around the alternative that is presented today which is the two-way street model that shows a north and a south segment. This is what is included in the TAP. South of the tracks shows a one way street and a dedicated bike lane on the west side going southbound and on the east side going northbound. South of the railroad tracks you have a sharrow lane and a dedicated southbound. There were residents concerned about the one-way street change. If we keep North Cory Street two-way it does not compromise the City's ability to do the TAP. Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) Central District stated that the City has enough points with the plan to make the Main Street project regardless of whether or not you have a bike lane on a sharrow format or have a dedicated northbound lane. Schmelzer stated that having gotten that answer, it is his responsibility to present it to Council members that have asked the question. This leads to another question which is if we are going to leave it two-way, do we want to take it and make it two-way from Front Street to Main Cross Street. An anticipated question is what do your emergency responders and Street Department think about that functionality. From the Traffic Commission perspective, if the City were to maintain North Cory Street in a two-way format, would it be prudent to make it two-way from Front Street to Main Cross Street? If it

is, then the Traffic Commission can recommend to Council that if the TAP is altered to maintain two-way traffic that the recommendation would be to keep it one-way or make it two-way to Main Cross Street. Question posed to Chief Horne, Chief Eberle and Matt Stoffel for their thoughts on making Cory Street two-way from Front to Main Cross Street. Stoffel stated that the one-way was implemented for Central Middle School. They used to line up in one of the lanes to drop off and pick up kids.

Schmelzer stated that the school no longer exists. The performing arts center has different peak hours than the school did. If the school was the only reason why it was modified, then it would be prudent to bring that traffic south to a connector and get it to Main Cross Street. Schmelzer discussed with Traffic Lights Supervisor Tom Demuth regarding the potential change from one-way to two-way traffic from Front Street to Main Street, and DeMuth said outside of the usual intersection upgrades that would need to be done when working on a project like that, it is all doable. Might need some additional conduit size, but there is nothing from his perspective from an equipment standpoint that would preclude us from making the change if that's what is decided.

Chief Horne inquired about making a left turn only lane on Cory Street at Main Cross Street if the two-way change is made. Schmelzer said yes. Chief Eberle stated that it would be a more natural break at Main Cross Street. Stoffel stated for Street Department Cory Street would be no problem taking it two-way to Main Cross Street. He stated it would be a lot easier for them as a two-way than a one way.

Motion to recommend that if the current Transportation Alternative Plan is modified to allow two-way traffic on North Cory Street that that two-way traffic pattern be extended from Front Street to Main Cross Street, by Schmelzer, second by Chief Horne. Motion passed 4-0.

Open up for other comments RE: TAP

Mike Reed with the Pathways Action Group, a grassroots citizen group interested in creating pathways to connect points of interest around Findlay, reiterated the view that they are in favor of making North Cory Street one-way with two-way dedicated bike paths. His group has been heavily engaged in improving the Blanchard River Greenway Trail. They are applying for a \$220,000 grant to extend the trail from Riverside Suites to Bright Road and starting to see way through so that it can be extended all the way to Riverbend Park. There are 4000 University of Findlay (UF) students, and he has found that there is 3 times the bike use as 7 years ago. Having North Cory Street as one-way would be a safe conduit for UF students to downtown and to gain access to the Blanchard River Greenway Trail. His group perceives that painting bike signs on the road doesn't show any real commitment to bicycles any more than if he went over to Emory Adams Park and painted a car sign on that trail and said now cars can go on there safely. It doesn't show any commitment to bike riders and safety. His group is really in favor of converting North Cory Street to one-way with dedicated bike lanes to send a message to the community that the City is walkable and rideable friendly, that we are looking to the future. Marathon is hiring young people. They want to be able to get uptown and downtown without using a car and so do UF students. His group has put a lot of time and effort into improving the Blanchard River Greenway Trail and others and we just want safe access to and from that pathway. Eventually it would allow UF students to go to and any citizen to go from Riverbend to Walmart, and we know UF students really want to get to Walmart. A lot of UF students don't have cars, and they need a safe bicycle access.

Schmelzer asked the Council members in attendance to share what they have heard from constituents. Shindledecker stated he has heard concerns from residents in the area. He did a little research and found that 800 vehicle permits were issued to UF residential students and another 1500 issued to commuter students, some of which are coming from Fostoria and North Baltimore, etc. Many of them are also residents in some of the neighboring blocks around UF. His first thought was he didn't think we needed a bike trail at least not at the expense of turning North Cory Street into a one-way street. He has changed his mind since then. He has seen a lot of emails with the concern not making Cory Street one-way but providing a bike path. He thinks the alternative plan is better than making Cory Street one-way. Shindledecker had a suggestion to instead make Franklin Street one-way and run the bike path from the parking lot behind the UF women's dormitories along Franklin Street to Defiance then run along the unimproved street that runs along Swale Park and connect up with the existing bike path that runs along High Street. He assumes that there is some right of way on North Cory Street behind John Snyder's Auto Mart that could include a bike path and connect up with the one on the south side of the Blanchard River. He is not sure of the ramifications of this plan. He stated that if the City wants a gateway to UF, the City would also want a gateway from UF, which is two-way traffic on North Cory Street. He supports whatever the ultimate decision is, however, it should at least receive some serious consideration.

Schmelzer stated that North Cory Street is going to have sharrow lanes no matter what, because the City is getting funding to redo the road which is always been a priority. Nobody with a sharrow lane or not wants to ride a bike on a torn up street. At the very least North Cory Street north and south of the railroad tracks will have bike lanes whether they be sharrow or not. Schmelzer stated that he does not agree with Reed's comment that it is meaningless that we have the bike markings on the street, because it does give some indication to the driver that there is an objective to it. No matter what, there is a portion of Cory Street that will have to be sharrow, even if it is one-way northbound.

Schmelzer asked Council members in attendance where they want to take the conversation from here.

Frische stated that she likes the plan as a two-way. It's a good give and take on both sides. Should we take it to the downtown committee and vet it out there, then call it good. Talked about traffic counts for before and after, don't know if we need to do that. Concerns she has been getting are traffic flow issues as far as the streets off of Cory. No one was against bike path. Traffic flow to her is going to trump a bike path. She thinks this is fixing the problem keeping the sharrow lanes and two-way.

Schmelzer asked where do we want to go to get final answer. Mayor stated the next step is to take to Council for approval of changes. Paul wants to make sure that we are on the same page in regards to the motion. If the TAP plan is changed to two-way, we want two-way to go all the way to Main Cross. The Traffic Commission has not made a motion to alter the TAP.

Mayor stated that the original proposal approved by Council was one-way. We modified the plan due to comments received, but council has not had an opportunity to decide on where they want to go. If they've got the votes on council to do what it is they want to do then I say go for it. If they don't then the alternative is to present it to Council. I have heard way more positive feedback for North Cory Street than I have heard negative.

From the two comments he received, Monday stated the concern is making Cory Street one-way, not necessarily the bike path. Tom stated some accommodations for bikes is important after reading letters and hearing comments from citizens. Mayor stated the reason you go one-way on Cory Street is one-way to help facilitate bikes. Monday stated that Committee of the Whole would not do much, because it would be more of the same discussion. There would be no action taken. Would like to see an ordinance drafted in such a way that Council can somehow make a choice of the two. Mayor stated to have the Law Director draft a resolution or whatever the proper instrument is to facilitate this alternative and Council can say yes or no to it. Monday agrees so that it moves this decision forward. Paul stated that if it gets drafted this week, it will be on the Council agenda for April 5.

Schmelzer stated that ODOT is okay with the alternative plan of keeping North Cory Street two-way. Paul stated he fully vetted, and ODOT won't take any funding away. Looking at Franklin Street idea, as far as another bike path, it would have to be in addition to Cory Street, if that was the dedicated area, then that's a Traffic Commission meeting, that would be a public meeting with Franklin Street residents-who would say you just moved the inconvenience of a one way street from Cory Street to my street. That's a whole another month from now. We would have to go through the whole process again. There will be bike path demarcations on Cory Street either way. We can pursue the Franklin Street conversation regardless.

Motion to propose legislation to City Council to ask them if they want to go with the alternate plan, keeping North Cory Street two-way, by Councilman Monday, second by Director Schmelzer. Motion passed 4-0.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned. The next meeting of the City of Findlay Traffic Commission will be held on April 18, 2016, at 2:30 p.m. in the third floor conference room of the Municipal Building.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy K. Launder  
City Clerk