

BOROUGH OF WEST READING TRAFFIC & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

March 10, 2021

The Borough of West Reading Traffic & Infrastructure Committee met on Wednesday, March 10, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. via a Zoom meeting with the following persons present: Chairman Christopher Lincoln; Public Works Director Dean Murray; Sergeant Ryan Phillips; Mayor Andrew Kearney; Council Member Patrick Kaag; Recreation Director/Assistant Treasurer Helen Moyer; Borough Manager Nicholas Imbesi; Police Officer Nicholas Karetas; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

Visitors:	Karen Livingood, Resident	Keli Hoyt-Rupert, Tandem Mobility & Movatic
	Michele Bare, Borough of Wyomissing	Samantha Kaag, Borough Council Member

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m.

Bike Share Presentation

Mrs. Bare updated the committee from last month's discussions stating that an electrical connection would not be required to operate a bike share station allowing more flexibility to locate a space along Reading Avenue. The only cost to the Borough for the first two-year period would be the cost to install a pad.

Ms. Hoyt-Rupert provided the following highlights of Tandem Mobility and Movatic's proposed bike share program:

- Tandem Mobility and Movatic offers a turnkey bike share program to small and medium sized communities with flexibility and resources to develop and manage a program suited to the needs of the community. This turnkey program would handle hardware, software, operations and customer support.
- Bike rack stations are available in three to twenty rack sizes to accommodate space limitations. A five-rack bike station would be provided to West Reading Borough through the PennDOT grant funding. The average cost to maintain each bike per year is \$2,000.
- A local representative would service and rebalance the bike stations in the surrounding area on a two-week basis.
- An app-based program would be used to lock and unlock the bikes, which tracks the time of use. There is an annual membership option that would cost roughly \$25 and would provide a free hour of use. Another option is a pay as you go program at an average cost of \$1.00 to \$1.50 per hour.

It was noted that specifications for a five-bike station are roughly twelve feet by five and a half feet, which exceeds the average width of planting strip areas. An easement agreement could be discussed with the owner of the shopping center to place a bike station near the corner of Sixth and Reading Avenues. Ms. Hoyt-Rupert offered to provide a standard location agreement template.

Winter use or hibernation of the station would be determined by the Borough. Options would be to reduce the fleet to half the number of bikes, allowing the ability to swap out for tune up during winter months or to hibernate the station during the months of January through March.

Samantha Kaag joined the meeting at 6:36 p.m.

Placement of a three-bike station in the park area could be used for recreational purposes or travel. However, funding of a second station in the Borough would not be available through the PennDOT grant funding. Grant funds will cover operating expenses of the five-bike station for a two-year period. A history of bike station usage will have been established by that time and would help to determine if funding an additional station would be desirable. The ideal distance between stations was noted as three blocks or eight tenths of a mile. Ms. Hoyt-Rupert indicated that the Borough could determine their involvement in maintaining the stations

based on the community's goals. Additional specifications and easement agreement documentation will be provided to the Borough for further consideration.

Mrs. Bare and Ms. Hoyt-Rupert departed the meeting at 6:39 p.m.

Public Comment

Mrs. Livingood requested on behalf of herself and fellow senior citizen residents to consider budgeting funds during the 2022 and 2023 budgets to support the bike share station(s). Also, Mrs. Livingood requested filling of potholes behind 305 and 431 Sycamore Road.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made to approve the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee minutes of February 10, 2021 by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mayor Kearney. **Motion carried.**

Old Business

Parkview Road Pedestrian Bridge – Mr. Imbesi reported that the engineer has met with representatives of UGI to discuss the scope of this project. UGI has provided comments to the right-of-way agreement and this is currently under review by the solicitor. Mr. Imbesi is waiting on the solicitor's comments but is confident that the Borough and UGI will come to an agreement. The joint permit application with the Department of Environmental Protection is in the final approval stages. Mr. Imbesi is hopeful for a fall bridge installation.

Penn Avenue Infrastructure – Placement of large metal planter boxes within the planting strip area of North Seventh Avenue near the intersection of Penn Avenue was discussed. The following items were noted:

- The planting strip ordinance prohibits placement of objects in these areas for the safety of pedestrians entering or exiting vehicles. However, there are no parking spaces in the vicinity of the planter boxes.
- Placement of the planter boxes should have been discussed with the Code Department prior to installment. Issues such as line-of-sight and right-of-way utility access are a concern. Mr. Murray noted that the containers do not block access to sewer or water lines, and electric lines are overhead. However, there is a gas line near one off the planter boxes.
- The planter boxes were placed prior to the recent snow events and were not discovered until the snow melted.
- There are limited areas within the business district where parking is similarly prohibited with a planting strip area. This would limit the promotion of additional similar uses of planting strip areas. The boxes are located on a side street.

It was noted that the planter boxes would provide an upgraded outdoor seating area that is regulated by a Sidewalk Café permit. To date complaints have not been received regarding this feature. Sergeant Phillips would like to determine if the planter boxes would pose any issues during large events within the business district. It was suggested to advise the owner of the business that they did not properly approach the Borough prior to placement of the planters and a willingness to allow a trial period through the end of the year.

Motion to recommend Borough Council to approve the placement of planters at 701 Penn Avenue during a trial period through December 31, 2021, subject to extension should large events not take place during this timeframe, and subject to removal should any complaints or issues arise. Moved by Mr. Murray and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried.**

Cathy Hoffman departed the meeting at 7:11 p.m.

Stop Sign Ordinance Updates – Sergeant Phillips provided an in-depth report of intersection studies at Ann Street and Sunset Road and Yarnell Street and Franklin Street. These studies were conducted with the assistance of a representative from Pennsylvania's Department of Transportation Local Technical Assistance

Program (LTAP). The installation of stop signs at both intersections on the minor street approach were recommended along with removal of various parking spaces within thirty-feet of the stop sign to improve line-of-sight. Crash data during a five-year period indicated one reportable crash at each intersection. A PennDOT reportable crash would involve injuries and the requirement to tow a vehicle from the crash site. One-way signage in the vicinity of Ann Street was recommended to be revised to meet standards. With this documentation it was recommended to obtain the solicitors advise on how to move forward.

The triangle intersection of Parkview and Sunset Roads was visited and noted to have ample signage that drivers should heed for safety.

Mr. Murray reported that the intersection of Walnut Street and Tulpehocken Avenue at one time had been a four-way stop. A number of years ago crew members were instructed to remove two of the stop signs at this intersection, which does not match the current ordinance regulations. Both Mr. Murray and Sergeant Phillips recommended a four-way stop at this intersection. Mr. Lincoln indicated that a traffic study of the intersection would be required for this change to document sight distance and traffic volumes. Stop signs are not intended to provide speed control measures. Mr. Lincoln will provide a list of thresholds to be met to create a multi-stop intersection.

Reading Avenue/Buttonwood Street School Zones – Mr. Lincoln researched the signal permits associated with these school zones and found that the permits were issued in 1971 and updated in 1981. The permits specify the location and time requirements only. Therefore, an update to the ordinance would be required.

Time Limit Parking – The following aspects of time limit parking were discussed:

- Mr. Lincoln visited the South Second Avenue area north of Franklin Street and reported that two-hour time limit signage is still in place on the east side of South Second Avenue. There is no parking on the west side of South Second Avenue.
- South Seventh Avenue does not have time limit parking signage.
- North Seventh Avenue in the ordinance lists a two-hour parking limit but is currently signed as a twenty-minute parking space. It was decided to update the ordinance to match the current signage and to add the enforcement hours of 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

The noted changes will be updated on the proposed ordinance amendment and provided to the committee for review next month prior to making a recommendation to Council.

Pedestrian Safety along Penn Avenue – Mr. Lincoln provided information obtained through his research of pedestrian signals. Currently there is a loop detector within the side street where a car is detected causing the signal to change. If a pedestrian presses the button to cross Penn Avenue the pedestrian signal would change to the man instead of the hand. Creating a pedestrian signal during every light change would create additional main street stops and potentially backup traffic. There are other methods available such as passive detection for pedestrians, which in lieu of push buttons, a radar gun would identify a pedestrian and cause the pedestrian signal to change. This option would be extremely expensive to implement at all Penn Avenue intersections. Grant funding could be pursued; however, this is normally used in high concentrations of pedestrians. Most pedestrians are unaware of pedestrian crossing laws that require the button to be pressed to allow crossing during the man cycle phases only. The option to remove pedestrian crossings would likely be frowned upon by PennDOT.

Sergeant Phillips recommended a pedestrian signal phase during every light change especially during rush hour to slow traffic for the safety of drivers and pedestrians alike. Also, timing of signal changes could be varied during various times of the day. Pedestrian crossing education could be provided via social media avenues. PennDOT would more than likely require a traffic analysis of the Penn Avenue corridor to understand what the

impact to traffic patterns would be prior to granting approval. Sergeant Phillips requested to pursue this avenue for the safety of pedestrians and to promote more pedestrian traffic to the business district area. Mr. Lincoln will obtain a cost estimate to potentially budget this study next year.

New Business

North Sixth Avenue Pocket Park Study – Mr. Lincoln referred to the road closure evaluation of North Sixth Avenue between Penn Avenue and Court Street to provide a permanent area for events. Sergeant Phillips preferred the one-way traffic limitation on North Sixth Avenue from Reading Avenue to Court Street, and one-way traffic limitation on Court Street moving westbound towards Seventh Avenue. This would eliminate an influx of traffic from Sixth Avenue onto Reading Avenue, which would at a minimum require a four-way stop or traffic signal at this intersection to address line-of-sight issues.

The shopping center deliveries and dumpster placement would need to be revised. It was noted that the owner of the shopping center is currently working on reorienting these aspects.

It was recommended to perform a temporary test road closure prior to erecting permanent structures. Temporary barricades would be placed at either end of the designated road closure. Residents with access to Court Street would be notified of the new one-way traffic regulations.

Driveway/garage access behind Diller Jewelers would be addressed as needed. It was noted that the shopping center owner is amenable to removing the access onto Sixth Avenue from the shopping center parking lot. In order to accommodate larger vehicle access to the narrow Court Street alley entrance from Sixth Avenue a parking space could be removed from the east side of this roadway to allow a wider approach.

Motion to recommend approval of a temporary one-year trial closure of North Sixth Avenue from Penn Avenue to Court Street and to implement one-way access from Reading Avenue southbound onto Sixth Avenue and westbound onto Court Street to Seventh Avenue, contingent upon the owner of the shopping center revising the delivery zone and dumpster placement along North Sixth Avenue. Moved by Mr. Murray and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried.**

Handicapped Parking Space Amendment – Sergeant Phillips requested approval of the removal of two handicapped parking spaces that the Police Department has identified as no longer needed. The spaces are located along North Sixth Avenue and the 200 block of Tulpehocken Avenue. There currently are no new requests for handicapped parking spaces.

Motion to recommend removal of two handicapped parking spaces near 30 North Sixth Avenue and 200 Tulpehocken Avenue. Moved by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Imbesi. **Motion carried.**

Adjournment

Motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 8:34 p.m. by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Murray. **Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary