

MINUTES
WORKING SESSION
CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL CHAMBERS IN THE CIVIC COMPLEX
401 WEST WASHINGTON STREET
EAST PEORIA, ILLINOIS

May 16, 2023

The Honorable John P. Kahl Mayor of the City of East Peoria called the Working Session of the City Council of the City of East Peoria, Illinois to order at 5:15 P.M. with the meeting having been properly noticed. The City Clerk certifies that notice of the meeting was duly served upon Council Members via email on Friday, May 12, 2023 at approximately 3:15 P.M.

Upon the roll being called the following answered present: Mayor John P. Kahl, Commissioners Daniel S. Decker, Mark E. Hill, Seth D. Mingus, and Michael L. Sutherland.

Absent: None.

Mayor Kahl explained that the Special Meeting is called for the purpose of East Washington Street Resurfacing Project discussion. He explained that no formal action would be taken at the meeting. He turned the discussion over to Director of Planning and Community Development, Ty Livingston. Director Livingston explained that one of the proposals that was discussed at a previous meeting was a lane configuration that will be from the Cole Street intersection through I-74. He explained that they worked with the Tri-County Planning Commission and looked at several things including speed, streetscaping, and lane reconfiguration. Director Livingston introduced Courtney Allyn and Rob Culp from Midwest Engineering Associates. Mr. Culp presented a slideshow that included information and pictures of the proposed project and potential lane reduction. The first project is from Main Street to the I-74 ramps. The East Washington Street interchange is proposed to stay as it is today. However, Cole Street going East to the I-74 ramps is the section area that is being discussed to possibility reduce the number of lanes. The proposed change would be a three-lane section with a center turn lane. A refuge island could also be added. These features were based upon public meetings. There would be a larger buffer between the street and the sidewalk, and there would be more distance between the utility poles and vehicles in the turn going onto Springfield Road. Mr. Culp feels that Pedestrians would be more likely to walk on the sidewalks in this area with the reconfiguration to three lane. The last option is to get more people to use Springfield Road for its original intent of avoiding the four corners intersection. Mr. Culp discussed having a ten-foot to twelve-foot section with a middle lane. When crashes were researched along this section, an above-average accident rate was found along this section of roadway. The accidents usually have more minor injuries. Mr. Culp explained that the volume of traffic does support a lane configuration. The intersection of East Washington Street at Main Street is about 12,000 vehicles of traffic, while Springfield Road has less traffic. It is not like the intersection of University and Main Street in Peoria. This traffic count does support a lane reduction between Cole and the I-74 interchange.

Director Livingston explained the differences between the original plan and what is being proposed now. The original plan dealt with streetscaping, etc., whereas, right now, there is resurfacing and lane reconfiguration discussion. There are also ADA ramps and other items that will be addressed. There are no parking changes going with this project now. While there will be more room with the current proposed project, there will not be the streetscaping and greenery that would be a benefit of the look

and feel of safety to get people to use the sidewalks. This proposal would be looking to reconfigure the lanes going from Cole Street intersection with East Washington Street to the I-74 interchange. Resurfacing is planned to be this calendar year. There was a discussion about the lane reduction causing more cars to backup. Mr. Culp explained that there would be more cars backed up; however, it is not anticipated to back up to Main Street, because there are a fair number of vehicles that turn right onto Cole Street. Ms. Allyn explained that there would be one through lane and one dedicated right-turn only lane at Cole going East. Commissioner Mingus commented on cars backing up now, especially during evening rush hour.

There was a discussion about the Festival of Lights and traffic issues. Coming from the interstate to Springfield Road, there is not proposed to be a loss of any lanes. Heading West from Springfield Road, it would be the same configuration (one left turn lane and one through lane). There was concern expressed regarding traffic backing up to Main Street from Springfield Road for the Festival of Lights. Mr. Culp explained that the number of cars for the Festival of Lights from this past year would be much more manageable, and in a heavier traffic year, there would be more issues.

Fire Chief Bobby Zimmerman expressed concerns about one lane with a turn lane and a fire truck being able to get through traffic. He is concerned with a fire truck going into oncoming traffic. Director Livingston explained that there are other communities that have reduced lanes to a similar configuration and suggested that the Fire Chief reach out to those communities.

Ms. Allyn discussed the proposed changes including larger lanes and a larger shoulder of the road. Mayor Kahl explained that the City Council is not making any decision now or in the next couple of weeks and that if someone does not speak tonight, their voice will be heard in the future by contacting the City. The City will make sure that everyone can be heard.

Chief of Police Richard Brodrick explained safety concerns that he has for his officers and the community. He believes that this would place first responders and the motoring public in a dangerous situation. He explained that during Festival of Lights traffic he feels that it will not be feasible at all. He understands that it is important for businesses and explained that he does not see a lot of people using the sidewalks beyond the 100 block of East Washington Street. He feels that safety is the biggest aspect from the Police Department's standpoint.

Mayor Kahl explained that if the City needs to schedule another meeting, we will do so.

Mayor Kahl asked for any comments from the audience.

Don Bell, a business owner in the area, came up to the podium and commented on the roadway and proposed changes. He explained that this area is a business district. He feels that it is not a place that you speed through, such as a throughfare. He explained that people do ride bicycles through the area and believes that if you make it a three-lane road those people that speed through will choose to go another way. He has been asking the City to help with the speeding issue. He feels that there is only an eight or eight and half feet for a lane around the bridge and a little over nine feet in the other areas. He explained that by 2024 there will be smart cars with lane departure or assisted driving, and he feels that the lanes need to be striped for those. Mr. Bell commented on the City Street Department taking the signs off along the road because people are hitting them. He explained that the road used to be a two-lane brick roadway that was changed to four lanes by Caterpillar and Caterpillar is no longer here. He feels that if businesses will not come unless we try to promote a nice business atmosphere.

