

THE SPECIAL WORK SESSION OF THE FORTIETH COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BERKLEY, MICHIGAN WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 6:00 PM ON MONDAY, JANUARY 27, 2025 BY MAYOR DEAN

PRESENT: Councilmember Steve Baker
Councilmember Clarence Black (arrived at 6:02 PM)
Mayor Pro Tem Ross Gavin
Councilmember Dennis Hennen
Councilmember Gregory Patterson
Councilmember Jessica Vilani
Mayor Bridget Dean

OTHER STAFF PRESENT:

City Manager Crystal VanVleck
City Clerk Victoria Mitchell
Director of Public Safety Matt Koehn
Deputy City Manager of Public Services Shawn Young
Community Development Director Kristen Kapelanski
Public Safety Lt. Jordan Kobernick
Director of Communications Caitlin Flora

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Pro Tem Gavin moved to approve the Agenda
Seconded by Councilmember Baker
Ayes: Gavin, Hennen, Patterson, Vilani, Baker and Dean
Nays: None
Absent: Black
Motion Approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Joel Ulferts, Berkley, stated he would have liked more information regarding the meeting topic on the agenda.

REGULAR AGENDA

DISCUSSION: Matter of discussing 2020 Sign Inventory and Recommendations Updates.

Management Transition Consultant Nate Geinzer introduced the agenda item.

Mr. Geinzer said this meeting wouldn't be a "coulda, woulda, shoulda" scenario but instead would focus on the Sign Project and what is next.

What is the "Sign Project"

Scope:

- Phase I: Inventory of all Regulatory Signs in the City
 - Locations
 - Reflectivity
 - Placement and Compliance
 - Basis for each sign as defined in the Michigan Manual on Uniform Traffic Control
- Phase II: Sign Recommendations
 - Identify Signs for replacement
 - Compare Signs with 100s of Old TCOs, address as necessary
 - Recommendations for No Parking locations adjacent to schools
 - Develop Standard for No Parking Locations for Fire Safety

Intent:

- Review 100s of TCOs that have accumulated to the 70s and compare them to modern standards
- Find appropriate standardization of parking regulations
- Ultimate Goal: Consistency and new baseline

How a TCO is originated was discussed.

Timeline:

Context – Two different councils

- Early 2020 – Staff begins talking with council
- May 20, 2020 – City Council approves Phase I: Sign inventory
- April 6, 2021 – City Council Approves Phase II: Sign Recommendations
- January 2023 – Staff Updates TCO recommendations
- Fall 2023 – Staff begins implementing recommendations around schools
- Late 2023/Early 2024 – Implementation of recommendations continue
- February/March 2024 – Progress stopped due in part to social media commotion

Fire Lanes*

*Note: Staff to reevaluate

- Clear roadway width less than 20 feet: No parking allowed on either side of the road except for boulevards
- Clear roadway width of 20 feet or wider: No parking allowed on the fire hydrant side

Deputy City Manager of Public Services Shawn Young discussed Act 51 Standards.

Status:

- Project 80-90 percent complete
- What is left?
 - Areas adjacent to Vinsetta Garage
 - Cumberland north of 12 mile
 - Signs needing replacement to meet state/federal guidelines
 - Other Misc.

Staff Preference: Move forward and Move On:

- Move beyond hodgepodge of the past
- Finish implementing the recommendations of the sign report
 - Verify recommendations against MDOT Act 51 Guidelines for Major Roads – to redefine major roads would cost the city monies
 - Major Roads require min 28' for parking on one side
 - Major Roads require min 33' for parking on both sides
 - Major Roads include: Bacon south of 12 Mile, Phillips north of 12 Mile to Webster, Tyler south of Catalpa, Griffith between 12 Mile and Catalpa, Harvard between Coolidge and Woodward.
 - Address Temporary Issues with Temporary Solutions
 - Reevaluate as Necessary following New Baseline
 - Avoid Reactions
 - Rely on subject matter experts, DPS, DPW
 - Decisions should be public safety driven not concerns of convenience
 - Avoid chain reactions: A change on one street usually results in the problem being pushed to the next street over, etc.
 - Mindful of limited staff resources

Mr. Geinzer discussed the impact of chain reactions. When you make a change on one street, it impacts the streets around it.

Director Koehn said hundreds of hours were spent on this study. He explained the importance of relying on the experts and having standards in place. He explained this is a dense city with public streets and we can't force people to park in public parking lots. He explained any time we fix something, we break something else.

Mr. Geinzer said ultimately the goal is to see if there is a consensus on a path forward. He asked what is needed from staff to move forward.

City Manager VanVleck explained this is a project Mr. Geinzer has been working on. She said we will never make everyone happy. And to Chief's point, we have a dense community. She said it is important to make standards so the process is objective and not subjective.

Mayor Dean said she would like to come from a place of safety. She said a robust education; communication plan is important. She said people want to know when something impacts them. People want the information and they want to understand.

Director Koehn said they used several traffic engineers to design a standard based on math. He said it took the Department's TCOs from hundreds to 23.

The evaluation/reevaluation process was discussed.

Councilmember Baker said he supports the idea of more proactive communication, rolling communication. He stated he would like to know more about the traffic committee Director Koehn spoke of earlier.

Councilmember Baker asked how the 696 closure process will impact Berkley and what should we be doing regarding signs to help our residents.

Councilmember Vilani thanked Mr. Geinzer for the helpful background. She said it was helpful to understand the timeline. She noted the big paradigm shifts in communication. She said in the past, people complained and signs were placed or removed. She supports breaking the cycle of the loudest wins in lieu of safety.

Councilmember Vilani said we also need to look at whether or not we are a walking district. She stated the mentality is that we brand ourselves as a walkable community, but she doesn't know if that is the vibe. She said people need more time, information, and consideration.

Mayor Dean said she was on council when this project began. She said she didn't feel she received this much information at that time.

Councilmember Patterson asked questions regarding street width. He asked questions comparing the HRC report to Mr. Geinzer's slides. A discussion ensued regarding street widths and emergency vehicle specifications. Safety concerns were discussed.

Lt. Kobernick said he's never experienced a firetruck that was not able to get through a street. He stated street widths are not the issue. He stated issues arise when there is an influx of vehicles due to special events.

Deputy Manager Young discussed the Department of Public Work's experience with various street widths. He said we have to adapt our standards. He said we need the on-street parking, but we also need to be safe.

Director Koehn pointed out it's not just a discussion regarding city/emergency vehicles, but all types of trucks, including delivery.

Councilmember Hennen made recommendations for communicating street sign changes. He said a yard sign with the information would be cost-effective. He discussed the utilization of no parking. He said safety is important, but quality of life is important too. He said he was going to bring up the streets near Green Lantern. He discussed keeping the standards and evaluating special zones that would be looked at when businesses are busy.

Mr. Geinzer said in closing, that administration hears Council, and the conversation isn't over.

Councilmember Hennen reaffirmed the points made. He stated they could look at site solutions if necessary. He said he would debrief with City Manager VanVleck.

Mr. Geinzer confirmed there is a consensus to keep talking.

ADJOURNMENT:

Councilmember Patterson moved to adjourn the Special Meeting at 6:48 PM

Seconded by Councilmember Vilani

Ayes: Gavin, Hennen, Patterson, Vilani, Baker, Black and Dean

Nays: None

Motion Approved.

Bridget Dean, Mayor

ATTEST:

Victoria Mitchell, City Clerk