

MINUTES
ANC 6A Transportation & Public Space Committee Meeting
Call-in Conference via WebEx
Monday, September 21, 2020

I. Meeting called to order at 7:04 pm.

II. Introductions:

Committee members in attendance: Elizabeth Nelson (Chair), Marc Brumer, Maura Dundon, Jeff Fletcher

Commissioners in attendance: Amber Gove (6A04), Mike Soderman (6A03), Sondra Phillips-Gilbert (6A07), Phil Toomajian (6A02), Brian Alcorn (6A08)

III. Old Business

Andrew DeFrank from the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) confirmed that that raised crosswalks are possible as a traffic calming solution.

As there was insufficient time during the meeting for him to provide an update on outstanding traffic calming issues, he agreed to send a response by email [since received].

A discussion of additional pedestrian/traffic safety issues, as suggested by commissioners and community members, was also postponed, due to lack of time.

IV. New Business

A. Advisory Bike Lanes on Tennessee Avenue NE

Will Handsfield from DDOT presented the DDOT pilot project for “Advisory Bike Lanes” to be implemented on Tennessee Avenue NE for a six-month period. An “Advisory Bike Lane” is a traffic calming design that narrows the lane for vehicular traffic by creating dotted-line bike lanes, which vehicles can cross if needed to pass. Mr. Handsfield related that Advisory Bike Lanes have been used successfully in Canada and Europe. Mr. Handsfield presented the pilot for the Committee’s information and ANC consultation prior to the Notice of Intent (NOI), but the pilot does not require ANC approval. The NOI has a mid-October 2020 deadline for comment.

The Tennessee Avenue stretch of the planned Advisory Bike Lane is part of a larger pilot in DC. A stretch of Advisory Bike Lane has already been installed in E Street. SE. Tennessee Avenue was chosen for the pilot due to low vehicular traffic volume, requests for traffic calming, and relatively higher bike usage in the area.

The pilot will narrow Tennessee Avenue NE for traffic calming by adding in dotted-line bike lanes to create narrower vehicular lane in order to slow car traffic. Sedans will still be able to pass each other, but larger vehicles will be able to cross over into the dotted bike lane for passing. Any increases in parking setbacks from intersections are to bring markings up to the current code. Some crosswalks will be restriped as well. The 100 block of Tennessee Avenue will receive a different treatment to take into account back-in parking. The bulb-out at Tennessee Avenue and 13th Street. (in front of Maury Elementary School) will be retained. A community survey will be part of the pilot process.

Committee member Marc Brumer asked about removing the pilot project markings if the pilot does not become permanent. Mr. Handsfield stated that the markings can be

removed quickly if needed. Mr. Brumer continued to be concerned that the pilot markings would not be removed after six months.

Mr. Brumer and Commissioner Amber Gove discussed that cars enter Tennessee Avenue at a high speed from angled intersections, and raised the need for additional traffic calming on Tennessee Avenue such as raised crosswalks and 4-way stops, especially at the intersection with E Street NE.

Community member Robb Dooling stated that he is in favor of Advisory Bike Lanes, having biked on them in Europe and the E Street SE pilot lane.

Community member Phil Paparodis stated that the flow of traffic on Tennessee Avenue is concentrated into a short time period in a day, so it is not always low volume. He noted the high speeds from angled intersections, and questioned whether the pilot will reduce speeds. He also said that bikers should stay in their lanes. Mr. Handsfield clarified that, in DC, bikers are not required to stay in the bike lane.

Chair Elizabeth Nelson expressed concern that the plan intentionally creates a head-on conflict between two directions of vehicular traffic, requiring encroachment into the bike lane, which she believes is unwise and dangerous.

Commissioner Gove made the motion: *TPS recommends that ANC 6A send a letter to DDOT in support of NOI #20-79-PSD for the proposed Advisory Bike Lane Project on Tennessee Ave. NE to include the following comments and recommendations:*

- *Requesting raised crosswalks at the intersections of Tennessee Ave. with special attention to those at C Street, E Street and 14th Street NE, if determined to be feasible;*
- *Additional traffic calming measures on the 200 block of 13th Street NE, potentially including raised crosswalks;*
- *Diagonal parking with painted lines on the 100 block of Tennessee Avenue NE; and*
- *Additional opportunity to review and comment (a second NOI) for the intersection at 13th Street and Constitution Avenue NE.*

Mr. Toomajian seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-2, including the 5 commissioners present. [In favor: Commissioners Alcorn, Gove, Phillips-Gilbert, and Toomajian; Committee members Dundon and Fletcher. Opposed: Committee members Nelson and Brumer]

- B. Public space application at 1660 Gales Street NE for exception from fence requirement. Applicant is requesting a 6-foot-tall, non-transparent wooden fence on the 17th Street side of the property. A public space permit is required because regulations are not to exceed 42” and must be at least 50% open.

Ms. Nelson opened with an explanation of the relevant regulations:

The reason the applicant needs a public space permit is because the area he wants to enclose is public space, not private property. The area between his property line and the street is what is termed “public parking” green space, not a place to put cars). On Capitol Hill, front/side yards are generally public parking. Owners of the lot are allowed use and enjoyment of the space and are responsible for maintaining it, but they do not own it and there are restrictions on the uses. They are allowed to fence the area so long as the fence is not greater than 42” in height and is at least 50% open.

This preserves sight lines for drivers and a welcoming and safe pedestrian experience. A taller or more-enclosed fence may be erected just inside the property line without requesting a public space permit.

Mr. Cameron Rochelle, the permit applicant, was present and described his permit request.

Commissioner Sondra Phillips-Gilbert, who represents the applicants' ANC single-member district, stated she is in favor of the permit in order to provide safety for the owners. This particular property is an end-unit with additional exposure to the street and is particularly vulnerable to crime due to its location. Commissioner Phillips-Gilbert stated that similarly situated properties have high fences.

Committee member Jeff Fletcher asked Mr. Rochelle why he could not put the fence on his own property. Mr. Rochelle said that this was to preserve open space for the property. Mr. Brumer stated that he had seen the property and that the fence (which is along 17th Street) would be a positive addition to the area, and would still preserve the green public parking on Gales Street NE in the front of the house. Ms. Dundon stated she was in favor of the permit for the reasons stated in the permit application, and that each permit should be assessed individually. Ms. Nelson expressed concerns about the fence detracting from the invitingness of the street for pedestrians and safety concerns in blocking views. She suggested that there are other, less obtrusive, ways to achieve the applicant's goals. Commissioner Mike Soderman suggested reducing the fence height. Ms. Gove asked if the fence could be slightly more open. Ms. Phillips-Gilbert spoke again in favor of the permit in light of crime in the area, which is a more serious problem than on other blocks in ANC 6A and also spoke of the need for flexibility.

Community member Maureen Bennitz, who lives near the property, spoke in favor of the fence and the need for safety, and said that the pedestrian experience is not the primary value.

At the request of the TPS Committee/Commissioners, the applicant indicated willingness to consider alternatives and submit revised plans by October 1, 2020.

Commissioner Phillips-Gilbert made the motion: TPS recommends that ANC 6A send a letter to DDOT in support of public space application 353808 (for a fence on public space that exceeds 42" in height and is less than 50% open) at 1660 Gales Street NE, conditional on the commissioners receive additional detail including drawings showing the fence design and materials to be used, by October 1, 2020 and the Commissioners approving the design and materials.

Mr. Toomajian seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-2, including the 5 commissioners present. [In favor: Commissioners Alcorn, Gove, Phillips-Gilbert, and Toomajian; Committee members Dundon and Brumer. Opposed: Committee members Nelson and Fletcher]

VI. Meeting was adjourned at approx. 9:30 pm.