

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
Austin, Texas

Special Meeting -- August 8, 1967

A special meeting of the Commission was called to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Room, Municipal Building.

Present

Edgar Jackson, Chairman
W. A. Wroe
Hiram S. Brown
Barton D. Riley
Robert B. Smith
Samuel E. Dunnam
Mrs. Lynita Naughton
Ed Bluestein

Absent

Dr. William Hazard

Also Present

Hoyle M. Osborne, Director of Planning
Richard Lillie, Assistant Director of Planning

BUSINESS

C10-67-1(m) ALLEY VACATION

Alley between West 30th and West 31st Streets,
between Whitis Avenue and Cedar Street

The Director of Planning reported that this is a request to vacate the alley between West 30th and West 31st Streets, between Whitis Avenue and Cedar Street. The Commission recently considered and recommended the vacation of the alley running north and south in this same block. All abutting property owners are in favor of the request and the staff recommends the vacation be granted. The Commission then

VOTED: To recommend that the alley between West 30th and West 31st Streets, between Whitis Avenue and Cedar Streets be VACATED.

C10-67-1(n) STREET AND ALLEY VACATION

Portion of 21st Street and Speedway
from 19th to 21st Streets

The Director of Planning reported a letter from the University of Texas, requesting to vacate a portion of 21st Street and Speedway from 19th to 21st Streets. A number of months ago, the Commission recommended the vacation of Wichita Street from 19th Street to 21st Street; 20th Street from Speedway to the alley between University Avenue and Wichita Street; and the alley between Wichita Street and Speedway, subject to the University acquiring all of the land abutting these streets (Case No. C10-65-1(u)). This request is to go to the City Council as the University has now acquired the

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property. In addition, a request was recently received for the vacation of 21st Street from the alley 125 feet west of Wichita Street over to Speedway and the vacation of Speedway from 19th Street to 21st Street (the subject vacation).

It is the staff's understanding that 3 or 4 buildings will remain on approximately four blocks of land. The balance of the area will be developed for the time being with approximately 1,200 parking spaces. The University wishes to gain control over those streets that abut the proposed parking area and lead into the University campus in this particular location. The entrance to the campus is presently at 21st Street and Speedway. Twenty-first Street between Speedway and San Jacinto Boulevard was vacated in 1933. The street remains open on the ground and is available to the public to use but it is under the control of the University. There is presently under construction, south of East 21st Street, a dormitory for approximately 3,000 students. This development puts additional parking pressure into the area, which is the basic substance of this request. A portion of Speedway is closed between 19th and 21st Streets at this time for construction on a drainage line. The intention of the University is that Speedway and 21st Streets, for the time being, will be left open as drives with access controlled by guard stations. The location of the guard stations was discussed with the University administration. Even though cars are moving through the area, they will have to slow down at the guard stations. Occasionally, cars will be stopped because they do not have a permit. The staff is concerned about the location of the guard stations and how much storage or "stack-up area" can be provided for the incoming traffic.

The closing of 21st Street for public use will mean that University Avenue must be used by traffic generated within the immediate University area. If a guard station is placed on 21st Street at the alley between University Avenue and Wichita Street, traffic will likely back up west on 21st Street for some distance. The likelihood is that University Avenue will become blocked for short periods of time.

A second consideration is the alignment of Speedway, whether it is a public street or part of the University campus driveway system, in relation to Congress Avenue. This street should be realigned to meet Congress Avenue thus avoiding further traffic problems. Cars eastbound on 19th Street will turn on Speedway and cars northbound on Congress Avenue will have to cross 19th Street to continue up Speedway. The outlets for traffic should also be considered. The general intention from the University is that those streets presently in place; Wichita, Speedway, 21st and 20th, will remain open for the time being and will be used in one form or another for ingress and egress from the parking areas. Ingress and egress is a matter of concern from the parking areas at peak hours.

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The major street in the University area is 19th Street which is a key east-west thoroughfare in Austin. Twenty-first Street is also important in the University area. The staff felt that these streets should continue to have a reasonable degree of protection. The Commission during the past several years has heard several requests for street closings by the University. Tremendous traffic generation in this area is the cause of major traffic problems. The staff feels that a joint traffic study and plan is needed between the University and the City and that the State Capital area should be included.

Mr. Osborne presented maps submitted by the University indicating the immediate University campus area and the proposed expansion areas in the University East and Brackenridge Urban Renewal projects. The maps presented show 19th and San Jacinto Streets remaining open. One omission on the maps is 26th Street which is to be opened and widened from Interstate Highway 35 to Guadalupe Street.

There has been discussion with the University about closing San Jacinto and Red River Streets. Further consideration should include the recognition of the recommendations of the Austin Transportation Study on future requirements for 19th Street, San Jacinto Boulevard, Red River Street and Interstate Highway 35. These streets should be designed to provide an operational plan for traffic management recognizing actual development in connection with future University development in the area. It is essential that there be a functioning operational plan between the University, City and State Capital Building area so that traffic problems can be worked out.

Mr. Bluestein asked who in the University works with problems of this kind. Mr. Osborne stated that he has talked with Mr. Frank Erwin, Chairman of the Board of Regents, Mr. Don Walker, Vice Chancellor and Mr. Lester Palmer on this project. There is recognition of the major problems of parking and street circulation in the area. In discussing these problems with Mr. Erwin, he agreed very readily that the realignment of Speedway to a 90 degree approach to 19th Street, aligning with Congress Avenue, could be accomplished. He also indicated a full willingness to work with the City in devising whatever control and storage system for the incoming traffic that would be feasible so that there would not be a storing of cars on 19th and 21st Streets. In addition, Mr. Erwin indicated full cooperation of the University in helping to devise a traffic and parking plan to improve the traffic situation wherever possible.

Mr. Osborne stated that Mr. Erwin expressed to him that there is a sense of urgency on the requested street vacation as they would like to have full control of the streets by the opening of the long session in September. The position of the City administration would be that no closing take place at the present time with the conditions or suggestions that an overall traffic plan and detailed plans be developed first. Mr. Osborne stated however, that Mr. Erwin had given him full assurance that the University would cooperate with

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the City on the development of this traffic plan. The agreement by the University to the realignment of Speedway indicates their willingness to cooperate with the City. The primary urgency is due to the desire by the University to control the streets in relation to the construction of the dormitory and the parking area.

Mr. Bluestein stated that in his opinion it would be very desirable for the Planning Commission, the University administration and City officials to discuss the traffic problems in the area and to establish a study committee.

Mr. Osborne stated that his suggestion was to vacate the streets as requested, recognizing the willingness of the University to work with the City in detail planning of the immediate area and developing an effective long range traffic management plan for the total University area. The staff recognizes that the Capital area plan should also be a part of the joint planning effort.

Mr. Dunnam stated that what concerns him is getting some sort of apparatus or communication set up between the University, City and State Building Commission as this is the only way a comprehensive plan can be worked out. He felt that this would be desirable because the problems are similar. There is an essential need for coordinating comprehensive planning which would set up a formal line of communication.

Mr. Jim Eichelberger appeared at the hearing and stated that he recommends to the Commission, based on his experiences with the University, that an agreement be drawn up that can be referred to at a later date. He stated that he is not saying that the University breaks their word, but the validity of their statements are temporary and if the City is going to deal with them an agreement should be drawn up. After the University makes a decision they assume it is all right with everybody outside of the University when they want to make a change. They do not always inform other people until the decision has been made. It is realized that a traffic problem exists in this area and it is felt that the City should help solve this problem.

Mr. Riley stated that in his opinion the University should come up with a comprehensive plan before the streets and alleys are closed as they have as much of a responsibility to the City as the City has to them. The Commission members recognized the University's willingness to work with the City and felt that this request should be approved. It was then

VOTED: To recommend that the portion of 21st Street from Speedway to the alley between Wichita Street and University Avenue and Speedway from 19th Street to 21st Street be VACATED, subject to the retention of the necessary easements, recognizing the willingness of the University to work with the City in detailed planning of the immediate area for effective traffic management and for a long range plan or total traffic management plan for the total University area.

(ABSTAINED: Mr. Riley)

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Mr. Dunnam stated that in his opinion a formal proposal should be submitted to the University, through the City Council, to establish a permanent, continuous joint planning activity. This will be an initial step toward a formal planning apparatus between the City, the University and the State Building Commission. He stated that in his opinion, this will have to be done sooner or later or there will not be a plan. The willingness of the University to cooperate with the City should be translated into some coordinated activity, the purpose of which is to recognize foresight on the existing problems.

The Commission members discussed the various problems in this area and noted that pedestrian circulation as well as vehicular traffic and parking is a problem in the University area, Capital area and other sections of the City. They agreed with Mr. Dunnam that a proposal should be submitted to the proper authorities for a joint planning study committee. It was then unanimously

VOTED: To recommend to the City Council that a letter be sent to the appropriate authorities at the University of Texas and the State Building Commission to establish a joint planning study committee with the City of Austin as soon as possible.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Hoyle M. Osborne
Executive Secretary