

EXCERPT FROM
CITY PEDESTRIAN-BICYCLE-MOTOR VEHICLE COMMISSION

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2004
5:00 p.m. – Regular Meeting
Conference Room 260 – Madison Municipal Building
215 Martin Luther King, Jr., Boulevard

MINUTES¹ (as revised and approved)

CALL TO ORDER at 5 p.m. by Chair Shahan.

Present: Mark Shahan, Matt Logan, Mary Conroy, Susan De Vos, Ald. Compton (5:10), Ald. Robbie Webber, Chuck Strawser (A2)
David Dryer, Executive Secretary
Stephanie Bradley-Wilson, MPD; Brad Murphy and Archie Nicolette, P&D; Larry Nelson, CE; Dan McCormick, Brian Smith, and Arthur Ross, Traffic Engineering

Absent: Chas Thimmesch, Cheryl Wittke,* Ald. Austin King, One vacancy

*Notified in advance of absence.

A. PUBLIC APPEARANCES –

Next, she addressed the 30 ft. setback issue on Broom Street (#8). The Plan Commission and Council had asked PBMVC for comments relative to traffic issues associated with the setback for the Alexander development project. She noted concerns of the Mayor as it might relate to removing the one-way pair of Broom and Bassett Streets, particularly as it would impact the intersection with West Washington. It was understood that part of the reason for the 30 ft. setback requirement was a consideration that at some time the street might be converted to two-way movement. Comments had been made that by restoring two-way flow, traffic speeds might be lowered. She and Mayor did not believe the Broom-Bassett one-way pair could be compared with East Johnson-Gorham one-way pair. She suggested that if speeding were in fact an issue, it could be addressed through traffic signals. She further suggested the one-way pair provided a better pedestrian environment. Additionally, there was concern about the loss of parking with the two-way configuration. She referred to the questions about the origins/reason for the 30 ft. setback. Although there were issues related to green space, she suggested the body confine its consideration to the traffic related issues and added that the Mayor considered the development proposal to be of appropriate scale for the area.

Shahan asked Hoffman about the cost estimate that had surfaced that day for the proposal to cut into the terrace to provide additional width and whether or not there would be TIF monies available. Hoffman replied that she didn't know but one had to remember there were various TIF districts involved so if monies were to come from that source, it would only cover that portion within the TIF area.

Hoffman closed by assuring members of the intent of the Mayor and herself to work with staff to secure what was necessary to make the proposal a reality; and this could mean that the project might need to be delayed to 2006. She asked members to look at the various cross sections

¹ Copy of agenda provided to City Clerk's office on 11/22/04. Agenda and minutes are posted on the Internet. Go to Madison's Home Page (<http://www.ci.madison.wi.us>), (Agenda, Minutes, etc.) (City Committee/meetings).

and provide input on ones that are feasible from a design perspective. Shahan asked if she was looking for a first and second choice option, and Hoffman responded that would be good. Request of Plan Commission for PBMVC review/recommendation relative to 30 foot setback for Broom Street as it relates to the Alexander Company proposal for the Meriter/Methodist Block 51 project

(Comments by Mayoral Assistant Hoffman made under Item B above.) Besides the request of Plan Commission, Webber noted that the item had been formally referred by the Council to PBMVC at its last meeting.

Brad Murphy, Planning Unit Director, referred to material he had handed out. 1) Drawing of existing Broom Street corridor with existing building footprints and relationship to existing right-of-way/setback. 2) Footprint of the Capitol West (Block 51) Development proposal. 3) Drawing showing the existing conditions on the block, including plantings that exist within the setback area. Some time ago (30 years or more), the 30 ft. setback was identified, although they had not found much in the way of documentation of the purpose for this setback other than for a future transportation corridor serving as a main exit point to/from the downtown. The concept may have been to convert Broom to two-way with additional traffic lanes. They hadn't found any specific policy document identifying the setback and its future purpose.

McCormick suggested the desire for the setback had origins in the 70's as a part of Isthmus redirection plan discussions. Broom Street was identified as a key street in the street system; a major connection to/from the downtown. Another plan (1978 Bassett Neighborhood Plan) talked about making Broom and Bassett Streets two-way. At that time, there was some debate about the future of Broom Street and the role it would serve in the future transportation system. In 1997 there was another recommendation put forth to make Broom Street two-way in an effort to move traffic out of the Bassett Neighborhood residential area. The idea was to do this in the existing right-of-way but staff was concerned about whether it could be accomplished in the existing right-of-way and still maintain parking. Through the years staff has tried to maintain the 30 ft. setback to keep options open.

Motion by Webber/Logan to suspend the rules to meet past 8 p.m. carried unanimously.

The question was now whether to continue to maintain this setback or to allow the Alexander development proposal to proceed as proposed which would place townhouses within the setback area. Over the years, there have been different reasons given for having the space, including the advantages of having it to add to landscaping features and appearance.

Murphy added that development to date had for the most part respected that setback requirement. Murphy pointed out that Capitol Foods had indicated a desire to expand and encroach into this setback area. Therefore, the decision reached on the setback for this development would establish a precedent for dealing with future requests. There were some existing buildings within the setback that predated the efforts to maintain the setback, e.g., Doty School, some buildings in Block 49, and Fire Station.

Registrants included:

Peter Ostlind (533 W Main), representing Bassett Neighborhood, who registered in opposition to changing the setback. He pointed out that some of the other registrants had to leave the meeting, including the Chair of the Capitol Center Neighborhood. A joint meeting had been held about this and there was consensus that the setback should be considered on the merits of the

setback and not in relation to a specific development proposal. An outcome of the meeting was that there was no reason to abandon the setback; it still had the potential of being a valuable asset to the community. Broom Street could serve as an enhanced entrance to the downtown and they visualized the corridor serving not only motor vehicle traffic, but also pedestrians, bicyclists, transit and rail. A goal of the 1977 Bassett Neighborhood plan was to improve linkages between the neighborhood and Lake Monona, Law Park, and State Street; and the Broom Street corridor was an ideal location to accomplish this. The group did not talk about what the future of Broom Street would look like, whether it was one-way, or two-way. The neighborhood had numerous complaints from pedestrians and bicyclists—somewhat aggravated by the one-way pair, which encouraged bicyclists onto sidewalks. When the Capitol Center project was proposed, the rationale was identified as wanting to provide an interface with the surrounding residential neighborhood and pedestrian scale streets, so it was not strictly a transportation issue in the minds of the developers. The neighborhood had accepted this as a valuable asset and felt that the current setback provided this. With regard to the Capitol Center proposal, it has an existing PUD that recognizes the setback and so the developers approached this property knowing of the setback. Although there are some buildings encroaching on the setback, the ability of the City to maintain it as other development occurred addressed the long-term nature of planning and they believed it would be a poor choice on the part of the City to relinquish that opportunity for a few additional residential units.

Shahan asked if Broom Street were made two-way within the existing street footprint, were there any concerns about traffic problems that might arise at West Washington intersection and the need to address the problem with widening the intersection and its implications on pedestrian access. Ostlind did not believe the neighborhood had gotten into this level of discussion although he thought they understood there could be those kinds of tradeoffs. He felt the neighborhood was more interested in pedestrian-bicycle interfaces connecting the area and if widening had to happen to improve the intersection traffic flow, it could be done only within the intersection and not down the block. The neighborhood's emphasis was more on relinquishing the opportunity in the future by not honoring the 30 ft. setback.

Compton sought clarification; the issue was not what to do with the street at this time, but whether or not the setback needed to be maintained. Ostlind agreed and added that the development proposal had forced the issue of whether they needed to continue to maintain the setback.

Shahan pointed out the difference in reasoning for supporting the setback today compared to the last time the issue was discussed in 1997 when it was more directed to transportation needs; in fact, there were some suggesting the setback was valuable for maintaining green space in the neighborhood. Ostlind agreed that people enjoyed the open, green space that existed. He acknowledged the discussions that had occurred about making enhancements to the entrances to the downtown. He saw this as a long-term planning issue; i.e., here's a corridor that may work very well for downtown transportation needs, and the neighborhood position was not to preclude the possibility for some change in the future. He pointed out that if there was a change of mind, nothing precluded that portion of the development from occurring since the townhouse segment was within the 30 ft. setback area.

Thomas Miller (29 East Wilson #507), representing the Alexander Company Inc., registered to speak. He provided some updated site plans for the development and he reviewed and described the current proposal elements (condominiums, neighborhood retail, commercial office space, parking to support the uses, etc.). The focus was to provide a pedestrian friendly streetscape, and provide alternative mode connections through the block. In terms of Broom

Street, they were proposing 24 townhouses, which would be similar in scale to the residential across the street to serve as a transitional zone from the six-story development adjacent to it. The townhouses would be setback from the curb 6-8 feet to allow for landscaping. He contended that since there was no plan for the 30 ft. setback restriction, there had been confusion as to what the space should be retained for; i.e., transit corridor, open space, widening of street for two-way traffic. The lack of planning had promulgated the idea that the 30 ft. setback should be maintained for open space when in reality the initial intention was for a transportation corridor. He believed their proposal further resolved the pedestrian-friendly streetscape that maintains existing tree canopies in the terrace and provides a transition from the taller buildings toward the capitol to the residential units in the neighborhood.

In response to a question from De Vos, Miller indicated his understanding was that a primary purpose/issue was the street requirements should Broom Street be changed to two-way traffic and the future desire to expand the street to meet the expected traffic capacity. Street widening would eliminate the terrace tree canopy area and create a cross section at the intersection of West Washington similar to the five lanes at John Nolen Drive, which he did not see pedestrian friendly or appropriate.

Compton asked if the developers were aware of the 30 ft. setback restriction and Miller indicated they were but because of a desire to present a more pedestrian friendly solution and provide the transition to the residential neighborhood, they questioned this requirement because they felt they could provide a more desirable outcome. He referred to the existing encroachments into this 30 ft. setback area, which would preclude use of the 30 ft. area without having to remove buildings.

Strawser asked the life expectancy of a city street tree; Dryer said he didn't know although it was likely a function of the terrace width and the type of tree.

Rebecca Grossberg (2925 Hermina) representing Environmental Group for the Alexander Company's Capitol West project, registered in support of the consultant request to abandon the setback and available to respond to questions.

Lee Brown (360 West Washington #801), registered in support of maintaining the setback and the trees along Broom Street. She addressed the value of these trees and role they played in ones environment. She referred to research done by the University of California and University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign and she summarized some of the values listed.

Sonya Newenhouse, representing the Madison Environmental Group registered in support and available to respond to questions. Asked about the position of Madison Environmental Group as it related to the setback, Newenhouse said they were appearing to share the positive aspects in the Capitol West project that could be realized by abandoning the setback. She said she was personally supportive of abandoning the setback.

Bob Holloway (360 West Washington #212) registered in support of preserving the setback and indicated support for preserving the one-way streets for Broom and Bassett.

Bert Stitt (120 South Franklin) registered in opposition but was no longer available to speak. His position was stated as opposition to abandoning the setback.

Bob Schaefer (6 Cottonwood Circle) addressed the needs of maintaining a street network to be able to move people and goods. He thought they should preserve the transportation corridor for whatever the future might bring.

Jim Skrentny (305 ½ W Johnson #4), representing the Capitol Center District of the Capitol Neighborhood, Inc. registered as opposed to abandoning the setback. His registration included the following: *“As a pedestrian and bicyclists, I would like to see studying the use of the Broom Street setback to support and enhance my mode of transportation. At a minimum I feel careful consideration should be given to the potential of this setback for a variety of future uses. As the Chair of the Capitol Centre Neighborhood, I would like to let you know that we’ve held one meeting on this topic (a joint meeting with the Bassett neighborhood). At that meeting no consensus was established to support the abandoning the setback. It was clear that further discussion is warranted.”*

Ledell Zellers (510 N Carroll Street) opposed abandoning the setback and did not wish to speak.

Shahan indicated he had met with Tom Miller and in reviewing the minutes from the December 1997 PBMVC meeting; several questions came to mind. What is the function of Broom Street in the current transportation network? What is its function in the future? What is the character of the street that is envisioned?

Compton/DeVos moved to make a recommendation to the Plan Commission to maintain the 30 ft. setback.

Compton admired the Alexander plan but in this instance she believed they had a certain obligation to protect the setback requirement that had been in place for several years.

Webber said she would not support the motion since she supported the construction of the townhouses in the setback. She claimed there really wasn’t a 30 ft. setback since in the 8-block segment from John Nolen, there currently were encroachments in the setback area in 5 of the blocks. The buildings that exist in setback area wouldn’t be torn down, in her mind. The City didn’t have a plan for using this space as a transportation corridor. She believed the townhouses would provide a transition into the residential neighborhood from the taller buildings. She contended the trees that exist did not provide a canopy; they were pine trees that shaded the street but did not overhang the area. The plan called for inclusion of such canopy trees.

DeVos saw the setback area as an opportunity to be able to expand and enhance the pedestrian and bicycle travel through the corridor.

Shahan pointed out the setback was not formally on the City’s official map, but had been provided through the Plan Commission review process. There were conflicting views as to the purpose of the setback, with some staff suggesting it would provide for the eventuality of converting Broom Street to two-way traffic. Was this a direction the City was moving toward, or would it remain one-way? What would the traffic projections be? What about the width of the sidewalk since the current one is fairly narrow? What were the plans as it related to adding a bike lane?

Dryer commented that they would have to get the traffic projections from the MPO. In respect to the sidewalk, it would be looked at as a part of the project. McCormick added that planning for

corridors was at different levels. For example, the City had a policy of reserving rail corridors for future transportation uses (e.g., multi-use paths, etc.). Planning for bike lanes, wider sidewalks, streetscape and landscaping would be a consideration as a part of planning process for an urban corridor. He referred to the different modeling they could do once projections were applied. Current sidewalk space was the standard size sidewalk width. One needed to consider that if they wanted to remove the one-way pair, more demands would be placed on Broom Street. He noted that if consideration were being given to removing the setback requirement, they might consider reducing the amount of setback to allow for such accommodations as wider pedestrian corridor, bike lanes, etc.

Nelson recalled that in the 60s/70s, the City's direction was toward wider streets with greater capacity; e.g., the Causeway was built in 1965 and in the early 1970s Campus Drive was built parallel to Old University Avenue. At that time, the City was acquiring property to build such facilities as Atwood Avenue bypass, and a two-way pair of Regent Street and College Court. By the mid-1970s the City began to abandon those concepts and decided not to add capacity to the downtown and accordingly the College Court proposal was abandoned. When the Capitol Center project was developed, the property was under City ownership and it was only natural for the City to keep options open and retain that portion of land on both blocks for potential widening of street and landscaping. The City was unable to acquire significant properties in the Broom Street corridor to continue the concept. Doty School was converted into housing and it was in the setback area. The City kept its options open without making any specific recommendations and there were no plans today to widen the street. The issue was to balance the tradeoffs of relinquishing the setback—potential road project in the future vs. open space vs. using the setback for building construction.

Compton said what was critical to her was that if the setback is relinquished, it would be gone and the option foreclosed.

Shahan commented that when he looked at the corridor and the existing buildings that encroach, he questioned the value of maintaining the setback—particularly at 30 ft. He referred to the discussions seven years ago with the McGrath development and the encroachment that resulted for the porch. He felt that the decision then was an indication that the full 30 ft. was not needed. McCormick commented on the McGrath encroachment and that of the Fire Station and said the issue was the future of this corridor and to weigh the desirability of maintaining options for the future. Shahan said part of the problem is that there isn't a clear understanding of the use of the setback and he believed they should make this decision now. If pedestrian-bicycle friendly were a goal, he contended existing conditions did not address that goal and so this might be a consideration. If Broom Street were two way, it would probably require the 30 ft. for the turn lanes and it becomes a higher designed roadway facility. The question in his mind was what is the desired character for Broom Street and what is its function and he wasn't sure they were able to respond within the short period available to the Commission.

Webber explained that the Plan Commission was looking for feedback from PBMVC on the transportation corridor issues; does the PBMVC believe they needed to maintain the option for future consideration of a two-way facility? Webber did not support future consideration of a two-way facility for Broom Street so she did not see the need to maintain the option and the 30 ft. setback. She supported the Alexander development.

Compton said she did not see PBMVC being restricted to considering only transportation uses and if the 30 ft. were relinquished for this development the buildings would be situated right up to the sidewalk. The development proposal required full use of the 30 ft. setback. She believed

the setback area could be used for bike lanes, landscaping, etc. She believed the issue was keeping options open for future uses, whether they be transportation or something else.

Shahan referred to the Plan Commission minutes and read the pertinent sections. Basically they requested feedback from PBMVC on the future use of the Broom Street.

Strawser noted that the City had not established the easement on the official map; rather it was a setback negotiated as a result of PUD considerations for development. Murphy responded it exists as an open space, landscaped setback in the approved zoning for the property (PUD). To use this, the applicant (Alexander) needed to process a zoning map amendment, which was the issue before the Plan Commission and Common Council. If the PUD were approved as presented, it would result in the removal of the setback for this development parcel. The recommendation of PBMVC would go to the Plan Commission and reported to the Council.

Motion to maintain the setback failed on a voice vote 3 in favor and 4 voting against (Chair Shahan voted no).