MINUTES OF TRAFFIC COMMISSION MEETING
OF THE CITY OF LOS ALAMITOS

REGULAR MEETING – SEPTEMBER 9, 2015

1. CALL TO ORDER

A Regular meeting of the Traffic Commission was called to order at 7:04 PM on September 9, 2015, in the Council Chambers, 3191 Katella Avenue, Los Alamitos, California, Chair Mejia presiding.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners: Chair Javier Mejia
Vice-Chair Gina Biri
Commissioner Dave Emerson
Commissioner Daniel Patz
Commissioner Jason Seaman
Commissioner James Wilhelm

Absent: Commissioner Thomas Lindsey

Present: Staff: Dave Hunt, City Engineer
 Associate Planner Tom Oliver
 Bruce McAlpine, Police Captain
 Dawn Sallade, Department Secretary

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chair Mejia.

4. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Chair Mejia opened the meeting for Oral Communications.

Trey Sampson, Healthcare Administrator for Reagan Street Surgery Center, said he wanted to come tonight to give his thoughts on why they oppose the restricted parking. His concern is the large number of elderly patients that they have; there are several physician’s offices in that area and a large majority of their patients visit their surgery center and it just doesn’t seem to be enough parking space. Fortunately, the hospital is kind enough to have built a parking garage but it’s actually too far from his surgery center. He said he’s concerned that restricting parking further away is really going to cause a significant impact on his patients that are already coming there and trying to find parking. A lot of their patients are lower income and to have to pay additional parking fees will cause a big problem for them. He doesn’t think restricting the parking is going to improve the traffic congestion and feels that by putting restricted parking is just going to impound the problem for their patients which are the main reason why the center is there anyway.
Responding to Chair Mejia’s question, Mr. Sampson indicated they have on average 550 patients a month currently and with the 2-hour parking that is currently there, they literally have patients running out every two hours to try to move their cars. Some of them that move their cars, especially the older spouses, are stuck just trying to find another spot to park and spend an hour or two just circling around waiting for the procedure to be over so they can pick up their spouse. It definitely creates a big challenge for the surgical center and he said he did speak with the Board of Directors there and the easy fix for that would be for them would be to try to purchase an area for parking but there is nothing available for them. They as employees get to park over in the parking garage at the hospital which is a long walk for them but that’s alright.

In response to Commissioner Emerson’s questions, Mr. Sampson said 51% of the surgical center is owned by Tenant Corporation. Also, once he started working at the Center, he briefed by the Board and the Hospital Administrator and so he made it mandatory that all employees park in the hospital parking structure as well as on the street behind the shelter. The surgeons are able to park in the six parking stalls that have been designated for them on site.

Theresa Sherrin, founder of Precious Life Shelter, said she feels that the hospital is the problem; the employees don’t park in their garage which you have to pay. She said she likes the hospital and when it was originally built by the doctors it was a great hospital and they were a part of the community; they cared about the community but Tenant Corporation doesn’t care about the community and questioned why the City allowed them to put in an office building and not have to give free parking. All the little businesses around have to provide parking and questioned why the hospital didn’t. She felt that the City is forcing people to shop elsewhere and go to other doctors outside the area and feels this is not helping the City of Los Alamitos.

Teresa Murphy, Executive Director of Precious Life Shelter for the last 26 years, reported that one of the things she observes regularly is it’s not the patients but the “scrubs” that are coming in and out of the Reagan Surgical Center all day to move their cars. There is a serious issue on the Reagan / Pine side where people are looking for a place to park. One of the things that she did suggest to the previous administrator at the center was the possibility of having just a decal that indicates medical center staff so they will know if their staff is parking out and they’re there all day long.

Grace Capanera, owner of Bella Hair Designers, said all her clients oppose the restricted parking; they’re elderly and have a hard time walking and if they can park on Pine Ave. in the restricted area, sometimes they park on the Florista side and walk through the shopping center to the salon, the will not pay for parking. And they do not want time restricted parking; as they might be there for five hours for their appointment and the restricted parking would not work for them. Getting out of the salon and having to move your car doesn’t work for them; they
just won’t come. If the medical center is having a problem with their nurses having to get there at 4:30 in the morning, why doesn’t the hospital have a trolley to these people up and take them from the parking structure to the surgical center. She said actually things are ok the way they area; there really isn’t that much of a problem. The people can get in and get out when someone leaves, they park in there. She also asks Nick’s Sandwiches how they will be impacted by the new Baja Sonora and they told her, “No problem”. People come and people go; there’s always parking but when you start restricting, that’s when there’s going to be a problem.

Trey Sampson indicated one of the issues that was brought up was the surgical center has parking under the surgery center which the patients should be parking there. There is actually 24 parking slots that are designated for the patients but generally there are usually 35 or so patients so it’s not enough for them. Another issue was the staff is actually parking in the Reagan Street parking slots. The staff have been informed these are not designated parking for employees. If they are parking there, that is more of an issue with them managing their employees well and that will happen so there will not be a problem with that in the future. As far as the ownership with the hospital and why can’t the hospital provide parking, the hospital are silent partners for the surgery center. They are investors in the surgery center; they are not part of management or financial obligations or anything in that respect for the surgery center. So, they were gracious enough to allow them access for parking in their parking garage which some of the staff are parking in there, too.

In response to Chair Mejia’s question, Mr. Sampson indicated they have the top level of the garage for their employees and it is free for them.

Ernie Capanera, co-owner of Bella Hair Design, pointed out that any restricted or pay parking will naturally drive people to park in their parking lot because it’s free which is not right. This will end up being an issue that the local merchants in the center will have to deal with the owner which is not going to be easy. He said his point is the restricted and pay for parking is going to make the situation worse and instead of that, the City should be looking at the root causes. He felt that the hospital is not being accountable enough for the impact that their creating and he thinks that some pressure should be put on them to do something more constructive.

There being no further speakers, Chair Mejia closed Oral Communications.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approve the Minutes for the Regular Meeting of July 8, 2015.
Motion/Second: Patz/Seaman
Carried 6/0/0: The Traffic Commission approved the minutes of the Regular meeting of July 8, 2015.

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B. Approve the Minutes for the Regular Meeting of August 12, 2015.
Motion/Second: Patz/Seaman
Carried 6/0/0: The Traffic Commission approved the minutes of the Regular meeting of August 12, 2015.

6. STAFF REPORTS

A. LIMITED PARKING – OLD TOWN EAST / MEDICAL CENTER AREA
Consideration of the establishment of Limited Parking within Old Town East Commercial Area and Medical Center.

City Engineer Dave Hunt summarized the Staff report, referring to the information therein and noted that the Staff report was written by Traffic Engineer Ruth Smith who is ill tonight.

Chair Mejia questioned that the Proposed Parking Limit Map and verified that the curb was a very pale green all the way in front of the CIF building. He felt that that should be updated/repainted. Also, there is no signage at the parking lot that was the pay lot. Also, adjacent to that, the parking that abuts it on Florista which is City right of way parking that curb face has got painted on it ”Plaza” which needs to be corrected.

Mr. Hunt said all of these issues will be corrected.

Commissioner Patz pointed out that before he could support parking restrictions, he asked have the City talked to the hospital and the surrounding surgical centers and made it very clear to the management of the hospital specifically that unless they get their employees to park in their building, they run the risk of the City imposing parking time limits all over the area as a direct result of their employees parking on the street. Have we tried that?

Mr. Hunt indicated the City Manager Bret Plumlee and the Community Services Director Steven Mendoza met with the majority of the owners out there in the area including the hospital and have talked with them about the parking problem. The City has talked with them about the parking problem from day one even during construction and with this. So, yes, they are aware of this and that’s why they’ve had discussions about trying to get all of their employees more to park in their parking structure. And they’ve made some efforts on that.

Commissioner Wilhelm asked couldn’t the City require, during the business license phase, all of the businesses to provide physically employee only parking areas, striped, numbered and signed, depending
on the number of employees that they have? That would guarantee that their employees would park in those spaces because why wouldn’t they?

Mr. Hunt explained that when a new business comes in and apply for their permits of what they are building, they have to provide the appropriate parking spaces for that business. When the hospital went in, they provided enough parking for their employees and their patients to park in their six story parking structure and when they expand the hospital, their last phase, they will build another parking structure to add to that. Some of the older businesses in the area at the time they obtained their permits met their criteria at the time and since then, some of the criteria has gotten more restricted over the last few decades and who knows if they would qualify currently but they are grandfathered in when they had their original building.

Associate Planner Tom Oliver further explained that business has to have the amount of parking they need for the type of business they are and they have to have a certain amount of ADA parking as well. But, the hospital being private property, the City doesn’t have a lot of say over what they can do with their private property. The folks that own these businesses are in it for the money and so they mark adjustments as they need to within their own parking lot.

Commissioner Wilhelm suggested, as Commissioner Patz alluded to, it might be a way of negotiating that. Generally all the businesses are opposed to any time limitations but if the City went to them and said we want you to physically set aside marked, assigned spaces for all of your employees, if you do that, then maybe the City won’t need to impose any time limitations. The whole purpose of this is to get employees to park in their business areas; get them off the streets. He said he’s got a hunch that what’s happening is that businesses understandably would like all of their primary parking area to be available to customers who they hope will come so they may be indicating to their employees to park anywhere they want except at the business. If businesses could be persuaded to physically create enough parking spaces for their employees, it seems to him that it would solve the entire problem. He asks if the hospital is really providing enough space in their parking structure.

Mr. Hunt indicated the City did the one day traffic study in the structure, hour by hour, and there is plenty of parking in there for their staff. It is underutilized and even if it’s fully utilized, there will still be space there for them.

Associate Planner Oliver said it’s also planned for the future; it’s empty right now because there’s more buildings to be built in the future and another parking structure as well.
Commissioner Patz asked how much enforcement is being done on the existing 2-hour parking areas.

Captain Bruce McAlpine from the Police Department indicated that the City has hired one Police Aide to work 20 hours a week. During the time that he is working, his primary purpose is not to necessarily enforce the restricted parking in this area but more so to follow the street sweeper to issue citations when appropriate there. With the potential addition to whether it's some sort of phased in approach with the parking (parking meters, additional time limits, etc.), the Police Department has plans to hire additional personnel that will be able to address any enforcement issues here. The Police Officers will respond to issues with parking enforcement when necessary but the reality is they are out doing other things to keep the community safe as opposed to trying to enforce 2-hour parking restrictions.

Chair Mejia said that is where he was going with it and he was wondering if there is a way to do a 2-week period of enhanced enforcement in those areas to get people's attention. After getting one or two tickets two weeks in a row, it's probably going to help to change behavior.

Captain McAlpine said that when this started last year at the Council's direction and the City started their Working Group that began to meet on a bi-weekly basis, they did take a look at what they had been doing for parking enforcement there. Also, at that particular time, the PD had an additional Aide who retired. The reality is we just don't have the affordability to bring in this particular Police Aide more than what we are already budgeted for the purpose of a 2 week or 3 week trial period to conduct additional enforcement.

Mr. Hunt said the plan is that if the City goes through with this additional parking restriction, it would get another Aide out there to enforce it and make sure that it's followed.

In response to Commissioner Seaman's question, Mr. Hunt explained that the whole reason for this is to keep the flow of cars going so that customers can come and go and go to the businesses instead of having people parked there all day long. That was the main thrust of this. It's a public street and anybody can park on a public street and the only thing we have to help the businesses in the area with that, Staff came up with the idea of restricted parking so that the businesses could get more customers.

Commissioner Seaman said he noticed an absence of a recommendation for installing parking meters where it had been present in previous recommendations.
Mr. Hunt explained that what Staff is really talking about now is that this is the first phase on how to solve the problem. So after 3 to 6 months, Staff would go back and do another 24 hour study on where people are parking, etc. to see if we actually solved the problem by doing it with just restricted parking. If the problem was solved by just doing this, then maybe we won't need to install parking meters.

Vice-Chair Biri indicated that of the two things that they've been given, either parking meters or the restricted parking, parking meters hurt residents and businesses and the restricted time limits hurts businesses. Neither one actually addresses the issue of hospital people parking in City spaces in a way that's cohesive. She felt her recommendation to the City Council would be no to time limits for the fact that she doesn't think it solves the original issue in a win/win way. And then her alternative recommendation would be to go back to the hospital and have them enforce their people parking in their structure because they have the space; they're just not using it which is creating undue hardship on the City, on the residents and on the businesses.

Mr. Hunt said the only issue with that is that the City cannot force hospital staff to park in their parking facility if we have public parking that is unrestricted out on City streets.

Vice-Chair Biri pointed out that is probably in the hospital's best interest to work cohesively with the City.

Mr. Hunt said he also wanted to point out that it's not just the hospital staff; it's the medical community, hospital staff and the other businesses are having their employee's park on the streets as well so that their customers can park in the parking lots.

Commissioner Emerson felt it's only the beauty shop operators that seem to have a problem with the 3-hour time limit as some of their clients are there for 5 hours. He said what he would like to see is that the Council approves the Staff recommendation of 3-hour restricted parking and suspend it for six months to allow the landlords and tenants time to get their employees to park in off-street employee places.

A long discussion ensued.

Motion/Second: Mejia/Patz
Motion Failed 3/3: (Ayes: Mejia, Biri, Patz) & (Nays: Emerson, Seaman, Wilhelm): Enforce the current restrictions in Old Town East and repaint the curb faces on the City right-of-way and then the Commission reviews in three months from Council implementation.
Commissioner Emerson felt that we need a window so that employers step up in good faith as a group and get their employees to park in allocated spaces.

Motion/Second: Biri/Emerson
Unanimously Carried: The Traffic Commission approved the City enforcing the existing 2-hour parking; that the City paint and update the painting on existing curbs; that the Commission review this issue in four months; and that the Commission strongly recommends that the City Council work with Staff to develop a plan for approaching and working collaboratively with the hospital and other large business owners to alleviate their employees parking in City spaces.

7. **ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**
   None.

8. **TRAFFIC COMMISSION INITIATED BUSINESS**

   **Vice-Chair Biri:**
   - Would like to address Commissioner Lindsey's absenteeism and asked if there was a City policy for excessive absences.

   Associate Planner Tom Oliver read the policy from the Municipal Code.

   Chair Mejia indicated Staff will notify the City Council.

   **Commissioner Emerson:**
   - Synchronization of Los Alamitos Blvd. turning into Seal Beach Blvd.

   **Commissioner Wilhelm:**
   - PD taken a look at the illegal left turns on Farquhar near the Blvd. up the alley?

   Captain McAlpine said that the Police Department is aware and the officers are aware that there is restricted signage there for that particular violation.

   **Chair Mejia:**
   - U.S. Bank on the corner of Ball and Bloomfield on the southwest corner, the traffic signal mast arm has been damaged.
   - Right turn only arrows need to be painted on Katella & Oak.
   - Congratulated Captain McAlpine on his impending retirement.
9. ADJOURNMENT

The Traffic Commission adjourned at 9:18 PM.