

In the Council Chambers of the Showers City Hall on Wednesday, May 12, 2010 at 7:30 pm with Council President Isabel Piedmont-Smith presiding over a Special Session of the Common Council.

COMMON COUNCIL  
SPECIAL SESSION  
May 12, 2010

Roll Call: Mayer, Piedmont-Smith, Rollo, Ruff, Sandberg, Satterfield, Volan, Wisler  
Absent: Sturbaum

ROLL CALL

Council President Piedmont-Smith gave the Agenda Summation

AGENDA SUMMATION

It was moved and seconded that Resolution 10-10 be introduced and read by title and synopsis. Clerk Moore read the legislation and synopsis, stating that there was no committee recommendation.

LEGISLATION FOR SECOND  
READING

It was moved and seconded that Resolution 10-10 be adopted.

Ordinance 10-10 To Create a Task Force to Recommend How the City Can Achieve a Platinum Designation from the League of American Bicyclists' *Bicycle Friendly Community Program by 2016*.

Piedmont-Smith noted that she was one of the ordinance's co-sponsors along with Ruff and Rollo. She said that they, along with Scott Robinson, Transportation Planner with the Planning Department, were available to answer questions regarding this legislation. She noted that there were members of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Commission present as well.

Ruff said that the idea of actively pursuing the Platinum Designation under the Bicycle Friendly Program was brought to him by a member of the planning staff. He said they had great enthusiasm and great ideas about ways the community could be moved towards implementing its stated goals and philosophy of transportation. He said this became even timelier with the announcement of Bikes Week. He said the resolution had specific goals that would meet measures and standards. He thanked Robinson, Joe Fish, Piedmont-Smith and Rollo for their work.

Robinson was asked to speak about the program under which Bloomington has achieved a Bronze level. Robinson said the level was achieved in 2003, and said there were a number of reasons to seek a higher level. Robinson said the League evaluated a community's commitment regarding engineering, educational activities, encouragement, enforcement, evaluation/planning and the way these areas interact with their philosophy. He said past evaluations of Bloomington have shown good marks in the engineering and planning aspects of this program, and that the task force would help forge ways of improvement.

Rollo asked if it was true that Bloomington was one of 108 communities that was considered bicycle friendly. Robinson said that the number was continually growing and that for the first time four communities had been rated Platinum. Rollo asked for examples and Robinson said Portland, OR; Boulder, CO; and Davis, CA had this rating while Madison, WI was rated Gold, and that Chicago was rated Silver. Robinson noted that businesses could apply for designation as well. Rollo asked if Robinson considered this designation of good bicycle infrastructure to be part of economic development. Robinson said this was part of the livability metric that would enter into economic development.

Rollo noted that there were about 2.7% of citizens who rode bikes and asked Robinson if that number could double or triple in 5 years if the infrastructure, safety and education for bicyclists were upgraded. Robinson said he thought it would be easy to attain in a college town and in a city with our population. Robinson said 10-15 volunteers counted bikes earlier this year and the city planned on continuing this count.

Volan asked what it would take for our community to become Platinum within six years. He wondered what other communities had done to achieve this status.

Piedmont-Smith gave examples of what other cities had done. She specifically mentioned bike lanes which were buffered from traffic on busy streets, bike boulevards, "car-free Sunday" parkways on a major road, dedicated funds and personnel to plow bike paths free from snow, a transit village to facilitate using transit, underpasses under car thoroughfares, a 'road diet' making a particular street narrower to make it safer to ride, a higher degree of enforcement of rules for cyclists and drivers. She noted that cities dedicated money to provide bike path maintenance. Robinson said that there wasn't a set list of requirements, but innovation in addressing priorities was encouraged.

Wisler asked if there was a reason that this required a council action and wasn't incorporated into another committee or commission. Ruff said it was a deliberate action to give it the status of a formal council hearing because it was important. He said that the Bike and Pedestrian Safety Commission dealt with pedestrians also. Robinson said it elevated the efforts to have the support of the council and to engage the greater community. Wisler asked if it was more of a declaration of support for the cause rather than an organizational need. Ruff said that in order to get the staff support and organization needed, this task force would provide the mechanism to do the job in an organized and aggressive manner. He said this was a different activity, project, goal and priority. He said that this would also bring in additional broad citizen involvement to strategize about reaching this goal. Piedmont-Smith added that the Bike and Pedestrian Safety Commission focused on safety and that this task force would look at infrastructure and education. She said that the task force had a deadline to do this work which was different from the way other boards or commissions approached their work.

Public comments were from:

Keith Vogelsang, president of the Bloomington Bicycle Club, said that they supported the city's goal of Platinum Status. He said the Club had a strong advocacy component, and had been giving small grants to churches, schools and youth centers to promote their own bicycling program and bike racks. He said the club was a natural ally in this effort and referred to some of the questions in the League of American Bicyclists' survey for the Platinum status.

Buff Brown said he was excited to see the resolution come to this point. He said, however, he hadn't seen the work of other committees and task forces trickle down to transportation policy changes. He said he was worried that this committee would distract advocates into thinking that the city was doing something, while the staff was doing business as usual. He also commented on the one-year length of the task force, saying that it would give another year of ignoring the greenways plan and continuing the building of roads. On the other hand, he applauded the charge of the task force. He referred to actions taken by Davis, CA in a five year period to create their status. He also referred to actions taken in Portland, OR in this regard. He thanked the council members for sponsoring this action and asked that they back it up with money.

Jim Rosenbarger, chair of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Commission, said the commission unanimously supported this resolution. He said that the Platinum award was actually a means to an end, not the end itself; not an award to hang on a city hall wall, but what was happening on the streets of the city. He said bike riding was 'the

thing to do' or the norm in the communities mentioned earlier and that was the main thing we could do to encourage bike riding.

Sarah Ryterband, MD, thanked the council and Robinson for their work on behalf of the Citizens Advisory Commission of the Metropolitan Planning Commission and Bloomington Transportation Options for People. She said the obesity in the community was surprising and that biking to school or work would be a boon to the health and well-being of citizens.

Nate O'Donnell said he lived a few blocks away from City Hall and that he didn't own a car, but biked to work. He said that it was hard to bike to get some supplies and sometimes shopped online. He noted this was a loss of economic activity to our community. He said changes in our bike infrastructure could change that.

Aaron Pollitt said he approved of the proposal for a more bike friendly community. He said that economic benefits for the community could result from the increased bike infrastructure, as well as environmental benefits. He said that changing ourselves was a big part of this effort and by example we would help with the change.

Alex Martin said he was from Florida and could bike long distances there and added tourists and residents of all ages rode bikes there. He said that he biked home at night from his job, and sometimes found it difficult to maneuver in the dark.

Travis Pontrelli thanked the council for its efforts and said he was in favor of having people focused on bicycles regardless of age.

Zach Elgie said it was difficult to find a good, safe route into town without meandering through smaller, safer streets. He spoke from the perspective of a Bloomington native and a former student. He said the increasing trend of medians was not efficient and said that effort could be better used for the installation of bike lanes.

Rollo said that he understood that there were cynical opinions about this resolution, but said that he felt this was moving ahead, and that this resolution gave urgency to the initiative. He said it framed the task force within the city's commitment to the Kyoto Protocol and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the Peak Oil Task force report.

Rollo related that he and Ruff had challenged each other to bike to all council meetings in 2006. He said they were continuing to do this even though it was sometimes difficult due to weather or safe routes. He said this gave him personal experience in the bike friendliness of the community and said the need is great for this type of infrastructure. He said the need for the comprehensive look at this issue was urgent. He gave information as to how citizens could apply for the task force.

Wisler said it was a worthwhile cause and was glad it was coming from Planning. He said that equally important to the design of roads was what was located on them in terms of walkability and bikeability. He said that land use, with the encouragement of mixed use in the downtown, would have a more immediate impact and should be considered by this task force. He added that upgrading and improving the roads between the downtown and the west side was a longer term project.

Ruff thanked the staff for their initiative and enthusiasm for the project. He thanked the council for allowing this to be considered in time for

Bike's Week. He read a quote from Ray LaHood, the US Secretary of Transportation, who wrote in the United States Department of Transportation Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation Regulations and Recommendations dated March 11, 2010:

The United States Department of Transportation (DOT) is providing this Policy Statement to reflect the Department's support for the development of fully integrated active transportation networks.... Walking and bicycling foster safer, more livable, family-friendly communities; promote physical activity and health; and reduce vehicle emissions and fuel use..... The DOT encourages States, local governments, professional associations, community organizations, public transportation agencies, and other government agencies, to adopt similar policy statements on bicycle and pedestrian accommodation as an indication of their commitment to accommodating bicyclists and pedestrians as an integral element of the transportation system. In support of this commitment, transportation agencies and local communities should go beyond minimum design standards and requirements to create safe, attractive, sustainable, accessible, and convenient bicycling and walking networks. Such actions should include:

Considering walking and bicycling as equals with other transportation modes: The primary goal of a transportation system is to safely and efficiently move people and goods. Walking and bicycling are efficient transportation modes for most short trips and, where convenient intermodal systems exist, these nonmotorized trips can easily be linked with transit to significantly increase trip distance. Because of the benefits they provide, transportation agencies should give the same priority to walking and bicycling as is given to other transportation modes.

Increased commitment to and investment in bicycle facilities and walking networks can help meet goals for cleaner, healthier air; less congested roadways; and more livable, safe, cost-efficient communities. Walking and bicycling provide low-cost mobility options that place fewer demands on local roads and highways. DOT recognizes that safe and convenient walking and bicycling facilities may look different depending on the context — appropriate facilities in a rural community may be different from a dense, urban area. However, regardless of regional, climate, and population density differences, it is important that pedestrian and bicycle facilities be integrated into transportation systems. While DOT leads the effort to provide safe and convenient accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists, success will ultimately depend on transportation agencies across the country embracing and implementing this policy.

Ruff said that it was a bold and significant statement to say that walking and bicycling should be considered as equal to and prioritized as other transportation modes. Ruff said he was aware of an inexplicable hostility from people toward bicyclists, and had recently noticed mean-spirited and angry online comments regarding bicycling and the proposal of this resolution. He said that the use of bikes reduced pollution on the planet, reduced congestion on the roadways, created more parking opportunities, promoted economic development and reduced health care costs. He said that he hoped that part of this initiative would help educate and inform people to reduce some of the intolerance he had seen.

Volan said that Ruff's gratitude for staff and council was reflective of that of the whole council. He said that he had always thought that the Little 500 and "Breaking Away" had given Bloomington a reputation for bicycling, but that the community's accommodations for bicycles were woeful. He said that had seen high speed bicycle lanes at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and said it treated this form of transportation with respect, and later added that bicyclists and pedestrians should not be considered "alternative" but as equals to auto transportation. He applauded the practical, concrete, and doable nature of this proposal. He urged people to attend the task force meetings and keep pressure on the elected officials and the mayor to make the changes needed after the information was assembled and a plan was formed. He said that there should be no illusions about the amount of work and time involved in this proposal.

Ordinance 10-10 (cont'd)

Volan noted that the bypass expansion project bids had been opened on that day. He noted that there were design issues that had to be addressed in pursuit of the Platinum status and specifically mentioned an underpass for bicyclists at 7<sup>th</sup> Street with no access to the bypass, a new traffic light at 17<sup>th</sup> Street that would not have crosswalks, and sidepaths located two feet from through traffic. Volan said the hostility towards bicyclists was associated with the way roads were designed and noted that narrowing and signage would give more positive cues to motorists. He urged citizens to help with the hard work involved in these projects.

Satterfield said that there were health benefits to riding bicycles, but that there were a lot of people who simply could not do this. He noted that he had witnessed hostility towards bicycles, but asked the task force to address the reasons for the aggravation of people who have little sympathy for bicyclists.

Piedmont-Smith noted the website for the League of American Bicyclists so that citizens could learn more about the League, status levels and application process involved in pursuing their Platinum Status. She gave information for online applications and said the deadline for applications would be in mid-June. She thanked Robinson, Fish and the council for their work.

Resolution 10-10 received a roll call vote of Ayes: 8, Nays: 0.

It was moved and seconded that the rules be suspended to take up an item not already on the agenda.

Motion to Suspend the Rules

The motion was approved by a voice vote.

It was moved and seconded that the May 19, 2010 Regular Session Meeting and the May 26, 2010 Committee of the Whole meeting be cancelled.

MOTION TO Cancel Meetings

Piedmont-Smith and Satterfield noted that there was no legislation coming to the council to discuss at these meetings.

The motion was approved by a voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

APPROVE:

ATTEST:



Isabel Piedmont-Smith-PRESIDENT  
Bloomington Common Council  
AUDYRUFF, Vice President

Regina Moore, CLERK  
City of Bloomington