

IRMA Glidden

From: Ingrid Ballmann <ingrid@ingridballmann.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 19, 2020 5:40 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: Comment reg. item 2d: Slow Streets/Commercial Streets agenda item of 05/19

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Hello,

I would like to provide comment in regards to the plan for Slow Streets/Commercial Streets to be discussed during tonight's city council meeting.

Please find my letter below.

Best regards,
Ingrid Ballmann

I've been an Alameda resident for 15 years, living on Broadway and Versailles. For 15 years, I have only lived on two major and problematic thoroughfares of Alameda. I would have much preferred living on a quiet street, where kids play basketball and can ride their bikes safely.

I am a pedestrian, I ride a bike and take public transit whenever possible. Through many well crafted plans, I've seen Alameda roads become much safer than when I first moved to Alameda. These improvements done by the Transportation Commissions and advocacy groups need to be fully acknowledged and appreciated.

Regarding the Slow streets and Commercial street plan however, I have some concerns. I came upon this plan as a friend sent it to me to sign the petition in favor of the Slow Streets. I would not have heard of it otherwise.

I have since tried to read over the plan and feel quite overwhelmed at trying to make sense of it. It seems that the implementation of the plan will be largely up to the evaluation of the plan itself, and the response from the community. But through which channels? Who do we expect will chime in on this - *right now?* Our community is coping with an unprecedented situation. Families are working from homes, while homeschooling children. Many people are taking a risk every time they go to work. Many people have lost their jobs. No one is left untouched.

Let's face it: right now, the people who can educate themselves about community initiatives, read about them at length, and chime in at city meetings, are only the people who have the luxury to do so. At this time, it is a luxury to be able to focus on a large sweeping plan to reshape Alameda's urban fabric and come to the table to share enthusiasm or concern. It's unlikely that anyone who recently lost a job or income, has to homeschool children or care for sick family members will have any bandwidth left to speak at council meetings. In that sense, because this moment makes an entire community input challenging, the input is likely to be lopsided.

The program is trying to accomplish some ambitious and remarkable goals. Making access to our local businesses easier during social distancing is a fantastic goal and we should all support it. Trying to make our streets safer is an urgency for Alameda. Increasing our use of public transit is essential to reducing our carbon footprint. What the plan does not demonstrate is HOW closing streets will in fact address any of these goals.

The ambitions of the plan are not in question. It is really the process, the timing at which it is carried, and the scale of our small town to carry such changes, that need to be carefully considered.

So here are some questions:

1. How will this plan to close streets indefinitely be genuinely adapted to the scale of Alameda? Where is the proof of concept, that our small town with such a limited traffic grid and so few thoroughfares can truly absorb and benefit as a whole, from the changes to its traffic patterns?

2. Largely missing from the plan is how to address and lessen the burden of added traffic to nearby streets. How do we make sure *my* slow street does not translate in a less safe street for *others*? How in the end, is *safety* going to be not only guaranteed, but improved with these changes?

3. How is input of the community actively promoted in times when citizens have so much more to worry about than a plan that will shape their entire community for years to come? How do we make sure people who live on nearby streets, not just the streets proposed for closure, are also represented fairly? if not, how is this proposal equitable?

This is no small matter. This plan will effectively reshape the fabric of our town for many years and it is still unclear how these changes will effectively address traffic safety and benefit in equitable ways to our entire community.

Thank you.

IRMA Glidden

From: johnsen cyndy <cyndyjohnsen@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 19, 2020 5:43 PM
To: Lara Weisiger
Subject: Re: Comments on Item 2-D: Slow Streets and Commercial Streets

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Thanks Lara! I would like to request that my comments (below) be read, assuming it doesn't get too late for everyone!

Thanks!

-Cyndy

On Tuesday, May 19, 2020, 10:30:48 AM PDT, Lara Weisiger <lweisiger@alamedaca.gov> wrote:

Hi Cyndy,

Your email will be included in the meeting record.

If you want to comment live during the meeting, you can attend via Zoom by registering here:
https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_B86B91QTShKINVKoRi59qQ

If you want a comment read during the meeting, please email (clerk@alamedaca.gov), text (510-747-4802) or leave a voicemail (510-747-4802) after the meeting starts at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully,

Lara

Lara Weisiger, City Clerk
City of Alameda

From: johnsen cyndy [mailto:cyndyjohnsen@yahoo.com]
Sent: Tuesday, May 19, 2020 8:29 AM

To: City Clerk <CLERK@alamedaca.gov>

Subject: Fw: Comments on Item 2-D: Slow Streets and Commercial Streets

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Dear Clerk,

Would you please file these comments under item 2-D for tonight's council meeting?

Thank you!

-Cyndy Johnsen

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: johnsen cyndy <cyndyjohnsen@yahoo.com>

To: tdaysog@alamedaca.gov <tdaysog@alamedaca.gov>; joddie@alamedaca.gov <joddie@alamedaca.gov>; mezzashcraft@alamedaca.gov <mezzashcraft@alamedaca.gov>; jknoxwhite@alamedaca.gov <jknoxwhite@alamedaca.gov>; mvella@alamedaca.gov <mvella@alamedaca.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, May 19, 2020, 08:27:47 AM PDT

Subject: Comments on Item 2-D: Slow Streets and Commercial Streets

Dear Mayor Ashcraft and Councilmembers,

I support slow streets and hope you do, too. Despite the pilot being limited in a number of ways, I've been grateful for the program and know that expanding it will make it better.

When I was young, our neighborhood streets were "slow streets" in the sense that cars drove slowly, expecting kids to be playing there. We spent hours in the streets, biking, roller skating, skate boarding, playing dodgeball, even pogo-sticking. We didn't have scheduled activities and our parents didn't spend hours driving us around to get to them. I didn't think it was special then, but now I know it was. This slow street pilot program has been a sliver of a flashback in that sense. Occurs to me that even post-pandemic, we could benefit greatly from dramatically slowing cars down on all neighborhood streets and treating our streets more as shared assets for people of all ages, not just for the exclusive use of cars.

Regarding commercial districts, my heart goes out to the local merchants that are under tremendous strain right now. I am eager to support them with my business, and hope we can implement strategies that allow them to open without endangering the health of customers or staff.

I live about 10 blocks from Webster and have been there a few times recently on my bike to pick up food, and felt cramped on the sidewalk by other customers waiting. It wasn't that it was crowded, but with others walking by, especially in small clusters or with dogs, the distance can easily get eaten up. So I am encouraged that there are initiatives afoot to create more space for people by claiming road space -- taking a lane from car traffic and moving parking out is one good option. I will feel more comfortable shopping at an establishment if I can stay in front of the store while I wait, while also maintaining 6 feet of distance from others. If it's a safe, comfortable, and inviting space, I may even want to stay a while and dine when that's possible, but that would require significantly more outdoor space, and more street charm. The European model of pedestrian streets and large outdoor dining areas in front of restaurants might be worth considering.

The natural temptation will be to make it easy for people to drive cars and pick up purchases, but a drive-through district would be just another tragedy in my opinion. My hope is that we instead find ways to encourage people to leave their cars at home, opting to walk and bike here. Alameda is lovely, and as many people are discovering during the SIP, it's naturally walk- and bike-friendly. A "Support our Merchants -- Leave Your Car at Home" campaign might be worth exploring. Plentiful, convenient bike parking and bike lanes that are safe for everyone are key. Bringing back Lime Bike, and offering e-bikes and scooters would broaden car-free options.

The street reconfigurations being considered are driven by tragedy, but they may dovetail well with our goals to reduce auto trips and emissions, while perhaps even making our business districts more vibrant and economically viable overall.

We are learning that this pandemic will be with us for quite a while, that we will likely have to adapt to living with it, without a return to "normal". Our lifestyles are going to change. Can we make the new normal better? With vision and intention, I believe we can.

Thank you for your consideration, and for all your efforts in these extraordinary times,

Cyndy Johnsen

IRMA Glidden

From: Pat Potter <pttr_pt@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 19, 2020 5:48 PM
To: Lara Weisiger
Subject: Comments on Item 2-D City Council Meeting 5-19-20
Attachments: Public Comment on Agenda Item 2-D City Council Meeting 5-19-20 - Pat Potter.docx

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Hi Lara,
Here are my comments for tonight. I've given it to you as an attachment as well, in case that is easier for your to read. Thank you! Pat

Wow! Who would have thought 6 months ago that you all would have an opportunity to turn Park and Webster Streets into world class spaces? With your vision, Alameda will be ranked up there with the best of European pedestrian plazas, we just have to make people our priority.

Visualize this:

- There is a beautiful **plaza between Central and Alameda Avenue** with seating for dining, stalls for shopping, and art exhibits. This plaza becomes a music and outdoor movie venue as well, once Covid-19 is controlled. Walking and biking is encouraged when coming downtown, and the parking garage is the place to park if you are not able to walk or ride.
- The sidewalks on Webster Street are expanded, and the business-owned parking lots, such as US Bank's and Mountain Mike's, are re-zoned for parking for anyone who can't walk or ride a bike. But biking and walking is always prioritized along the street to create the best shopping and dining experience.

To really make our business communities fun, relaxing, and inspiring places, we have to envision them as places where we can stroll, shop, and dine. Not the places they are now, where people rush in and out of the area in their cars. We want people to see Park and Webster as places they can bring the family on a summer afternoon, see friends, and enjoy what our wonderful business community has to offer.

Pat Potter

On Monday, May 18, 2020, 01:24:02 PM PDT, Lara Weisiger <lweisiger@alamedaca.gov> wrote:

Hi Pat,

If you send comments any time after 5:30 pm tomorrow night and before public comment on the item is closed, I will read it.

Thanks,
Lara

From: Pat Potter [mailto:pttr_pt@yahoo.com]
Sent: Sunday, May 17, 2020 7:08 PM
To: Lara Weisiger <lweisiger@alamedaca.gov>
Subject: BWA Comments on Item 2-D City Council Meeting 5-19-20

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Hi Lara,

I sent public comments re the above item to you and City Council. Did you need me to confirm that they should be in their packets? I think several of us will be contacting you during the meeting so our comments will be read. Do we just do that at 7:00 whether or not the meeting to discuss this comes first or second? Not sure what the timing will be but want to be sure our comments are read out loud.

Thank you!

Pat Potter

Bike Walk Alameda

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Pat Potter

IRMA Glidden

From: Denyse <denyse@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 19, 2020 6:41 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: Public Comments for City Council - Item D2 - safe streets expansion

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Hello City Clerk,
Can you please read the below comments tonight? Thank you.

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Thank you Honorable Mayor, Vice-Mayor, and Councilpersons for listening to my comments this evening.

I would like start by thanking staff for all the work they've done so far on the Slow Streets program. And, thank you staff and council for your science-, and fact-based leadership! I've never been prouder to be an Alamedan.

The existing slow streets, though a bit out of the way for me, have been wonderful!! I'm fortunate enough to still be working from home but the uncertainty that I, and so many others, are facing, is difficult. Having the opportunity to safely go for a walk in the evenings down Pacific has been sanity-saving. I'm reminded of my youth when we were expected to go play in the street until dinner, and it wasn't a death wish. It's so wonderful to see parents teaching their kids to ride bikes, or children chalking up the streets for hop-scotch and four square. It seems like everything might be ok.

I want to ask you to please not only approve staff's recommendation to expand the slow streets project, but also consider adding PSAs reminding folks who should be prioritized on these streets. Some drivers may still be surprised to see people outside of cars in the street.

I'm also very grateful for DABA's support for re-configuring Park St. to better support shoppers and dinners. With today's further loosening of restrictions, allowing for retail curbside pickup, I would like us to consider re-configuring our street space in our business districts to allow for safe, separated bike infrastructure on both Park and Webster in order to facilitate non-car access to these business corridors. I believe this should be a priority over personal parking. While there's a parking lot one block from Park St., we still don't have any way for people to bike safely on Park or Webster . There are many recent, and local studies that prove that decreasing car infrastructure and supporting biking and walking is good for business. Please, if you're going to do the work to reconfigure our streets, please don't continue to allow for on-street parking while not doing anything to provide a safe place to bike.

Thank you again for your thoughtful consideration (and thank you, City Clerk for reading these comments)

Denyse Trepanier

IRMA Glidden

From: Olaf Faaland <olaf.faaland@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 19, 2020 7:00 PM
To: Lara Weisiger
Cc: Tony Daysog; Pam Faaland
Subject: Please read for Special Meeting Agenda Item 2-D

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Dear Clerk Weisiger,

Please arrange for my letter, below, to be read during today's City Council Special Meeting, in regards to Agenda Item 2-D.

thanks,
Olaf

=====
Dear Mayor and Councilmembers,

I recently saw an article about Berkeley closing some streets to allow restaurants to use sidewalk space or lanes for outdoor seating. This would allow many to serve the same number of patrons at once as they did before the pandemic struck.

As I'm sure you know, the restaurant business is very episodic - there are busy times of day, and quiet or dead times of day. When we get to the point where anything other than takeout is safe, barriers and distancing requirements that limit a restaurant to 1/2 or less of its normal capacity will cut their revenue in half or less - the business will not spread out significantly. And as a result, many restaurants will be unable to cover their expenses and will be forced to close permanently. Most restaurants operate on the very edge of profitability.

In addition, allowing outdoor dining will simply be safer. Sunlight desiccates viruses and destroys them; the large volume of space and air any shed virus spread into will reduce the amount an individual comes into contact with; and points of concentration such as air conditioning units will be removed from the system.

Similarly, most shops are small intentionally, to minimize rent and expenses. With few people in the store, revenues will be drastically reduced.

Surely we can make this happen in our fine city. My wife and I moved to Alameda over 20 years ago for the sense of community we feel here - and the local restaurants and shops are an enormous part of that.

Please do everything in your power to help the city find creative ways to allow our restaurants and stores to open, without endangering the health of our loved ones. Closing streets and lanes would be an excellent start.

Sincerely,
Olaf Faaland
2625 Washington St.

IRMA Glidden

From: Jim Strehlow <jimhstrehlow@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 19, 2020 9:11 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: 2-D temporary street reconfigurations

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Temporary street reconfigurations involve reusing traffic lanes and parking spaces. The following is regarding the section: "Commercial Streets: Park & Webster"

There is a proposal later tonight to remove 23 parking spaces that Central Avenue businesses and neighborhood **need**.

Without those Central Avenue parking spaces, the existing parking spaces on Webster Street near Central Avenue become more necessary for the neighborhood.

That is one of the reasons why it is **extremely difficult** for Webster Street businesses to, in mass, easily convert parking spaces to restaurant use to provide space for social distancing.

Park Street, Oakland's Jack London Square, and San Francisco's Market Street have parking structures. Webster Street does not.

Individual businesses should have permission during a limited COVID-19 Emergency timeframe to implement some street-side expansion; but the City needs a plan for a Webster Street Parking Structure or Solution.

Remember: outdoor temperature, fog, rain, wind, and street lighting are factors that a normal indoor restaurant does not normally need to consider for its restaurant service. Such weather factors extremely limit the number of hours that could actually be used (e.g. six hours) successfully for outdoor dining.

Most streets are designed for 24 hour vehicle use... and in particular, their use for EMERGENCY EVACUATIONS which is the DAILY basic public safety need for most of us in Alameda.

Separately, I disliked the City's partial closing of Versailles Avenue without advance public discussion.

Jim Strehlow, life-long Alameda resident

[P.S. thank you regarding your reading of my 2-C comments for me.]