

The Gatlinburg Board of Commission met in a virtual special called meeting on Thursday, May 7, 2020, at 10:00 A.M. The City Manager noted that the electronic meeting was being held in accordance with the Governor's Executive Order No. 16, which temporarily allowed all members to meet via an electronic basis during the COVID-19 pandemic. The City Manager also conducted a roll call of the Commission and all members were present. Mayor Werner then called the meeting to order.

DISCUSSION AND CONSIDERATION OF APPROVING A PARTIAL CLOSURE OF PARKWAY FROM TRAFFIC LIGHT #6 TO REAGAN DRIVE INTERSECTION EFFECTIVE FRIDAY MAY 8, 2020 AT NOON UNTIL 2:00 P.M. SUNDAY, MAY 10, 2020.

Item A under New Business was Discussion and Consideration of approving a partial closure of Parkway from Traffic Light #6 to Reagan Drive intersection effective Friday, May 8, 2020 at noon until 2:00 p.m. Sunday, May 10, 2020. Vice Mayor McCown made a motion to approve the partial closure, which was seconded by Commissioner Smith.

The City Manager said there was discussion regarding a closure of Parkway at a recent Gatlinburg Convention and Visitors Bureau Board Meeting, as it related to the City providing additional pedestrian space during the COVID-19 pandemic and, as a result, City staff began discussing different approaches to accomplish the goal for providing additional pedestrian space to allow for social distancing. The City Manager said the partial closure would mean installing temporary "bicycle rack" style barriers from Traffic Light #6 on Parkway to its intersection with Reagan Drive, allowing for the outside lanes to be turned into additional space for pedestrians, while the inside lanes of Parkway would still be open to vehicle traffic. The Police Chief said the partial closure would allow one lane in each direction to remain open for vehicle traffic and one lane designated for pedestrian traffic. Chief Brackins explained that by operating under this plan, driveways and some crosswalks would remain open. The City Manager explained that the Commissioners had in their meeting packet a memorandum from Jim Downs, former Special Events Manager and current General Manager at Rocky Top Sports World, outlining the concept of a partial closure of Parkway, along with depictions of the temporary barriers and maps. Commissioner DeSear asked for an explanation of the orange markings on the map supplied in the packets. The Police Chief explained those were the crosswalks that would remain open. Mayor Werner commented that the partial closure of Parkway concept is an attempt to reopen businesses safely and responsibly and by helping promote social distancing for the safety of the City's residents and guests. The Mayor also noted that the partial closure of the roadway for one weekend was a test and would help the City see if this is a viable solution to help promote social distancing, while also allowing businesses to reopen in a responsible manner.

Commissioner DeSear asked if emergency vehicles would be able to access the area. The Police Chief said there would be no issues, since the roadway would partially be open, and the City's bike and walking patrols would be present in the downtown area during the closure and also explained he had discussed the plans with the Fire Chief. Commissioner DeSear also asked about traffic concerns by restricting traffic flow to one

lane in conjunction with the reopening of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The City Manager explained that the partial closure of Parkway is a trial concept and that there are concerns with the impact it would have on traffic flow. The Police Chief said officers would be in the downtown area to help facilitate motorists throughout the weekend and some traffic would be diverted onto Cherokee Orchard Road and River Road. Commissioner DeSear then asked about additional concerns at the newly renovated intersection at Traffic Light #6. The City Manager noted that traffic flow remains the same at that intersection as the number of lanes available for motorists remains the same. Commissioner DeSear also inquired about the number of parking garages open in the downtown area. The City Manager noted that the McMahan/Parkway garage is open and that the garage at the Aquarium would remain closed until the Aquarium is reopened.

Vice Mayor McCown asked if any thought had been given to removing on-street parking from River Road to help traffic flow. The City Manager explained that there had been no discussion as to removing River Road parking and noted that part of the traffic flow issue on River Road during the first weekend of May was corrected with the resynchronization of Traffic Light #5 at the intersection of Parkway and River Road. Vice Mayor McCown also clarified that this is a partial closure and not a full closure of Parkway. The City Manager said the item on the agenda is a partial closure.

Commissioner Reagan asked if it was possible to make River Road traffic one-way at specific times during the weekend to help with better flow to eliminate any traffic backups. The City Manager said that such an approach had not been part of administrative discussions and the Police Chief said one-way traffic would be something needed to be studied due to the impacts to driveways and access points on River Road. Mayor Werner reiterated that the partial closure would be a really good test, that there would be positives and negatives and that he had heard from businesses in favor and against the closure. The Mayor said the purpose of the partial closure is a way to promote responsible social distancing and that the City would learn many things during the partial closure.

Commissioner DeSear said businesses would be impacted with possible deliveries over the weekend. The Police Chief answered that officers could help arrange for deliveries if any happen during the partial closure. The City Manager displayed a flyer created by the Public Information Officer which would be distributed to downtown businesses notifying them of the partial closure and plans for implementing the partial closure, including Sanitation Department garbage collection times during the weekend.

Mayor Werner asked about other banners being installed in the downtown area. Commissioner DeSear asked if the item on the agenda was requested by the Convention and Visitors Bureau. The City Manager replied that is where the idea was recently discussed. The City Manager also explained that banners would be installed at various locations through the downtown area. The Public Information Officer said that the banners would encourage visitors to practice social distancing, use hand sanitizer, wear facial coverings and follow CDC guidelines, while using the Governor's "Do your part, stay apart" campaign slogan to promote social distancing.

Commissioner Reagan inquired about extending the partial closure further along Parkway past its intersection with Reagan Drive. The City Manager noted that the sidewalks are wider after this intersection and also noted that the cost of the barriers were just under \$6,000.00. Mayor Werner said the City would learn what works best during this initial partial closure. The Police Chief also explained that by ending the partial closure at Reagan Drive, traffic flow could be facilitated on other streets throughout the City. Commissioner DeSear asked about extending the closure to Traffic Light #8, and the Police Chief noted that using Maples Lane for River Road access is key to having traffic flow.

Vice Mayor McCown asked if signage and messaging would be displayed on the three entrances to the City regarding the partial closure. The Police Chief replied that 14 signs would be placed at strategic locations to alert motorists.

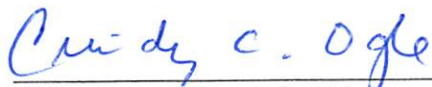
A roll call vote was held and the motion to approve the partial closure was unanimously adopted.

Mayor Werner expressed his appreciation for those who have worked to help move the idea of a partial closure of Parkway forward.

There being no further business to come before the City Commission, Commissioner DeSear made a motion to adjourn. Vice Mayor McCown seconded the motion. A roll call vote was held and the motion was unanimously approved.



Mike Werner, Mayor



Cindy Cameron Ogle, City Recorder
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