

**UNAPPROVED  
CITY OF BLAINE  
TRAFFIC COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
July 12, 2017**

The Blaine Traffic Commission met in the City Hall Chambers on Wednesday, July 12, 2017. Chair Haas called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**ROLL CALL – 2017 TRAFFIC COMMISSION**

Members Present: Commission Members: Chmielewski, Hill, Mahmudi, Skarich, Wold, and Chair Haas

Members Absent: Commission Member Maschke

Staff Present: Jean Keely, City Engineer  
Sergeant Joseph Sadler

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**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Item 3.1 – June 6, 2017, Traffic Commission Minutes

**Motion by Commissioner Hill to approve the minutes of June 6, 2017, as presented. Motion seconded by Commissioner Wold. The motion passed 6-0.**

**OPEN FORUM FOR CITIZEN INPUT**

None.

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

**Motion by Commissioner Wold to adopt the July 12, 2017 Traffic Commission Meeting Agenda. Motion seconded by Commissioner Chmielewski. The motion passed 6-0.**

**PUBLIC HEARING/COMMENTS**

None.

**PREVIOUS BUSINESS**

None.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Item 8.1 – Traffic Concerns on 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue, West of Sunset Avenue

City Engineer Keely stated City Staff have received complaints of speeding near Sunset Avenue on 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue. She added this is a unique situation, as the lot sizes are large near Sunset Avenue where the speed limit is 55 miles per hour (mph), but the speed limit is reduced to 30 mph further along 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue where the lots are smaller. She noted, due to the large lot sizes, State statute allows 55 mph or what is reasonable or prudent.

City Engineer Keely stated City Staff collected speed and traffic counts data in 2007, and 155 vehicles per day were counted. She added that was the year the Willowbrook plat was developed east and west of Opal Street. She noted traffic counts in 2015 had increased to 568 per day, and the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile was between 39-42 mph west of Sunset Avenue, where the speed limit is 55 mph.

City Engineer Keely stated, as discussed at the Traffic Commission's last meeting, the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile is a commonly accepted traffic speed measurement which indicates the speed that 85% of traffic is traveling.

City Engineer Keely stated Blaine Police monitored the area in February 2016 but no tickets were issued. She added the speed trailer was used for a week in June 2017 where the road transitions from 55 mph to 30 mph, as part of neighborhood outreach effort in transition areas. She noted the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile was 36 mph.

City Engineer Keely stated Engineering staff will place traffic count tubes to verify speeds without the trailer, and work with the Police Department to determine whether enforcement is needed.

City Engineer Keely stated 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue is a State Aid collector route, which was extended to Woodland Parkway in 2013. She added residents requested speed humps; however, that is not allowed on MSA roadways. She noted one solution would be to install white edge striping and a double yellow line in the middle to reduce the lane widths to 11 feet.

City Engineer Keely stated the Traffic Commission can direct City Staff to send notices to neighborhood residents, inviting them to the Traffic Commission's August 9, 2017, meeting, to provide feedback and comment on this issue. She added the Commission could also forward a recommendation directly to the City Council.

Commissioner Hill asked about the MSA designation. City Engineer Keely stated the MSA route goes to Woodland Parkway that is also an MSA route. Woodland Parkway then is U-shaped back to Lexington Avenue. City Engineer Keely stated collector routes are designed to get traffic to the County road system where the roadways are larger and speeds are higher.

Commissioner Wold asked what is the speed limit west of Woodland Parkway to Lexington Avenue. City Engineer Keely stated that is not a public road but is the Lexington Athletic Park driveway. It has speed humps to discourage thru traffic.

Chairperson Haas asked what the street frontage is for lots on 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue east of Opal Street. He added a State statute was passed that allows speed limit of 35 mph in areas with rural designation. City Engineer Keely stated the lots were there a long time before the area to the west was urbanized. She added she knows of the State statute, but it has not been used in the City of Blaine. She noted the Traffic Commission could direct City Staff to research it.

Chairperson Haas asked whether there are advanced warning signs that the speed limit is changing. City Engineer Keely stated there is no advanced signage, but the 30 mph sign is visible from the turn onto 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue from Sunset Avenue.

Commissioner Hill stated if the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile is only 39-42 mph in a 55 mph, the speed limit does not need to be lowered as drivers are not going as fast as they could be.

City Engineer Keely stated the 30 mph speed limit was set when there were enough driveways to qualify it as an urbanized area.

Chairperson Haas asked whether there is a threshold for the number of permissible driveway accesses on an MSA roadway. City Engineer Keely stated this is a short State aid route, and there are wetlands along 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue, so the City allowed some homes to be built on 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue. She added the City generally tries to keep driveways off longer State aid routes due to higher traffic counts.

Commissioner Wold stated he would support sending notices to neighborhood residents about the August 9, 2017, meeting. Chairperson Haas agreed, adding neighborhood feedback and comments would be helpful.

Commissioner Wold requested that the Traffic Commission receive a copy of the notice. City Engineer Keely agreed.

**Motion by Commissioner Chmielewski to review Rural zoning designation, driveways and their lengths on 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue, and whether the Rural designation applies in this case. Motion seconded by Commissioner Wold. The motion passed 6-0.**

**Motion by Commissioner Mahmudi to direct staff to mail notices to neighborhood residents inviting them to the August 9, 2017, Traffic Commission meeting and then make a recommendation to the City Council. Motion seconded by Commissioner Wold. The motion passed 6-0.**

Item 8.2 – Traffic Concerns on 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue and 7<sup>th</sup> Street, East of University Avenue

City Engineer Keely stated City Council and staff have received resident complaints regarding traffic speeds on 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue near University Avenue, as well as complaints about cars parked on 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue near the north end of Happy Acres Park.

City Engineer Keely stated the Crescent Pond neighborhood, developed in 2006, is located between 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue and 125<sup>th</sup> Avenue near University Avenue. She added 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue will eventually connect to Jefferson Street and 125<sup>th</sup> Avenue with future development of the large vacant parcel on 125<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

City Engineer Keely stated the City Council authorized seasonal parking restrictions in 2012 on the north side of 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue between 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and 7<sup>th</sup> Street. She added the restriction was requested by neighborhood residents to be enforced from 4:30-8:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday from May 1 to July 31, except legal holidays. She noted there is a parking area at the south end of Happy Acres, but many people prefer to park on 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue as that location is closer to the northern ballfields.

City Engineer Keely stated residents have complained that other park events occur outside the seasonal time frame, and requested additional parking restrictions. She added the City Council forwarded this issue to the Traffic Commission for review and consideration.

City Engineer Keely stated neighborhood concerns have been expressed regarding traffic speeds on 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue and 7<sup>th</sup> Street. She added City Staff completed traffic counts in 2009, and recorded 938 vehicles per day on 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue with an 85<sup>th</sup> percentile of 29 mph. She added traffic counts were completed again in 2015, and recorded 1336 vehicles per day on 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue west of 7<sup>th</sup> Street with an 85<sup>th</sup> percentile of 31 mph westbound and 30 mph eastbound. East of 7<sup>th</sup> Street had 474 vehicles per day and an 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed of 30 mph. She noted traffic counts on that same day on 7<sup>th</sup> Street were recorded at 1133 vehicles with an 85<sup>th</sup> percentile of 27 mph.

City Engineer Keely stated City Staff received an additional request for striping of the mid-block crosswalk where there is a pedestrian crossing signed on 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue. She added the signed crossing leads to a trail that enters Happy Acres Park, and was installed with the development of the neighborhood. She noted the City's crosswalk policy discourages mid-block crosswalks which should be considered only where special circumstances warrant their presence, such as locations near parks and trail systems. City Engineer Keely stated pedestrians should proceed into crosswalks with caution whether they are painted or not.

City Staff recommends that notices be mailed to neighborhood residents inviting them to the Traffic Commission's next meeting to receive public comment, or make a direct recommendation at tonight's meeting.

Commissioner Hill asked whether 7<sup>th</sup> Street is an MSA road. City Engineer Keely stated it is not an MSA road.

Commissioner Skarich stated the trail is the only entrance to the park on foot along the north side of 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue and serves no purpose without the crosswalk.

Chairperson Haas stated, regarding seasonal parking restriction signage, it could be recommended that the dates be changed to an end date of October 31, or a year-round restriction, although nobody parks there in the winter.

Commissioner Chmielewski stated November 1 would be a good end date. Chairperson Haas stated the start date could be moved up to April 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Motion by Commissioner Chmielewski to recommend to the City Council that the seasonal parking restriction signs on the north side of 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue near Happy Acres Park be amended to read “No Parking from April 1 through November 1”. Motion seconded by Commissioner Hill. The motion passed 6-0.**

Chairperson Haas stated, regarding speeding, the traffic counts that were completed show that most drivers in this location are not speeding.

Commissioner Wold asked whether there is a timeline on the connection to Jefferson Street and 125<sup>th</sup> Avenue. City Engineer Keely stated that will be developer driven, and the property is for sale by its current owner.

**It was the consensus of the Traffic Commission to recommend to the City Council that no change should be made to the speed limit of 30 mph at 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue and 7<sup>th</sup> Street.**

Chairperson Haas stated, regarding the mid-block crosswalk, painting the crosswalk would not change anything as it is already signposted. City Engineer Keely agreed, adding people should still be encouraged to cross at the adjacent intersections as that is where drivers would expect them to cross. She added there has been only one request to paint the crosswalk.

Commissioner Wold stated people would use the crosswalk properly if it were to be painted and clearly defined.

Commissioner Chmielewski stated mid-block crosswalks are dangerous as drivers are not watching for them. He added stripes on the road give pedestrians a false sense that they do not have to wait to see if a car is coming.

Commissioner Skarich asked how pedestrians access the trail to the park if they do not cross at the crosswalk, as there is no sidewalk at either intersection. He stated there is no trailhead access without crossing the street.

Commissioner Wold stated it is already designated as a crosswalk.

Commissioner Mahmudi stated striping the crosswalk would encourage pedestrians to use it properly.

Chairperson Haas asked whether there is advance crossing signage on either eastbound or westbound. City Engineer Keely stated she does not believe there is any additional signage other than the signs at the crosswalk.

Commissioner Hill stated there are numerous studies that show that painting the pavement can be more dangerous than not painting the pavement, even though that seems counter-intuitive.

Commissioner Wold stated signs are already there for pedestrians to cross at that location. He added advance signage could be put up for drivers to make them aware of the crosswalk. He noted there could be liability issues if there is no striping.

Commissioner Hill stated the existing crosswalk signs are already there for vehicles, and no new signage is required.

Chairperson Haas stated the City has a policy in terms of liability regarding crosswalks. City Engineer Keely agreed, adding a crosswalk was removed on Lakes Parkway due to limited visibility of pedestrians from traffic coming over a bridge.

Commissioner Skarich stated that if he lived in this neighborhood, and walks there every day, he would use the mid-block crosswalk instead of walking 25 yards to the intersection. He reiterated the trail is not accessible without the mid-block crosswalk.

Commissioner Skarich stated the Traffic Commission should stress the importance of pedestrian awareness, and equal responsibility with drivers, to be aware of crosswalk safety. He added the Police Department is probably interested in ensuring pedestrian safety and driver awareness as well.

City Engineer Keely stated the City of Blaine attempts to adhere to a policy of painted crosswalks at intersections. Chairperson Haas stated that is a good policy.

Commissioner Wold stated there is no intersection near the mid-block crosswalk. City Engineer Keely stated the closest intersection would be at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and 7<sup>th</sup> Street, then pedestrians must walk within the boulevard on the south side of 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue.

Commissioner Wold stated drivers see painted crosswalks and know there is a potential for pedestrians to cross there. He added the City may be protected from a liability standpoint, but painting the crosswalk is the right thing to do.

Commissioner Haas asked how many complaints were received on this issue. City Engineer Keely stated one comment was received from a resident.

**Motion by Commissioner Chmielewski to recommend to the City Council that the pedestrian crosswalk on 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue at Happy Acres Park remain as is with no additional pavement markings. Motion seconded by Commissioner Hill. The motion passed 5-1 (Wold).**

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

City Engineer Keely stated, regarding the previously-approved minutes of the Traffic Commission's June 6, 2017, meeting, she would like to request minor amendments. She stated Agenda Item 8.1, Rice Creek Parkway Traffic Study, would be reviewed at the City Council's July 13, 2017. She requested the following amendments to the June 6, 2017, minutes:

- Page 5, paragraph 4, line 2, replace “June 15, 2017” with “July 13, 2017”
- Page 8, last paragraph, last line, replace “128<sup>th</sup>” with “129<sup>th</sup>”

City Keely stated these amendments do not change the intent of the June 6, 2017, minutes as previously approved by the Traffic Commission.

**It was the consensus of the Traffic Commission to approve amendments to the June 6, 2017, Traffic Commission meeting minutes as requested by City Engineer Keely.**

Item 9.1 – Update on Traffic Enforcement

Sergeant Sadler stated, as discussed at the Traffic Commission’s last meeting, the City Council directed the Police Department to conduct high-visibility traffic enforcement in four areas of the City of Blaine: Rice Creek Parkway; Radisson Road; 129<sup>th</sup> Avenue between Baltimore Street and Radisson Road; and Lakes Parkway. He added the enforcement detail was undertaken from May 16 - June 23, 2017. He noted 26 shifts were posted between 6:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Sargeant Sadler stated a total of 78 hours were worked during 23 shifts taken by Police Officers. He added 191 vehicles were stopped, resulting in 94 citations and 110 warnings. He noted neighborhood breakdowns were as follows: Rice Creek Parkway: 18 hours worked and 31 stops made; Radisson Road: 21 hours worked and 56 stops made; 129<sup>th</sup> Avenue: 15 hours worked and 37 stops made; and Lakes Parkway: 24 hours worked and 67 stops made.

Sargeant Sadler stated the Officer’s traffic logs show a change in driver behavior as the number of stops and citations decreased over the course of the enforcement detail. He added the Officers felt they had some good success. He noted the Traffic Unit began enforcement on June 15, 2017, and have focused on these four target areas as well.

Commissioner Skarich asked whether the Radisson Road enforcement was undertaken in a specific area. Sargeant Sadler stated two segments of Radisson road were worked: north of Main Street which is a 45 mph zone, and south of the Lakes Parkway to 105<sup>th</sup> Avenue, where the posted speed is 50 mph. He added resident complaints had been received about the intersection of Lakes Parkway and 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

Commissioner Hill stated there were more warnings on Lakes Parkway than the other focus areas. He asked whether Officers were more lenient on Lakes Parkway. Sargeant Sadler stated warnings and citations were issued based solely on driver speed. He added Officers generally issue warnings to drivers that are driving 3-6 mph over the speed limit, and citations are issued for speeds that are 6 mph and higher over the speed limit.

Chairperson Haas asked whether there is an indication as to whether drivers speed within their own neighborhoods. Sargeant Sadler stated he does not have specific data, but many citations were issued to neighborhood residents.

Commissioner Hill asked whether the Blaine Police Department is involved in Minnesota's "Toward Zero Deaths" (TZD) speed reduction initiative. Sargeant Sadler confirmed the City participates in the County-wide program, partnering with other agencies within Anoka County. He added roads where there are major problems are targeted, and the program focuses on major thoroughfares rather than residential neighborhoods. He noted the Traffic Unit's primary focus is on residential neighborhoods, but not in connection with TZD.

Commissioner Skarich asked whether morning or evening rush hour appears to be more of a problem. Sargeant Sadler stated both time frames are consistent, but he did not have exact numbers.

Chairperson Haas thanked Sargeant Sadler for his report.

#### Item 9.2 – Introduction of Traffic Unit Officers

Sargeant Sandler stated the Traffic Unit was initiated on June 15, 2017. He introduced Officers Zach Johnson and Matt Langreck, two officers assigned to the Traffic Unit. He invited them to address the Traffic Commission.

Sargeant Sandler stated the newly completed Traffic Unit cars will be in the City Hall parking lot after the meeting for the Traffic Commission's review.

Officer Zach Johnson stated he has worked for the City of Blaine Police Department for four years. He added he has been a Police Officer for about ten years.

Officer Matt Langreck stated he has worked in law enforcement for about 13 years, and he has been with the City of Blaine Police Department for 1.5 years.

Chairperson Haas thanked the Traffic Unit Officers, and wished them good luck.

#### Item 9.3 Next Meeting – Wednesday August 9, 2017 at 6:30 p.m.

Chairperson Haas stated the Traffic Commission's next meeting would be held on Wednesday, August 9, 2017.

Chairperson Haas stated November 7, 2017, is Election Day so a new November meeting date should be chosen. City Engineer Keely stated the meeting could be rescheduled to Wednesday November 8, 2017.

**Motion by Commissioner Chmielewski to reschedule the Traffic Commission's November meeting to Wednesday, November 8, 2017, at 6:30 p.m. Motion seconded by Commissioner Skarich. The motion passed 6-0.**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion by Commissioner Wold to adjourn the Traffic Commission meeting. Motion seconded by Commissioner Chmielewski. The motion passed 6-0. Adjournment time was 7:28 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Mullen

*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*