



City of Blaine Anoka County, Minnesota Minutes - Final

Blaine City Hall
10801 Town Sq Dr NE
Blaine, MN 55449

Traffic Commission

The Traffic Commission is an advisory body to the City Council. The Commission's function is to review neighborhood traffic concerns on local streets, define issues, review alternatives and cost, hold neighborhood informational/public hearings and make recommendations to the City Council. For each item the Commission will receive reports prepared by City staff, hold neighborhood information hearings and take comment as needed and discuss and act on each issue/concern. The City Council will make all final decisions on these matters.

Wednesday, August 9, 2017

6:30 PM

Council Chambers

1. Call To Order

The Blaine Traffic Commission met in the City Hall Chambers on Wednesday, August 9, 2017. Chair Haas called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Staff Present: Jean Keely, City Engineer
Sergeant Joseph Sadler
Lieutenant Dan Pelkey

Present: 4 - Haas, Chmielewski, Wold, and Hill

Absent: 3 - Mahmudi, Maschke, and Skarich

3. Approval of Minutes

3.-1 [MIN 17-29](#)

JULY 12, 2017 TRAFFIC COMMISSION MINUTES

Commissioner Hill requested the following amendment to Agenda Item 8.1, third paragraph, third line - replace "the speed that 85% of traffic is travelling" with "the speed at or below which 85 percent of people drive".

Chair Haas requested the following amendments to Agenda Item 9.2, paragraph 1, first line; and paragraph 2, first line: replace "Sandler" with "Sadler"

Motion by Commissioner Wold to approve the minutes of July 12, 2017, as amended. Motion seconded by Commissioner Chmielewski. The motion passed 4-0.

Aye: 4 - Haas, Chmielewski, Wold, and Hill

4. Open Forum for Citizen Input

Colin Harrington, 4417 121st Avenue, stated he has questions regarding the 121st Avenue traffic study. Chair Haas stated that is an Agenda item that will be discussed at tonight's meeting.

Discussed.

5. Adoption of Agenda

Motion by Commissioner Chmielewski to adopt the August 9, 2017, Traffic Commission Meeting Agenda, as presented. Motion seconded by Commissioner Hill. The motion passed 4-0.

Aye: 4 - Haas, Chmielewski, Wold, and Hill

6. Public Hearings/Comments

6.-1 [TC-09](#)

TRAFFIC CONCERNS ON 121ST AVENUE WEST OF SUNSET AVENUE

City Engineer Keely stated the Engineering and Police Departments received complaints about traffic speeds on 121st Avenue, west of Sunset Avenue. She added the Traffic Commission reviewed data collected by the City speed trailer and Enforcement Officers, and directed City Staff to invite adjacent property owners to discuss their concerns at tonight's meeting.

City Engineer Keely stated that 1/3 of the neighborhood was not included in a mailing that went out on July 26, 2017, notifying residents of the public hearing at tonight's meeting. She added residents from Lever Street to Woodland Parkway did not get the letter. She noted she had indicated to residents who did not receive the notice that they can forward their comments and concerns to her and she would relay them to the Traffic Commission.

City Engineer Keely stated a resident has asked whether this item can be kept open until the Traffic Commission's next meeting to allow those residents who did not know about the meeting to have an opportunity to address this issue. She added City Staff can send another letter to residents in Woodland Village who did not receive the first letter, and let them know the issue will remain open for another month.

City Engineer Keely stated the current speed limit by State Statute on 121st Avenue west of Sunset Avenue is 55 miles per hour (mph). She added the neighborhood changes to urban residential lots just before Opal Street, and the speed limit drops to 30 mph. She noted traffic counts taken in 2007 were 155 vehicles per day, and increased to 568 vehicles per day in 2015.

City Engineer Keely stated the 85th percentile speed (the speed at or below which 85 percent of people drive) at 4813 121st Avenue in 2015 was 38 mph. She added Police monitored the area for 2 afternoons in June 2017, setting up the speed trailer and doing traffic enforcement. She noted, at that time, the 85th percentile was 36 mph.

Chair Haas had asked if City Staff had researched the State Statute related to speed limits in rural residential areas. City Engineer Keely confirmed this, adding she provided copies of the Statute for the Commissioners. She stated the area just west of Sunset Avenue could meet Statutory requirements for a 35 mph if it were to be designated a Rural Residential District by the City Council. She added 121st Avenue is a Municipal State Aid (MSA) road from Sunset Avenue to Woodland Parkway. She noted residents have asked if speed humps could be installed, but they are not allowed on MSA roads; however, other traffic calming measures can be considered, such as striping both sides of the road, a yellow double center line, and increased traffic enforcement.

Sergeant Sadler stated the City's Traffic Unit has conducted traffic enforcement in this area, and spent 17 hours there since June 14, 2017, making 27 traffic stops, including 5 speeding citations. He added 17 vehicles were local traffic.

Sergeant Sadler stated speeds were between 25-31 mph as captured by the speed trailer. He added, during the 17-hour period of enforcement, only 16 vehicles were going 35 mph.

City Engineer Keely stated the Traffic Commission can take public comment at tonight's meeting, and decide whether to forward a recommendation to the City Council, or table the issue to allow other residents to have a chance to attend the next Traffic Commission meeting.

Chair Haas stated he supports leaving it open until the Commission's next meeting to get more public input.

Motion by Commissioner Hill to open the public hearing. Motion seconded by Commissioner Wold. The motion passed 4-0.

Aye: 4 - Haas, Chmielewski, Wold, and Hill

Todd Anderson, 4603 121st Avenue NE, stated he appreciates that neighborhood residents are being given this opportunity to provide input. He thanked the Traffic Commission and Police Department for increased traffic enforcement. He added the speed trailer, through its visible presence, sends a serious message, not only to potential speeders but also to residents of the neighborhood.

Mr. Anderson stated he has lived in the neighborhood since 2009. He added he

was shocked when he learned that the speed limit on 121st Avenue from Opal Street to Sunset Avenue was 55 mph. He expressed concern that 55 mph is too high for a residential neighborhood, and it is heartening to hear that a reduction to 35mph could be under consideration.

Mr. Anderson stated his neighbors have started Facebook pages to post about excessive traffic speeds in their high-density neighborhood, combined with poor visibility on 121st Avenue. He added he and his neighbors propose formally painted crosswalks with associated signage at the intersections of Opal Street and Lever Street with 121st Avenue. He noted there are many families with elementary school-age children in the neighborhood, who want to cross Woodland Parkway to get to the Lexington Athletic Complex.

Mr. Anderson stated he would like to see a controlled intersection at Opal Street and 121st Avenue as that is the point where the speed limit transitions from 55 mph to 30 mph. He added having a formal stop there would effectively dampen the speed of incoming traffic and would allow drivers to assess the residential environment that they are entering. He noted a permanent solar-powered speed sign somewhere along 121st Avenue would remind drivers of how fast they are going, and to be mindful of the neighborhood they have entered.

Melanie Beckstrom, 4432 121st Avenue NE, stated she originally contacted City Engineer Keely and the City Council with concerns regarding traffic speeds on 121st Avenue. She thanked the Traffic Commission for being responsive and informative. She added she did not receive notification about the meeting until earlier that day, and she has tried to combine her comments with conversations she has had with other neighbors that could not attend on short notice.

Ms. Beckstrom stated her family moved to their home three years ago, knowing that the neighborhood would grow and develop. She added, however, traffic speeds are too fast on 121st Avenue, and she does not feel that it is a family-friendly street and she is frequently in danger when she goes for a walk with her baby in a stroller. She noted there is low visibility for fast-moving westbound traffic, and she would like to see the speed limit decreased even lower than 30 mph, or speed bumps installed.

Ms. Beckstrom stated she has crossed 121st Avenue numerous times where crosswalks were suggested, she has never had cars yield to her, even though she is pushing a stroller. She added she has had several near misses, and the road is dangerous for pedestrians. She added children are getting on and off school buses at that those locations and trying to cross the street, which is another safety concern.

Ms. Beckstrom stated the situation on 121st Avenue is similar to Lakes Parkway, with a cut-through traffic trying to access busier, main roads. She added she is aware that speed bumps are not allowed due to MSA road funding, but if 121st Avenue is removed from MSA funding, the residents could petition for speed bumps, which are already in place on 121st Avenue, west of Woodland Parkway. She noted she hopes the safety of the City's residents is of greater concern than the cost of speed bumps.

Ms. Beckstrom stated the safety measures that the neighborhood residents are proposing would not have a negative impact on the City or commuters who use 121st Avenue as a cut-through route. She added, however, there is a potential for great harm to the neighborhood and its residents if the high speed of traffic on 121st Avenue is not addressed.

Colin Harrington, 4417 121st Avenue, thanked the Traffic Commission for addressing this issue and holding a public hearing. He urged the Commissioners to keep the discussion open so other residents have an opportunity to express their concerns. He stated there are older homes with long driveways on 121st Avenue, after which there are a number of homes on both sides of the street that are much closer to the roadway. He added the speed limit at this location needs to be addressed, as 55 mph is not appropriate so close to residential homes with young families and children. He noted 20-25 mph would be more appropriate.

Mr. Harrington stated he would like to request a review of traffic speeds not only on 121st Avenue, but also other residential streets. He added thru traffic from 125th Avenue via Opal Street - as well as traffic from Lever Street to the south - use 121st Avenue to get to the Lexington Athletic Complex. He noted 121st Avenue is the only route for residents from the Sunset Avenue area to get to Lexington Avenue and the shopping area at I-35W.

Mr. Harrington stated he would like to see a 2-part speed limit change - a lower speed limit of approximately 25 mph between Opal Street or Lever Street and Woodland Parkway. He added a stop sign at Lever Street and 121st Avenue would be very helpful to deter traffic from gaining speed. He noted the lack of a painted crosswalk should be addressed.

Mr. Harrington stated he supports a possible stop sign at Opal Street. He added there is a very high density of foot traffic from the Opal neighborhood to the Lexington Athletic Complex, or into Woodland Village.

Mr. Harrington stated the new Parkside North Development, north of Woodland Village, will increase traffic and as residents of that area will use Sunset Road as a connector to get to the schools. He asked whether there are any newer traffic

counts than those done in 2015, when there were 568 cars per day.

City Engineer Keely stated traffic counts will be done in 2017, as the City is required to do traffic counts on MSA roads every two years.

Mr. Harrington stated residents on Woodland Parkway as well as homes between Lever Street and Woodland Parkway did not receive notification of the public hearing, and many of them would like a chance to comment on this issue.

Peter Mundel, 4813 121st Avenue, stated his family moved into their house 3 years ago in 2014. He added he has a younger sister and a dog, and they love to play in the front yard. He noted he never really noticed speed on 121st Avenue until his mom noticed cars were going really fast, and then he started to notice it all the time.

Peter stated his school bus stop is at the intersection of Opal Street and 121st Avenue, and he has to cross the street to get home. He added there is a hill there, and he cannot see cars that are coming over the hill. He noted if a kid were walking and a car was going faster than the speed limit, that could end badly.

Peter stated the new park area, Lexington Athletic Complex, has been drawing a lot of kids and families, and my family and friends like to bike down there. He added the visibility is not good when you have to cross the road from the bike path, and you cannot see cars coming until they are very close. He noted when the park gets busy with soccer or lacrosse games, there is a lot of traffic and there is no designated crosswalk area, especially near the park, where they really need to put a crosswalk.

Peter stated he is a Boy Scout, and he attended the meeting for his Citizenship in the Community Merit Badge, but this is also a good opportunity for him to share his opinions since he lives right on 121st Avenue.

Dave Mundel, 4813 121st Avenue, stated his house is right where the 30-mph speed limit sign is posted. He added at about 5:30am, there is a pick-up truck that goes from Sunset Avenue to Lexington Avenue, at speeds of 65 mph or more. He noted his wife spoke with the person setting up the speed trailer to see if that vehicle's speed could be isolated when counts were done last week.

Mr. Mundel thanked the Traffic Enforcement officers who have been stopping traffic and giving citations. He stated he really appreciates the time and efforts that are being put into this important issue. He noted he supports a stop sign at Opal Street and 121st Avenue as a way of bringing traffic speed down, as well as a speed limit of 35 mph from Sunset Drive to Woodland Parkway.

Mr. Mundel stated all large construction vehicles should be required to use Lexington Avenue. He added he has a list of contractors and trucks that use excessive speed, including cement trucks. He noted they are consistently well above the 39-42 mph that the City has calculated, and there absolutely no need for them to use 121st Avenue now that the Parkside development has been established to the north.

Mr. Mundel stated there are large numbers of people coming across from Lino Lakes to the Lexington Athletic Complex, using Sunset Drive to 121st Avenue. He added he would like to know when the traffic count data will be available, to see what speeds are on 121st Avenue. He noted he believes the 85th percentile has increased.

Jason Orcutt, 4384 118th Avenue, stated he is on the Homeowner's Association Board, and they are responsible for plantings along the roadway's medians. He added the City had indicated that two trees would be planted in the boulevard, but there are no trees planted. He noted plantings and trees in the boulevard along Woodland Parkway and 121st Avenue would be very beneficial, in addition to the residents' requests for traffic calming measures.

Mr. Orcutt stated the Homeowner's Association would like to meet with City Staff to discuss this further. He added trees were cleared for the wetland project and many residents feel that funding should also be used for plantings in this neighborhood. He noted other streets in the neighborhood should be reviewed for traffic calming measures, including Hupp Street and 117th Avenue. He expressed a hope that the City and the Association can work together to come up with a long-term solution.

Melanie Beckstrom, 4432 121st Avenue, thanked Mr. Orcutt for his comments about plantings in the roadway medians. She added Hupp Street is a dead-end road, and in any case, it is not on the agenda. She noted neighborhood safety is a primary and valid concern for residents of this community.

Ms. Beckstrom reiterated that there are parallels between 121st Avenue and Lakes Parkway in terms of traffic concerns. She quoted an article regarding a City Council meeting at which Lakes Parkway was discussed: "Councilmember Mike Burke first believed the problem could be resolved with additional enforcement or another stop sign, but after watching traffic during an hour-long lunch break, he now believes this street is too narrow and has too many driveways."

Ms. Beckstrom stated Councilmember Dave Clark has publicly questioned what should have been done differently, and he has emailed City Manager Clark Arneson to request consideration of options. She read a quote from

Councilmember Clark: “I can tell you that one of the worst aspects of being on City Council is traffic issues, because they deal with the safety of your kids, and a lot of times there are very few things you can do because it is based on driver behavior.”

Ms. Beckstrom stated neighborhood residents want to request the City’s consideration of adding physical things to slow traffic and change driver behavior. She expressed her hope that this request will be taken seriously.

Chair Haas referenced the Minnesota Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MMUTCD), which provides guidelines for traffic signage to ensure uniformity across cities and counties throughout the State of Minnesota. He stated the City is required to adhere to the standards within the manual when making decisions about signage and with traffic issues and signage.

Chair Haas asked whether City Staff can determine whether 2017 traffic counts will warrant stop signs. He added he hopes that data will be available for the Traffic Commission’s next meeting. He noted City Staff had mentioned that a reduction to 35 mph speed limit is a possibility. He stressed the importance of not setting a precedent by reducing the speed limit to 20-25 mph. He urged residents to review the guidelines in the MMUTCD, which can be found online.

Commissioner Chmielewski stated crosswalks have been suggested by residents. He added crosswalks are only effective at controlled intersections, because traffic does not stop mid-block even if a crosswalk is painted. He noted he works for another City in the area and he has experience with traffic controls standards.

Commissioner Hill stated research has been done regarding marked crosswalks, that indicate that painting crosswalks actually makes them less safe, because they give pedestrians a feeling of invincibility.

Motion by Commissioner Wold to table Agenda Item 6.1 to the Traffic Commission’s September 5, 2017, meeting, and request that City Staff send public hearing notices to residents of the neighborhood. Motion seconded by Commissioner Chmielewski. The motion passed 4-0.

Aye: 4 - Haas, Chmielewski, Wold, and Hill

A member of the audience asked whether traffic counts would be available before the September meeting. City Engineer Keely confirmed this, adding traffic speeds are not available as the raw data must be initially submitted Mn/DOT for adjustment.

Commissioner Chmielewski stated speed bumps or humps are not allowed on MSA routes, for which State funding is received. He added there are requirements for routes that receive MSA funding.

7. Previous Business

City Engineer Keely stated the City Council, at their July 13, 2017, Regular Meeting, approved the Traffic Commission's recommendations for removal of parking restrictions south of 89th Avenue, as well as implementation of traffic studies for Rice Creek Parkway and 129th Avenue.

Informational; no action required.

8. New Business**8.-1 [TC-10](#)****REVIEW OF LAKES PARKWAY TRAFFIC CONTROL**

City Engineer Keely stated the City Council has received comments and concerns over the years about traffic on Lakes Parkway. She added the City Council has directed the Traffic Commission to review existing traffic control features on Lakes Parkway and provide recommendations to the City Council.

City Engineer Keely stated Lakes Parkway extends from Radisson Road to Rendova Street, and will eventually connect to Lexington Avenue. She added Lakes Parkway serves as a collector road providing access to the adjacent County road system, and was designed in 2002 as part of the master plan for the 1,000-acre Lakes development. She noted there is no driveway access on Lakes Parkway, but there is a sidewalk on one side of the roadway and a trail on the other, and bike lanes are striped and signed in both directions.

City Engineer Keely stated a landscape median with plantings is maintained by the Lakes Homeowner's Association. She added the speed limit of 35 mph was set by Commissioner of Transportation. She noted she has provided a report for the Traffic Commission's review, summarizing the City's actions and studies that were the result of complaints and comments received by City Staff from residents.

City Engineer Keely stated a resident complaint was received that traffic was not stopping at the stop signs at the North Lake Boulevard/South Lake Boulevard intersection. She added City Staff added a panel to the existing stop signs that reads "cross traffic does not stop". She noted only the side streets have stop signs.

City Engineer Keely stated City Staff receives complaints about visibility, and the City advises the Association to monitor and maintain the median plantings. She added there were concerns about the pedestrian crossing east of the bridge near the Beach Park, and that trail crossing was removed and replaced at the North Marina Circle intersection. She noted requests have been received for multi-way stops at West, North and South Lake Boulevards, but 2014 traffic counts did not

warrant multi-way stops at those locations.

City Engineer Keely stated traffic counts were not done in 2015 and 2016 as 125th Avenue was under reconstruction and City Staff felt that counts would not be accurate. She added traffic counts are planned for this summer after MSA counts are completed. She noted painted crosswalks and signage were added at West Lake Boulevard and North Marina Circle at the direction of the City Council, and a crosswalk was painted at South Lake Boulevard but signage has not yet been installed.

City Engineer Keely stated the City Council directed the Police Department to perform a six-week high-visibility traffic enforcement, and Lakes Parkway was one of the streets identified for this initiative. She added 24 hours were worked on Lakes Parkway between May 16-June 23, 2017, and as reported at the last Traffic Commission meeting, there were 67 stops, 19 citations issued and 51 warnings were given. She noted City Staff will re-check the multi-way stop warrants that were included in the previous study.

City Engineer Keely stated the Traffic Commission had received in their packet a map of the area depicting traffic accidents on Lakes Parkway from January 2015 - July 2017. She added the map was compiled by the Police Department and Geographic Information System (GIS) Department, and indicates how many accidents happened at each intersection, and the time of day that they occurred.

Sergeant Sadler stated the Traffic Unit has been engaging in traffic enforcement on Lakes Parkway in addition to the traffic enforcement directed by the City Council. He added there was a decrease in traffic speeds during the enforcement period, but things have picked up again. He noted, to date, there have been 44 traffic stops, 23 citations issued and 21 warnings given, and 38 of the 44 drivers were local residents.

Sergeant Sadler stated the Traffic Unit has observed that speeds are highest between Radisson Road and West Lake Boulevard, where Lakes Parkway is a four-lane roadway with center median. He added it narrows to 2 lanes with a painted bike lane and some road curvature after West Lake Boulevard, which effectively lowers the traffic speeds.

City Engineer Keely stated City Staff recommends that the Traffic Commission review the speed studies to date, and invite residents to the September 5, 2017, Traffic Commission meeting for a public hearing on this matter.

Commissioner Hill asked where the two personal injury accidents happened in 2017. City Engineer Keely stated one accident occurred at Radisson Road and

one accident at Vermillion Street, so both accidents occurred within the four-lane section of roadway.

Commissioner Hill stated he is surprised that there have only been three accidents at the Lakes Parkway/Radisson Road intersection. He added he is a member of the Lakes Homeowners Association, and they have identified 9 intersections for landscape maintenance and removal of plantings in the median. He noted any complaints received by City Staff can be directed to him.

Commissioner Chmielewski stated the Traffic Commission should hold off on this issue, and schedule a public hearing for the October 3, 2017, meeting, as the September meeting agenda will contain the 121st Avenue traffic speeds public hearing. City Engineer Keely asked who the Traffic Commission would want to notify, and what parameters should be used for the mailing.

Chair Haas stated he likes the idea of a Facebook group that neighbors use to share ideas and communicate. He re-iterated he does not believe there will be warrants for a stop sign. He added traffic enforcement is really helping.

City Engineer Keely stated City Staff tries to anticipate issues before they are brought forward. She added City Staff has received complaints regarding traffic speeds at the Aspen Lake Drive and 116th Avenue intersection, and that may come before the Traffic Commission for consideration.

Chair Haas stated the additional Police traffic enforcement makes a big difference. He added he was interested to hear that traffic speeds on Lakes parkway slow down dramatically when the roadway narrows. He noted this confirms what the Traffic Commission has learned about road calming measures.

Chair Haas stated the median is attractive with many plantings and shrubs, but the size and number of trees are prohibitive. He added it is difficult to find a good location for the advanced notice crosswalk signage due to overgrown trees and shrubs.

Commissioner Hill stated the southernmost intersection would be a perfect location for a mini roundabout. City Engineer Keely stated those types of traffic controls can be reviewed and discussed when the next phase of development occurs, completing the connection from Rendova Street to Lexington Avenue.

Commissioner Wold stated he supports solicitation of public comment on this issue at the Traffic Commission's October 3, 2017, meeting. He added the Traffic Commission should decide who should receive the public hearing notice. He asked whether the Lakes Association would be willing to help get the word out.

Commissioner Hill stated he is open to suggestions.

Chair Haas stated traffic counts are required to determine warrants before multi-way stops can be considered. Commissioner Chmielewski agreed, adding the Traffic Commission will need to review traffic counts before they do anything else.

City Engineer Keely agreed to provide the traffic counts data to the Traffic Commission before the October 3, 2017, meeting.

It was the consensus of the Traffic Commission to table the Lakes Parkway Traffic Review to the October 3, 2017, meeting.

9. Other Business

9.1 Update on Traffic Enforcement

Sergeant Sadler stated schools will soon be back in session, and he encouraged residents to observe speed limits in school traffic zones. He added a flashing yellow light on a crosswalk sign indicates that children are present, and drivers should be aware of crossing guards. He added the Police Department will be engaged in heavy traffic enforcement during the first few weeks of September.

Informational; no action required.

9.2 Revised Meeting Calendar

Chair Haas reviewed the following upcoming meeting dates:

September 5, 2017

October 3, 2017

November 8, 2017

Informational; no action required.

9.3 Next Meeting - Tuesday, September 5, 2017 at 6:30 p.m.

Chair Haas confirmed the Traffic Commission's next meeting is scheduled for September 5, 2017, at 6:30 p.m.

Informational; no action required.

10. Adjournment

**Motion by Commissioner Wold, to adjourn the Traffic Commission meeting.
Motion seconded by Commissioner Hill. The motion passed 4-0. Adjournment time was 7:54 p.m.**

Aye: 4 - Haas, Chmielewski, Wold, and Hill