

**UNAPPROVED
CITY OF BLAINE
TRAFFIC COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
June 6, 2017**

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

ROLL CALL – 2016/2017 TRAFFIC COMMISSION

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

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: Jean Keely, City Engineer
Sergeant Joseph Sadler

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Item 3.1 – May 2, 2017, Traffic Commission Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Maschke to approve the minutes of May 2, 2017, as presented. Motion seconded by Commissioner Chmielewski. The motion passed 7-0.

OPEN FORUM FOR CITIZEN INPUT

None.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion by Commissioner Maschke to adopt the June 6, 2017, Traffic Commission Meeting Agenda. Motion seconded by Commissioner Mahmudi. The motion passed 7-0.

PUBLIC HEARING/COMMENTS

None.

PREVIOUS BUSINESS

Item 7.1 – Updated 2017 Calendar of Meetings

Chair Haas stated the proposed 2017 meeting dates were discussed at the Traffic Commission's May 2, 2017, meeting. He added all meetings will be held on the first Tuesday of the month with the following exceptions: July 5, 2017; and August 9, 2017.

Commissioner Wold stated it is likely that many Commissioners will be unavailable on July 5, 2017, due to the long holiday weekend.

Chair Haas stated the July 5, 2017, meeting could be changed to July 12, 2017. City Engineer Keely agreed.

Motion by Commissioner Chmielewski to change the Traffic Commission's July 5, 2017, meeting to July 12, 2017. Motion seconded by Commissioner Skarich. The motion passed 7-0.

Item 7.2 – Draft Traffic Commission Rules for Transaction of Business

City Engineer Keely reviewed the Draft Rules for Transaction of Business document that was distributed at the Traffic Commission's May 2, 2017, meeting. The Ordinance passed by the City Council establishing the Traffic Commission stipulated that Rules for Transaction of Business should be approved by the Traffic Commission.

Chair Haas asked whether a Vice-Chair should be appointed, as indicated in the Draft Rules for Transaction of Business. City Engineer Keely stated it is not specifically required, and a Commissioner could be selected if the Chair will be absent.

Commissioner Hill stated, for purposes of clarification, that the document is entitled "City of Blaine Traffic Commission Rules of Business and Meeting Order and Procedure". City Engineer Keely agreed.

Motion by Commissioner Chmielewski to approve the Traffic Commission Rules of Business and Meeting Order and Procedure. Motion seconded by Commissioner Hill. The motion passed 7-0.

Chair Haas asked whether any Commissioners were interested in being Vice-Chair. Commissioner Wold confirmed his interest.

Motion by Commissioner Maschke to appoint Commissioner Wold as Vice-Chair of the Traffic Commission. Motion seconded by Commissioner Chmielewski. The motion passed 7-0.

NEW BUSINESS

Item 8.1 – SEH Presentation of Rice Creek Parkway Traffic Study

City Engineer Keely introduced SEH Consultant Tom Sohrweide. Mr. Sohrweide has completed three traffic studies for the City of Blaine in the past year, and two of these studies are on

tonight's agenda. She welcomed Mr. Sohrweide and invited him to address the Traffic Commission.

Mr. Sohrweide stated he has been involved in speed control issues in residential areas for many years, both at the local and national level. He reviewed the difference between a "collector road" and local residential roads. He added a street's speed limit can only be changed by the State of Minnesota, although the City has authority on some streets, including dead ends. He noted residential streets are generally 30 miles per hour (mph).

Mr. Sohrweide stated the goal is to increase driver awareness of the speed limit and control speeds, which in turn will improve conditions in the neighborhood.

Mr. Sohrweide stated Rice Creek Parkway is a collector roadway, and the City has received neighborhood complaints about high traffic speeds. He added collector streets can be residential streets, but also their intermediate function is to get traffic out of residential areas and onto wider, busier roadways.

Mr. Sohrweide stated Rice Creek Parkway is an MSAS State Aid roadway, so there are restrictions associated with its use and regulation. He added Rice Creek Parkway has three distinct segments: Xylite Street to Rice Creek Parkway; Rice Creek Parkway with a center median to the all-way stop at 90th Avenue; and Flanders Street extending north to 95th Avenue.

Mr. Sohrweide stated traffic volumes at this location are consistent with previous counts, with weekday volumes of 1,400 cars per day, which is low for a collector roadway. He added speeds are high – the average speed on Flanders Street is 35 mph, and the 85th percentile is 39 mph, which means 85% of traffic is traveling slower than 39 mph. He noted 80.5% of vehicles are going over the speed limit, and that number is up by 15% over counts done in 2014.

Mr. Sohrweide stated the high speeds are indicative that traffic calming is required, and the most commonly used methods are stop signs and speed humps. He added stop signs should not be added unless they are warranted, and warrants are established by the Minnesota Uniform Traffic Control Devices Manual.

Mr. Sohrweide stated speed humps have been proven to be effective in controlling speeds, but there are many negative aspects about them, and they cannot be used on a State Aid street. He added speed humps are different from speed bumps, in that they are longer than the wheel base of a car, so the car rides up and over it. He noted this creates problems for emergency vehicles and school buses, because their wheel base is longer, and it is difficult for maintenance crews to maneuver around speed humps.

Mr. Sohrweide stated an all-way stop at 93rd Avenue would be beneficial as it would pair with the existing all-way stop at 90th Avenue. He added pavement markings provide a visual path for the vehicle, and effectively narrow the lane of traffic.

Mr. Sohrweide stated enforcement is an effective means of traffic calming, although the Police Department has a lot of demands on them, and this is a low-volume roadway. He added City

Staff had discussed an all-way stop at Xylite Street, but that is not recommended as there is a change in speed limit and roadway alignment, as well as introduction of a center median.

Mr. Sohrweide stated the recommendation is to consider installation of an all-way stop at 93rd Avenue. He added Flanders Street should be changed to a double yellow center line, no passing zone, instead of a dashed center line. He added this is more delineating, and therefore more observed and controlled. He noted there should be a white line along the edge of the gutter on the parking side of Rice Creek Parkway, and a yellow edge line along the median.

Chair Haas asked whether the speed limit was set by State statute, or if speed studies were originally done. He added residents often do not realize that speed limits could go up as a result of doing a speed study.

City Engineer Keely stated a traffic study was requested from the Commissioner of Transportation because Xylite Street was formerly a County road with a higher speed limit, but was changed to a City road. She added a speed study would have been requested when Rice Creek Parkway was developed in 1994, and Xylite Street was changed to 30 mph due to the increase in residential property along Xylite Street.

Commissioner Hill asked how wide Flanders Street is, and whether a bike lane might be a possibility. Mr. Sohrweide stated parking is prohibited on the north side of Rice Creek Parkway, so a bike lane on the south side would take away parking. He added a bike lane is a possibility on Flanders Street, but the streetway is not wide enough as there is parking allowed on one side.

Commissioner Skarich stated he has driven through that area during rush hour, and speeds of 45 mph on Xylite Street and 30mph on Rice Creek Parkway both seem appropriate. He added there are often cars parked along Rice Creek Parkway, which is a traffic calming measure itself as drivers slow down. Mr. Sohrweide agreed that parked cars close the environment and reduce speeds.

Commissioner Chmielewski stated striped lines on a collector road in a residential area indicates that speeds are going to increase. Mr. Sohrweide stated he has heard that comment, but there is no data to support the idea that stripes increase traffic or attract higher speeds.

Commissioner Hill stated the speed trailer is very effective, as well as flashing speed limit signs that show an approaching car's speed limit. Mr. Sohrweide agreed, adding they are most effective in a transition area.

Chair Haas asked whether flashing speed limit signs are a possibility. City Engineer Keely stated the City has installed two permanent flashing signs on 119th Avenue, and that was initiated by the City Council. She added they are costly, and the solar batteries don't hold up well in the winter. She noted the City plans to do speed checks on the areas near those flashing signs this summer, and compare that to data from earlier speed checks.

Commissioner Mahmudi stated he would recommend getting the neighbors involved first, and then pursue SEH's recommendations.

Chair Haas asked how many resident complaints were received. City engineer Keely stated she is unsure as the complaints were received by the City Council.

Commissioner Chmielewski stated it would be great to get residents involved, but it would be better to act on SEH's recommendations now. He added this would show residents that the Traffic Commission is taking action and moving forward with plans to address traffic speeds on Rice Creek Parkway.

Chair Haas stated neighborhood residents should be notified by letter that the recommendations for Rice Creek Parkway will be considered by the City Council at their June 15, 2017, Regular Meeting. City Engineer Keely agreed, adding costs associated with striping require City Council authorization.

Motion by Commissioner Maschke to recommend City Council approval of the following recommendations made by SEH based on their Rice Creek Parkway traffic study: installation of an all-way stop at 93rd Avenue; a double yellow center line north of the median; a white edge line on the “no parking” side with and without the median; a yellow edge/center line adjacent to both sides of the median; and increased enforcement during critical time periods. Motion seconded by Commissioner Hill. The motion passed 7-0.

Item 8.2 – SEH Presentation of 129th Avenue Traffic Study

City Engineer Keely stated the City Council, at their February 2, 2017, Workshop, discussed resident's concerns regarding traffic speeds on 129th Avenue from the Highway 65 Service Road to Radisson Road. The City Council recommended that a consultant be hired to conduct a traffic study of 129th Avenue, a Municipal State Aid road, including its future extension to the east. This extension would create the City's northernmost east/west connector route.

The City Council received the results of this study last week, which have been included on tonight's agenda as City Staff anticipates that the City Council will recommend that the study be reviewed by the Traffic Commission.

City Engineer Kelly stated SEH consultant Tom Sohrweide would present the results of the traffic study.

Mr. Sohrweide stated this case involves three different roadways, built at separate times with varying designs. He added the west leg was constructed first; 129th Avenue between Itasca Road and Radisson Road was the second segment completed; and the 3rd segment was filled in between them. He noted the first segment to the west is wider and has two lanes of traffic, so speeds and volumes are highest in that area.

Mr. Sohrweide stated the second segment is unique in that it has a median with a sidewalk in the median, so pedestrians must cross a lane of traffic to access the sidewalk. He added the third leg also has a median with sidewalks on both sides of the street, and parking is allowed. He noted parking is prohibited on the north side of the second segment.

Mr. Sohrweide stated parking should be prohibited on this roadway based on Minnesota State Aid road standards for roadway width. He added the roadways have surmountable curb, which allows cars to pull up onto the curb to park.

Mr. Sohrweide stated an important concern relates to the future of this roadway. He added a regional traffic demand model is used to consider the future connectivity of this area by 2040. He noted the model indicates that Radisson Road and 125th Avenue will double their volumes to over 20,000 a day, which will make 129th Avenue an attractive cut-through route during busy traffic times.

Mr. Sohrweide stated the roadway is currently at lower levels than that which is expected for a collector road, and the roadways are wide. He added the recommendation of SEH is to use pavement markings to delineate a shoulder wide enough for a bike lane, and prohibit parking. He noted an all-way stop would not be appropriate as the intersections are mostly T-junctions, side street traffic volumes are low, and there is no existing all-way stop to provide a starting point.

Mr. Sohrweide stated speed enforcement would be effective during morning and evening hours when traffic is heaviest. He added there is a mid-block signed crosswalk across 129th Avenue that is not marked, and therefore is not legally conforming. He noted it is recommended that crosswalk markings be added to the roadway to make this a legally conforming crosswalk.

Mr. Sohrweide stated SEH does not recommend pavement markings on the west segment where the roadway is the widest, as the properties' street frontage is side yards, and the City has not had concerns expressed by those residents. He added pavement markings on such a wide roadway can create the impression of a four-lane road.

Commissioner Hill stated SEH's daily traffic counts forecasts are confusing for the area west of Lexington Avenue and east of Radisson Road. He added that is the same segment, but the table on page 3 of the traffic study indicates 4,100 cars daily east of Radisson Road, and the number drops by half west of Lexington Avenue.

Mr. Sohrweide stated those traffic counts refer to the area without the connection. He added as Lexington Avenue develops, it will generate its own traffic, with or without the connection to Radisson Road. He noted the traffic study assumes the absence of cut-through traffic.

Commissioner Chmielewski stated another option for the crosswalk would be a solar-powered push-button unit. He added he understands there are costs associated with that, but traffic speeds and safety in this area are critical issues.

City Engineer Keely stated a flashing crosswalk sign has not been discussed, as the City Council recently requested the traffic study. She added the City's crosswalk policy discourages mid-block crossings, but this is a unique location, as the sidewalk transitions from roadside to middle of the road.

Chair Haas asked whether the difference will be addressed when the east segment is reconstructed at some point. City Engineer Keely confirmed there would still be a median, but it would be narrower, with sidewalks along the road sides rather than in the median.

Commissioner Maschke asked whether the bike lane issue should be revisited. Commissioner Skarich expressed agreement that striping a wide roadway creates a natural parking zone. He added a bike lane would eliminate the parking zone, which is especially important as parking is prohibited. City Engineer Keely agreed. Mr. Sohrweide stated the roadway should be striped as a shoulder.

Motion by Commissioner Wold to recommend City Council approval of the following recommendations made by SEH based on their 129th Avenue traffic study: install a white edge line to create a shoulder in the median areas; install a yellow edge/center line adjacent to both sides of the medians to create an 11-foot traffic lane; prohibit parking in median areas; increase enforcement at critical time periods; install crosswalk pavement markings to legally establish the mid-block crosswalk. Motion seconded by Commissioner Hill. The motion passed 7-0.

City Engineer Keely stated the traffic speed studies for Rice Creek Parkway and 129th Avenue conducted by SEH would be reviewed by the City Council at their July 13, 2017, Regular Meeting, and a letter will be sent to residents in these areas.

Item 8.3 – Review Existing Parking Restrictions – Quincy Street and Monroe Street from 88th Avenue to 89th Avenue

City Engineer Keely stated the City Council identified several traffic issues to be reviewed and discussed by the Traffic Commission. He added Public Works has been assessing all the City's roads signage for reflectivity, and to create a database of signs. He noted some signs are quite old, and Public Works has questioned the need for them to continue in their current location.

City Engineer Keely stated a parking restriction on 89th Avenue, authorized by the City Council in 1984, prohibits parking from 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. on Sundays. She added, at that time, 89th Avenue was a narrow, 2-lane County road with two churches and limited off-street parking. She noted both churches now have additional on-site parking, and 89th Avenue was reconstructed with a center median. City Staff does not believe parking is an issue at this location, and parking restrictions from 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. on Sundays only should be reviewed.

City Engineer Keely stated she is unsure whether residents of the area are aware that these parking restrictions are being reviewed, as this issue was raised by the Public Works Department. She added City Staff recommends that the Traffic Commission review this issue and make a recommendation to the City Council to remove the parking restriction and related signage.

Commissioner Skarich asked, since the parking restriction was for Sundays only, whether the church parking lots were full. Commissioner Maschke stated there is ample room in the church parking lots even on their busiest days. Commissioner Wold stated he would support removal of the signs. Commissioner Skarich agreed.

Chair Haas stated a letter should be sent neighborhood residents notifying them of this issue. City Engineer Keely agreed.

Motion by Commissioner Skarich to recommend that the City Council rescind Resolution No. 84-28, and direct City Staff to send notice to residents that the City Council will consider the removal of “No Parking” signs on 89th Avenue at their Thursday, June 15, 2017, Regular Meeting. Motion seconded by Commissioner Chmielewski. The motion passed 7-0.

Item 8.4 – Review Existing Parking Restrictions – 87th Lane from Jackson Street to the West Cul-de-Sac

City Engineer Keely stated a parking restriction on 87th Lane, authorized by the City Council in 1989, prohibits parking from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., Monday-Friday. She added parking restrictions were put in place when residents complained about overflow parking from nearby commercial businesses. She noted the parking restrictions are no longer necessary as the commercial area is now segmented from nearby residential streets, and on-site parking has increased for commercial uses.

Chair Haas stated a letter should be sent neighborhood residents notifying them of this issue. City Engineer Keely agreed.

Motion by Commissioner Mahmudi to recommend that the City Council rescind Resolution No. 84-39, and direct City Staff to send notice to residents that the City Council will consider the removal of “No Parking” signs on 87th Lane at their Thursday, June 15, 2017, Regular Meeting. Motion seconded by Commissioner Chmielewski. The motion passed 7-0.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

UPDATE ON TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT

Sergeant Sadler presented a traffic enforcement update, including details of a 6-week high visibility traffic enforcement effort that was initiated in May 2017 at the City Council’s request. He stated enforcement efforts are being focused on Rice Creek Parkway; Radisson Road north of 125th Avenue; 129th Avenue between Baltimore Street and Radisson Road; and Lakes Parkway. He added units have completed 15 shifts for a total of 45 hours up until June 5, and will continue their efforts for a few more weeks. He noted an email was received from a resident on 128th Avenue who noticed the increased police presence and expressed their appreciation.

Sergeant Sadler stated strict enforcement is being utilized, with cars being stopped for going 3-5 mph over the speed limit and receiving a citation for speeds that are 6 mph or more over the speed limit. He added the Police Department will present the results of the 6-week traffic

enforcement effort, including total hours worked, locations, average speeds, and warnings and citations given, at an upcoming Traffic Commission meeting.

Sergeant Sadler stated the Traffic Unit will begin its operations on Wednesday June 14, 2017, with two dedicated officers trained and out into the neighborhoods as soon as possible.

NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY JULY 5, 2017, AT 6:30 P.M.

Chairman Haas stated, as discussed under Agenda Item 7.1, the Traffic Commission's next meeting has been re-scheduled to July 12, 2017, at 6:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Maschke to adjourn the Traffic Commission meeting. Motion seconded by Commissioner Chmielewski. The motion passed 7-0. Adjournment time was 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Mullen
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.