



City of Blaine Anoka County, Minnesota Minutes

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, November 6, 2019

6:30 PM

Council Chambers

1. Call To Order

The Blaine Traffic Commission met in the City Hall Chambers on November 6, 2019. Chair Haas called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Staff Present: City Engineer Dan Schluender, Sergeant Nate Hatanpa

Present: 6 - Haas, Wold, Hill, Skarich, Anderson, and Chmielewski

3. Approval of Minutes

3.-1

AUGUST 7, 2019 TRAFFIC COMMISSION MINUTES

Attachments: [08-07-19 TC](#)

Chair Haas requested the following corrections:

-page 2, 4th paragraph should read "seconded by Commissioner Skarich" and "5-0"

Commissioner Chmielewski requested the following correction:

-page 2, 5th paragraph should read "5-0"

Motion by Commissioner Chmielewski to approve the minutes of August 7, 2019, as amended. Motion seconded by Commissioner Wold. The motion passed 5-0.

Aye: 6 - Haas, Wold, Hill, Skarich, Anderson, and Chmielewski

4. Open Forum for Citizen Input

There were no comments.

5. Adoption of Agenda

City Engineer Dan Schluender requested the following additions to the Meeting Agenda:

9.1 Other Business -

-Discussion Regarding 121st Avenue NE and Lexington Avenue -

Commissioner Wold

-Discussion regarding Legislative Approval of 25 mph speed limit -

Commissioner Anderson

Motion by Commissioner Skarich to adopt the November 6, 2019, Traffic Commission Meeting Agenda, as amended. Motion seconded by Commissioner Chmielewski. The motion passed 5-0.

Aye: 6 - Haas, Wold, Hill, Skarich, Anderson, and Chmielewski

6. Public Hearings/Comments

None.

7. New Business**7.-1****TRAFFIC CONTROL HARPERS STREET**

Attachments: [Harpers Street Area Map](#)

Mr. Schluender stated City Staff have received complaints regarding traffic speed in the Harpers Street NE area, north of 125th Avenue NE. The complaints relate to speeding in both directions on Harpers Street NE. City Staff has gathered data on this corridor over the years, including traffic counts in 2009 of approximately 1,200 cars per day with 85th percentile speed of 34 miles per hour (mph).

Mr. Schluender stated traffic counts in 2017 were a little over 3,000 cars per day with 85th percentile speed of 34 mph. He added traffic counts in Spring 2019 were 3,700 cars per day with an 85th percentile of 34 mph. He noted fresh data has been collected by the Police Department over the past week.

Sergeant Nate Hatampa stated the Traffic Enforcement Unit's Jamar Tech Radar System was employed on Harpers Street NE in two different locations over the course of six days - at 128th Avenue and Harpers Street NE and 130th Court and

Harpers Street NE. At the first location, traffic counts were 8,273 vehicles with 85th percentile speed of 34 mph. At the second location, traffic counts were 805 vehicles with 85th percentile of 32 mph.

Sergeant Hatampa stated the Traffic Enforcement Unit conducted numerous hours of data collection but did not do any traffic enforcement during this period. He added the Officers wanted to get true data and not slow down traffic by their presence and speed control.

Mr. Schluender stated Harpers Street NE has been on the leading edge of development for a decade, and traffic volumes have increased as it has extended to its termini at 132nd Avenue NE. Most of the neighborhood streets are funneled onto Harpers Street NE as the collector, which forces drivers into a one way in/out situation. Neighborhood complaints have been received by City Staff, requesting police presence and stop signs.

Mr. Schluender noted that stop signs should not be used as speed control devices, as they lead to increased traffic speeds between stop signs, and general noncompliance. He stated 129th Avenue is an intersection where a stop sign would be warranted, as the streets will eventually connect on the west to Xylite neighborhood and on the east to the remaining parcel, directing traffic to a midblock intersection. An additional connection to Radisson Road is planned for 132nd Avenue, and 131st avenue will be extended to Lexington Avenue. Traffic patterns will definitely change in this neighborhood in the coming years.

Chair Haas asked whether Harpers Street NE is a State Aid road. Mr. Schluender confirmed this.

Commissioner Wold asked why the traffic counts were so high, when they were recorded at 3200. Sergeant Nate Hatampa stated that data was taken over a week period, and the trailer is a passive device that collects data whenever cars go by.

Chair Haas stated this area does not currently meet warrants for a stop sign. He added the area can be monitored but there does not appear to be excessive amounts of traffic.

Mr. Schluender stated City Staff would like to do a mailing campaign to the residents of this neighborhood, as approximately 80% of the traffic is local. He added a mailing will bring this issue to their attention. He requested the Commissioners' input on the scope of the mailing. He noted he can provide a map.

He added 125th Avenue NE does not have a signal.

Chair Haas stated east to west traffic on Harpers Street NE should be included, as that neighborhood has one way in and out.

Commissioner Anderson stated a street can be used as the outmost edge of the study area, to compile a mailing list.

Commissioner Wold asked whether the mailing would include an invitation to residents to attend a Traffic Commission meeting to discuss this issue. Mr. Schluender stated he wants to share information regarding traffic speeds and complaints with the residents of the neighborhood, and that the data collected indicates that 80% of violators live within a 3-block radius of Harpers Street NE and 125th Avenue NE. He added this is an issue of self-awareness and education, to begin a dialogue among the neighbors. He noted he is not sure whether an open house or public meeting is necessary.

Chair Haas requested that City Staff send out the mailing to neighborhood residents and bring the results back to the Traffic Commission for review. Commissioner Wold stated the Commissioners could be copied in on the mailing. Mr. Schluender agreed.

Motion by Commissioner Wold to send a mailing to residents in the Harpers Street NE neighborhood north of 125th Avenue NE to share information regarding traffic speeds and report back to the Traffic Commission at their next Regular Meeting. Motion seconded by Commissioner Chmielewski. The motion passed 5-0.

Aye: 6 - Haas, Wold, Hill, Skarich, Anderson, and Chmielewski

Commissioner Anderson stated he received a comment from a neighborhood resident regarding a school bus stop at 128th Avenue NE. He added the resident indicated that children, including her own child who has a disability, must cross 128th Avenue NE to access the bus stop, as the bus travels south. He noted the resident is requesting consideration of a crosswalk at this location.

Mr. Schluender stated crosswalks or striping can be considered at that location, although they instill a false sense of security. He added City Staff can contact the bus company to review and potentially change bus stop locations. He requested the resident's contact information so he can reach out to the resident and see what can be done to accommodate her request. Commissioner Anderson agreed.

7.-2

CONSIDERATION FOR CROSSWALK AT HARPERS STREET AND 132ND AVENUE

Attachments: [Harpers Street xwalk](#)

Mr. Schluender stated City Staff received a request from a resident for a crosswalk on the southeast corner of Harpers Street NE, 131st Avenue NE and 132nd Avenue NE. There is a community area on the east side of the T-junction with swimming pool, club house and playground that is heavily used by the neighborhood. A crosswalk would make it easier and safer for families and children to cross the street.

Mr. Schluender stated 131st Avenue NE and 132nd Avenue NE are collector streets on the Minnesota State Aid (MSA) system. In addition, there is a short block of 131st Avenue with 12 homes that will be a collector to Lexington Avenue. Intersections in this area were laid out with 1 crosswalk each, and at this intersection, the crosswalk is on the north or west side of the intersection.

Chairman Haas asked whether there are pedestrian crossing signs. Mr. Schluender no there are no pedestrian crossing signs.

Commissioner Hill asked whether there is a stop sign for Harpers Street NE. Mr. Schluender confirmed there is the intersection has a stop condition, and when the streets are connected it will be a three-way stop.

Steve Peterson, 3162 131st Avenue NE, stated he is a resident of this neighborhood, and he served on the Andover Planning Commission and works as a highway planner. He added he is aware of the increasing emphasis on pedestrian safety at the State level, related to all local roadways. He noted the intersection is unique due to the community area with bus stop, playground, clubhouse and neighborhood pool, that is an amenity for the Wagamon Ranch development.

Mr. Peterson stated the sidewalk ends on the east side of Harpers Street NE, and the area is not ADA-accessible and is not a viable crossing. He added the 70-80 residents on the east side of Harpers Street have to cross the two busiest legs of the intersection to get to the community area. He noted adding an ADA-accessible curb ramp will eliminate the safety risk for neighborhood residents.

Commissioner Hill stated a pedestrian ramp should be put in at this location. Commissioner Anderson agreed a ramp would be appropriate in line with the sidewalk.

Commissioner Chmielewski asked why a pedestrian crossing was not put in at this location. Mr. Schluender stated the City has typically done 2 crossing legs at T-junctions to minimize the number of crossing options.

Chair Haas stated it would make sense to add a crosswalk if this will eventually be a three-way stop. He added the City of Blaine has typically done 1 crossing at the uncontrolled leg of a 3-way intersection. He stressed the importance of avoiding a situation where pedestrians think they are safe.

Commissioner Skarich stated he supports the second option for pedestrian crossings. He added residents will continue to cross the road, and that is a safety concern. Commissioner Wold agreed, adding a ramp is required as this is a special situation.

Chair Haas stated he does not support adding two crossings that are uncontrolled at both legs.

Motion by Commissioner Hill to recommend to the City Council that ADA-compliant pedestrian ramps be installed on each side of 131st Avenue NE at Harpers Street NE. Motion seconded by Commissioner Anderson. Vote on the motion: Commissioners Hill, Skarich, Wold voted aye. Chair Haas and Commissioner Chmielewski voted nay. The motion passed 3-2.

Aye: 4 - Wold, Hill, Skarich, and Anderson

Nay: 2 - Haas, and Chmielewski

Mr. Schluender stated this item will be reviewed by the City Council at an upcoming meeting in December 2019. He added funding sources will need to be identified.

8. Updates

8.1 Police Department Update

Sergeant Hatanpa stated the Police Department recently acquired a speed-reading sign with support from CenterPoint Energy. He added the sign reads speeds but does not collect data and can be connected and deployed anywhere in the City with 2 weeks of run time in normal weather. He noted the sign is currently deployed at the 12400 block of Lever Street NE.

Sergeant Hatanpa stated the City's speed trailers have been put away due to the cold weather, as the batteries do not last. He added the speed-reading sign will hopefully be used throughout the winter.

Sergeant Hatanpa stated resident complaints have been received regarding traffic speeds on Flowerfield Road NE east of Lexington Avenue NE. He added traffic data was collected, and the 85th percentile speed was 32 mph in a 35-mph zone. Additional speed enforcement was done on the 200 block of 91st Avenue NE, and

the average speed was 31 mph.

Sergeant Hatanpa reviewed other problematic locations: 11400 block of Club West Parkway, with an 85th percentile speed of 36 mph in a 35-mph zone with a curved roadway; and 121st Avenue NE and Lexington Avenue, with vehicles trying to turn left onto southbound Lexington Avenue. He added a traffic light will be going in there at some point the near future.

Sergeant Hatanpa introduced Officer Travis Hill, the newest member of the Traffic Enforcement Unit. He added Officer Hill replaces Officer Zach Johnson.

Commissioner Hill stated he recently attended the Blaine Citizens Academy, an 8-week course planned by the Police and Fire Departments and City Staff. He added it was a great experience, and he thanked City Staff for making it a success.

8.2 ADA Transition Plan Update

Mr. Schluender stated City Staff have collected the necessary data for the ADA Transition Plan, and a public hearing is will be held at the Traffic Commission's December 3, 2019 meeting.

9 Next Meeting - Tuesday, December 3, 2019 at 6:30 PM

9.1 Discussion Regarding 121st Avenue NE and Lexington Avenue NE

Mr. Schluender stated the traffic situation at 121st Avenue NE and Lexington Avenue NE was referenced earlier and requested as an agenda item. He added this is a developing edge area, and many neighborhood residents on the east side of Lexington Avenue are cutting across high-speed traffic on Lexington Avenue on foot to gain access to the Wetland Sanctuary. He noted Ramsey County has been notified of this situation, and signage has been posted.

Mr. Schluender stated Woodland Parkway and 122nd Avenue NE are connector streets for that side of Blaine. He added Anoka County began an intersection signal project at 117th Avenue NE and Lexington Avenue NE this fall, with a pedestrian crossing that will be operational in Spring 2020. He added there will be an increase in traffic as more commercial use is added to that intersection. He noted the County intends to add a 3rd lane to each direction of Lexington Avenue, and a signalized intersection with pedestrian safe crossing will be added.

Mr. Schluender stated the Lexington sports complex will have a pedestrian trail system extending to the north, to the intersection at 122nd Avenue NE. He added there is currently no pedestrian walk or trail that extends beyond the western

parking lot in the sports complex, and there are currently no plans for a pedestrian crossing. He noted Commissioner Wold wished to comment on this issue.

Commissioner Hill asked whether a fence has been considered on Lexington Avenue. Mr. Schluender stated that would be a County decision. He added when the 3rd lane goes in, there will probably be some kind of barrier installed.

Commissioner Wold stated he often parks at the sports complex for his grandsons' football games, and the parking situation is difficult. He added cars are parked on both sides of the roadway and it is difficult to get a car through. He noted it is necessary to turn right onto northbound Lexington Avenue NE and make an uncontrolled U turn to go southbound on Lexington Avenue NE.

Mr. Schluender stated the City is trying to do scheduling to accommodate this issue, and the Police Department has been engaged. City Staff are trying to work with the parking that is currently onsite, and address games schedules to make it work for parks programming.

Commissioner Wold stated new intersection controls at 122nd Avenue will help the situation. He added it is a dangerous spot.

Mr. Schluender stated hopefully visitors to the sports complex will access Lexington Avenue at the south end which will have a signal.

Commissioner Anderson asked whether there has been discussion between the County and City regarding cost sharing for 117th Avenue and Lexington Avenue intersection improvements. Mr. Schluender stated this has been an issue of discussion by the City Council. He added there 11 potential new signals are being reviewed throughout the City.

Commissioner Skarich asked whether Lakes Parkway will come through to Lexington Avenue. Mr. Schluender confirmed that it is still the City's traffic plan to have Lakes Parkway connect with Lexington Avenue at 122nd Avenue.

9.2 Discussion regarding Legislative Approval of 25 mph speed limit

Mr. Schluender stated new State legislation allows Minnesota cities to decide whether to lower their residential speed limit from 30 mph to 25 mph. He added Commissioner Anderson requested a discussion of this issue. He noted residents will make requests to lower the speed limit on their streets, and the Traffic Commission can discuss how to handle these requests.

Commissioner Anderson stated the City of Minneapolis is considering lowering the residential speed limit to 25 mph. He expressed concern that a hodge podge will be created, as drivers must observe varying speed limits from city to city. He requested that the Traffic Commission consider a recommendation to the City Council to draft a letter to local government representatives, requesting that a 25-mph speed limit be mandated for all communities in the metro area.

Commissioner Chmielewski stated the 25mph was only supported by legislators in Minneapolis, St. Paul and Duluth. He added he does not believe a letter to legislators will change what has already happened with this issue. Chair Haas agreed, stating traffic speed reductions must be addressed in a safe way through enforcement and education. He expressed concern that changing it for one street will mean that every street will have to be changed.

Commissioner Chmielewski stated the Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul felt that a lower speed limit would be beneficial due to narrow streets and issues with snowplows. He added the majority of the streets in Blaine have an 85th percentile speed of 34-36 mph and lowering the speed limit to 25 mph will not change that.

Commissioner Hill stated Minnesota State Aid (MSA) has been assisting cities that are tackling this issue. He added he could provide a report on their efforts at the Traffic Commission's next meeting. Mr. Schluender agreed.

Commissioner Chmielewski stated the Traffic Commission discussed this issue at its last meeting, and the consensus was to leave the residential speed limit at 30 mph. He added the City would be put in a position where the speed limit on all residential streets will have to be lowered.

Commissioner Hill stated he would recommend adding this issue to the next Traffic Commission meeting agenda, and he provide an MSA position update or have someone from MSA administration present their findings.

Mr. Schluender agreed to add this item to the December 3, 2019 meeting agenda.

10. Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Chmielewski to adjourn the Traffic Commission meeting. Motion seconded by Commissioner Wold. The motion passed 5-0. Adjournment time was 7:27 p.m.

Aye: 6 - Haas, Wold, Hill, Skarich, Anderson, and Chmielewski