



City of Harrisonburg

City Hall
409 South Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Meeting Minutes - Final Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission

Wednesday, February 10, 2021

8:30 AM

Virtual

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission met on February 10, 2021 at 8:30am using a GoToMeeting. The meeting was not held in person due to the state of emergency related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Commission members attended by calling in using a phone or joining by audio/video on a computer. Information allowing members of the public to watch the meeting live was provided in the agenda and posted on the City website in the week prior to the meeting. Members of the public were given the opportunity to provide comments on the items discussed by phone or e-mail prior to the meeting.

All attendees introduced themselves. Mr. zumFelde welcomed Dr. Scherpereel as a new member on the Commission.

Commission members present: William Blessing, Marian Lebherz, Kyle Lawrence, Chance Ebersold, John Scherpereel, Erin Yancey (Public Works), Sgt. Wayne Westfall (Police Department)

Advisory members and guests: Jakob zumFelde (Public Works), Tom Hartman (Public Works), Matt Tobia (Fire Department), Paul Helmuth (Fire Department), Bill Yates (JMU)

2. Election of Commission Chair

Mr. zumFelde asked for nominations for Chair of the Commission for the 2021 calendar year. Mr. Ebersold nominated Mr. Lawrence, Ms. Lebherz

seconded the motion, and all members voted in favor.

3. 2021 Meeting Dates

Mr. zumFelde showed the meeting dates listed for the 2021 calendar year.

No members expressed concerns with the proposed dates.

4. Visibility of Downtown Traffic Signals due to sun

Ms. Yancey said that following concerns raised at TSAC about how the sun can cause visibility concerns with downtown traffic signals, staff have determined that it would be appropriate to install backplates at the Main St & Elizabeth St intersection. The backplates would be the same color and style as the black backplates currently installed at the Main St and MLK Jr. Way intersection. After installation at this location, staff will determine whether it is desirable to install at other intersections on Main St downtown. Mr. Hartman and Ms. Yancey clarified that all other signals in the City, outside of downtown, already have backplates. But backplates were not installed on downtown signals, as this was the design recommended by the Downtown Streetscape Plan. Ms. Yancey asked if any Commissioners had concerns and no concerns were raised.

5. Vine St overnight truck restrictions

Mr. zumFelde gave an overview of existing truck restrictions, and past truck restrictions, on Vine St. The restriction is currently in place for Vine St between Country Club Rd and Old Furnace Rd between 9pm and 5am. An overnight truck restriction was previously also in place between Main St and Old Furnace Rd, so staff are proposing to re-install those signs. Chief Tobia asked whether additional signs would be installed on Main St so that trucks turning from Main St onto Vine St would see the sign before making the turn. Mr. zumFelde said that this was discussed by staff, as such additional signs are in place for similar situations, however he said the fact that the restriction is only in place overnight is a notable difference and led staff to suggest only installing a sign on Vine St at this time. Ms. Leberherz noted that there is considerable commercial traffic turning from Washington St onto

Vine St. Mr. zumFelde asked if she knew if any of these vehicles would be traveling at night, and she indicated that they may only be during the day. Ms. Lebherz said that the speed limit sign (25 mph) used to have a “residential” sign associated with it, but that is no longer there. Mr. Blessing asked if the existing signs on Vine St have been effective in reducing trucks using Vine St overnight. Sgt. Westfall said that he has had officers patrol this location and a few summonses have been written.

6. Northeast Neighborhood Intersection safety concerns

Ms. Yancey said that staff and neighborhood residents have been working through the neighborhood traffic calming process for the last few years. Unfortunately, the pandemic has stalled this process. Staff recognize that there are a few high-crash intersections in the neighborhood and are proposing that staff evaluate these intersections and identify potential treatments to be considered by TSAC. Mr. Blessing said that he is aware that having adequate sight distance is a challenge at almost every intersection in the Northeast Neighborhood, but that many actions have been taken over the years to make improvements when possible. Mr. Lawrence asked if speed and volume data had been collected. Mr. zumFelde said that it was collected in 2017 or 2018, but that staff have learned more about the traffic counters used and so he is unsure of the accuracy of that data. Mr. Lawrence said that speed is a concern, as well as sight distance, for intersections in the neighborhood. Mr. Lawrence noted that one challenge with traffic calming efforts in general is that residents may not know what certain treatments are or really understand how they function. He suggested that implementation of treatments at one or two intersections in the neighborhood would help residents of the neighborhood understand what they look like so that they are prepared if the treatment is proposed at other locations in the neighborhood.

Dr. Scherpereel asked what the Neighborhood Traffic Calming process involves. Ms. Yancey gave a brief explanation and directed Dr. Scherpereel to the City’s Traffic Calming Manual that provides details about the process and potential treatments.

Dr. Scherpereel asked where in the process the Northeast Neighborhood is.

Ms. Yancey said that the petition has been completed, so the next step will be to create a neighborhood committee, but that has not yet occurred due to the pandemic.

7. Greendale Rd Curve

Mr. zumFelde reminded the Commission members that safety concerns at this intersection came to light when an impaired driver did not turn and hit many vehicles on the Police Training property. Mr. zumFelde said that staff have now had a chance to review the crash reports from this location and found that the majority of them were vehicles headed northbound into the curve who crossed the centerline during rainy or wet conditions. Staff have identified multiple actions to be further evaluated and then implemented. The first action that staff will pursue is moving the cautionary curve sign or potentially adding a second curve sign before the curve. A second action that staff will pursue is adding reflective lane markers along the centerline in the curve. A third action that staff will pursue is changing the color of the stone in the driveway to change the appearance of that driveway to ensure people do not think it is a continuation of the roadway. Mr. Blessing asked if staff will only be choosing one of those actions or implementing them all. Mr. zumFelde said that staff will be pursuing all of the suggestions, but have not finalized that they are all feasible or cost-effective.

8. Smithland Rd Speed Limit

Mr. Hartman said that staff collected data in December and reviewed existing speeds. The 85th percentile at the location was approximately 42mph in both directions. He said that staff also reviewed the crash history and the context of the segment, with advisory speed signs for the curves on both ends of the segment. Due to the combination of these factors, he said that staff are proposing reducing the speed limit to 40mph. He said that the Police Chief has approved this change and that staff will be making the change in the coming months.

9. Blue Ridge Dr speeding concerns

Mr. zumFelde said that Public Works and HPD staff have been contacted on multiple occasions regarding speeding concerns on Blue Ridge Dr. He said that staff have collected speed and volume data on Blue Ridge Dr as well as some adjacent streets. He showed the data to the Commission members, and noted that the 85th percentile speed is above 35mph on Blue Ridge Dr between Country Club Rd and Meadowlark Dr. The 85th percentile speed was lower than 35mph at the other locations where data was collected, so the speed at these locations is not high enough to be considered concerning. He showed the traffic volume data that had been collected and noted that there was no indication of cut-through traffic using Meadowlark and Star Crest Dr to avoid Vine St. Given these aspects, staff see the speeding concerns as being confined to Blue Ridge Dr and think it is appropriate to address those concerns without considering the neighborhood for the Traffic Calming program. Mr. zumFelde also noted that the volume of traffic on Blue Ridge Dr makes it more like a Minor Collector street than a neighborhood street. Mr. zumFelde said that staff are proposing to install a speed radar sign in both directions on Blue Ridge Dr as well as considering adding a centerline on some segments of Blue Ridge Dr. Mr. zumFelde said that a timeline for implementation of these measures is dependent on available funding. Mr. Blessing said that he thinks the centerline would improve safety on Blue Ridge Dr, as he has seen many cars that don't stay on their side of the road.

10. Intersection Sight Distance Concerns due to fences

Mr. zumFelde said that three locations have been brought to staff's attention where fences are causing sight distance issues. These three locations are Neff Ave & Putter Ct, Peach Grove Ave & Lois Ln, and the apartment complex entrance near 873 Port Republic Rd. He said that staff in the Community Development department will evaluate these situations to determine if the fences comply with the zoning code. Once this determination has been made, staff will identify actions necessary to

address the concerns.

11. Updates on Previous Agenda Items

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Mr. Lawrence asked if there were any updates on SMART SCALE projects approved for funding, in addition to the information provided. Mr. Hartman said that staff continue to watch the actions of the Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) meetings.

12. Other Business/Announcements

There were no items discussed as announcements or other business.

Adjournment