

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE REPORT

July 15, 2009, 1:50 PM

City Council Chambers

Members Present: Jason Wiener (Chair), Ed Childers, Dick Haines, John Hendrickson, Bob Jaffe, Renee Mitchell, Dave Strohmaier, Pam Walzer, Jon Wilkins

Members Absent:

Others Present: Phil Smith, Laura Goldberg, Ben Weiss, Kevin Slovarp, Steve King, Deborah Oberbillig, Teresa Joseph

I. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

A. Approve minutes of July 8, 2009 as submitted or corrected – Approved as submitted

B. Announcements

Steve King, Public Works Director, gave an update on the 5th/6th/Arthur project. Ongoing discussions with the University of Montana and the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) have resulted in a concept accepted by MDT. Because it is on Highway 12, the project will need to be added to the long-range transportation plan and go before the Metropolitan Planning Organization. The item will come before the Council again to update the Memorandum of Understanding between MDT, UM, and the City, and to order sidewalk improvements assessed to UM, which will be their share of the project. The project is approximately 1.5 million dollars. The City street crews will help complete the work, and in-kind contribution of approximately \$500,000, and MDT will handle the traffic lights. The project may be built next summer. Kevin Slovarp, City Engineer, pointed out that Jeanette Rankin Park is actually State right-of-way, not a park.

Phil Smith, Bicycle/Pedestrian Program Manager, introduced the Bicycling Ambassadors for the summer, Ben Weiss and Laura Goldberg. They will come before Council with a report at the end of the summer.

Mr. Jaffe asked what the outcome of Orange Street restriping was. Mr. King stated that it will be striped with bike lanes after the chip and seal.

C. Public Comment on Non-Agenda items

Teresa Joseph of 1226 Lincoln Parkway appealed to the Council to revoke a business license. After a fire at her house, a demolition permit was pulled, and at the time her contractor, Rick's Flooring, did not have a business license. He brought in unlicensed workers and ruined the materials. She dismissed him and received threats. She has gotten a restraining order, but was told to come before the Council and request his license be revoked. Council members stated they would make a referral and begin the process, but it was not a fast one.

II. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

1. Resolution to change speed limits on Rattlesnake Drive and Greenough Drive (memo) (Resolution).—Regular Agenda (Steve King) (Referred to committee: 07/13/09) REMOVE FROM AGENDA

Motion: The committee recommends the City Council adopt a resolution to set a speed limit of 30 miles per hour on the portion of West Greenough Drive between Waterworks Hill and Lolo Street and the portion of Rattlesnake Drive between Missoula Avenue and Creek Crossing Road.

Mr. King stated that the 85th percentile in the traffic study was between 35 mph and 40 mph. Other factors, such as school zones, the character of the road, and wildlife were also considered. Most collector roads in town are posted at 30 mph. Missoula Municipal Code 10.18.020 allows the Council to declare and set speed limits.

Deborah Oberbillig of 503 Linden Street off Greenough Drive, supported the lower speed limits. She had hoped for a 25 mph limit, but this was a good step and will make an improvement. There is a problem with wildlife, pedestrians, and bicyclists up there.

Mr. Strohmaier made the motion.

Mr. Strohmaier stated that the speed limit was strongly supported by both Rattlesnake neighborhood councils. The speed limit deviates from the 85th percentile, but other factors warrant the speed reduction.

Mr. King stated that he expected the behavior of most drivers would most likely not change with the posting of a sign, and that it would only change when the physical roadway changed, such as with the addition of a sidewalk, constrained roadway, and cross-traffic. The signs are only a part of the overall character of the road.

Mr. Childers noted that it only takes one person to drive 30 mph to slow the traffic to that speed.

The motion passed unanimously.

2. Authorize speed limits ([memo](#)) ([Speed Limits Memo – Steve King](#))([Presentation Maps](#)).—Regular Agenda (Ed Childers) (Referred to committee: 12/08/08) **REMOVE FROM AGENDA**

Motion: The committee recommends the City Council authorize speed limits as posted on England Boulevard from Reserve Street to Flynn Lane at 30 mph, Lower Miller Creek Road through the Maloney Ranch subdivision at 30 mph, and Expressway at 35 mph where posted to transition between the 25 mph and the 45 mph zone.

Mr. King stated that there were a number of other areas in town where speed limits were changed without Council approval, detailed on the attached memo.

Mr. Childers made a motion to authorize the speed limits as they exist as detailed in the December 16 memo, with the exception of George Elmer Drive.

Mr. Jaffe stated that changing the limit on Expressway concerned him. It is 25 mph at Reserve Street, then it transitions to 35 and 45 out in the County. He wondered why it was set at 25 mph near Reserve Street, a commercial area, when it could easily be 35 mph. Mr. King stated that he was not sure how the speed was established, whether it was set by the City or by the County and inherited by the City. He stated that it was in the Council's purview to set it at 35 mph the whole way, which would satisfy the citizen who spoke about it being a speed trap. Expressway is a local collector now, but is intended to be a minor arterial in future development.

Ms. Walzer agreed that Expressway had an inappropriate speed and was a speed trap. She thought that if they did a traffic study, they would find that the 85th percentile would be a higher number. The speed increases to 45 mph adjacent to the residential areas. She thought the speed should be 35 mph for the length of the road within City Limits.

Mr. Wiener stated that the current discussion was to authorize limits as they exist, and that they are supposed to conduct a study before they start changing speed limits. He thought that they should discuss any changes separately.

Mr. Hendrickson stated that 25 mph was unreasonable, and 35 mph would be better throughout. He asked staff whether 35 mph would be a good fit in their professional opinions, without spending time and money on a study. Mr. King replied that it was important to document and follow the ordinance, which specifies that they will determine speeds based on the results of an engineering and traffic investigation. He recommended passing the motion on the floor to adopt speed limits as they exist, and ask the Mayor to request staff to conduct a study. It would not have to be elaborate, but it would have to be documented.

Ms. Walzer stated that residents of Pleasant View had a mixture of ideas on what was the appropriate speed. She was concerned about lowering speed limits to 25 mph later, because it is hard to get speed limits reduced. She questioned whether a 30 mph speed limit was logical on a street with people living on it.

Mr. Strohmaier stated that the request for a speed study on Expressway did not need a formal motion, and that a request from the committee chair should suffice. Mr. Wiener confirmed the request. Mr. King stated that they would bring back the information on Expressway when it was ready.

Mr. King stated that on England Boulevard the physical features cue drivers that it is a 30 mph roadway. Drivers transition from Reserve to the residential neighborhood with a roundabout at Connery, and there are several bulb-outs as well as bike lanes and parking on both sides of the street, front porches, and a curving roadway. The staff recommendation is to retain the current limit.

The motion passed unanimously.

III. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

1. George Elmer Drive Speed Limit (memo) (Speed Study).—Regular Agenda (Bob Jaffe)(Referred to committee: 11/17/08) **REMOVE FROM AGENDA**

Mr. Slovarp stated that the engineering speed study for George Elmer Drive was last presented and discussed May 27. There is some traffic calming occurring with the addition of a roundabout in the design of the Flynn Ranch subdivision. Staff recommended 45 mph as an appropriate speed on the road as it exists now.

Ms. Walzer asked about the speed capability of the roundabout being designed. Mr. Slovarp stated it would be 15 mph. Ms. Walzer was concerned about a sudden drop in speed, from a 45 mph road to a 15 mph roundabout. She thought they should step down the speed limit as people approached the roundabout.

Mr. Slovarp stated that it was possible to do a step down. The roundabout cues people to slow down, and there are 15 mph warning signs before the roundabout.

Ms. Mitchell stated that a roundabout designed to reduce speeds to 15 mph on a 45 mph road was a drastic change, and a set up for a rear-end collision. She stated that 35 mph on the street could be adequate. Less of a speed differential seemed safer.

Mr. Jaffe asked whether a speed study was conducted and if 35 mph on George Elmer would be supportable. Mr. Slovarp stated they didn't take speed counts on the road for the study, but created the report based on the Wye/Mullan Comprehensive plan and Long-Range Transportation Plan and what the road was designed to carry. The road is wide open right now, and 35 mph would be artificial until other side friction and developments were there. Mr. Jaffe asked whether they could set the limit at 35 mph now and deal with it being over-engineered for now. Mr. King recommended a compromise and stated that they could create a transitional speed limit, with a reduction to 35 mph 500 feet south of the new neighborhood and roundabout, leaving the rest of the road at 45 mph.

Mr. Wiener asked how they would evaluate the road as future subdivisions came in. He thought they should redo the plan if their vision is for something other than a 45 mph collector road. When they evaluate subdivisions for street design, he doesn't want to limit access to the roadway if they are moving away from that. He asked if Engineering referred to the comprehensive plan for the area when reviewing subdivisions, and Mr. King replied that they do.

Childers asked if they needed a motion to reduce to George Elmer Drive speed limits to 35 mph within 500 feet of the new roundabout, and Mr. Wiener replied that they would need a resolution drafted first.

IV. HELD AND ONGOING AGENDA ITEMS

1. Discussion on the sizes of grease interceptors for the restaurant industry ([Grease Interceptor PowerPoint](#)) ([memo](#)).—Regular Agenda (Stacy Rye and Bob Jaffe) (Referred to committee: 04/21/08)
2. Consider restructuring the city's Sewer Loan Program along the lines of the recently approved change to the Sidewalk & Curb Loan Fund.—Regular Agenda ([Chapter 3.16 – Sidewalk & Curb Loan](#)) ([Chapter 3.18 Sewer Loan](#)) ([Ordinance 3344](#)) (Ed Childers) (Referred to committee: 06/26/06)
3. Discussion item to consider vacating portions of an 1896 petition County road on the westerly side of Miller Creek Road. ([memo](#)) (Monte Sipe) (Referred to committee: 10/6/08)
4. Discussion item regarding complete streets. ([memo](#)) (Jason Wiener) (Referred to committee: 10/27/08)
5. Information item to present the City's Master Sidewalk Plan. ([memo](#))—Regular Agenda (Doug Harby) (Referred to committee: 01/12/09)
6. Discussion of local, city-sponsored energy production ([memo](#)). (Ed Childers) (Referred to committee: 12/22/08)
7. Discussion on the leaf removal program ([memo](#)).—Regular Agenda (Jason Wiener) (Referred to committee: 06/08/09)
8. Resolution of intention to close and vacate certain portions of Miller Creek Road and Lower Miller Creek Road generally located between Briggs and the "Wye". ([Resolution A](#)) ([Resolution B](#)) ([Staff Report](#)) ([map-6 MB file size](#)) ([memo](#)) ([PW](#)) (Returned from Council floor: 4/13/09)

V. ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully Submitted,

Jessica S. Miller
Office Manager
City Public Works Department