

## **Traffic Control Board Minutes Tuesday, June 26, 2007**

Angela Cimmino√  
Doug Kary  
Keith Lang √  
Walt Willett√  
Steve Zeier √

Capt Vladic √  
Sondra Baker √  
Judge Knisely

√ = Present

**Staff Support:** Terry Smith, John Gibson, Nick Bailey

**Guests:** Steve Wahrlich, owner Clock Tower Inn, 2511 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North

**Call to Order:** At 12:20 pm by Walt Willett

**Minutes:** Motion for approval of minutes from the June meeting was made by Angela Cimmino and seconded by Walt Willett. Motion carried on voice vote.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** There was no public comment concerning items not on the agenda.

### Request for 1-way alley, Block 90 Billings O.T.

Item 1 under “Old Business” was taken up first since Mr. Wahrlich was present to address the Board. Mr. Wahrlich reported that he bought the old Ponderosa Inn approximately two years ago. The alley between 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North, and North 25<sup>th</sup> and North 26<sup>th</sup>, Streets splits the hotel property. Even though Mr. Wahrlich has removed some trees along the edge of the alley to improve sight distance and posted advisory signs, there have been two accidents between vehicles and a few near misses involving pedestrians crossing the alley. Mr. Wahrlich reported the City conducted traffic counts in the alley and found 85% of the traffic is traveling southbound, with a high speed of 22 MPH recorded during the study. The motel was only at 40% occupancy when the study was conducted. The problem is worse with the street and lane closures on North 26<sup>th</sup> for the parking garage construction. The apartment building at the north end of the block is dependent on the alley as an exit from their parking lot.

Terry noted that the traffic study did not reveal unusual volumes or speeds for a commercial alley. There were about 100 cars per day using the alley, with an 85%-ile speed of 13 MPH. When the Board considered the request at their April meeting, they asked staff to explore other alternatives.

Terry stated there have been several options weighed:

1. Vacating the alley. City policy requires that the City be compensated for the value of the property when a street or alley is vacated (transferred to private ownership). There is 3000 sq feet of alley at an estimated value \$10.00 a sq foot. The City would have to retain an easement for the sanitary sewer main in the alley because it serves properties to the north. Paying \$30,000 for the property and then not being able to build on or over it is not an attractive option for Mr. Wahrlich.
2. Putting speed humps in the alley. Most speed humps are designed to reduce travel speeds to around 25 MPH—speeds in the alley are already lower than that. Speed

- humps would also create drainage problems unless an expensive storm drain line was extended in the alley.
3. Make the alley a one-way. The Solid Waste Division would prefer the alley be one-way southbound for garbage pickup. A one-way southbound would do little to reduce conflicts, since 85% of the traffic is already traveling southbound. Mr. Wahrlich is willing to relocate the dumpsters to accommodate garbage pickup. The apartment dumpster has already been moved to the east side of the alley, which improves sight distance where their parking lot exits onto the alley.

Terry stated the previous staff recommendation had been to re-evaluate the situation after the Wells Fargo drive-thru in the block north of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue has relocated to the new parking garage building. Terry noted that designation as a one-way alley was very inexpensive to implement and it could always be changed back if it didn't work out or created other problems.

Captain Vlastic moved that the Board make a recommendation to the City Council to restrict the alley to one-way northbound traffic from 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North to 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North. Motion was 2<sup>nd</sup> by Angela Cimmino. The motion carried on a voice vote.

### **STAFF REPORTS:**

#### **1. Lake Elmo Road Corridor**

Nick Bailey, Staff Engineer, updated the Board on planned improvements to Lake Elmo Road. A copy of Nick's presentation was provided to each Board member.

Nick noted that the improvements have been broken into several phases covering the Lake Elmo Road corridor between Main Street on the south, and Pemberton on the north end. Lake Elmo Road is a Collector Street, and therefore Arterial Fees cannot be used for reconstruction. The primary source of funding is gas tax funds, supplemented by some storm drain funds and by CTEP funding for some of the sidewalk & multi-use trail improvements.

Phase I of the project included Lake Elmo Road from Wicks Lane to Angel Drive, and was completed in 1999. Bike lanes could easily be added to this section.

Phase II, Main to Hansen, was bid in 2006 but bids exceeded the project budget. In order to reduce costs some adjustments made and the project will be re-bid. Construction is scheduled to begin in the fall of 2007, after water goes out of the irrigation ditch.

Phases 3 and 4 will cover the area from Hilltop to Wicks. Construction funds will not be available for this segment until July 1, 2008. Nick noted that there is nothing programmed in the 5-year Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for the last segment between Angel and Pemberton.

#### **2. Grand Avenue 8<sup>th</sup> West to 12<sup>th</sup> West**

Terry reported that the Grand Avenue project is on schedule and should be completed by around the 1st of September.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

#### **Proposed Changes in Billings Curb Cut Ordinance**

Terry provided Board members with a copy of proposed modifications to the City's Curb Cut Ordinance. The ordinance amendments were prepared in response to requests for the Billings Home Builders Association. Terry noted that he feels there are problems with the specific wording of the proposed amendments. He distributed some additional suggested changes, both

in wording and in concept. Terry noted that the exact wording might still need to be refined. After some discussion, Angela made a motion to support the concepts included in the changes proposed by Terry. Captain Vladic seconded the motion and it passed on voice vote. Because time was short, Terry asked members to review the proposed ordinance and additional proposed wording changes and get back to him if they found conflicts, or other items that needed to be clarified.

#### ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Angela asked if a presentation on traffic signal warrants could be made sometime prior to the December meeting. She asked if a copy of the MUTCD signal warrants could be distributed to all Board members.

**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 1:54 PM.