

Traffic Control Board Minutes
February 24, 2009

Sondra Baker
Judge Knisely
Capt. Bedford ✓

Doug Kary ✓
Brent Krueger
Keith Lang ✓
Walt Willett ✓
Steve Zeier ✓

✓ = Present

Staff Support: Terry Smith, Erin Claunch, Lora Mattox

Guests: None

Call to Order: Chair Doug Kary called the meeting to order at 12:15pm in the Public Works conference room, 2224 Montana Avenue.

Minutes: Minutes of the January meeting were distributed. There were no changes to the minutes; Doug Kary declared them approved as printed.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

STAFF REPORTS:

Terry reported that based on last night's City Council action regarding creation of a new street lighting district on King Avenue East, it appears the Council wants to use LED lamps rather than high-pressure sodium lamps, in all future lighting districts. The LED lamps use less energy and need to be replaced less often than HPS lamps. The initial cost of LED lamps is 4 to 5 times more than for HPS lamps.

BOARD REPORTS:

Planning Board: Lora Mattox reported the Lockwood Transportation Study would be before the Planning Board tonight for approval. This is the first time the Lockwood area has had a specific list of projects developed. The project list includes estimated construction costs. The Transportation District created for construction of the Johnson Lane Interchange remains in place and is a potential source of funding for projects beyond State and County funding.

Lora also reported there has been a series of public meetings held to gather input for revitalization of the area between downtown and the fairgrounds via a tax increment district. The project is known as the BIRD (*Billings Industrial Revitalization District*). Although early discussions included changing 4th and 6th Avenues North back to two-way streets, it appears that will not be part of the final plan. The focus now is on creating more of a traditional "Main Street" feel along the 2nd & 3rd Avenue corridors. The intent is to make the area a destination, rather than streets only carrying pass through traffic. These streets (2nd & 3rd) would be reconfigured to emphasize access to adjacent properties, traffic circulation within the area, and shared use by all street users (motor vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, etc.). Lora will make sure that Traffic Control Board members are on the notification list for future public meetings concerning the BIRD.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Photo Enforcement. Terry reported that a committee reviewed proposals from two different companies to provide red light cameras on a contract basis. The committee felt that the Redflex Traffic Systems proposal looked best. Redflex is the company hired by the City of Bozeman to implement their red light cameras. No date has been set for Council consideration of the proposals. Terry distributed a copy of a legal opinion on use of photo enforcement that was prepared for Redflex Traffic Systems before they contracted with the City of Bozeman. Lt. Bedford distributed information on House Bill 531. This bill would effectively prohibit the use of photo enforcement in Montana. This bill has been approved on second reading in the House and appears to be headed for the Senate.
2. Ordinance Revisions related to Boards & Commissions. Terry distributed a copy of City Ordinance 09-5485, that was given final approval by the City Council at their January 12th meeting. The ordinance establishes more detailed operating procedures for all City Boards & Commissions than existed in the past. Steve Zeier noted that the discussions at the January 12 Council meeting with respect to the Traffic Control Board were very interesting and he encouraged other Board members to read the minutes from that meeting if they had not. There was a general discussion of what the Board can do to be more visible to the City Council and be more involved in Council actions that involve traffic and transportation issues.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Election of Chair. After some initial discussion by the group, Walt Willett nominated Doug Kary as Chair for 2009. Keith Lang seconded the nomination. Doug called for additional nominations. There were none. Nominations were closed and Doug was elected Chair by a voice vote. Keith Lang nominated Walt Willett as vice-chair for 2009. Steve Zeier seconded the nomination. There were no additional nominations. Walt was elected on voice vote.
2. Inner Belt Loop. Doug asked how Alkali Creek Road fit into the proposal to construct the “inner belt loop,” a roadway around the north & west sides of the Airport to connect the Heights to the West End. Terry & Erin reported that a study completed several years ago for the Planning Department recommended extension of Wicks Lane to Alkali Creek Road and then west around the airport to tie in at Zimmerman Trail and Highway 3. The current proposal is to use Senators as an interim connection between Governors and Alkali Creek Road, then take traffic north along Alkali Creek Road to where the westerly segment of the “inner belt loop” would begin. On an interim basis, this would save the cost of acquiring right-of-way and constructing Wicks Lane from where it currently dead-ends northwest of Skyview High School down to Alkali Creek Road. It would still allow traffic from the Heights to get to the westend without having to use Main Street or Airport Road. Doug asked if the proposed roadway extension down to Alkali Creek Road in the State land south of Skyview could be used for the connection instead of Senators. This would save drivers considerable distance over using Senators. Terry noted that he had not heard much about the State lands development in recent months and was not sure of its status. Terry offered to bring additional information back to the Board at the next meeting.
3. Two-way traffic on 4th & 6th Avenues North. This issue was discussed during the report on the East End BIRD. At this time, it appears the proposal to make 4th & 6th two-way is not going to be part of the overall plan for the BIRD.
4. Harvest Church Traffic. Terry reported that an interesting situation has developed with Harvest Church traffic in the Heights. The church has been placing people at the intersections of Fantan & Wicks, and High Sierra and Wicks to direct traffic before and after their weekend services. Three-way stops were implemented at these two intersections a number of years ago in an effort to

discourage high school traffic from cutting across the then vacant land west of Skyview High School to access Wicks Lane. Students were doing this to avoid stopping at the intersections, while drivers that properly exited the parking lots using Fantan or High Sierra were forced to wait for the traffic using Wicks. Traffic flow was improved by flagging traffic at these intersections during church arrival & dismissal periods on weekends. Without the flaggers, everyone on Wicks had to stop at both intersections even though there is very little traffic on the side streets on weekends. A neighbor complained about the Church controlling traffic. After review by the City Attorney's office it has been determined there is nothing in existing law to allow church members to flag traffic at these intersections. The law allows use of civilians to control traffic in limited circumstances—school crossing guards or for construction traffic control. Other than that, an individual controlling traffic must be a sworn law enforcement officer. The church is willing to work with the City to work out an alternative. The church is willing to obtain training for their members and is also willing to provide liability insurance. Terry noted that the issue of civilian authority to control traffic also applies to fun runs, road races and other similar events. The Board asked what would happen if the 3-way stops on Wicks were eliminated. Terry noted that at some point in the future when Wicks is extended all the way to Alkali Creek Road, these multi-way stops would probably be removed. Once Wicks is extended it would be inconsistent with driver expectations to stop a major street such as Wicks for relatively minor side streets. Terry expressed concern that removing the 3-way stops at this time would result in high school traffic using other roads in the area to get to Wicks and then traveling on the unimproved portion of Wicks just to “beat” the stop signs that would remain for High Sierra & Fantan traffic entering Wicks. Staff will bring traffic volumes and other more detailed information to the March meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 1:35 PM