

# TRAFFIC CONTROL BOARD MINUTES

## October 22nd, 2013

MEMBERS PRESENT: Todd Cormier, Walt Willett, Gene Wade, Capt. R D Harper

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sondra Baker, Trina White

STAFF SUPPORT: Terry Smith, Erin Claunch, Zach Heid, Lora Mattox, Debi Meling

GUESTS: None

### BUSINESS MEETING:

**Call to order:** Todd Cormier called the meeting to order at 12:20 pm in the conference room of the Public Works Building, 2224 Montana Avenue.

**Minutes:** Motion for approval of the September minutes by Gene Wade, seconded by Walt Willett. Motion carried on a voice vote.

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT: None

### STAFF REPORTS:

**Rimrock Road Project:** Erin Claunch gave an update on the Rimrock Road Project. It is fully paved and the striping is 90% completed. The asphalt trail on the north side of the road from Zimmerman to Shiloh needs to be paved still. The only other big item that needs to be completed is the traffic signal at Rimrock Road and 38<sup>th</sup> St W. They will be setting signal poles next week. Gene asked when the road is going to be open to traffic. Erin said the road could probably be opened now, but they are delaying opening the section west of Zimmerman Trail until the traffic signal is operational for the school crossing at 38<sup>th</sup>.

**Pedestrian Bridge over the Railroad:** Terry reported preliminary construction plans have been submitted for review. Negotiations with the railroad for an easement are moving forward. Lora mentioned that a color has been chosen (brick red) for the ADA lift for the bridge.

### BOARD REPORTS:

**Planning Board:** Lora let the board know that the public meeting for the transportation plan had 24 people attend. There are not any large new projects being proposed with this plan since our federal funding is fully allocated through the year 2022 for Bench Boulevard and the Billings Bypass. Another open house will take place in January 2014. Lora mentioned there is a website ([www.billingslrtp.com](http://www.billingslrtp.com)) with an interactive map where you can add comments in specific locations for improvements or issues. This map will help figure out where the public sees issues or has concerns with areas of Billings.

### COUNCIL ACTIVITIES:

**Special Events in Public Right-of-Way:** Debi Meling gave a presentation that was recently presented to City Council. She asked the Board for input and opinions on how the City handles special events in the public right-of-way. As more events are being requested each year, the goal is to make sure the needs of businesses, residents, event sponsors and the public are balanced. See Attached "Special Events in Billings Montana" presentation.

### OLD BUSINESS:

**Traffic Signals and Public Art:** Terry shared with the board that two traffic signal controller cabinets have been wrapped with art. The pictures/graphics are printed on vinyl and then applied to the cabinets. The locations are 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave N & N 28<sup>th</sup> St and 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave N & N 28<sup>th</sup> St. Four more downtown controller cabinets are going to be wrapped with art in the near future. The project is sponsored by the Downtown Billings Alliance.

NEW BUSINESS:

**Charter Amendment:** In the upcoming election, there is a proposed amendment to the City Charter to allow boards and commissions to have administrative authority if allowed by state or federal law, or by interlocal agreement. Terry mentioned that he understands that it is aimed at the Parking Advisory Board but the proposed amendment is not specific to the Parking Board. Terry noted the item is informational only. Staff cannot advocate for or against items on the ballot.

**Nov-Dec meeting date:** Traditionally we have combined the November and December meeting since those meetings usually fall close to Thanksgiving and Christmas. The board settled on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December for the next Traffic Control Board meeting.

**13<sup>th</sup> & Parkhill (Gazette Article):** Terry noted this intersection was being discussed by the City and the State prior to the recent *Billings Gazette* article. The State completed a safety project at the intersection in 2010 that included a major realignment of the Parkhill approaches, curb extensions, and shortening the pedestrian crossing distance on 13<sup>th</sup> St W. Prior to the realignment, the north curb east of the intersection almost lined up with the south curb west of 13<sup>th</sup> St W. The project did not reduce traffic accidents as much as anticipated. The average number of accidents per year has stayed essentially the same. The state is planning to install a traffic signal at this location. One down side to placing a signal at this location is that it will draw more traffic to Parkhill. Terry mentioned the City is working with the State to see if speed feedback signs can be installed on Parkhill at Highland School to help mitigate the impacts of increased traffic on Parkhill. Underground conduits for a signal were installed with the realignment project, so adding a signal will a relatively easy project. Terry cautioned that signals do not guarantee elimination of all accidents; however a change from right angle accidents to more rear ends is typical with a signal.

**Board Comments:** Gene asked why we have the one-way system downtown. Originally it was designed to speed traffic up and now we are trying to slow traffic down. Terry commented that the pendulum never stops in the middle. In the 1960's moving more traffic with fewer impediments was the goal of traffic engineering. With the street widths in downtown Billings, the one-way streets allowed a total of 6 travel lanes on each pair of streets rather than a total of 4 travel lanes with two-way streets. Todd noted that traffic flow was also improved with one-ways because left turn conflicts are eliminated. Walt mentioned that it is also easier to coordinate traffic signals on one-way streets. Terry said that it would be quite costly to transition back to two-way streets since the traffic signals are set up for one-way traffic.

Walt asked if the council will be appointing new members to the board. Walt will be term limited at the end of the year. Gene's membership will expire at the end of the year; however, his membership is the remainder of a previous board member. There is also the position that Brent Krueger vacated. Terry noted the mayor will make appointments for all board and commission vacancies near the end of the year. The Mayor's appointments are subject to Council approval.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 1:20 pm.

# Special Events in Billings Montana

## Evolution

- Success!
  - Event Dependent to Destination
- Event Congestion
- Becoming a CITY
  - Larger
  - Vibrant Downtown
  - Residences
  - Town Square
- Awareness of “brick and mortar” business
- Public Needs

You can't just keep  
doing **what works**  
**one time**, everything  
around you is  
changing. **To succeed,**  
stay out in front  
**of change.**

—SAM WALTON  
Walmart World

## Definitions

- Public
- Private but open to public for fee
- Closed to Public
- Runs
- Parades/Processions
- Sales
- Vendor Carts
- Block Party

## Goal of Discussion

- Keep downtown vibrant!
- Strike a balance
  - Manage downtown to maximize the use but not negatively impact businesses, residences, event sponsors, and the public
- Criteria Guidance
  - Variable by event
  - Objective but flexible
  - Not based on specific events
- Minimize liability to City and sponsors

## Next Steps

- Feedback from City Council
  - Tonight and when policy comes forward
- Public Outreach
  - Downtown Businesses
  - Downtown “users”
    - Event sponsors
    - Participants
  - Public
  - Staff
- Draft Policy to Council (?)

## Discussion/Council Direction

- Type of Event
- Restrictions
  - Hours/time/number per year/area
  - How many on one day? First requested?
- Cost Issues
- Details/Requirements for events
- Noise
- Location
  - Parade/Procession/Run
- Grandfather?