

Traffic & Safety Meeting Committee Meeting Minutes – March 3, 2009

In attendance:

Mayor Shawn Larsen	Jim Hamer – BYU-Idaho	Kristy Geisler – City of Rexburg
Stephen Zollinger – City of Rexburg	Graydon Burton	Randy Schwendiman
Lynn Archibald	Jody Weimer	Garth Gunderson
Capt. Randy Lewis – Rexburg Police	John Millar – City of Rexburg	Kendra Decker – City of Rexburg
Steven Smith	Reed Nielsen – BYU-Idaho	

Changes to previous month's minutes

Approval of previous month minutes

Motion to approve – Reed Nielsen
Seconded – Graydon Burton
Motion Carries

Discussion on Share the Road Campaign

Mayor Larsen shared with the committee that the Post Register will be doing an updated story on Pedestrian Safety. It will be appearing in the Post Register within the next couple of days.

Kristy Geisler said that she gave the Department of Highways, spoke to Evelyn in that office and gave Kristy a list of things to ask for if grant funding is received, Kristy said some of the funding requested includes overtime pay for officers for enforcement, funding for officers to conduct safety classes for people who have received a citation will now come to Police Department instead of going to the University, funding for 300 bike helmets, reflectors that can be snapped onto clothing (blinking lights) and additional 200 pedestrian flags or visibility flags as they're called on the grant, and funding for materials for school classes.

Kristy Geisler also said that John Millar has ordered and received 100 pedestrian flags with a reflective strip on the flag. She said it would be about \$20,000 toward the program if they are rewarded. The Madison Memorial Hospital will be partnering with the City to offset that cost for billboards and other advertisement along with BYU-Idaho.

Lynn Archibald says that the main problem with pedestrian accidents have been with older people, not younger people, and would like to maybe make reflective clothing fashionable. Going around elementary schools, children tend to be more cautious while the BYU-Idaho students during a class change aren't very cautious.

Kristy said the reflectors will snap on and be noticeable, flashing lights.

Mayor Larsen asks if anyone in the committee finds the flags in locations they don't belong to please return them to City Hall.

Graydon Burton stopped near the track at BYU-Idaho, and about 80 yards down there was a blinking light crosswalk, and instead of using the crosswalk, a group of 10-12 students lined along the street waiting for the cars to pass so they could run across the street. They were not at the crosswalk, about 2 or 3 used the crosswalk and the rest didn't use the crosswalk.

Kristy Geisler said education isn't just the billboard; education is the enforcement from the officers pulling them over. With the weather changing, more people are out and some of the things that were more prevalent during the fall need to be back out.

Captain Lewis said that the patrol officers have started enforcing.

Mayor Larsen says he has noticed a change in attitude with Pedestrian Safety, and he emphasized that this is an ongoing campaign and to have heightened awareness.

Most pedestrian accidents have been in the crosswalks, the people who are getting hurt are not the jaywalkers. Drivers and pedestrians need to be aware, and awareness is important in this campaign. Both jaywalkers and pedestrians need attention.

Mayor Larsen asked Randy Lewis to take information to the patrol officers.

Mayor Larsen passed out a document titled *Idaho's Vision for Walking & Bicycling*. In the document are comments from around the state from individuals who would like to help develop policies for pedestrian and bicycle safety. If you have questions or comments, the Mayor can give out his contact info. The ITD is involved in this process and this document is for the committee's reference.

Discussion of Cell Phone Ordinance

Mayor Larsen also shared a letter about cell phone use and there is a study from the University of Utah on how cell phone use is as dangerous as drunk driving. The comment from the letter was:

"I would urge the City Council to have an ordinance forbidding use of cell phones by drivers while they are driving."

The last consensus in the committee was to wait to see what the state of Idaho to make a decision regarding cell phone use and for right now it has stopped and the state level.

Stephen Zollinger said that universities are on polar opposites of this issue. The University of Oregon just came out with a study just within the last 30 days saying they don't believe cell phone use has any effect of drivers.

The question of where the City stands on the issue was brought up and Stephen Zollinger said that the City of Rexburg can be more restrictive than the state of Idaho and not less restrictive.

Lynn Archibald said that if phone use is not part of the accident records because people don't want to get caught for being negligent.

Stephen Zollinger said that the phone records are subpoenaed if there is an accident that includes a fatality. With the last three fatalities, the cell phone records have been subpoenaed.

Mayor Larsen explained that the reason this is on the agenda is because he wants to know whether or not there is committees support on an ordinance they were considering recommending to the City Council.

Stephen Zollinger would like to know if the committee wants to put it into a formal ordinance.

Reed Nielsen likes the cell phone, but doesn't like the iPods when you're jogging down the road or crossing the street as a pedestrian (to not include iPods in ordinance).

Stephen Zollinger – Research studies show that the seriousness of injuries to pedestrians goes up dramatically if they are wearing iPods.

Reed Nielsen says to publicize that information and let the individuals make the choice whether they wear it or not. In a car you can damage someone else.

Randy Schwendiman said that the interruption of traffic flow is what bothers him. When pedestrians use either a cell phone or iPod in the crosswalk it slows down the flow of traffic because people aren't paying attention.

Mayor Larsen said that in a class called Project Citizen that he visits up at Madison High School, this issue came up and the class decided that the City should restrict cell phone use while driving in the City of Rexburg.

Stephen Zollinger said that laws in the state of Idaho can be written by municipalities for the purpose of protecting others from your actions or you from your own actions. All falls within police power.

Mayor Larsen said it has worked effectively, for example: the smoking ban in the state of Idaho, first included bowling alleys, and a number of cities passed a local ordinance including Rexburg. The number of cities did that and the legislature took it on as a state issue. Mayor Larsen said he isn't sure how they will handle cell phone use, but it may, if a number of communities pass it, the state can look at it and decide from there.

Lynn Archibald has heard from some news reports was that they would punish the one doing the text messages, and asked Stephen Zollinger.

Stephen Zollinger said there were three different bills. Including: all inclusive, use of a hand held device, just texting, and certain circumstance you couldn't use cell phone or text messages.

Lynn Archibald moves to gather and have Stephen Zollinger to put together information and discuss at the next meeting and go through it line by line. Reed Nielsen seconds and the motion carries.

Mayor Larsen asks Randy Schwendiman what he thinks the City Council will think of the cell phone ordinance. Randy Schwendiman said he doesn't know, but personally he is in favor of it. There isn't a day that passed where he wouldn't be in trouble if he wasn't paying attention either.

Stephen Zollinger said that a ban of cell phones in a crosswalk is to protect you from yourself (i.e., Speed limits).

Randy Schwendiman continues answering the Mayor's question of whether or not the City Council will approve and he says the he is in favor of if they have reasonable enforcement Pedestrians on 2nd East are every bit as bad and anyone driving a car, because they don't pay attention to what is going on.

Graydon Burton asked about the usage of Police and Fire Department radios in their vehicles and Stephen Zollinger said that the officers go through extensive training.

The motion and a second for Stephen take a look at the ordinance and make recommendations that will come before the committee at the next meeting. Motion carries.

Discussion on street lighting on East portion of 2nd East

John Millar says that there are five (5) lights on 2nd East between 3rd and 6th South that are now 70 watt with existing steel poles. He has ordered new 250 watt lights for those, with 10 foot mast arms. He said it is an interim step for additional lighting. The lights will probably be here before the next meeting. It is collaboration with BYU-Idaho; they felt like it was important to get those lights in place.

Lynn Archibald wants to group to determine the appropriate lighting at intersections, which takes the discussion to street lighting. He asks the City if there is a minimum lighting throughout the City. Lynn has checked it out and said that at almost every intersection lights should be 250 watt.

Mayor Larsen asked John the light wattage where the boy was hit on 2nd East and it was 250 watt there and they have ordered more.

John said that the only thing to do is to change out the whole head to change the wattage would cost about \$100 each.

Mayor Larsen asked for any other feedback and Reed Nielsen drove around and said older parts of town 2nd N and 1stN is dark.

John Millar said that there is a 70 watt light every 750 feet.

Reed Nielsen encouraged the City to make sure each intersection has a light.

There was a question of the cost of running the lights and John Millar said that Utah Power and Light maintain them; City of Rexburg owns lights and 250 watt for \$24 a month. The City is looking at a program to take over maintenance and with that it goes to \$6 a light.

Graydon Burton this is something the budget must consider.

Mayor Larsen says by the City taking over maintenance they can do it in a more efficient manner.

Reed Nielsen brought up that in some places the trees have grown over lights

John Millar said that the trees are in right of way, and it gives City of Rexburg legal authority to cut them down.

Mayor Larsen asks the group to come up with a list of priorities.

1. Focus on every intersection/crosswalk in the community.
2. High pedestrian areas, especially around university, focus on crosswalks

3. Neighborhoods within the city limits that have no/inadequate lighting. Older neighborhoods within the city limits.

The residential areas around the campus are poorly lit.

From there, the ordinance can be based on these priorities and let the council decide if they support the idea of having dedicated lighting fund that would be the first priority.

The lights that are around homes are being used to supplement what the city doesn't provide. Homes in Rexburg are having more lights.

Mayor Larsen encourages the committee to be involved at City Council to support the ordinance. On both the cell phone ordinance and the street light ordinance. The Mayor knows that there will be opposition on both issues and it helps when there are people there.

Relevant Issues Discussion

Rod, a resident of Rexburg lives at 23 E. 2nd South. He lives across the street from the Snow and Kirkham Buildings near campus. He has a driveway that is approx. 30 feet long. People who park in front of his house ignore the yellow paint and park there causing the car to block part of his driveway. Because of the snow, people don't see the yellow curb. His car gets blocked and it causes him to have to drive into the other lane. The cars are also parking beyond the bike lane. He has researched and would like signs and the curb painted red.

Randy Lewis said that decision should be based on good judgment with the snowfall. Snow gets piled up, and it makes it difficult to enforce.

John Millar said that new parking laws are being discussed and address the pressure for street parking and there are literally hundreds of driveways in the same situation and to mark one driveway and not others become problematic. Permit parking will hopefully help the situation.

Rod suggested the idea of posting his own signs saying 'No Parking' in the public right away. He would have to post the sign on the area on either side of his driveway.

Mayor Larsen said that permit parking around the university will eventually come into effect. Permits can be purchased at City Hall and the revenue will be used to enforce parking. All parking around the BYU-Idaho will have the "U" parking zone. Along with university there will be neighborhood parking permits for the neighborhoods around the campus. There would be two permits per home, and hopefully this will be in effect by next fall.

The City doesn't want to have people all over the campus posting the 'No Parking' signs.

There was a question about the 2nd West crosswalk and Mayor Larsen said it will be discussed at the next meeting, but the Mayor did say that 2nd West will be getting a Hawk Signal.

Another concern was the snow at the middle school. There is snow blocking the crosswalks causing the students to walk outside of the crosswalk and into the street. Mayor Larsen would pass the information on to John Millar to have the street department take a look at the area.

Meeting Adjourned.