

Traffic and Safety Committee Meeting Minutes

January 6, 2009

In attendance:

Mayor Shawn Larsen

Roscoe Orton

Reed Nielsen

Jodi Weimer

John Millar – City of Rexburg

Jim Harmer – BYU-Idaho

Stephen Smith

Rick Robbins

Graydon Burton

Garth Gunderson – BYU-Idaho

Capt. Randy Lewis – Rexburg Police

Kristy Geisler – City of Rexburg

Stephen Zollinger – City of Rexburg

Approval of previous month's minutes:

Motion to approve –Roscoe Orton

Seconded – Rick Robbins

Minutes were approved.

Discussion on Prohibited Use of Hand-Held Wireless Phones:

Graydon Burton provided some information from the Internet showing which states have laws against use by drivers of vehicles from using hand-held phones. Stephen Zollinger addressed how a law against use could be applied within Rexburg city limits.

According to Stephen, a major component for enforcement would be an awareness campaign. Using our competent police force to provide education for the violation – and give them one more reason to have to be able to pull over an erratic driver.

The Mayor addressed what the penalty could be. It could involve a driver safety course – that is generally six hours in length, and provided at BYU-Idaho.

Rick Robbins asked if a law against driver's cell phone use can be an effective tool for the police force. Capt. Lewis said yes, it would be a good tool.

Garth Gunderson talked about a study conducted in Missouri. It should that when drivers were issued a citation or written warning, they would slow down after a traffic stop. Those drivers that were only given a verbal warning did not change their driving behavior and continued to speed. He said on campus when they conduct a jaywalking sting, the school would give written warnings, and the second violation was written as a violation.

The Mayor asked if the group would like to make a recommendation to Rexburg City Council in relation to passing an ordinance prohibiting cell phone use by drivers – particularly in the area around BYU-Idaho.

Rick Robbins wanted to wait a month and talk to people in the community about their thoughts in regards to this issue. Lyle Wakefield wants to be more specific about which devices are prohibited. For example, is this ordinance only going to talk about hand-held cell phones, or will it include I-pods and other devices that pedestrians are often using.

The Mayor asked Stephen Zollinger to draft an Ordinance that the Traffic and Safety Committee can review at their next meeting and make suggestions and changes.

Discussion on a Street Light Utility Fee:

Stephen Zollinger reviewed with the committee a proposed Street Light Utility Fee that would enable the city to place new street lights in under-served areas within the city, or replace old inefficient lights with new lights and poles. Because lighting can be seen as an essential service and a safety measure it is something that could easily go to council to be approved.

The Traffic and Safety Committee would work with city engineers to determine the priority for enhancing lighting on specific streets. The city is scheduled to take over ownership of all lights and poles from Rocky Mountain Power in the near future. Also, all new subdivisions within the city have new and sufficient lighting. This plan would bring city lighting up to par in a short period of time; with the city lighting eventually improved in all areas.

The Mayor indicated the next step was for an ordinance to be drafted; and for the Traffic and Safety Committee to make a recommendation to the city council to review.

Jodi Weimer asked if the fee would be a flat fee, or if it would go up. John Millar indicated that the first thing to occur would be for an Enterprise Fund to be established, and that a review of how the charge would pass through to single residences, multi-family, etc.

Rick Robbins said he would like more specifics on the number, but that he thought it was an excellent idea.

The Mayor asked for a **motion** from the committee to move forward with this concept.

Motion made by Rick Robbins.

Seconded by Lyle Wakefield.

Motion carried.

Discussion by John Millar on Snow Removal:

John indicated that city crews had worked as hard and as fast as possible to remove the snow the city received over Christmas. Priorities were to keep intersections cleared, and then move through arterial routes. During times that schools are in session, those routes are also a priority.

Reed Nielsen said there was no way for him to move the amount of snow that the city crews put back on to the sidewalk when they plowed roads. He felt that most homeowners were like him – didn't have the time or the resources to move the snow. He wondered if there were options from the city to help homeowners.

He also mentioned that along 2nd West pedestrians were being forced out into the street because of the snow on the sidewalk (several feet high.) John indicated that the city was doing what they could to open those sidewalk up, particularly as BYU-I students were coming back into town.

John also mentioned that there is a strong possibility of a traffic signal at 7th South and 2nd East through a cooperative effort with the city and BYU-I and the LDS Church.

Discussion by Doug Stutz on Rexburg Bicycle Ordinance:

Doug provided the group with a copy of the current Bicycle Ordinance on the books for the City of Rexburg. As he indicated to the committee it obviously needs updates. The update he is proposing brings the ordinance up to date with state code; and recognizes bicycles as a legitimate vehicle on the road.

The Mayor asked if the committee would like to make a recommendation for the revised Bicycle Ordinance go to city council for review and approval.

Motion made by Rick Robbins.

Seconded by Roscoe Orton.

Motion carried.

Kristy Geisler handed out information to the group regarding BYU-I's commitment to promoting the Share the Road campaign to their students on campus.

Meeting adjourned.