

City of Springfield  
Work Session Meeting

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION MEETING OF  
THE SPRINGFIELD CITY COUNCIL HELD  
MONDAY, JUNE 1, 2009

The City of Springfield Council met in a work session in the Jesse Maine Meeting Room, 225 Fifth Street, Springfield, Oregon, on Monday, June 1, 2009 at 6:25 p.m., with Mayor Leiken presiding.

ATTENDANCE

Present were Mayor Leiken and Councilors Lundberg, Wylie, Leezer, Ralston, and Pishioneri. Also present were City Manager Gino Grimaldi, Assistant City Manager Jeff Towery, Mary Bridget Smith from the City Attorney's Office, Recorder Amy Sowa and members of the staff.

1. Main Street (Hwy 126B) Pedestrian Safety Update.

City Planner Dave Reesor presented the staff report on this item. During the March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009 work session, Council requested periodic updates from Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) regarding pedestrian safety on Main Street. ODOT and City Staff have made progress towards identifying opportunities and challenges of the following potential safety improvements on Main Street:

- Pedestrian Safety Study
- Designation of Safety Corridor
- Mid-block Crosswalks
- Establish a Safety Committee
- Additional Street Lighting
- Reducing Speed
- Signal Placement and Timing

The attached memo from David Helton, ODOT Area 5 Planner, outlines progress and issues with these proposed safety improvements. As explained in Mr. Helton's memo, ODOT has not yet been able to obtain funding for a full pedestrian safety study on Main Street. However, while ODOT staff is still seeking funding for a formal pedestrian safety study, ODOT and City staff are also pursuing a variety of pedestrian safety improvements that can be implemented without the full formal study. These improvements include additional street lighting and potential mid-block pedestrian crossings at strategic locations. Additional potential safety improvements will likely take longer to implement and include signal placement and timing, reducing the posted speed, and establishing a Safety Committee.

The attached memo from the Springfield Police Department (SPD) summarizes Main Street crash data, and discusses the Safety Corridor concept for Main Street. SPD and the Presiding Judge of the Municipal Court have expressed strong reservations about the Safety Corridor concept, noting that accident data does not appear to support speeding as a cause of pedestrian fatalities on Main Street and that existing resources are not available to increase police presence on Main Street. Considering input from ODOT and SPD, staff recommend that Council support a potential mid-block pedestrian crossing at 51<sup>st</sup> and Main Street and additional street lighting along the Main Street corridor as short term solutions, and recommend support of a Traffic Safety Committee as

a long term solution to help educate drivers and pedestrians and to help leverage future funding for additional safety improvements.

ODOT Area Manager Sonny Chickering and Area 5 Planner David Helton were present to give a brief summary of the material at the work session and answer questions.

Mr. Reesor introduced Sonny Chickering and David Helton from ODOT.

Mr. Chickering said in March when he came before Council, his primary focus was a comprehensive study of the East Main Street corridor between 21<sup>st</sup> Street and about 69<sup>th</sup> Street because of their concern for safety along that corridor. At that time, Council offered support for that long-term study, but it was also clear they expected something sooner. He and Mr. Helton pursued some of the suggestions from Council and the result was the report in the agenda packet. There were six specific, relatively short-term potential improvements along East Main that could provide a significant measure of safety improvement for pedestrians in that corridor. He thanked Mr. Reesor and Richard Perry from the City for meeting with him, as well as Chief Smith and Captain Lewis, to discuss some of these potential solutions. Lane Transit District (LTD) had also been involved in several meetings. Region ODOT traffic engineers, Angela Cardwell and Craig Black, had also come down for some meetings and had visited the corridor. He felt they had a cooperative team effort which was very important as they tried to build community support for one or more of these solutions.

Mr. Chickering said he would continue to pursue funding for the long-term study. There were a lot of planning needs in the region and he was competing for those funds regionally, including eleven counties in the northwest corner of the state. He would keep the Council posted on those efforts. In the short-term, six improvements were being considered, each with potential to improve safety, although some had political and technical challenges.

Mr. Chickering said the six short term options included: 1) Traffic safety committee composed of local community representatives, including citizens that lived and worked along that stretch of Main Street. This committee could also help with the education piece in the short-term and serve a role on the long-term study; 2) Street lighting which City staff had supported. There was a need for more lighting in that corridor as many of the accidents had happened at night. Staff had identified stimulus funding that could be used for those lights; 3) Marked mid-block crossings at up to seven locations. The most likely location for short-term solution would be at 51<sup>st</sup> Street, the location of the latest pedestrian fatality. There was an existing island median at that location and it would be relatively simple to put a marked mid-block crossing there. It may or may not involve flashing yellow beacons or red stop lights. Traffic engineers seemed receptive to that location for such a crossing. There were two or three other existing islands within the corridor, and they would continue to look at all possible locations; 4) Traffic signals. ODOT staff researched the inoperable traffic signal near 48<sup>th</sup> Street, at the Weyerhaeuser Haul Road. That was not an ODOT signal, but belonged to Weyerhaeuser and was there by permit from ODOT and was non-functional. ODOT would like the existing hardware removed so people did not have the expectation that it was a functional light. There were long-term plans to have a signal at 48<sup>th</sup> Street when warrants were met; 5) Speed limits. A speed limit investigation was done in 2007 that was recently reviewed by ODOT and City staff. That study did not support lowering of the speed limits. At the City's request, another study could be done, but there was data in the attached document about how fast people were currently traveling along that corridor; and 6) Designation of a safety corridor. Such a corridor identified a segment of a highway where fines doubled,

headlights were recommended, and there was a concentrated effort for implementation and operation. Some of the requirements for a safety corridor included an accident rate higher than average for similar facilities in the State. This segment of Main Street met the criteria. It also needed a commitment by the local law enforcement to patrol and enforce the double fines, and there was a requirement that the local Court could not waive, reduce or suspend the base fine amount or minimum fines in the corridor. He explained and said it could be an issue for some citizens. The highest likelihood would be the marked crossing at 51<sup>st</sup>, additional street lighting and a safety committee.

Mayor Leiken asked about the cost of the study.

Mr. Chickering said ODOT turned in an application for one source of funds. The normal planning funds for the next biennium had been allocated to other projects and were not available to him. He was in touch with LTD who may have some funds that could possibly be used.

Mayor Leiken asked if they had a conversation with Representative Terry Beyer. No. She was the Chair of the House Transportation Committee and a member of this community. She was well respected and people listened to her. This Council would be willing to talk to anyone in Salem to make sure study money was available. He understood the process, but believed there could be a way to get the funding. This would be a great time to enlist Representative Beyer's leadership. Funds were needed for this study and he offered his help and support.

Councilor Pishioneri said looking into street lighting would be very worthwhile. He discussed installing new lights with a broader illumination field and configuring the spacing of the lights to accommodate. He felt marked crossings were a great idea, but not very effective without assistance, besides just painted lines. That would have to be supported by a Police traffic team to enforce that on a regular basis. He agreed the signal at the Weyerhaeuser Haul Road should come out. He felt the speed limits were about as fast as they could get. He concurred the safety corridor was too difficult at this time. He explained. With Police Chief Smith's input, he would like to look at a dedicated officer that worked traffic in that section as a pilot program. That officer's activities could be tracked to see if any change occurred. Tracking could also show whether or not the activity was enough to pay for the position.

Chief Smith said that was very possible. From the Police Department's perspective, they were concerned about the safety corridor not only because speeding tickets would be doubled, but a host of other violations that could be unrelated. The education forum for pedestrians regarding crossing the street throughout this corridor would have more effect than enforcement. There was no other stretch in Springfield with more enforcement than this corridor. They could increase enforcement activity, but he was not convinced they would see a change in the outcome. Lighting and education were the two major factors.

Councilor Leezer agreed with additional lighting. She explained. She felt they needed to take another look at the 2007 study and perhaps do another study regarding the speed. It was going to be hard to educate citizens, because only those that wanted to listen would listen. She would like to look at speed and enforcement.

Councilor Wylie asked about medians that had been put in and then taken out because businesses didn't like them.

Mr. Chickering said they removed about half of them.

Councilor Wylie said she wanted the medians put back as they were an important safety feature for those crossing the street. She was also interested in pedestrian crossings with signs, blinking yellow lights, and required stops. Morally and ethically, this was something the Council had to do to make this area safer.

Councilor Lundberg said she was supportive of lighting. She didn't want to give people a false sense of security with a crossing, but would support additional assistance (such as flashing lights). She referred to the crossing at Harlow Road in front of Guy Lee. She was not sure about the traffic speed. She discussed the speed issue further. Reducing the speed could affect people, through enforcement or other education. In looking at the reports on the accidents, each had different circumstances. She was not supportive of mid-block crossings alone.

Councilor Ralston said he agreed with lighting and education. Marked crossings could be good, but could give a false sense of security. He didn't feel speed was the problem, but quick lane changes were a problem. He was not supportive of a safety corridor. Funds were needed to do the studies.

Councilor Pishioneri discussed the number of accidents and injuries on Franklin Boulevard in Glenwood where the traffic moved slower and was heavily enforced. He referred to the pedestrian activated crossings on Olympic Street and how affective it was. A safety corridor was not appropriate at this point. Enforcement would be key, including pedestrian enforcement. He would like to see what city ordinances we had regarding pedestrians.

Mayor Leiken thanked Mr. Chickering.

Mr. Chickering said they would continue to work on this issue. He said he heard Council say to not only address these things short-term, but also pursue the long-term study.

## 2. Ward 5 Vacancy Process.

City Manager Gino Grimaldi presented the staff report on this item. Due to the death of Councilor John Woodrow, the Ward 5 City Council position is vacant. Council needs to determine the process in which to fill this vacancy.

The Springfield Charter states that when a vacancy occurs on the Council, the position shall be filled by appointment by a majority of the Council. The process leading up to that appointment is left open for the Council to decide.

The last time a Council position was vacant due to the death of a councilor, the Council chose to advertise, provide applications for interested citizens living within the correct ward to pick up, and interview all applicants and appoint a new councilor. If the Council chooses to move forward with this same process, staff would begin advertising for this position immediately to allow ample time for the recruitment, interview and appointment process to be completed before Council goes on summer recess.

Mr. Grimaldi noted the supplemental questions that were included in the agenda packet, some were from past packets and some were new.

Councilor Ralston said mixing and matching the questions was a great idea. He didn't feel that the 7<sup>th</sup> question in the new questions was needed, "The Ward 5 position that you have applied for has a term that expires January 2010. If selected, would you have an interest in seeking to be elected for a new four year term?" He didn't want to commit an applicant to running for election after the appointment ended.

Councilor Pishioneri agreed.

Mr. Grimaldi asked if there were particular questions they wanted from the old to go with the new.

Mayor Leiken suggested councilors email Mr. Grimaldi with the questions they felt were most appropriate.

Council agreed to move forward with the recruitment process.

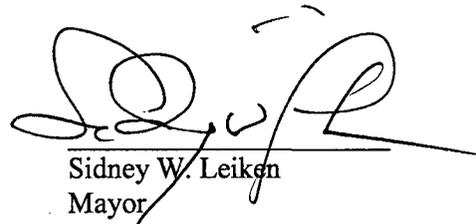
Councilor Pishioneri suggested including a question asking for the applicant's area of expertise and how that might fit in with this group.

Councilor Wylie said she would prefer more questions rather than fewer. This was a very important decision.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

Minutes Recorder – Amy Sowa



Sidney W. Leiken  
Mayor

Attest:

  
~~Amy Sowa~~ Julie Louison  
City Recorder