

**CITY OF OLYMPIA
LAND USE AND ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE
MINUTES
January 26, 2009**

Members Present: Councilmember Messmer, Councilmember Machlis, Councilmember Strub

Staff Present: Randy Wesselman, Steve Hall, Subir Mukerjee, Keith Stahley, Jan Weydemeyer, Amy Buckler

Guests Present: Mike McCormick, Jackie Barrett Scher, Amy Tousley

The January 26, 2009 meeting of the Land Use and Environment Committee was called to order at 4:32 p.m.

1. **Approval of the December 15, 2008 Minutes of the Land Use and Environment Committee.**
Minutes of the December 15, 2008 Land Use and Environment Committee were approved with no changes.
2. **18th Ave. /Elizabeth St. /14th Ave. Speed Limit Revisions** (*Randy Wesselman, Public Works*)
The City has completed the first phase of this project, and is in the design part of the next phase (Boulevard Rd. to Hoffman Rd.) They have completed the traffic analysis and took this into consideration in making recommendations for new posted speed limits. They want to be consistent with the speed limits nearby, and into Lacey, and think that 30 mph is realistic: the majority of people would use this speed and it would be enforceable.

Questions and Comments from Committee:

- We need to be aware of safety concerns of our constituents - a lot of people say that cars drive too fast in their neighborhood, and they feel it's unsafe. Speed limits might be part of that safety package, along with sidewalks, bike lanes, and proper road section delineations.
- Councilmember Messmer has in her files strong studies that say that people do comply with posted speed limits. Posted limits will at the least keep people in a certain range, i.e. they may go 28 in a 25 zone, or 30 in a 25 zone, but probably won't go 35 in a 25 zone. This is contrary to what Attachment 2 states, which is that posted speeds are not the biggest factor in drivers' speeds;
- Have we been building, designing, and thinking from a traffic movement perspective too long and have not taken into account other issues? We need to consider what happens to a pedestrian who is hit by a car at various speeds. At 20 mph, they might not die, at 30-35 mph, they will die.
- We have to look at the assumptions, since that is where technical recommendations come out of. We may be analyzing based on faulty assumptions, one of which is that moving cars faster is the most important thing. It was suggested that the Transportation Mobility Committee needs to have a driving mobility strategy discussion.
- One of Olympia's policy decisions was to consider bike paths to be transportation issues, unlike many jurisdictions.

- Do we want *any* City streets to be considered to be rural streets?
- Eastbay Drive has a much more rural character than the areas under discussion tonight, but it was made 25. Like it or not, there is political influence.
- Do we want to set speed limits based on what we think our police can enforce? Do we make any ordinance based on whether we think police can enforce it? The enforcement question comes in when deciding how much compliance to go for - 100% will be a challenge.
- It doesn't take much for the police to go out there and sit there sometimes. We shouldn't assume there will be police compliance problems.
- Is it good for the city to have a hodgepodge of various speed limits?
- Councilmember Messmer recommended that this whole corridor be 25 mph, until we come to a point where there are longer segments, where we can see enough distance ahead and there is safety in crossing. When thinking simply about moving motorists, it sounds reasonable to increase the speed limits, but this can be detrimental to our sense of safety. The Hoffman section is residential street, but not all provisions are in place for pedestrians and bicycles, but we need to make it clear that it is a neighborhood. Once the section from Hoffman to Boulevard is built out, it might make sense to be 30 mph, but in the short run it ought to be 25.
- Councilmember Strub agreed that maybe from Hoffman to Boulevard it can make some sense to go 30 mph, but suggested, for consistency, to make the whole area in question 25 mph.
- Councilmember Machlis feels that feels that people are generally self-correcting and will drive as fast as what their safety level is. She also believes that this is a technical issue. The only way to get consistency is to let the Traffic Staff use the standards in the industry and try to get consistency where we can get it. We happen to be familiar with these particular roads, but Staff can really see the consistency on how we can apply the standards. She is comfortable having the Transportation Mobility Committee report back to us, but doesn't want to have debates about particular streets outside of those criteria. With regard to enforcement, she feels that the real issue is having a whole bunch of people knowing they are breaking the speed limit. Although she felt that Councilmember Messmer made some good points as far as what we want our community to be like, she feels that but on specific streets, people might not understand.
- Mr. Hall said that our decision has to make sense to the public. We should move ahead on the recommendation, and later, after the bigger conversation is held (maybe with the ad hoc mobility committee), then we can lower the speed limits if we want to.
- Mr. Wesselman said that they look at development and changing characteristics along the streets. They would like to re-look at other streets throughout the city with regard to speed limits. With regard to the corridor in question, they expect drivers to drive according to characteristics along the street. He cautioned to be careful about posting too low; people will do things they normally would not do if they start getting frustrated.
- Councilmember Messmer noted that she has done considerable amount of research and study on transportation issues, and believes that she understands the issues and can back them up with strong data. If people start driving too fast and ignoring speed limits, there are methods we can use to get them to comply. For instance, trees have been proven to slow speeds.

Councilmember Strub made a motion recommending that the speed limit of the section between Boulevard and Fones (the first bullet point on the Staff Report) be changed to 25 mph, and to not make changes on the other three bulleted recommendations (i.e. keep the speed limit 25 mph).

Councilmember Messmer seconded.

Councilmember Machlis did not agree.

3. Continuing Discussion of the 2011 Update of Comprehensive Plan Process (*Keith Stahley, CP&D*)

A guest, Mike McCormick began by voicing some concerns and suggestions:

- Make sure that the process is inclusive.
- Discussion needs to start at a regional level, particular with regard to climate change.
- Devise a way for there to be an ongoing and continuous ability to get feedback from the community. Changing players has meant forgetting the original vision.
- Review Thurston County-wide planning policies.
- The Urban Land Institute (ULI), which uses a technique which goes beyond the Land Use Game, to jobs and housing and carbon footprints. He will give you more info. Email mike.mccormick@comcast.net for the contact at ULI.
- Olympia and other jurisdictions need to ask some questions, and then start the discussion at a regional level:
How does your current plan relate to county wide planning policies? Are there changes in that suggest you might want to revisit county wide? Are there things you want to but can't do with existing policies?

Mr. Stahley agrees that other jurisdictions need to be part of the discussion. He has spoken with their planning directors and he will continue to encourage them along towards a regional perspective.

Staff feels that one-on-one discussions may be the best way to start. This will be supplemented with "person on the street interviews." They are looking to get a cross section of people, chosen randomly. Interviews will be summarized into a starting vision, and will be a jumping off point for broader conversations, which can be things like electronic polling; town hall meetings; meetings with the planning commission, other boards and commissions, neighborhood associations. The City is planning on using staff resources rather than outside consultants. Amy Buckler, who is currently a grad student at Evergreen, will be involved, as will be other Evergreen students.

Mr. Stahley has a telephone conference tomorrow with Visual Strategies. They have a different land use scenario game. It gives your carbon impact and helps you frame your plan and put it out to community as well.

Committee Comments and Questions:

Councilmember Messmer:

- Smaller group settings were used for the sustainable economy chapter. It was good, but it wasn't as robust because we didn't have a broad involvement with large number of people. It has wound up being a lesser known chapter of our plan. We need to broaden out and get people involved before we start shaping.
- During our one-on-ones, we need to try to explain to the community that this is just brainstorming; what they say will help shape our plans, but will not verbatim be written into a goal.

- We should be checking in on what we already have, not leave everything wide open for a rewrite. There was a lot of effort on the current comp plan - should we be checking all of the details on every part?
- The Land Use Game scenario got people involved. You do framing up front with a slide show. There is not quite enough time to get into detail, but it sets the stage for the game and gets people talking.
- Councilmember Messmer mentioned SimCity. She said that having immediate, electronic results is powerful, but that putting people in the same room talking is also powerful. The most powerful thing about the land use game is talking together; it is more important than the result.
- In town hall meetings, we try to present facts and info but it is hard to figure out how to transmit in a productive fashion to a huge crowd. In the break-out groups, people don't know each other.
- We have televised info we could provide to people. We can coordinate with TCTV.

Councilmember Machlis:

- A good model is the way Obama did health care outreach studies, which she participated in. People got together in private houses and they were given a lot of facts and then specific questions to address. Everyone felt they had a voice.
- The community needs to participate, and we need to be as inclusive as possible.
- We do have a plan, and it is probably not invalid. The City has some information about population trends, we do have a street system in a built environment, and it's not useful to pretend that we don't have these things that we are already working with.
- We don't want to raise expectations, but we don't want people to feel they are just rubber stamping.

Councilmember Strub:

- We should talk to people for a much longer period.
- In an experience similar to Councilmember Machlis' experience with Obama's health care outreach, she explained her participation in MoveOn.org's vision planning a year or two back. They set it up so people all over the country held parties in their homes, and set up a framework using a tight script. At 8:30, participants reported in through a website. Move On compiled all the information, reported back to all the groups all over that country that night, posted the results on the website, and then worked on coming up with a vision to make a progressive plan of action. Many things decided that night came to pass, such as a local radio station. Councilmember Strub will look for her MoveOn.org worksheets.
- It was mentioned that a 159-page Climate Change bill just appeared with recommendations that will affect the land use, housing, and transportation chapters.
- It was requested that Councilmember Strub work with people to address this issue from a regional level, since she represents the City on Thurston Regional Planning Council.

It was agreed that the LUEC needs to make sure the rest of the Council knows where we are going on this. Mr. Stahley will come back to full Council for a study session. A few months after Council sees it, it will come back to the LUEC.

Meeting adjourned 5:58 p.m.