

Barre City Transportation Advisory Committee

July 21, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Present: Giuliano Cecchinelli (Chair), Michael Hellein (Vice Chair), Arthur Bombardier, Jake Hemmerick, Joanne Reynolds

Staff: Bill Ahearn, Eli Morgan

Visitors: Patti Coburn (VTrans), Aaron Guyette (VHB), Jeff Bachiochi (VHB), Joshua Akers, Dale Bernash, John Charissakis, Karen Charissakis, Mo Millard, Bonnie Millard, Lori Plant

1. Call to order

6:31pm

2. Adjustments to the Agenda

1. Ahearn requested "Path of communications with City staff", Cecchinelli added as 6.4.

3. Approval of minutes

1. Reynolds and Hemmerick noted that they did not receive minutes, Cecchinelli stated minutes were on the City website. **Motion Bombardier, Second Hemmerick, Approved with Reynolds abstaining**

4. Visitors and Communications

No visitors and communications.

5. Old business

1. Berlin Street Crossing Traffic Study

Ahearn noted he has asked the State for a Probability Impact Analysis for increased wait time at the rail crossing. He mentioned the possibility of a one-way "pop-up" experiment on Berlin Street. Hellein stated his recollection that the Committee had previously ruled out a one-way treatment in a meeting with residents of the neighborhood. Ahearn said he recollected the Committee had assented to a one-way pop-up. Hemmerick pointed out that the minutes for the relevant May 2020 meeting were never made public. Ahearn said the City would try to find and publish the minutes.

6. New business

1. VTrans Project -Merchant St./Rt 14 & Quarry St Intersection

Guyette, contracting engineer to VTrans, presented design of Quarry Street project. Expected to complete in 2024, estimated cost \$7.8 million, with Barre City contributing 1.1%.

Hemmerick noted the City has limited road maintenance support from the State, and this new liability is one more thing that is difficult and costly to maintain. Observing that four structures and five parcels have already been removed from the Grand List, he asked if there was any part of the project to protect existing property values and if the second lane is warranted by traffic volume.

Guyette responded that the City is responsible for ongoing maintenance because Quarry Hill remains a City street, and impact on property values was not considered in the design process. Guyette said a turning lane was warranted by volume, but said the second lane on Quarry Street was included in the design because Barre Town had built a "deceleration lane" on Quarry Hill Road.

Hellein criticized the design for serving the wrong priorities and focusing on convenience for truck traffic over the safety of people walking or cycling. He pointed out that VTrans data shows only five crashes near this project location in the past decade, none of which caused injuries. Hellein said that it seemed likely that the project would be built as designed, but that we should expect more crashes and a less safe intersection afterward, because the proposed design treats a city neighborhood like a highway off-ramp. Hellein noted that he requested this item to be addressed by the Committee because the project has not been in the previous two Municipal Plans, and he wants to have an understanding of how this came to be the City's construction priority.

Ahearn defended the project on the grounds that it is good for Barre businesses, and that turning lanes and signalization makes it safer for children. He pointed to increased control over drainage into the Parkside Terrace neighborhood as a reason to support the project. He stated that he has personal knowledge of only the past 4 years of the project, so he cannot speak to how it came about. Ahearn expressed concern that the project was not in successive Municipal Plans, and stated we should find out why it was removed.

Coburn, VTrans project manager, pointed out that Merchant Street is a separate project, and can't be addressed by the invited professionals.

2. Speed Bump Seminary Street at Shurtleff

Akers, Seminary Street resident, described Seminary Street as extremely dangerous, and that he's afraid to cross and is afraid for his kids to cross, and knows that his neighbors are afraid of the street too. He and his wife avoid parking on the street because both of their cars have been struck

by vehicles while parked on-street. He described a child who was the victim of a hit-and-run collision in 2017. Akers requests a speed bump to slow traffic on Seminary.

Hellein asked Ahearn if we had seen enough success from speed table trials to install them in more places.

Ahearn stated that they worked well, and that the City is buying more speed signs to collect data to make decisions about where to build speed tables.

Hemmerick stated that he is sad to hear the stories of residents who have to deal with streets that are dangerous by design. Asked Ahearn if more budget was needed to gather data and if there was available equipment to collect other environmental data such as noise and air quality.

Ahearn said there was not any particularly good equipment for environmental study.

Hellein asked if there are currently candidates for temporary speed hump placement, and if Seminary Street can be put in the queue.

Ahearn said that the temporary speed humps are on order and are intended for Merchants Row.

3. Perry St. Traffic Concerns

A number of residents on and around recently repaved Perry Street expressed concern and frustration with the speed of traffic on their street. They described the speed of vehicles leaving them afraid to cross the street, afraid to access cars parked on-street, even afraid of walking a dog on the sidewalk. They described hearing speeding vehicles on the street even in the middle of the night. Mo Millard said that it's lucky that no kids live on the street, and that the time Perry Street was unpaved during the current project it was the best the road has been in 40 years.

Ahearn recognized that Hill Street and Perry Street is a "bad intersection" and described how the current project of converting it to a T intersection with a stop sign would help to fix that.

Residents expressed concern that speeding on the rest of the street would continue, and that truck traffic would continue to use their street as a shortcut, and that encouraging pedestrians to cross Hill Street by installing a crosswalk was a dangerous decision.

Cecchinelli noted that signs prohibiting trucks from Camp Street had no effect. Hemmerick agreed that signs do not change behavior, and consistent enforcement and geometry changes are needed.

Ahearn said the new T intersection should make it more difficult, though not impossible for trucks.

Hellein described the Planning Commission's 2020 streets survey and that across the City residents saw vehicle speed as the biggest problem facing their streets. He stated that small increases in speed matter, because a person hit by a car at 20mph has a 9/10 chance of surviving, but a person hit by a car at 40mph has a 9/10 chance of being killed.

Hemmerick concurred that a City Council survey showed the predominant concern is with traffic speed. He stated that there is a systematic failure, and we need a systems change, and Barre City's transportation system needs to help us meet our smart growth goals.

Akers mentioned that it is shocking to see the issues he experiences on Seminary Street are happening all over the city, and is surprised how much is spent on Quarry Street when that could be spent on crosswalks.

Bernash asked what residents can do to be proactive. Ahearn responded that coming to the TAC helps him know where to focus, and that he uses speed measurement before adding an intervention to control speeding to ensure that it is necessary and fair.

Hellein said that is not good enough. Every street in the city has traffic that's too fast, and if residents tell us cars are going too fast on their street, we don't need to scientifically verify it - it's just a fact. We should not let our speed sign data be the bottleneck that gets in the way of solving this problem.

Hemmerick observed that the speed data we collect has not been reliable, and the presence of a speed sign, even unlit, reduces vehicle speed and is not an effective way to establish the need for an intervention.

There was some discussion of the impact of GPS devices on vehicle routing, and Ahearn stated police officers are currently making around 90 stops a day, issuing tickets in the "double digits", and are using traffic stops to enforce more serious crimes.

Reynolds encourages the Committee to consider city-wide traffic calming approaches in a future meeting.

7. Other Business

No other business.

8. Confirm Next Meeting Date- Wednesday, August 18, 2021

Confirmed

9. Round Table

Hemmerick noted it would be better to have more information available in the agenda. Cecchinelli said that he and Ahearn would improve the content of the Committee packet.

Hellein noted the next meeting is 12 months after our last officer elections, so we should have officer elections on a future agenda.

10. Adjourn

9:21pm, **Motion Hellein, Second Hemmerick, Adjourned**