

STATE OF TEXAS

COUNTIES OF POTTER AND RANDALL

ON this 17th day of November, 2010, the Amarillo Traffic Commission convened in regular session in the City Commission Chambers in the Municipal Building.

ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS	PRESENT TODAY	NO. MEETINGS HELD SINCE APPOINTMENT	NO. MEETINGS ATTENDED SINCE APPOINTMENT
Mr. Rob Ledwig	Yes	24	20
Mr. Rudy Mediavilla	No	24	10
Mr. Kenneth Graham	Yes	12	10
Mr. Bob Balliett	No	9	6
Mr. Wes Reeves	Yes	9	6
Mr. Leon Church	Yes	3	3
Ms. Ellen Robertson-Green	Yes	3	3
Ms. D. J. Stubben	Yes	3	3

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Taylor Withrow	Traffic Engineer
David Szmagalski	Traffic Operations Technician
Judy Alexander	Recording Secretary
Lt. Michael Miller	Amarillo Police Department

Commissioner Ledwig established a quorum and called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. The following items of business were conducted:

ITEM 1. Invocation:

Commissioner Stubben gave the invocation.

ITEM 2. Approval of the September 15, 2010, Amarillo Traffic Commission Minutes:

Commissioner Robertson-Green stated the minutes should include Commissioner Graham's request for input from cities who have implemented the cell phone ban in school zones. Commissioner Reeves made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Commissioner Graham seconded the motion, and motion carried 6:0.

ITEM 3. Traffic Engineering Study: Cell Phone Restrictions in School Zones:

Taylor Withrow, Traffic Engineer, stated that the Texas legislature passed HB 55 during the last legislative session, which makes the use of a wireless communication device while operating a motor vehicle within a school crossing zone a class c misdemeanor unless the vehicle is stopped or the device is being used in the hands-free mode. He stated that the bill requires any city that desires to enforce the prohibition to post signs that comply with standards adopted by the Texas Department of Transportation at each school crossing.

He reported that the City Commission has asked the Traffic Commission to examine the law as it might relate to Amarillo and report back to them.

Marcus Norris, City Attorney, gave a presentation on the legal aspects of the statute and the local option to enforce it. He stated a city ordinance can supplement the statute for clarity, but the statute cannot be contradicted. It must be carried out as written. He said the statute does allow exceptions for emergency or medical situations as well as for ham radio operators.

He brought up issues that would need addressing such as where and how to begin. ~~Should the ban include only elementary schools, only high schools, or only arterial streets near school zones or should the ban include all schools?~~ Commissioner Graham asked about data from other cities in Texas such as Austin that have enacted the ban. Commissioner Reeves suggested local school districts be contacted for their input.

Mr. Norris reported that he envisions the ban will be difficult to enforce. A police officer must directly observe use of the device within a school zone before a citation can be issued, similar to the enforcement of other offenses such as seat belt requirements or speeding. He stated that violations would be considered be a moving violation under the Texas Transportation Code.

Commissioners discussed the possibility of a total ban of cell phones while driving in the city. Mr. Norris said the State Legislature may consider a total ban in their next session, but he suggested that would be best left to them.

Commissioner Reeves inquired about the cost of the project. Mr. Withrow said that he estimates the cost to be between \$40,000 and \$60,000, and the project should take three to four months to complete. Implementation will require reworking each school flasher and each side street sign post. The law requires the signs must hang from the school flasher, and all signs in school zones without flashers will also need to be changed to reflect the ban.

Commissioner Robertson-Green suggested that representatives from local school districts be invited to speak at the December Traffic Commission meeting. Mr. Withrow concurred, and he said he would contact them.

ITEM 4. Miscellaneous Discussion:

Mr. Withrow stated that Dean Downey submitted a list of suggested locations for "Share the Road" motorcycle signs, and Commissioner Graham submitted a list of suggested locations for "Share the Road" bicycle signs. He stated that the Traffic staff has analyzed accident statistics along with the submitted lists and has made a recommendation for the placement of the signs. Commissioners discussed plans for an ad hoc committee to address bicycle/pedestrian issues. Finalization of the "Share the Road" signs would be one of their responsibilities.

Mr. Withrow reported that the Hike and Bike Master Plan will be under the Traffic Engineering Department instead of the Parks and Recreation Department. Plans are for it to be a multi-modal transportation document, and he is in the process of revising it.

Mr. Withrow reported the City Commission has addressed the four-way stops at Hayden Street and S.W. 32nd Avenue and Ong Street and S.W. 32nd Avenue. They have made the decision to leave the four-way stops at both intersections.

Mr. Withrow said he has completed the quarterly report for the Red Light Camera program. He said the volume of accidents, violations, and hearing requests continue to decrease. There are no plans to add additional intersections or relocate equipment at the present time.

He reported the two-way street designation on S.E. 17th Avenue between Bolton Street and Spring Street was approved by the City Commission and has been implemented.

~~He stated that revisions are being made to the Neighborhood Traffic Assistance Policy, and he said the document will be submitted to the Traffic Commission at a future date.~~

He announced he will be retiring at the end of January. Negotiations are underway to hire his replacement.

Dean Downey, 2601 S.W. 26th Avenue, appeared and inquired about the proposed locations for the "Share the Road" motorcycle signs. Mr. Withrow said that some of his suggested locations for signs were excluded because they were on state highways or they overlapped the locations for the bicycle signs. Mr. Downey expressed a desire for motorcyclists to be included in the ad hoc committee along with bicyclists and pedestrians. He stated the large number of motorcyclists in the area deserve representation.

Jimmy Hammonds, 1514 S. Pierce, appeared and stated he promotes working together to improve safety for both bicyclists and motorcyclists.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:36 p.m.


Taylor N. Withrow
Traffic Engineer