

# MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

The Public Works Committee met on Tuesday, May 17, 2011.  
The meeting was held in the Main Conference Room at Leawood City Hall.

## **Members in Attendance:**

Adam Abrams,  
James Azeltine, Committee Chair-Councilmember Ward 4  
Ken Conrad,  
Michael DeMent,  
Jon Grams,  
Marsha Monica,  
Andrew Osman, Councilmember Ward 1,  
Jim Rawlings, Councilmember Ward 2,  
Carrie Rezac, Councilmember Ward 3  
Kip Strauss

## **Committee Members absent:**

John Burge

## **Staff in Attendance:**

Joe Johnson, Director, Public Works Department  
Julie Stasi, Administrative Services Manager, Public Works Department

## **Chair Azeltine called the meeting to order at 7:33 AM.**

- **Old Business-Past Minutes.**

Jon Grams motioned to accept the Minutes of the March 15, 2011 Meeting and approve as written.  
Carrie Rezac seconded the motion to approve as written.  
All present members were in favor. Motion passed.

- **Old Business-Review request to replace YIELD signs with STOP signs at 121<sup>st</sup> Terrace & Wenonga (City Council assignment-February 21, 2011) (City Council re-assignment April 18 2011)**

Chair Azeltine advised that the group had met on this request at the last meeting and returned a recommendation to the City Council. Council returned the item to the Committee for continued discussion and further consideration on the request to place stop signs on 121<sup>st</sup> Terrace & Wenonga. Something pointed out at the council meeting before the referral but never really discussed in this meeting was a visibility issue from either bushes or cars parked or whatever. So we decided to take another look and let us know what staff found out in regards to that issue.

*[An e-mail from resident Jeff Nessel was distributed to the Committee and is also attached to these Minutes.]*

Joe Johnson: Since the meeting last time, the information is the same as far as the number of accidents, the volume of traffic. There have been two accidents in eight years and the volume is somewhere around 800 vehicles in a single day. The standards we use are the MUTCD Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices, the most current edition; which is pretty much the Federal Standard. This has been

adopted by the Federal Highway and the Department of Transportation in most states and municipalities use this to look at all sorts of different things....How you stripe roads, how you sign roads, where you place signs. And it gives criteria to look at in intersections for signing, signalization and it helps cities look at if there is a problem and what needs to be looked at in the intersection in terms if there is a problem whether signing or signals are a solution to improve driver habits to increase safety and minimize accidents.

Staff went through that process at the last meeting and based on speed and volume counts as compared to MUTCD, the intersection does not meet warrants for stop signs. At the last council meeting there was an issue raised about sight distance and whether no parking signs ought to be put up.

We went out and took a look at the intersection. (Staff displays photos which will be attached to these Minutes.) One of the pictures was taken sitting at the Yield sign. The Yield sign is back at the end of the curb return so it is 25' away from the intersection. As you pull up to the Yield sign, you cannot see down the street. There are a series of pictures as I pull up to the intersection you start seeing more. At one point you can see the full intersection, the crest of the hill which is a couple hundred feet down. This is the reason we have the Yield sign. It wouldn't be any different if you had a Stop sign there. You would have to stop and then you would have to pull up to the intersection before you can get a clear view. And that is acceptable.

We have looked at it. The Police Department has looked at it. And about where I am sitting in the vehicle is right within the sight triangle that we use as described by MUTCD.

This is a sight triangle for a stop sign. When we look at sight distance for a stop sign it is 14' back from the intersection at a 3 ½' height. And you need to look down the street to see an object that is 3 ½ feet in height. Another picture shows the parking of two cars within the sight triangle. When staff was out there and both cars were parked during this process; vehicles were pulling up to the intersection on both sides, vehicles were doing what they were supposed to be doing and pulling up to the intersection.

A couple days before that, staff was out there for about thirty minutes watching traffic in the afternoon. Staff had a vehicle parked out here and one of the residents dropped off one of their children and then went about their business. In all cases, people were slowing down. If there was a car coming, they stopped. You know even with a stop sign people do a rolling stop. They pull up to the intersection and if it's clear, they proceed.

A different photo shows the other side of the intersection [heading west looking back to the south]. We also had the Police Departments Traffic Division take a look at this to see if in their opinion they thought that we needed to put "no parking" signs up at the intersection. Their opinion was "no". When we looked at this for no parking signs, we see that this is a residential setting, we have residential streets that are all posted 25mph and to his knowledge, the City has not gone into any residential street and placed no parking signs from here to the corner at any location. Generally this is addressed with the use of Yield signs or Stop signs if there is an issue with that type of traffic movement. In this case, we have yield signs at this intersection. Based on what staff saw and in talking with the Police Department, their opinion is still that the yield signs are right. The Police Department is not going to go out and set a car out there and count people or try to ticket people running stop signs, they do not do that. If it is a high accident area, then that is a different thing, then they would take a look at that. But that is not something they are going to sit out and do.

Joe Johnson said his concern is that the folks that are driving out here are the ones that live here. Putting up a stop sign is not going to change their driving habits. They are still going to pull through the stop sign, stop at the intersections they have to and then proceed through the intersection. The assumption is if you put a stop sign up people are going to obey it and stop. I've seen enough out here even at the four way stop that if there is nobody coming; they kind of roll to the intersection and then go through the

intersection or turn if they have to go east or west. This is what we have captured at the intersection for obstructions.

Kip Strauss advised he drove through the intersection this morning before the meeting.

He pulled up to the intersection and certainly going west bound, you can clearly see the yield sign. You are going up a hill and it is right at you. He felt like going east bound and he could see the yield sign too. He likes Joe's comment about it is the residents that live there that are driving through that intersection. And the applicant says that there is full support for a stop sign, but he feels if they could talk to the neighborhood association about good driver behavior, that would be a good mitigation. Was curious about the two accidents over the eight years and if there was a way to find out if those accidents were caused by people that live in the neighborhood?

Joe Johnson- did not know if the Police tracked that.

Kip Strauss- guess his point is that he would guess that the two people that caused those accidents live in the neighborhood and if they were paying attention, then the accident would not have occurred.

Joe Johnson-In reading those police reports, both accidents were people traveling east bound. They had pulled up to the yield sign, stopped and then pulled forward and had the accident. Both accidents were listed as "inattention".

Marsha Monica- arrives and advised she just drove by the intersection. She lives in the Waterford Subdivision and at the corner of Glenfield (which is the main entrance in from Mission Drive). There is a stop sign there and people roll through that stop sign all the time. So she thinks the point is well taken that if there is a stop sign there, depending on the traffic flow and whatever, whether it is a stop or a yield people tend to roll through those.

Joe Johnson- advised he had an email last week from a resident at 88<sup>th</sup> & Lee Boulevard. The person called into the police department and said they almost hit a pedestrian who was walking on Lee Boulevard. The car had pulled up to Lee off of 88<sup>th</sup> Street and there is landscaping out there that needs to be removed.

Joe Johnson- said he went to take a look and there is a lot of landscaping there. There is a ten foot section of sidewalk on either side of 88<sup>th</sup> Street that it is hard to see through. But there is a stop sign there and you are supposed to stop behind the sidewalk. And if you stop behind the sidewalk, it is very clear you can see....well the driver had just blown through the stop sign to pull up to Lee and in doing that, almost hit the jogger coming across 88<sup>th</sup> Street on Lee Blvd. So the perception of putting a stop sign in and drivers are going to obey it is not always accurate.

Councilmember Osman- In essence with a Yield sign, you are supposed to stop if there is a conflicting vehicle.

Joe Johnson- Drivers are supposed to stop behind the stop sign or the yield sign and then proceed to the intersection and drive appropriately to cross traffic.

Councilmember Rawlings- This has been an issue for a couple of months. We have brought this up and talked about it. Ever since we have spoken of this, he himself has been aware as he drives through Leawood looking at all the intersections that he goes through. He is thinking practically every intersection or major intersection has landscaping with urns and/or landscaping and fountains. And if you look at every intersection, everyone has a potential for an accident if a driver is not paying attention. This one doesn't seem to be any different than any other intersection. Drivers just need to do heads up driving and pay attention and be aware of their surroundings.

Chair Azeltine-Asked Staff if when they were out there with the vehicles, were there any vehicles at the

time that were parked right at the intersection or within 50 feet?

Joe Johnson-No, the only time he has been out there and seen vehicles parked, were the trucks parked for a minute or two who had dropped off one of their children at the corner house. But at times he has sat there and monitored traffic; he has not seen any vehicles.

Joe has been out there half a dozen times and two times he has sat out there for 20 to 30 minutes and has seen one vehicle dropping someone off and then they left.

Chair Azeltine-also advised there is a fire hydrant on one of the corners and you are not allowed to park within so many feet of those.

Joe Johnson. As far as speeding goes, the Police Dept did a speed study with their stealth unit. It is just a box they hang up, so it does a good job of collecting the true speed. It is posted 25mph. The 85<sup>th</sup> percentile of drivers was 29 mph. The highest speed recorded was 47mph. This was three weeks before our first meeting.

Councilman Rawlings said that Police Chief Meier told him that in looking at safety and speeds in neighborhoods, probably 95% of the offenders speeding on the 25mph streets are people that live in the neighborhood-trying to get home. It's not an occasional person passing through. It's us and we are the enemy.

Chair Azeltine-perhaps some communication on a part of the neighborhood association could help as well.

Michael DeMent motioned for the denial of the residents request; remaining with the recommendation that the Committee agree to keep the intersection the same. The location does not meet the warrants according to the standards adopted through the MUTCD / ASHTO Criteria currently used in Leawood.

Jon Grams seconded the Motion.

All present members were in favor, Motion passed.

Chair Azeltine appreciates the Committee's patience with this topic. We have analyzed this from all sides.

Ken Conrad-Remembers last time it was brought up that there needs to be communication with the homes association to give them the data, the traffic report and everything.

Joe Johnson advised it was not given to the homes association but it was given to both Mr. Nessel and another resident who had made the first request. We can definitely figure out who the board members are of the homes association and provide that information to them.

The Committee remarked that the Homes Association in the area of the intersection should probably be contacted and advised of the outcome; and how the City reviews an area and applies MUTCD standards to determine traffic warrants and requests.

Ken Conrad-In response to hearing that so many people would sign the petition for a sign and they were all in favor of it. It may be good that the information get passed back to them other than just to the couple of people that really want this.

The Committee knows that if someone comes up in your association if they have a pretty decent idea and they put a paper in front of you, many times, you say sure and sign it.

Ken Conrad-It would be good if it was made available to this association so they can make the neighbors aware.

Councilmember Rezac-Also include the pictures as it shows staff was out there and it is hard to look at the pictures and say that there is a visual obstacle there.

Michael DeMent-There may also be a benefit to boiler-plating this material and if you periodically have these issues and we go through this and the discussion, we advise everyone to talk to their associations. With a general packet, you could say there is a thought process and we have criteria that we look at when we make these recommendations. We do not just say yes or no and put up another sign. Advise requestors our process and what it is. It is not just a gut reaction of putting a piece of metal on a pole. We go through a thoughtful decision in looking at their requests and residents in the mean time could be talking with each other on good driving habits.

Chair Azeltine-Just send a cover letter to this one homes association to let them know a concern was raised and we had a real process that we used in determining our findings and recommendations.

Marsha Monica-in looking again at the email; is this not the definition of a yield sign, to a full stop and proceed when safe? Is that not the definition of a yield sign?

Joe Johnson advised that both the stop sign and the yield sign are fairly similar as how you drive through. Generally the yield sign is if you pull up to an intersection and it is clear, you really do not have to come to a complete stop. The stop sign, you are supposed to come to a complete stop behind the stop sign and then proceed forth. With a yield sign you can actually slow down and stop up at the intersection before pulling out. It does not require you to stop behind the sign like a stop sign does.

Kip Strauss-There is confusion possibly at other intersections that have a stop sign. The intersection at 121<sup>st</sup> Street, just to the north, there is a 4-way stop. And this location does not meet a 4-way stop criteria now. Also a little further north there is another street that does have a stop sign on Wenonga.

Marsha Monica-Advised she lived in Verona Gardens when that stop sign went in. It was different back then.

Joe Johnson-Advised MUTCD has come into play since then and there is a way to look at intersections and see key things that need to be looked at to determine whether that safety is there. It is not dealing with emotions. It looks at what is happening-the speed, the accidents and the reasons. Just putting a stop sign up does not change driving patterns. As a pedestrian, you may get a false sense of security that where there is a stop sign, people are going to stop.

Marsha Monica-In response to them, it is not that we are unsympathetic to them. It is that we are not seeing that by doing a stop sign it will change the driving habits that currently exist and that it will not solve the problem.

Ken Conrad-Your response is the speed study, the on-sight study and the common practice of intersection design. That is the standard we use. The other locations that signs were installed were from the past and that is not today's issue. What we have to do is address each individual case based on this criteria. It is a process and in this case the process shows the fact that there probably is not a necessity for it.

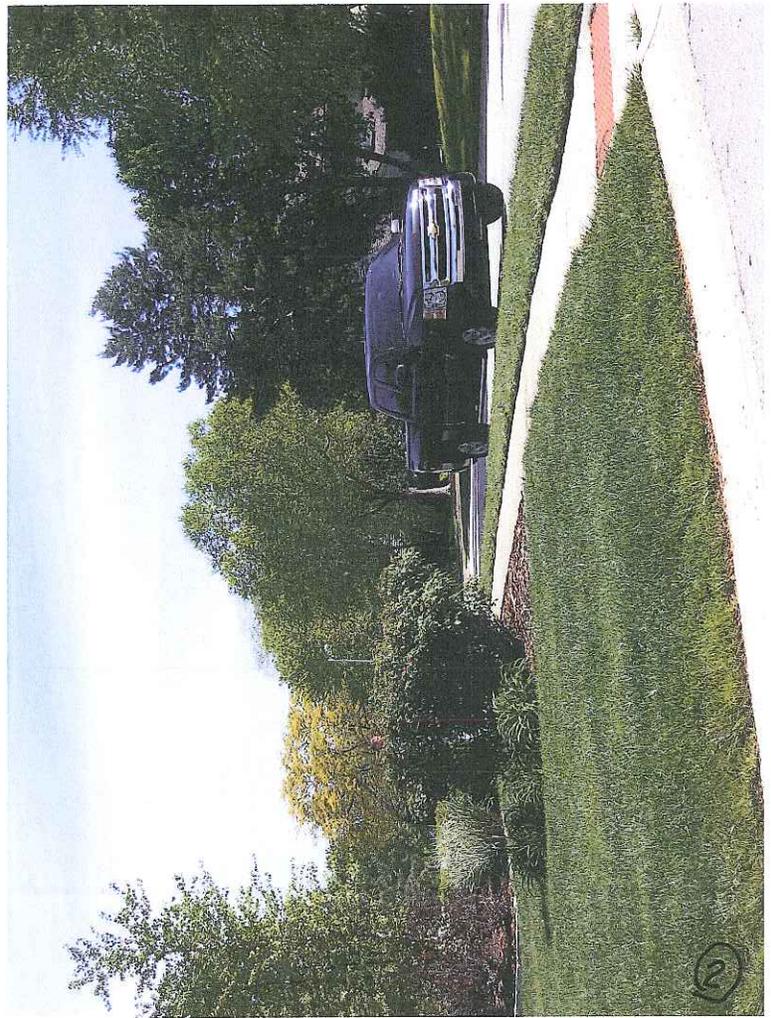
Chair Azeltine advised there had been a new assignment for June. Therefore, the next meeting will be June 21, 2011.

**Meeting adjourned at 8:15 AM.**

Minutes transcribed by Julie Stasi, Public Works Department

[attachments: 1 e-mail, 10 pictures]

OLYMPUS file DS300126







Joe Johnson

---

From: Jeffrey Nessel [REDACTED]  
Sent: Monday, May 16, 2011 8:30 PM  
To: Joe Johnson  
Cc: James Azeltine  
Subject: RE: MAY MEETING

Joe:

Thank you for the info. I will not be able to attend the meeting but I do hope that a copy of the petition I presented at the council meeting (along with the fact that NOT ONE PERSON refused to sign, and all in fact agreed that a STOP sign was needed) will be mentioned. To refresh your memory I collected those signatures on a weekend just asking anybody who was outside in the neighborhood. Furthermore, at that same meeting, Jim conceded that there "might" be a visibility problem looking northward if any car is parked in front of the house on the northwest corner. Jim, as I told the council the FIRST night I spoke on this issue, it is a MAJOR problem. Also, as the resident of that particular house told me (and as she wrote on the petition) there have been numerous near misses at that same intersection.

If I were to attend the meeting tomorrow I would simply ask if the residents want it, it would not cost the city a dime and it will force those obeying the law to come to a full stop and proceed when safe and thus perhaps prevent a very serious accident, why won't the city be proactive and take down the yield sign and put up a stop sign. All the "guidelines" you cite won't make a bit of difference to a family trying to understand why a government failed them.

Jeff Nessel

---

From: joej@leawood.org  
To: jeffnesse [REDACTED]  
Cc: jamesa@leawood.org  
Subject: RE: MAY MEETING  
Date: Thu, 12 May 2011 16:46:38 +0000

Jeff,

Here is the packet that the committee will receive for their discussion.

Joe

*Joe C. Johnson, P.E.  
Director of Public Works  
Leawood, Kansas  
(913) 339-6700, ext. 131*

---

From: Julie Stasi  
Sent: Thursday, May 12, 2011 11:32 AM  
To: jeffnesse [REDACTED]  
Cc: James Azeltine; Joe Johnson  
Subject: MAY MEETING

Hello Mr. Nessel.

The Public Works Committee will have a meeting on Tuesday, May 17, 2011.