

**Public Safety Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
March 16, 2022  
6:00 PM  
Council Chambers**

**Members Present**

Councilor Chris Rice, Chair  
Councilor Dana Berlin  
Councilor Skip Gilman  
Councilor Amy Malone

**Members Absent**

Councilor Peter Lachapelle, Vice Chair

**Others Present**

Councilor John LaRochelle  
Councilor Laura Hainey  
Michael Bezanson, PE, City Engineer  
Deputy Chief Jason Thomas, PD  
Assistant Fire Chief Tim Wilder  
Dan Camara, GIS Asset Mgmt. Technician  
Bob Mayrand, 514 Salmon Falls Road

**Minutes**

Councilor Rice brought the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

1. **Approve Minutes from February 16, 2022 Public Safety Meeting.**  
*Councilor Berlin made a motion to approve the minutes from February 16, 2022. The motion was seconded by Councilor Malone. Unanimous voice vote carried the motion.*
2. **Public Input**  
Members of the public were present for items that were on the agenda.
3. **Request for Crossing Sign with Light at the East Rochester Elementary School (request was sent by Councilor Hainey)**  
Councilor Rice summarized the issue. This request was moved up the agenda so Councilor Hainey could explain the issue, as she had another meeting to attend within an hour. Councilor Hainey said the request is for a crosswalk at the intersection of Portland Street and Carole Court for students attending the East Rochester School. The existing crosswalk across Portland Street worked well for the old school location, but now with the configuration of the new school and the new development across the street, the children get crossed further down. Right now, the students cross the road in an area that currently has no marked crosswalk. There is a new development being built across the road; currently there may be only one student that lives there now, but there will be many more houses built in the future. There are also students north of the School that walk down Portland Street and need a place to cross. Councilor Rice asked Mr. Bezanson if there was a policy that states how many feet between crosswalks. Mr. Bezanson

said no he does not think so; however, back in 2019 the Committee went through an in-depth study of the school routes and crossings for each of the City's schools. In August of 2019 the Committee discussed the East Rochester and Nancy Loud Schools and Mr. Bezanson made mention in that meeting that the Committee may want to consider a crosswalk across Portland Street at Carole Court in the future. He stated that the current request seems appropriate. Councilor Berlin asked whether the presence of the exit road from the school and the development road, Carole Court, created a situation that would warrant a 4-way stop. Councilor Hainey stated that the development is not completed yet, but the road from the school is a one way out used by parents dropping off and picking up and by busses exiting the school. Councilor Berlin questioned whether the intersection would warrant a 4-way stop, especially when the development is completed, which would allow crosswalks to be painted on each leg of the intersection. Mr. Bezanson said there should be a painted crosswalk across Carole Court right now. ADA-compliant pedestrian access ramps currently exist on either side of Carole Court, as well as across Portland Street on the school side. Adding a crosswalk across Portland Street might be as simple as painting the crosswalk and installing the signs for it. The appropriate advanced warning signs are already installed. Councilor Malone asked what the Committee could do next. Councilor Rice said that since this could be completed at minimal cost, they could make a motion to recommend to full Council to install a crosswalk across Portland Street at the discretion of DPW. Mr. Bezanson said he has not talked to the School Department or considered the need for a crossing guard. Councilor Hainey said there currently is no crossing guard. Councilor Berlin said based on the minimal cost and effort we should just do it. Councilor Rice said he can see going to the School Board to see if they have any suggestions and recommendations. Councilor Hainey said they should notify the School Board out of courtesy. ***Councilor Berlin made a motion to recommend to City Council to install a crosswalk across Portland Street to Carole Court with the appropriate signage at the discretion of DPW. The motion was seconded by Councilor Malone. Unanimous voice vote carried the motion.*** Councilor Rice will email the chairman of the School Board to let him know.

**4. Flat Rock Bridge Road/Salmon Falls Road Intersection Safety Concerns (kept in committee)**

Councilor Rice summarized the issue. Mr. Bezanson said they have made some progress with the surveyor on a scope of work, so he has a better understanding regarding costs has been considering how to fund the effort. This effort will be to establish the right-of-way and be definitive about it, which will support future paving of the roadway, ensuring it is located within the right-of-way, and will support any efforts to address line-of-sight issues at the intersection. It could be that this effort needs to wait until a new budget is approved for the next fiscal year.

**5. Salmon Falls Road Traffic Issues (kept in committee)**

Councilor Rice summarized the issue. He stated that there were some citizens in the audience that attended last month's meeting to address the Committee

regarding speed and noise on the section of Salmon Falls Road just southeast of Portland Street. They have submitted information to the Committee via email regarding the issues that are occurring in this area and suggested signage. Councilor Berlin stated that he believed that removable speed bumps wouldn't be a good idea, but wanted to revisit the idea of a speed table, which is completely different. He prefaced his comments by acknowledging the idea of setting a precedent: if a speed table is installed at one place, the Committee will likely be addressing requests from many others throughout the City. In light of this, he is requesting criteria for obtaining a speed bump, hump, or table. He passed out an article called Reducing Traffic Speeds, which presented options, including lower posted speed limits, police enforcement, speed watch programs, portable speed display boards, and physical road alterations. Councilor Berlin read a portion of the article describing the differences between a speed bump, hump, and table: speed bumps are 3 to 6 inches high with a length of 1 to 3 feet; speed humps are 3 to 4 inches high and typically 12 feet long; and, speed tables are essentially flat-topped speed humps, usually 22 feet long. The article goes on to say that they all slow traffic, but speed bumps can cause vehicle damage and loss of control, therefore traffic engineers strongly recommend against speed bumps in the public right-of-way. Traffic engineers recommend speed humps only on streets where speed limits are 30 mph or less. Speed tables are used nationwide on roads with less than 40 mph speed limits. In some places fire departments have object to speed humps, but found speed tables acceptable. Properly designed and installed speed tables present minimal problems with plowing and street sweeping. As long as done correctly no legal issues. Councilor Berlin said given all of the information he believes a speed table would work in this area. Again, there should be criteria established to address future requests. Some criteria he believes could be considered are speed limit (maybe less than 35 mph), distance to stop sign/intersection (maybe no less than 150 feet), distance to residential or commercial driveway (maybe no less than 50 feet), greater than 50 percent of motorists travelling more than 5 MPH over the posted speed limit, and cannot be installed on roads of certain length (maybe less than 600 feet). Councilor Rice said he does support this and would also like to see traffic counts as a criteria. Councilor Berlin said behind the Dover High School on Bellamy Road a speed table has been installed that significantly reduced the traffic speed there. He mentioned that he could reach out to see the traffic counts in the area. Councilor Rice also mentioned that the grade of the roadway should be considered, as a significant slope on the road may not be ideal for the installation of a speed table. He admitted that speed humps and speed tables would have a significant initial cost, but they do reduce speed and the payoff could be huge in the long run. Councilor Berlin asked whether other municipalities had existing criteria. Mr. Bezanson said there are some federal guidelines regarding the installation of speed humps and tables; he hadn't yet checked with NHDOT regarding any State guidelines. He stated that there are no speed humps or tables installed in the City of Rochester currently; however, there is one raised crosswalk at The Ridge on the public roadway, Marketplace Boulevard. A raised crosswalk is essentially a speed table with one or more crosswalks installed on top. The City is also planning

to install another raised crosswalk at the Strafford Square roundabout in the northbound slip lane. Councilor Rice said down south they install grooves in the pavement, similar to rumble strips, to alert motorists to slow down in certain areas. Councilor Berlin questioned whether pavement grooves or rumble strips would exacerbate the noise issue in the area. Deputy Chief Thomas said that since this issue was presented at last month's meeting, there has been an emphasis placed on enforcement in the area; during that time 20 cars were stopped and 1 felony arrest was made for being a habitual offender. The speed trailer was out on Salmon Falls Road for 8 days from September 30 to October 7, 2021 near the Walnut Grove Church and the total traffic volume counted was 20,945 vehicles. Average speed recorded was 41 MPH and the posted speed limit is 35 MPH. Highest speed recorded was 81 MPH, which was recorded at 3:00 AM on one of those days. Deputy Chief Thomas said now that the weather is getting better the speed trailer would be coming back out and that they will be putting it in stealth mode, so it is collecting data but not displaying recorded speeds. Assistant Fire Chief Wilder requested that staff be allowed the time to respond to any suggested installations of speed humps or tables and the resulting effects that could have on response times and vehicle wear; there are other solutions such as offset speed tables that would allow fire engines to maneuver around speed tables by crossing the roadway centerline. Councilor Rice admitted that this issue may not have a quick fix, and it might involve a capital improvement project that would need to go through the Public Works & Buildings Committee and the Finance Committee. This is in the discussion stage right now. Mr. Mayrand of 514 Salmon Falls Road was present to discuss the issues of Jake brakes and noise and the speed limit. Councilor Rice said he would allow him to speak, but further information should be communicated during the Public Input portion of the meeting or through email to the Committee members. He also said that none of the ideas presented are off the table yet; the Committee is still discussing possible solutions. The Committee will continue to consider signage that could be installed per MUCTD. This was kept in committee for further discussion to find an appropriate solution for this area.

**6. Concern of Traffic around William Allen School (resident sent email to City Manager)**

Councilor Rice summarized the issue. No action was taken.

**7. Sidewalk Request on Hansonville Road (email was sent to Councilor Lachapelle) (kept in committee)**

Councilor Rice summarized the issue. Mr. Bezanson said that the Department has considered what it would take to install a sidewalk along Hansonville Road between Oak Street and Gear Road. Given the width of the existing right of way, a sidewalk would likely need to be installed immediately adjacent to the roadway, which would necessitate the installation of curbing and closed drainage. The installation of catch basins and drain pipe would likely be costly as there is a lot of exposed ledge in the area. Mr. Bezanson said he doesn't have a cost estimate right now, but the cost is adding up. Kept in committee for further discussion next month.

**8. Safety Issue Crosswalk Columbus Avenue near KFC (Route 125) Request was sent by Councilor Berlin (kept in committee)**

Councilor Rice summarize the issue. Mr. Bezanson stated that there is federal guidance regarding the application of pedestrian crash countermeasures. He referred to 2018 guidance from the Federal Highway Administration that ranks countermeasures for areas based upon roadway annual average daily traffic (AADT), speed limit, and number of lanes that a crosswalk crosses. He stated that, according to the guidance, this particular crosswalk location seems to already have in place all of the countermeasures that should always occur in such a location, with the exception of adequate nighttime lighting levels. Additionally, a Rectangular Rapid-Flashing Beacon (RRFB) installation should always be considered in such a location, according to the guidance. Councilor LaRochelle suggested that the City could explore the use of solar-powered street lights for such situations. Mr. Bezanson said the lighting should be downcast and installed just ahead of the crosswalk as traffic approaches. This was kept in committee for further research into lighting costs and potential solar options.

**9. New DPW 209 Chestnut Hill Road-Street-Light Request at the Entrance to DPW (original request from Councilor Gray)**

Councilor Rice said that it didn't meet the streetlight policy of 3 telephone poles. Mr. Bezanson said there was lighting in the parking lot and that there is a new pole at driveway. ***Councilor Gilman made a motion to install a streetlight on the pole at the entrance of the new DPW at the discretion of DPW. The motion was seconded by Councilor Malone. Unanimous voice vote carried the motion.***

**10. E911 Update**

There was no E911 Update.

**11. Emergency Management Update**

Assistant Chief Wilder said the Fire Department is working with Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM), who oversee the Seabrook Station; Rochester is a host community will be ramping back up training as the COVID-19 pandemic put the City behind about 1 ½ years in training efforts. There will be a graded exercise this year, so there will be joint training with HSEM at the Rochester Middle School.

**12. Other**

**Church Street Speed Limit on Church Street**

Mr. Bezanson said there was a resident on Church Street that requested reduced speed limits on Church Street in Gonic. He said that Councilor Lachapelle was going to bring this issue up to the Committee, but in the Councilor's absence he would introduce the issue for further discussion next month. He pointed out that there is a posted 25 MPH speed limit headed into Gonic from both directions on Pickering Road, as well as from midway down Church Street. There is a posted

30 MPH speed limit inbound on Church on the portion that is closer to Route 125. Councilor Berlin stated that he could be in favor of a 25 MPH speed limit for the entire length of Church Street. Councilor Rice said this issue will be kept in committee to hear the full request from the resident through Councilor Lachapelle and to be discussed next month.

#### **Estes Road Guardrail Request**

Mr. Bezanson said that DPW was contacted by the owner of a house on Estes Road that sits closer to the road than other houses in the area and is located on a curve in the road. Recently a vehicle had a roadway departure and ended up in the owner's front yard. The owner requested measures to prevent this from happening again, including potentially a guardrail. Mr. Bezanson mentioned that given the location of the property owner's driveway, a guardrail may not be able to prevent a vehicle departing the roadway from entering the owner's front yard. He mentioned that this portion of Estes Road is on the paving list for this year and they can look at the crown of the road. Councilor LaRochelle asked whether this has happened more than once. Mr. Bezanson said that owner mentioned that this had happened before. Mr. Bezanson also reported that the Deputy Chief noted a few crashes in the area over the past three years, some of which appeared to be roadway departures, but it is unclear when the last one may have happened at this particular property. Councilor Rice asked the speed limit in the area. Deputy Chief Thomas and Mr. Bezanson said it is posted 35 MPH. Councilor Berlin asked if there was a sign at the curve. Mr. Bezanson said no there were no warning signs in this location. Councilor LaRochelle asked whether the City ever considers installing reflectors along the edge of road in a curve. Councilor Rice said the City Council has approved chevron signs on roadway curves, including a recent installation on Pickering Road. **(kept in committee)**

**Councilor Rice adjourned the meeting at 7:18 PM.**

***The minutes were respectfully submitted by Laura J. McDormand, Admin. Assistant II.***

# Reducing Traffic Speeds

## *Speed Limits, Stop Signs, and Physical Road Alterations*

Residents often complain that traffic speeds are too high. Lower speeds can reduce accidents, traffic noise, air pollution, and energy consumption. This article describes various ways to slow traffic on existing roads, and their affects.

### Speed Limits

**Lower Posted Speed Limits** reduce traffic speeds only when accompanied by enforcement, speed watch programs, and/or portable speed display signs. Drivers generally ignore posted speed limits if, in their judgment, the speed is not reasonable.

**Police Enforcement** lowers traffic speeds when police consistently issue tickets. However, cities and towns must commit personnel for a long time. When enforcement ends, drivers will return to the prior speeds.

Residents support and encourage enforcement on "their" street. However, neighborhood speeders are usually the local residents. Community opinion can turn negative when police cite residents.

**Speed Watch Programs** rely on volunteers to use a radar unit, and record speeds. Some neighborhoods set maximum speeds. Police send letters to those whose speeds exceed these maximums.

Speeds typically go down during the watch, but rise when it ends. Residents often find that no significant problem exists. Even though speeders are usually local residents, they usually perceive these programs positively.

RSAs 262 and 263 restrict a governing body's authority to set speed limits. Within those restrictions, a speed watch might be a low cost initial phase to slow speeders. Later phases can be the physical road alterations described below.

**Portable Speed Display Boards** show the speed limit and the driver's travel speed. Studies show small speed decreases when the device is present. A few studies show increases as the device challenges some drivers to speed. Recorded data can help police target enforcement times.

### STOP Signs

Some towns install STOP signs as an immediate, tangible, and inexpensive response to residents' safety concerns. However, officials should note that STOP signs have some negative affects on safety. Speeds usually decrease only within about 100 feet before and after STOP signs. Drivers reach normal or higher speeds by midblock. While accelerating they take longer to stop for an emergency, such a child running into the street.

STOP Signs tell drivers where they must stop. Drivers tend to roll through "speed control" STOP signs. Many traffic engineers conclude that this disregard for STOP signs carries over to important STOP controlled locations.

For these and other reasons, the MUTCD recommends STOP signs only where engineering judgment indicates certain conditions. In Section 2B.05 it states "STOP signs should not be used for speed control."

Community reaction is usually mixed. Some view STOP signs as a safety improvement. Others view them as limiting movement where they most frequently drive. In addition, air quality worsens, and fuel consumption and noise increase near STOP signs.

### Physical Road Alterations

**Street Narrowing** is the real or apparent reduction of the pavement width. Towns can narrow a road in several ways.

- **Removing pavement surface** lowers speeds only where there is a large width reduction. In some areas, reducing widths to less than 28 feet has increased accidents.
- **Chokers** are curb bulbs or median islands that narrow a street. They lower speeds in their immediate area. After passing them, drivers accelerate to normal speeds. Chokers can increase snow removal costs.

- **Pavement markings** indicate narrower than actual travel lanes. They rarely reduce speeds. Where pavement marking better defines the travel way, speeds have increased

Pavement removal and chokers are costly.

Some towns include them in street beautification projects. Increased streetlights, landscaping, and activity also tend to slow motorists. Improved crossing point visibility and shorter street crossing time might improve pedestrian safety.

**Speed Bumps, Humps, and Tables** are raised areas in the roadway surface across the roadway. Speed bumps are 3 to 6 inches high with a length of 1 to 3 feet. Speed humps are 3 to 4 inches high and typically 12 feet long. Speed tables are essentially flat-topped speed humps, usually 22 feet long.

They all slow traffic. However, speed bumps can cause vehicle damage and loss of control. Traffic engineers strongly recommend AGAINST SPEED BUMPS.

Traffic engineers recommend speed humps only on streets where speed limits are 30 mph or less. Nationwide, agencies use speed tables on roads with less than 40 mph speed limits. In some places, fire departments have objected to speed humps, but found speed tables acceptable.

Both affect vehicle speeds along the road length when appropriately spaced. (See ITE, 1999, p. 63) If spacing is too far apart, speed decreases only in the immediate vicinity of the hump or table.

However, speed humps and tables often divert traffic, especially large trucks, to alternate routes. They can be uncomfortable for transit and school bus riders. Because humps and tables slow traffic, they reduce air quality impacts and energy use.

Most people living in the area initially favor speed humps and tables, but some tire of the inconvenience. Some cities require resident petitions and have a clear criterion for speed humps. (See Riverside CA. 1998., pp. 31-33)

Speed humps and tables are geometric design features. Officials should have engineers design their profile and spacing. Properly designed, they have

minimal affect on snowplowing and street sweeping.

**Introducing Curves** on previously straight alignment can take two different forms:

1. Reconstruct the street with a curved centerline alignment and a uniform roadway width;
2. Introduce chokers or barriers on alternate sides of the street to create a serpentine travel path.

Speed changes little at curves if widths are uniform. There is some reduction near chokers and barriers. The closer the spacing the greater the speed reductions.

Engineers should design curves, chokers, and barriers. Vehicle flow and visibility issues can be complex. Pedestrian and bicycle traffic complicates design. Landscaping, often desired in such projects, can create visibility problems.

## Speed Reduction and Costs

Police enforcement reduces traffic speeds, but can be expensive. Speed watch programs and display boards are relatively inexpensive but produce mixed and temporary speed reductions. STOP signs are cheap but reduce speeds only near the signs. The MUTCD and traffic engineers discourage their use for speed control.

Even though low cost, street narrowing by pavement marking is ineffective. Chokers and removing pavement surface have mixed effect on speeds. They have more affect when part of a street beautification project.

Properly designed speed humps and tables reduce speeds and have only initial significant cost. Introducing curves are usually even more expensive, and speed reduction depends on many factors.

### Sources:

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