

**PLACENTIA TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING
February 24, 2011**

The Special meeting of the Placentia Traffic Safety Commission of February 24, 2011 was called to order at 7:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers, 401 E. Chapman Avenue, Placentia, California by Chairman Faia.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

ROLL CALL: Present: Commissioner Bruschke
Vice Chairman Chadha
Chairman Faia
Commissioner Hernandez
Commissioner Labreche
Commissioner Stafford

Absent: Commissioner Gorman

STAFF PRESENT:

Troy Butzlaff, City Administrator
Steve Drinovsky, Director of Public Works
Jim Anderson, Chief of Police
Ward Smith, Police Captain
Ruth Smith, Traffic Engineer
Jonathan Wu, Associate Engineer
Scott Millsap, Traffic Sergeant
Sara Salazar, Administrative Assistant

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Chairman Faia invited public comments on items which are not public hearings. There were none and Chairman Faia closed the public comments.

REPORTS:

**I. TRAFFIC CONTROL: TSC NO. 11-02
Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Concerns at Golden Avenue and Valencia Avenue
Requested by the City Administrator**

Chief Anderson addressed the Commission. Police enforcement was increased in the week following the accident which occurred on January 24, 2011, at the intersection of Valencia Avenue and Golden Avenue. In a three (3) year history of the intersection, five (5) accidents occurred with one being similar to the recent accident.

Sergeant Millsap addressed the Commission and gave a description of the accident. An investigation determined that the cause of the accident was failure to yield while

making a left hand turn.

Ms. Smith updated the Commission regarding the requests made by residents and the City Council for safety improvements at the intersection of Valencia Avenue and Golden Avenue. Requests were made for left turn arrows in all four directions, flashing beacons on school speed limit signs and on speed feedback signs. Other improvements considered were flashing beacons on crosswalks, upgrading school signs to fluorescent yellow-green and upgrading the signal with pedestrian countdown heads. Ms. Smith referred to the California Manual of Uniform Traffic Code Devices (MUTCD) and spoke about conditions and warrants that the City must follow when making improvements to traffic devices. The traffic study that was conducted shows that protected left turn arrows are not warranted at this intersection. Flashing beacons were considered for the nearby two (2) school crosswalks. The crosswalk on Golden Avenue at Chickasaw Drive warrants a flashing beacon, however the crosswalk on Valencia Avenue at Purdy Avenue has insufficient pedestrians to meet the requirements. The result of installing unwarranted flashing beacons could be drivers ignoring the warning. Speed feedback signs do not require warrants and would alert drivers to their current driving speed as they enter the school zone. Fluorescent yellow-green signs could replace the existing yellow signs to remind drivers of the school zone. Countdown pedestrian heads would allow pedestrians to know exactly how much time they have to safely cross.

Commissioner Labreche asked Ms. Smith if all cities are required to follow the rules of the MUTCD to ensure uniformity. Ms. Smith responded that yes, cities are required to follow the MUTCD. Commissioner Labreche asked Ms. Smith if by following these rules, cities avoid liability from design flaws. Ms. Smith responded that yes, when following these rules, cities have "design immunity" which protects them from lawsuits. If a city does not follow the rules of the MUTCD, they could be held liable (for resulting collisions/injuries).

Chairman Faia asked if the Commission could get details on the traffic study at the next meeting. Ms. Smith responded that yes they would.

Commissioner Brusckke asked what the traffic volume was at the intersection. Ms. Smith responded that in addition to traffic volume, collisions within a 12 month period are considered for protected left turns. Collisions did not meet the requirements. The product of multiplying the left-turn volume by the opposing through volume needs to be at least 100,000, and did not meet the requirement.

Mr. Butzlaff informed the Commission that the City has received in the past and will continue to apply for grant funds from the "Safe Routes to School" fund to enhance crosswalks within the City.

Chairman Faia opened the public comments for the item.

Mr. Scott Riordan, 520 Comanche Drive, Placentia, thanked staff for holding the meeting. He expressed that the intersection is extremely busy in the morning and

afternoon and felt that motorists drive very fast. He expressed that he felt the traffic device enhancements presented by Mrs. Smith would be a great improvement. He felt that this accident may have been prevented if the intersection had been equipped with protected left turns. He also asked for clarification on the required traffic volume for a protected left turn.

Mr. Blake Anderson, 520 Apache Drive, Placentia, stated his son was present at the crosswalk when the accident occurred. He expressed that he felt the accident could've been prevented by either a protected left turn or speed control. He encouraged staff to consider the curvature of southbound Valencia Avenue when determining improved traffic devices. He questioned why there were not more violations recorded by the Police Department.

Ms. Melissa Larsen, 520 Apache Drive, Placentia, stated she walks her two boys to the corner every day and has seen how fast cars drive by. She expressed that safety at the intersection needs improvement and anything will be appreciated.

Ms. Judy Trinh, 2831 Alderberry Court, Fullerton 92835 presented a picture of her son Matthew Trinh, a victim of the collision. She expressed concern over the excessive speed on Valencia Avenue and requested safety enhancements be made. She presented a petition of 653 signatures in support of protected left turns and flashing beacon lights at Golden Avenue and Valencia Avenue, to Mr. Butzlaff.

Mr. Jeff Anderson, 501 Comanche Drive, Placentia, stated he was present at the intersection at the time of collision. He felt the intersection was unsafe due to traffic driving too fast on Valencia. He did not agree with traffic reports from staff.

Commissioner Labreche asked what the 85th percentile was in the City's last speed survey on Valencia Avenue. Ms. Smith responded that the speed was properly posted and she would need to get back to him with the speed.

Mr. Butzlaff gave Ms. Smith an opportunity to respond to questions presented by residents.

Ms. Smith responded to concerns regarding the requested left turn signal not being warranted, and stated that based on the recommendation of staff, it is a decision each city must make. She explained the formula used to determine the required traffic volume for the left turn signal.

Mr. Butzlaff added that if the City acts against design standards, its design immunity is compromised, which puts the City at risk of large liability exposure.

Sgt. Millsap referred to the vehicle code and spoke about violations caused by motorists when pedestrians are present in the crosswalk. He stated he has been working the crosswalk after school and has not issued any violations.

The Commission allowed questions from residents in the audience.

Ms. Melissa Larsen, 520 Apache Drive, Placentia, asked about liability to the City over unsafe crosswalks. Mr. Butzlaff responded that the City would only have design immunity if all design standards were met. Ms. Smith agreed with Mr. Butzlaff's response. Commissioner Labreche added that even if the City has design immunity, it may still be subject to costly lawsuits.

Questions were raised about the speed of the vehicles that were involved in the collision.

A request for daily police presence after school was made. Mr. Butzlaff responded that it is not in the City's budget to provide that service. Chief Anderson responded that the City contracts with a crossing guard service to help children across the street. The Police Department does not have the staff to provide that service.

A question was raised about the number of officers working at any given time. Chief Anderson responded that the department has about four (4) officers during the day and five (5) or six (6) on nights and weekends.

A question was raised about the interpretation of the required warrants. Ms. Smith assured them that her interpretation was correct.

Discussion ensued with questions and answers between staff and residents.

A question was raised about the highly visible and recently painted red curbs on the east side of the intersection, but not the west side. Mr. Drinovsky responded that he supports all efforts to improve the intersection and the City would do all it can.

Chairman Faia closed the public comments.

NON AGENDA ITEMS:

None

ADJOURNMENT: 8:45 p.m.

MOTION TO ADJOURN BY COMMISSIONER STAFFORD, SECOND BY COMMISSIONER BRUSCHKE, CARRIED BY A UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE OF THE MEMBERS PRESENT 6-0-1 (GORMAN ABSENT), TO ADJOURN TO A REGULAR MEETING ON MARCH 21, 2011.



RUTH SMITH, T.E., Traffic Engineer
Secretary to the Traffic Safety Commission

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