

Mayor David Anderson called the special council meeting of August 21, 2015 to order at 2:30 p.m. Present for the meeting were Mayor Anderson, Council President Rick Alonzo, Council Members Ron Smith, Connie Wells, and Adam Arthur, Clerk Kris Larson, City Administrator Mike Klaus, Police Lieutenant Christian Frye, and Economic Development Coordinator David Sims. Also present were Ben Ward, Terry Troutman, and Dan Budd from Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), Ken Blockhan, Christy Gilbertson, John O'Connor, and Paul Anthony.

The purpose of the special council meeting was to discuss the Highway 95 project.

Ben Ward said ITD wanted to speak to the group about the closure of alleys. He said this is not a popular idea with the council and others but there was not much comment about this at the public meeting in February or the hearing. They would also like to close Denver Street on the east side of Highway 95 but ITD does not feel as strongly about that as they do the alleys.

Ben said closing the alleys would be for safety as it would help eliminate rear end collisions. ITD is considering a safety crossing between Madison and Monroe. There would be flashing warning lights to notify vehicles of pedestrians. There would be an island for pedestrian safety. If the alleys are not closed then the island cannot be constructed. Another idea would be to have alleys with right turns only off the highway. The protected crossing needs an island for refuge. He said there can be other crossings but they don't have the island. Rick asked why they picked that particular spot for the crossing. Ben said he has heard that Madison is one of the areas with the biggest needs for a crossing. Madison is not suitable for a crossing because of the merging traffic and drivers will be concentrating on the traffic merge. The merge will be backed down the overpass so it will be completed before the drivers reach Madison Street. The best exact location is still being looked at for a crossing near El Paso Street. The crossing at Madison and Monroe will require the closing of the alleys. John Youngwirth said there are issues in the winter due to the slick roadway. Ben said there won't be as much pedestrian traffic in the winter because the pool will be closed. Ben said the crossing will not be a traffic stop because there are yellow flashing lights. He said there will have to be education for the public.

Paul Anthony said if crossings are put where people do not usually cross the highway they will not be used. He asked that ITD keep this in mind. Ben said it is 250 feet from the merge point on the highway and there will be yellow flashing lights. Dan Budd said the corner on the bypass will be where people have to merge or they will hit the curb. David Sims said there is no speed limit sign after the bypass and this would help.

Ken Blockhan made a left hand turn on Monroe heading north on the highway. He said he waited four minutes to make the turn. Ken spoke of the design and how people will make left hand turns.

Mike Klaus said an alleyway will be closed with the proposal but he said it looks like a good landing for the pedestrian. Mike asked what the cost of an overpass would be. Ben said it is over \$1 million. Mike is concerned about the speeding vehicles. Mayor Anderson said the pedestrian overpass may not be used as it would be farther for pedestrians to walk to cross the highway. Ben said these issues have been looked at and the bottom of the bridge has to be 18 feet above the highway and there would be quite a ramp to make that distance. Ben believes the

mid-block crossing will be used and it costs \$10,000. David Sims thinks kids will use the crossings provided by ITD. Ben thinks the pedestrian traffic flow will change once the highway has good sidewalks on both sides. Now people walk down Madison Street.

The alley at VanBuren and Jackson cannot be closed as it is not a through alley. This is the alley behind Darrell Kerby's residence. The east side between Madison and Monroe is used quite heavily and that is not a through alley either. If it cannot be connected that will be harder.

Mayor Anderson said council passed a resolution to leave the alleys and Denver Street open. He said the alleys are unique and some are very important but others are not. He said alleys are getting harder to maintain and the garbage company is getting larger equipment. Mayor Anderson said he would like to invite the residents to an afternoon meeting with the council to discuss alleys and garbage pickup. He understands ingress and egress but some of our alleys are used quite heavily. Ben said some folks have an alley access to their garage but the garage also has access off the city street. Ben said if ITD closes an alley and there is no other access to the property owner then ITD is purchasing property. Connie asked if there is additional cost to the project. Ben said a lot of the traffic through here is not local and they do not understand the streets to be so close together causing more rear-end collisions. Connie thinks the project will make alleys more visible. Ben said the less dense the accesses are the better.

John O'Connor said a lot of hours have been spent on the pedestrian overpass and he understands that it may not be used. He thinks the alternative is a good way to solve the problem. John would hate to see the alley open on both sides of the highway and jeopardize the refuge in the middle of the highway.

Ken Blockhan spoke of possible grade improvements on the south hill and a pedestrian overpass. Ben said he does not think ITD will have the funding. Ken spoke of the bypass and explained where he could see the crossing. Ben said it does not work in this project but it could work in another project possibly. He said people are not willing to go out of their way to cross.

Mike Klaus asked if a south bound merge could be forced prior to the corner on the bypass. Ben said that is a good idea and it can be considered. Ben said the project ends at Madison Street and the merge on the bypass is a little out of the project area. Ben thinks a crossing at Madison may work if the merge is farther north on the bypass. Ben said the budget is finite.

Ron Smith asked about the alleys that do not go through. The alley at Madison and Monroe on the east side does not go through and the alley at VanBuren and Jackson on the west side of the highway does not go through.

John Youngwirth does not see too many safety problems but the alley on Madison and Monroe is a very steep grade. Ben thinks it could be put through to Fresno Street. He said the access to their property would have to be looked at. David Sims said the right of way through there is very narrow so it may be hard to place fill. Ben said ITD has looked at a property on Monroe where access could be had from the alley. He said the property is virtually abandoned.

Mayor Anderson asked what it means that we are in the design phase. Dan has the project modeled. ITD is scheduled to build the project in 2018 so by this time next year the design has to be completed.

Christy Gilbertson, owner of the espresso shop and the car wash, said Denver Street is the main entrance for a huge portion of her customers. She spoke of the larger customer traffic and semi traffic that comes through and how it would be difficult if Denver Street access were closed. She has been at this location for 14 years and Denver is the main entrance. She said if Denver was closed her business would be done. John Youngwirth said the City streets, such as Denver and Lincoln Street, are not built nor do they have the turn radius for commercial trucks to use. Christy thinks there would be many accidents if Denver is closed off. Connie thinks people would go through the parking lots if Denver was closed. Mayor Anderson asked if in the next 60 days if ITD could come speak to their position. Ben said they could.

Mayor spoke of the congestion on the south hill and asked if the speed limit could be lowered from 35 to 30 on the south hill. Paul Anthony asked how this would work with the synchronization of the traffic light. David said ITD can override the speed on the south hill according to a law change two years ago.

Paul Anthony asked about speed limits. Ben said the highways are for economic mobility as well as public safety. Truck traffic and tourist traffic use the highways and they constantly lobby for clear pathways through areas. Paul said we should look to a bypass. Ben said one day there probably will be one but not now. Ben will speak to Ryan, ITD's traffic engineer, about the process of a request to lower the speed limit.

Mayor Anderson said ITD should not design beyond budget constraints. He met with ITD Board yesterday and mentioned a recent windfall that the State has received between \$50 million and \$90 million. He said there were four bullet points and we fell right in the middle of them. He said ITD is looking at shovel ready projects and \$5.2 million is not going to complete our project from Madison to Alderson Lane. He said Bonners Ferry fell into the criteria for this funding. Ben said right of way acquisition takes a long time. Ben said we need to know what shovel ready means. Terry Troutman said shovel ready projects do not include right of way acquisitions. Dan Budd said we are close on the funding for this project and they are looking to find some other funding to go farther south if they can. Ben said drainage feeds into this project and it would be good to do the roadway section as well. Dan said the drainage system will take more funding than what was originally anticipated. He said ITD is working with what we have to meet the project needs. Ben said it is six tenths of a mile from Madison to Alderson Lane.

Connie asked if ITD has spoken to businesses about closing some of their accesses. Ben said they have not yet. Dan said once ITD knows what streets are open they can work on the highway accesses.

Ron asked about the Augusta Street project. Ben said ITD will work with HMH Engineering to make sure ITD and HMH work together to make sure the drainage will work for both projects. Dan said the amount of water will have to be metered in a pond so ITD knows how much water

to anticipate. Dan said the railroad is experiencing problems from the Tamarack project drainage.

Paul Anthony spoke of the utilities and asked council to bury all utilities in the swale that ITD is building on the highway project. This would beautify the town and it would attract tourists. He spoke of different beautification projects that could be done in Bonners Ferry. Paul said when people come to Bonners Ferry from the south it looks very utilitarian. He thinks this is an opportunity to make the town more beautiful by burying utilities. He said it will have economic effects on our town. We want people to stop and spend money. Mayor Anderson spoke of the pictures that New Mobility West showed us when they came to town. Paul said the utility poles are miserable looking.

Mike Klaus said it is expensive to bury primary wire and said a project estimate of \$400,000 came in at \$800,000 for a project the City just bid out. He said it would be millions of dollars to bury the wire. David Sims said Frontier phone lines are what runs along the highways and Bonners Ferry's electric lines cross the highway. Ben said if utilities are in our right of way and must be moved then the utility company has to pay for it, but if we ask them to bury the utilities for aesthetic reasons, the utility company will generally only agree if ITD or someone else pays for it. Paul said there has to be a way to make this happen and this is the chance to do it. He said it is an economic opportunity. Mike Klaus said we are all on the same sheet. He said there is a pot of money and asked what ITD can do to advocate for us to use some of this additional money. Ben Ward did not know the answer. He spoke to someone who recently purchased the Cable Company and he wanted to bury fiber. Ben said if one goes then it will be easier for others to go. Adam Arthur said two Frontier poles were hit this year alone causing damage to their transmission. Terry said buried utilities are the preferred method. John O'Connor asked if buried utilities can be a safety issue. Terry spoke of the location of buried utilities. Dan said poles in a clear zone are an issue.

Connie asked if they will leave Denver Street open. Ben said they will.

Ken Blockhan spoke of leaving Denver Street open as a driveway rather than an approach. He said instead of a right of way there would be a utility access. The right of way is 60 feet on Denver Street and Mike Klaus said we need the distance for the water and sewer lines. Mayor Anderson said Les Schwab is going to build a new building on the opposite side of the highway. Ben said the new construction Jay Wages will be doing is south of Denver. He will hold off on the approaches until the highway project is complete. Dan said Jay and the bank are talking about a joint approach for that area. Dan said there are so many right hand turns that this increases rear-end collisions.

The meeting adjourned at 3:41 p.m.

David K. Anderson, Mayor

Attest:

Kris Larson, City Clerk