

**Public Safety Committee
Draft Meeting Minutes
February 15, 2023
6:00 PM
Council Chambers**

Members Present

Councilor Peter Lachapelle, Chair
Councilor Alexander de Geofroy
Councilor Skip Gilman
Councilor Amy Malone

Members Absent

Councilor Dana Berlin

Others Present

Michael Bezanson, PE, City Engineer
Gina Golden-Silvestro, GIS/AM Technician
Lt. Elizabeth Turner, PD
Dave Smith 588 Salmon Falls Road
Martin Hamel, 584 Salmon Falls Road
Sergei Markovskii, 119 Oak Street

Minutes

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

1. Approve Minutes from Public Safety Meeting.

Councilor Malone MOVED to approve the minutes from January 18, 2023. Councilor Gilman seconded the motion. MOTION CARRIED by a unanimous voice vote.

2. Public Input

David Smith of 588 Salmon Falls Road was present to talk about speed limits on Salmon Falls Road and the flashing electronic sign that is located at 584 Salmon Falls Road. Mr. Smith has begun to obtain signatures for a petition to: 1) remove the electronic sign, 2) change the speed limit back to 35 mph where it was recently lowered to 25 mph, 3) change the speed limit to 40 mph heading toward Somersworth, and 4) remove the discrepancy in speed limit where one direction is 35 mph and the other is 30 mph. Mr. Smith stated that this area is not a neighborhood or downtown; it's a route to move traffic to Maine or Rochester. He doesn't feel that speed is the primary concern; the original complaint came from a resident that lives about 500 feet from the intersection of Portland Street and was regarding noise. Mr. Smith stated that Salmon Falls Road is noisy; it's just part of living on the road if you wanted a quieter location you would have to move. Mr. Smith currently has 12 signatures on the petition. Mr. Hamel of 584 Salmon Falls Road was present to discuss the electronic sign that is in front of his property; he would like it removed. Previously there was a sign in place on wheels that was located near his lilac bushes; he wonders why the flashing electronic sign could not be placed in that area and not in front of his living room window.

3. Oak Street-Sign Near 119 Oak Street (kept in committee)

Councilor Lachapelle summarized the issue. Mr. Bezanson evaluated this area of Oak Street with the DPW Highway Supervisor and proposed that 100 feet of culvert pipe could be installed with DPW crews; they could purchase the pipe and other materials, use in house equipment and labor. Mr. Bezanson said there is plenty of grade for the water to flow in a pipe. Drainage currently flows along the side of the road from Barrington Lane to a brook just west of the 119 Oak Street driveway. DPW would need to replace the existing driveway culvert and repave the driveway apron area. Councilor Lachapelle asked if the shoulder would be extended. Mr. Bezanson said yes, the area of the proposed culvert pipe would be filled in and provide enough roadway shoulder for a vehicle to potentially recover if it went off the road. Councilor de Geofroy asked if the shoulder would be vehicle bearing. Mr. Bezanson said yes it would be compacted when installed. ***Councilor Malone MOVED to recommend to full Council to extend the driveway culvert and shoulder at 119 Oak Street at the discretion of DPW. Councilor de Geofroy seconded the motion. MOTION CARRIED by unanimous voice vote.***

4. Salmon Falls Road Noise Abatement Signs (Request came from Councilor Gilman)

Item # 5 was moved up on the agenda members of the public were present for this Item. Councilor Gilman said he had received some speed and noise complaints and a resident was requesting some signs. Councilor Lachapelle thinks “speed limit” signs are not working and putting more signs up is sign pollution. Councilor de Geofroy asked if 25 mph is an appropriate speed for this area and should it be best practice. Mr. Bezanson said it is an approach to a “stop” sign, eventually motorists would have to get to 0 mph. Councilor Lachapelle said he feels bad for the gentleman that has the electronic sign in front of his living room window and asked Mr. Bezanson if it was placed correctly. Mr. Bezanson said he would look into it and said he thought it was placed there because that was the location of the previous speed limit sign. Councilor Malone said everything we do seems to have a domino effect. She stated that the Salmon Falls Road residents’ opinions should matter and wanted to know if the sign could be moved so it was not an eyesore. Councilor Lachapelle said to Mr. Smith to keep getting other signatures. Councilor de Geofroy said it sounds like no real value is coming from the electronic sign; and, if we are discussing taking it out to move it, should we discuss simply removing it from this location altogether? Councilor Gilman stated that he felt that the electronic sign does work effectively for alerting motorists and slowing traffic. Councilor de Geofroy asked how difficult it would be to get data from before the electronic sign was placed and after it was placed. Councilor Lachapelle said they could see if the speed trailer could be put back out in the area. Councilor Lachapelle said this issue would not be resolved tonight. ***(This was kept in committee for more research). Councilor Gilman MOVED to recommend to full Council to install 2 signs on Salmon Falls Road to ride quietly, 1 on each end. Councilor Malone seconded the motion. Voice vote was 2 to 2; will go to full Council for vote.***

5. Intersection of Summer and Columbus-Request to Change Pedestrian Walk

Sign to Push Button (Request came in from City Mangers office)

Councilor Lachapelle summarized the issue. Mr. Bezanson said that DPW's signal contractor was working at this intersection today and they retimed the pedestrian signal. Councilor de Geofroy stated the request for the pedestrian walk sign be changed to a push button. Mr. Bezanson said there is a capital project in design for this intersection and this will be addressed during the construction of this project.

6. Flashing Lights and Raised Table Policy Discussion (This item was kept in committee)

Councilor Berlin was not present to discuss this item.

7. Other

Downtown Patrols

Lt. Elizabeth Turner said they have started extra patrols in the downtown area to address different violations and address speeding issues. The POP unit alone logged a total of 8 hours of directed patrol for the downtown area in the last month, which does not include other patrols.

COAST Bus Stop Relocation Near Cove Court

Mr. Bezanson said he was contacted by COAST Bus company regarding relocation of the bus stop near Cove Court to a location to the west near the no parking zone just past a crosswalk. The Committee agreed that the COAST Bus stop could be moved and that they didn't believe they needed to vote on this.

Stop Sign End of Hemlock/Lowell is Missing

Councilor Lachapelle said that someone said that the "stop" sign at the end of Hemlock at Lowell was missing. Mr. Bezanson said he would check to see if there was a "stop" sign previously there. **(kept in committee)**

Councilor Lachapelle ADJOURNED the meeting at 6:44 PM.

The minutes were respectfully submitted by Laura J. McDormand, Admin and Utility Billing Supervisor

PETITION TO THE CITY OF ROCHESTER SAFETY COMMISSION FOR THE REMOVAL OF ELECTRONIC SPEED SIGN AND CHANGE TO SPEED LIMITS ON SALMON FALLS RD

This petition seeks to address several traffic signage and speed limit changes along Salmon Falls Rd from Portland Ave to the Somersworth town line. It is our opinion and observation that the recent changes to the speed limit and electronic signage poses safety issues as well as infringing upon the rights of the residents living within the parameters of the aforementioned roadway. The following specifically addresses those issues.

- 1) Remove the electronic sign that was placed in November directly in front of 584 Salmon Falls Rd. The sign directly infringes on the owners' property rights due to the obtrusive nature of the sign as well as the flashing nature of the sign. This is also highly visible to 588 Salmon Falls Rd
The electronic sign also poses a safety hazard as vehicles brake heavily directly before the sign which have almost caused several near rear end accidents.
- 2) Reinstitute the 35 MPH speed limit as the 25 MPH limit is not applicable to the road type and is causing traffic tie ups and unsafe conditions. Salmon Falls Rd is not a neighborhood. There are no sidewalks, school zones, or business zones. The purpose is to carry traffic from Rochester to points east and west. Based on the nationally recognized 85th percentile rule for establishing speed limits, the speed should be between 35-45 MPH. Due to the reduced speed limit vehicles are now passing on the double solid.
- 3) Raise the posted speed limit to 40 MPH from the corner after Tara Estates up to the Somersworth city line. Again, this is in accordance with the safe limits of the road as well as within the standard of the 85th percentile rule.
- 4) Change the speed limit sign from the corner of Tara Estates heading west towards Portland Ave to 35 MPH to coincide with the 35 MPH limit traveling east on the exact same stretch of road. It is both confusing and unenforceable.

David L. Smith 588 Salmon Falls Rd
Nancy Wilcox/NANCY WILCOX 782 Salmon Falls
Brock Allen/BROCK ALLEN 54 Jay Way
Jeff Adams 203 E. EXETER AVE
ROBERT ARTHUR 24 BETTS RD ROCHESTER NH
MICHE ARTHUR 58 Salmon Falls Rd
LARRY ARTHUR 203 CACE DR
Monique Wood Monique Wood 5 Watercress Dr, Rochester, NH 03868
Harry Stephen Wood Harry Wood 5 Watercress Dr, Rochester, NH 03868
Sandra Turner/ANITA TURNER 103 CACE DR
Claire Hamel 588 Salmon Falls
Martin Hamel 584 Salmon Falls Rd
Claire Hamel Claire Hamel 584 Salmon Falls Rd