

TOWN HALL MEETING MINUTES
May 21, 2014
6:00PM

ROLL CALL

Mayor Frank Cox, Monica Masco, Julie Mayfield, Amy Weissfeld (excused absence Robert Muth)

STAFF

Nick Hogan, Ben Shumaker, Eric Hansen

GUESTS

Moderator, Dena Marshall

Approximately 35 guests present

6:09pm Meeting called to order by **Mayor Frank Cox**. Cox introduced **Moderator, Dena Marshall** and gave her credentials.

Marshall said that tonight's meeting is about pedestrian and traffic safety. She said maintaining a sense of calm and efficiency is important to a sense of flow of life in Stevenson and that is why they are meeting tonight. She explained the rules of the meeting and that the meeting will end at 8:00 pm. She asked that comments be kept in order, be respectful and concise. Each speaker will be given three (3) minutes for public comment, if there is time at the end she will circle back for additional time to speak. **Marshall** asked if there were any questions about the process; no questions were asked.

Nick Hogan went over the Items Under Consideration as printed on the back of the agenda.

1. Limit Out of State Truck Traffic
WSDOT explained that to him that both states (Oregon and Washington) charge cents per gallon on gas tax. In OR for larger trucks, they waive the cents per gallon and charge cents per mile. So sometimes, some trucks buy their gas in OR and then come over to WA to avoid paying the cents per mile tax. In general, he is told that larger companies encourage trucks to stay on the freeway to save time. This is a legislative issue and there is probably nothing the city can do about it.
2. Increase Speed Limit Enforcement
WSDOT traffic engineer said to increase enforcement of existing speed limits. They've been talking to Sheriff Brown about what they can do to increase the time spent on enforcement.
3. Converting 1st and 2nd to One Way Streets
1st Street would handle the East bound traffic and 2nd Street would handle the West Bound traffic. Both streets would have room for diagonal parking and both streets would be one lane, the side benefit is additional parking room.
4. Stationary Signs
These signs are like the flashing sign on the Bridge of the Gods. The city is thinking about putting one of these on either end of the town. **Hogan** is working with WSDOT and they gave input on where to place signs.
5. Reduced Speed Limit Warning Sign
Coming into town from the EAST there is a warning sign, talking with WSDOT about moving it further away from the 25 mph zone.
6. Install pedestrian crossing warning signs on center strip
Install pedestrian crossing warning signs in the center strip of SR 14.
7. Pedestrian Flags at Cross Walks
Signs on either end of crosswalks, pedestrians grab a flag and move them from one side to the next. He said this is an inexpensive option, WSDOT said they have seen this used in other cities and believes it is effective.

Items the City of Stevenson is no longer considering;

1. Redirect East Bound Trucks Only onto 1st Street

WSDOT won't support this idea. If the city makes 2-one way streets WSDOT will accept 1st street as part of Hwy 14. WSDOT would own 1st and 2nd Street and when it's time to repave them, they would pay to repave them. If trucks are routed onto 1st street only, the repair would be the city's responsibility. The cost to the city would be approximately ½ to 1 million dollars. That's a deal stopper. That is the entire annual budget for City of Stevenson's General Fund.

2. Lower Speed Limit in town from 25 to 20

WSDOT said because it is Hwy 14 the city needs their permission to lower the speed limit. And they would not give the city that permission. Downtown Stevenson does not meet WSDOT's criteria for lowering the speed limit.

3. Move MPH Signage

Heading east coming out of town, passing the hardware store, and drivers can see the 50 mph sign up ahead and traffic starts to speed up. The city asked if they can extend the mph sign ¼ miles east and WSDOT said no. They have very specific criteria for what the speed limit is in each zone and right now the existing traffic in that area doesn't warrant it. They did say when Chinidere is built out they would reconsider.

Hogan asked if there were any questions for him.

Libby Johnson

Johnson asked if # 4, installing stationary radar signs also includes 1st street. **Hogan** said initially the thought was just on 2nd Street. She said they have excessive speeding on 1st street. # 2 in the items no longer in consideration; Johnson asked if the city could lower the speed limit to 20 mph on 1st street since it is not considered part of Hwy 14. **Hogan** said that would be an option, he would have to look into it.

Johnson asked if photo radar and speed bumps on 1st street have been considered. She also asked if spray painting 25 mph on the roadway like on Loop Road had been considered. **Hogan** said those are a lot of good ideas and thanked her.

Marshall read the names of the speakers in order.

Mr. and Mrs. Robinson

Barbara Robinson, who lives on 1st street, said she would keep this brief because their preferences were option #1 and #2 on the list of items no longer in consideration. She confirmed that the speed limit cannot be lowered because WSDOT doesn't allow it. **Hogan** said, on 2nd street yes. She said she finds this kind of humorous because they fought this battle years ago, they had meetings. Her daughter was in Kindergarten at the time and they asked for a crosswalk, a sign, a painted crosswalk with donated paint and were told no. Then later there are signs and crosswalks allowed. She said they do change their minds. Her daughter is 42, and now they have truck traffic. It's kind of like they go round and round in circles. She feels that slowing down seems logical. People even uptown in cars are not aware, all the sudden someone is in the crosswalk and the person behind them slams on breaks. They would like to see it lowered to 20 mph. **Moderator** confirmed with **Robinson** that she wants to go back to state to revisit lowering the speed limit.

Ben Sciacca

Sciacca said that first he would like to make a public apology to the city council and anyone present because of strong feelings about how he presents himself; he didn't mean to offend anyone. He said he is passionate about what they are talking about tonight. They are affected by things that take place on Hwy 14. He asked the crowd if anyone could tell him the population of Stevenson. Someone said 1,400 to 1,500. **Sciacca** said that seems like a small number of people for the large amount of traffic going through

the town. He then asked **Eric Hansen** roughly what the count is for business hours through town. **Hansen** said, 2nd Street in 2013 we had 6,800 average daily traffic count and on 1st Street at Russell we had 2,014. **Sciacca** said the majority of traffic is coming through on 2nd street. He said they want that, they are a corridor here in our community. He believes they happen to be in the middle of the only national scenic area in the country. It's unfair for 2nd street to be taking on the majority of the traffic. **Sciacca** said he measured the width of 2nd street and it is forty (40) feet, twenty (20) feet per lane to park and exit a vehicle when trucks are coming in both directions has potential problems. They shouldn't have to wait for a truck to pass by in order to get out of their car. **Marshall** gave a 30 second warning. He continued on saying that 1st street is forty four (44) feet wide, that's two (2) feet wider. Bingen, on the north side of the road, is twenty three (23) feet, that's three (3) more feet than we have. He believes they need to do something about it. Hopefully if he has time later he can make a few suggestions.

Craig Fever

Fever said he is a recent resident of Stevenson, within the last three (3) years. One of the main focus points was that this was a small community, but something has changed in the last year with the amount of speeding vehicles through town, log truck drivers especially. He said you can hear them coming and he doesn't have a radar gun but he knows the difference in 25 mph and 50 mph. He said they are trying to make up time at the crest of the hill. There are some residential homes on that street, more children on the street. With the excessive truck traffic there are more dangers. He has voiced his opinion to some as they drive through town. He also voiced his concerns to the Skamania county sheriff's office, the first time they didn't have manpower, the second time still to no avail. Then he spoke to the city, and he can finally see some more sheriff cars parked at the crest of the hill. He said this is great, but he does think they should park on the other side of the crest and start finding these drivers. He said you can put signs and flashing lights, but unless someone is enforcing that no one is going to slow down. WA State Police knows there is something that can be done on top of what Skamania Sheriff's office has done. **Fever** suggested maybe a sting operation. He said to hit them in the pocketbook, which will encourage them to slow down a bit.

Jackie Duncan

The whole idea of redirecting trucks on 1st street is wonderful to her but she doesn't live on 1st street. Her idea was to do that because she thinks Stevenson is charming and the city is trying to be visitor friendly. All these noisy trucks going up and down the street when you are trying to parallel park and get out to go into the stores is not very charming. Just make it a two way so they don't have to stop. Anyway, she thought they could make it a two way and they could go through. This whole thing she had in her head is gone away, now we are going to have to work it out.

Phil Crawford

Crawford lives in sight of 1st and 2nd streets on the east side of town; he can see both streets from his upstairs and downstairs windows. He said he is really pleased with the ideas that were presented. He had a couple of added thoughts though. He said the noise is a big problem; this is the Columbia Gorge and it's supposed to be reasonably quiet. The trucks don't seem to know what a muffled brake is. Maybe they don't live around here but he thinks some of them do. He's concerned about why WSDOT doesn't want to deal with speed going out of town. He mentioned Frank Johns Road being an accident corner. He can't imagine the criteria WSDOT has for not moving the mph sign. He said with 2nd and 1st and Frank Johns and Benny's coffee shop, maybe we need to retry talking about that issue. He said there have been some hits out there and it seems like a safety issue. The only other thing he wanted to add is the excessive motorcycle noise, as soon as they see the 50 MPH sign it's pedal to the medal. It's a real problem out there.

Greg Wiebe

Wiebe said he has seen everything everyone has mentioned and generally it is the truck traffic. In the list of things for consideration, increasing speed limit enforcement would be his top priority. He said he knows the county doesn't have the additional funds but it's a state highway and WSP should be involved in this. He thinks stationary radar signs would be great. One way streets, there again, he doesn't know if it's a good thing or a bad thing. Once it starts you can't go back. He would hate to say he is all for that and it end up being a poor decision. Redirect to 1st street, we shouldn't let up on the state, ask again and again and again. If it's a budget issue for the city, put money away each year, plan for it.

Latonia Gardi

Gardi said she is a resident on 1st Street. She doesn't believe the truck traffic should be put on 1st street, it's unfair. Some other things she never took into consideration is that one way traffic would give people more parking. It really isn't safe to get out and have two (2) feet and have to rush so you don't get run over. She thinks it would be a good idea to have one way traffic for safety. The whole state not wanting to move the mph sign, she would suggest the city keep bugging them, invite them out. She thinks that would help them they could see.

Cheti Boo

He said they do have a problem on 1st street, trucker or car traffic, it doesn't matter. He said it is mostly early morning and after work hours. He said you can get a lot of students walking down that road after school. The driver's education school is there, all those big trucks driving through. They travel 45 mph just to pass that traffic on 2nd street. He doesn't think truckers should go down that road; they should stick to the Oregon side. And even if it was turned to a one way on either side, he believes they will have trucks flying through on each side.

Laurel & Stan Barber

Barber had a couple of comments on # 3. He said it looks like the proposal is one way traffic on each street, 1st and 2nd with diagonal parking. When he goes through Bingen and he diagonally parks, he's backing out into the lane of traffic. To him, that defeats the whole purpose because then again it makes the whole street narrower by diagonally parking. To him that should be thrown out. He's concerned why the option of east bound truck traffic is not being considered on 1st street.

Karen Ditzler

She thinks the ideas are really good ones. She likes the ideas about crosswalks on 1st street. The county needs more money so they can have more law enforcement. She thinks the money just goes to the legislative area. She's interested in a road tax. The weigh station in home valley should be open. She is afraid there are some trucks in violation that are using our highways.

Brian McNamara

He is a business owner and resident on 2nd street. He has seen an increase in traffic and applauds all the ideas he's heard so far. First the width of 2nd street, it was his understanding that when the renovation was done it was narrowed by three (3) feet and that exacerbated the problem. The crosswalks are concrete and the road is asphalt. He said the trucks are loud, hit the crosswalk and because of their weight the asphalt has sunk and the concrete is high. An empty truck is even louder and you can see the cracks in the road. They beveled the turn on 2nd into Columbia because the buses were crashing on the curb because it was narrow. Just the same on Frank Johns Road, you have to pull out, stick your nose out. What is really dangerous is turning by Columbia by the gas station and going west. He prefers to go on the side of caution. Takes longer to get around corner, it is not a good intersection. One other thing about these crosswalks is that you have to stand between cars and people don't see you.

Marshall said that **McNamara** was the last person to sign the list and asked if there was anyone else that would like to speak.

Joe Schlick

He owns two businesses in the center of downtown and he's definitely opposed to a one way. One of the issues is they have empty buildings on 2nd street. If they route half of the traffic through town onto 1st street it will eventually have a more business climate because there will be more traffic, but for the people that live there, that's just more traffic altogether. He said they don't need to build the businesses down there, because they still have empty stores on 2nd Street. **Jeff Carlson** had mentioned photo cop speed enforcement to him when they were talking. They are probably very expensive; he doesn't know if the city or county can have that on the highway or on 1st street. Whoever is in charge may make money on that deal/revenue. Once the truckers know they can't travel 40 mph the speeding will stop. He doesn't know what those cost, or even if it is practical but he thinks it's a great idea. The bigger issue is the fact of enforcement. He said we can add mph signs all they want, it's obviously not doing the job. The ideas about flashing speed signs certainly make him slow down or to notice his speed. He'd like to see some tickets get written which would remind them all to slow down.

Libby Johnson

Lives on 1st street and said that the people on 1st street are in the zone of the commercial district, they pay as much as people on Hwy 14. They've been disregarded because they don't have as many businesses. She agrees with **Joe Schlick**, they want to build the downtown. She would like to see a lot more 25 mph signs go up. Washington State Patrol (WSP) should be involved regularly in discussion not only for speeding, but for weigh station. She's printed a number of letters to their legislators. She said they can send this letter to the legislature too. They can ship it out via email, as she has gotten a lot of responses. She said the more they squeak the more action they will see from the state.

Philip Watness

Watness introduced himself as editor and reporter. He would like to start with the most outlandish ideas and move toward the doable ones. He thinks EMS and the fire department should park downtown and have doors that fly open. His second outlandish idea is to get the states of OR and WA to do something long term to move trucks into Oregon, using extra revenue in OR to help with safety issue and issues on the WA side in terms of commercial items. His third outlandish idea is to figure out how to get trucks to stop and eat. He suggested kiosks and food trucks and items like that; he said he is talking outlandish ideas so bear with him. His more doable idea is to get mobile traffic signs and you as citizens take a picture of them driving by and send a notice to the company. As a former FedEx truck driver having tickets or accidents are two of the worst things you can do to your career as a driver. As far as safety, coming down Russell Street trying to cross down the hill, you can't see past the concrete posts. Put up big mirrors so you can see traffic coming each way. We always lean on government, it's time we start leaning on one another to solve our problems.

Andrew Grossman

He probably crosses 2nd Street six (6) or seven (7) times a week at least. He said it's always a frightening process because people don't always stop. Two (2) or three (3) times he has had a confrontation. He said the simple solution would be to put a stop sign on 2nd so there is a three way stop at Russell Street. Otherwise this could be a very pedestrian friendly town. Tourists want to stop and shop kind of ridiculous not to have a safer situation. The crosswalks are barely visible. He appreciates the city having this meeting, it's about time.

Mary Repar

Repar said that WSDOT works for them, they don't work for WSDOT. She urges our elected officials to work with the county elected officials. This isn't just a city issue, it's a county issue. She said you all need

to be the ones to push that uphill. She doesn't see a problem with changing speed limits on the east end. She said they need to be more vocal and she urges them to work with county officials to coordinate their efforts. This is the county seat, they should be involved, they have some money, and you have some money. She said they should pool their resources together to get something done. WSDOT needs to hear from all of them and from their elected officials, they work for us, this is our town, we live here and we want to slow things down.

Karen Shields, EMS

Shields introduced herself and said EMS is on 1st Street. She said they aren't opposed to or for any of the ideas, they are for safety. She does know that because of their location, if the city were to convert 1st Street to one way it would significantly impact their route of traffic, especially going from the west end of town. It would also put their ambulances onto 2nd Street, they are running between four (4) to six (6) calls a day so that is twelve (12) additional trips if they were to go around. Those traffic patterns, at least for EMS are going to create other issues. They've been there for a long time. They have no plans to move for the next five (5) years. She said as you make your decision be aware that emergency services would be affected.

Karen Ditzler

She said one of the issues they have been talking about is congestion in the city. She thinks that the one way and diagonal parking is trying to address us coming into and out of town and parking. She said the community is growing, they are getting bigger and their season for tourism is extending. Seems to her that what they really need to address is a better parking facility for the community. She said that everybody knows it's hard to find a parking place on 2nd street; it's not on 1st street but conceivably it could be. They need a parking structure of some kind.

James Lee

Lee introduced himself as a pharmacist and business owner in town. He is opposed to one way traffic but he is for the safety of every citizen of this community, for the children coming in and out of the ice cream shops, including his disabled customers who go out into the street with an 18 wheeler barreling down on them on many occasions, sometimes blowing their horns at them. The solution of one way truck traffic is what he was thinking of on 1st going east and west on 2nd. It would be extremely hazardous to turn left to go onto 1st street. He doesn't want to ship all the noise to 1st street. Another solution he suggested to city council before was a stop light on Russell Street but that idea was not thought of highly. He said it would definitely slow trucks down. They have a stop sign on 1st which slows them down. He said he is sure people get tired of hearing them gear down on 1st street. The safety of our citizens is first. He asked if anyone had tried to petition either the governor or the commissioner of the Hwy state patrol. He said he has a petition circulating for the citizens to sign.

Brian McNamara

He said that many of his points were made by others. He does think there is a lot of revenue that could come to the state, and it would be worthwhile to open the Home Valley truck station both ways. He is curious as to why there are car carriers coming through Stevenson, because there isn't anywhere to sell vehicles. A trucker told him it is because they don't have to stop. Another idea he has seen is stationing a cop car with a dummy in it. He said the fact is they need more enforcement. Someone also mentioned the idea of a sting operation to him. Also, a couple of people could use the crosswalks to slow down traffic, use civil disobedience. He reminded everyone that they should all slow going through town and stop for pedestrians.

Barbara Robinson

Robinson confirmed with **Hogan** that she is speaking about a larger blinking lighted sign. **Hogan** said we are just now looking at that. She said we want a healthy business community. They need what's conducive

to the businesses. She said she lives by the stop signs and realistically it isn't that bad. That's the emergency street, it's the phone company, it's the fire department, and it's the post office. It is a different use there and there are so many people walking down to the boats now, 20 mph would be great. She said to keep pushing the state, whether it's writing letters or being a squeaky wheel.

Benny Sciacca

It was a year ago this month that he asked for this public forum. After waiting that amount of time, he asked the moderator to be lenient with his time. **Marshall** allowed him four (4) minutes. **Sciacca** said they all didn't move to Stevenson for the year round sunshine. The quality of life here in his opinion has declined. There is toxic coal being transported, highly explosive oil, speeding through of town, and he is opposed to the legalization of marijuana. He believes there are important issues that are bringing the morale and quality of life down. City revitalization has been mentioned the last couple of years and he believes it is important and that they need an opportunity to grow their town. Right now they have a one road town. He said to look at the numbers; he asked if they have roughly fifteen (15) people living on 1st street. Let's say for ease that we have 1500 people living in Stevenson that's 1/10 of 1% of the city of Stevenson population, not counting the other county residents. He asked if it was fair for all them to absorb the other 95% of traffic in town for their sake. He said he sympathizes with them. For the record, he said he is not trying to make 1st street a truck route. It was his suggestion a year ago that East Bound trucks take 1st street. The quick reaction from the public works department during the I-84 closure with the addition of some simple signage, re-routed an entire interstate plus our own truck traffic on Hwy 14 through 1st street without a single mishap. For him that accounts for something, for him that was proof. He thinks we should have the opportunity to seek federal funds. He would like for business on 2nd street to consider something. Most businesses on the south end of the street have very little parking. The other businesses on other side of street have more parking. (**Marshall** gave **Sciacca** a 30 second warning.) The diagonal parking is crazy and he doesn't like the idea. If we have two lanes, people traveling west have the opportunity to park on your side of the street and we have a truck lane on the right side if we have two lanes, therefore people can get out without fear of getting run over. I think we need to consider opportunity for growing our town. (**Marshall** cut **Sciacca**'s time)

Greg Cleaver

He said he can appreciate businesses trying to run their business and having to deal with trucks. He said they, as part of 1st street, are in the business district. They also pay their fair share of taxes. He asked what the business hours were in the downtown area. Someone said 10:00 am - 6:00 pm. 10:00 am - 6:00 pm is the business heart of town, he said you people go home at night and get to avoid all that stuff. They have to live it 24-7 trucks, traffic, trucks going all night long. He said they need to work together as a community and not point fingers to come up with a solution to enforce speeding. WSDOT needs to be involved.

Latonia Gardi

She said she is also a resident on 1st street. She said there may just be fifteen to twenty (15 -20) people on 1st street, but that doesn't make them any less important. Everyone who travels on 1st Street is only there for that small section of time. She requested that the city ask for funding. She said if the state denies them the funds to continue their request. She suggested they write letters to all of them, tell them what's going on and that it's not ok. County residents and business owners are not ok with it.

Ron Shippy

He said he was late and didn't hear a lot of comments made. He feels the City of Stevenson isn't ready for a two way yet. Portland has this, Stevenson isn't ready. He feels either they should run east truck traffic on 1st or through traffic, one or the other. He made a trip from Underwood to Stevenson and he met fifty eight (58) trucks during that trip. A couple years ago he was told they couldn't use 1st street, the state withheld all the ballast and it would fall apart. For four or five (4 or 5) days there were adverse

conditions, the road did not break up and no senior citizens were run over at the post office. He doesn't see why they can't run the trucks through there. There has got to be a difference in load requirements/state requirements for State of OR and WA. Otherwise all these OR trucks wouldn't be running on this side, maybe some of the truck traffic could be cut back. One other thing to note, coming down Russell Avenue to Second Street. It's impossible to make a left hand turn if a van is parked in the first space.

Jackie Duncan

She asked if there was a way to have east bound trucks only going on 1st street from 10am-6pm, during business hours. She said there are school zones. She said people are used to seeing signs with times. It would alleviate a lot of the late time noise. The flashing signs do work, that gets your awareness back to where you are. The crosswalks need to be repainted so you know they are there. She said the one way isn't an option for 2nd street at all because people coming to their town have no clue what's on 2nd street. If they go to 1st they would not know there was a restaurant there. That 50 mph out of town on the east end, she has visited The Cabin, and it is really difficult taking a left going into traffic to Carson, people are starting to speed and it's dangerous.

Chris Ford

The most effective thing that he has seen over the years is that when he goes into Bingen he slows down because he will get a ticket. He said that the speed enforcement is critical. Bingen has a police department and the City of Stevenson contracts with the county sheriff's department which has the entire county to service. Bingen has only residential so they can concentrate more on traffic. He said when you go to Bingen you never see speeders. It is a very long stretch of road. Vehicles enter at 50 mph, slow and then on the east end they get back to 50 mph. As far as a one way goes, they have two good examples - Hood River and The Dalles. Both cities are both a little bit different. The Dalles has structured in the center of the town; where you have a turn around, you get in the left hand lane and you can just make a loop. They don't have state highway going through either. Hood River has a secondary commercial area up in The Heights that is commercial and mixed residential. That is a different situation, but something to look at.

Libby Johnson

She thinks a collaborative effort of Skamania County, Klickitat County, City of Bingen, City of Stevenson, Murdock, Lyle, all towns/cities on the WA State side might be advantageous. They should collaborate together to make more noise in Olympia.

Bob Robinson:

He says we need more law enforcement.

Brian McNamara

He said he noticed the survey the city provided, and asked if they could make it more visible to the public so that there is more response. He said that along with the survey there is a letter on the back for government contacts. He requested the city send these out and they would go further. He likes this idea and said that the minutes of this meeting could go out as well.

Hogan said we just finished the survey and encouraged everyone to complete a hard copy and drop it off at city hall. He said the survey is also on their website. **Masco** asked for the website address. **Hogan** said it will be in the Pioneer Newspaper along with a link to the website. **Casey Roerer** said the website is ci.stevenson.wa.us

Moderator asked if City Council or staff had comments, responses, and questions.

Weissfeld thanked everyone for coming and said she knows they've talked about this before. She knows they've hashed this out for years and years, but they have new blood and people who are anxious to make

a change. They need to hear your opinions. Talk to your neighbors, talk to fellow businesses owners and let them know this survey is online.

Benny Sciacca thanked everyone for coming. He thinks it important to do something. He is encouraging the city to take a lead and wants to see something in a reasonable amount of time.

Latonia Gardi

She spoke regarding the ambulance/EMS traffic. She said if changes were made could this requirement be waived for EMS/emergency vehicles so that they could get on the next street over.

7:31 PM ADJOURNED

Frank Cox, Mayor

Nick Hogan, City Administrator/Clerk

Minutes by Melissa Andersen