

**Traffic Safety Advisory Committee**  
**November 1, 2010**  
**Minutes**

Present: Bill Ruoff – Chairman  
Gil Archambault  
Chief Fred Douglas  
Richard Tortorelli  
Dave Wheeler  
Dana MacAllister  
Gary Daniels – Board of Selectmen representative

Absent: Bill Parker

Secretary: Kathryn Parenti, Recording Secretary

1. *Roll Call vote required by the BOS.*

2. *Approval of minutes from August 30, 2010.*

R. Tortorelli made the motion to approve the minutes.

F. Douglas seconded the motion

All were in favor of approving the minutes from August 30, 2010; none were opposed.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

3. *Ball Hill Road – Resident forum regarding traffic accidents*

B. Ruoff noted today's public forum was the result of a phone call from a resident after the recent fatal accident on Ball Hill Road. He stated a letter was sent to the residents of the road inviting them to either come in to the forum or to send a letter stating their concerns. The Committee received five (5) letters and the main concern of those residents was speed. He even received a phone call from a property owner, who does not live on the road, was also concerned with the excessive speed on the road. The road itself has been around for a long time and the main issue was speed. He opened the meeting to public comment.

Bob Willette, 218 Ball Hill Road, stated he drives the entire length of Ball Hill Road and has driven it for the past fifteen (15) years. He noted the speed limit had been dropped down from 35 to 30 mph a few years ago. He felt in order to reduce the speed on the road, the town would have to hire an additional police officer to sit on the road and monitor traffic. There are twelve (12) curves and six (6) hills from his house to the end of the road. The curves and hills are not marked and there is even a house that is approximately four (4) feet from the road; at times, there is even a car parked in the road in front of this house. He didn't think a change in speed would change the situation. He felt painting lines on the road or placing no parking signs would be a better solution.

B. Ruoff noted the line painting contractor will be painting lines tonight, depending upon the weather. The request for the reduction in speed five (5) years ago, came from the TSC. He noted on the roads that were chip sealed, the residents liked the rural effect of no lines and asked if the lines could not be painted. They were eventually repainted on

Federal Hill and Savage Road. He asked where the no parking signs would go; perhaps at the house that is close to the road.

B. Willette thought the entire road should be posted with no parking signs as there are many spots on the road where oncoming traffic cannot be seen.

Lorna Willette, 218 Ball Hill Road, stated she echoed B. Willette's concerns regarding the parking of cars on the road. People even park on the wrong side of the road and when it is night, the headlights are blinding. She had concerns with the yield sign at the intersection of Ball Hill and Young Roads. She has almost been hit there twice by people who don't yield. For the most part, there is visibility there but on a bad day, there is not much. She noted on Melendy Road, traveling from town, there is a yield sign that is ineffective.

Faye Richey, 138 Ball Hill Road, noted this may not be in the Committee's control but she felt there were drainage problems on the road that might dictate how drivers use the road. Water pools at the intersection of Ball Hill Road and Young Road and people have a tendency to drive around the water. It is an aspect that needs to be addressed as it does become icy in the winter and make it hard to stop at that intersection.

Rodny Richey, 138 Ball Hill Road, stated he was concerned with the painting of lines. He felt that may cause drivers to be unfriendly to pedestrians and cyclists; the road is not that wide. There is also some vegetation on the side of the road near 136 Ball Hill Road that is normally removed by DPW but has not been this year. If the brush is trimmed back to the rock wall it provides more space for pedestrians to walk. He noted there was some inconsistency with the speed limit; traveling south, the limit is 30 mph and traveling north from Osgood Road, the limit is 35 mph on Osgood Road. There is no speed limit sign on Young Road nor going north on Ball Hill Road. He thought signs could be placed on the straight stretch of road between Annand Drive and 136 Ball Hill Road. He wondered what the cause of the fatal accident was.

B. Ruoff asked if there were any additional comments; there were none so he asked F. Douglas to bring everyone up to date on the accident reconstruction process.

F. Douglas replied the accident investigation is not complete as of yet; it is a long process. There is a four (4) member accident reconstruction team and each member has specific responsibilities and training. On the day of the accident, he was on site from the time of the accident until 9pm. They use a new technology called "Total Station" that is driven by satellite and all of the accident evidence, roadway markings, final point of rest and any other evidence, is programmed into the computer. If they place a piece of evidence back at the accident site several years later, the software can tell you where to place it with an accuracy of 3/4". The next step is to speak with witnesses, each driver, if available, the occupants present and any people in the area. The witnesses gave pretty accurate accounts of what transpired. It was determined speed was not a factor in the accident and the vehicle traveling north was operating left of the center line. They are trying to determine what caused the vehicle to be in the other lane. Some indicators show driver inattention was a factor. They have subpoenaed cell phone records of both the driver and the passenger to see if they were on the phone or text messaging at the time of the accident; there was some resistance from the driver and occupant and thus the reason for taking the subpoena route. If it is determined texting or cell phone use was the cause, the repercussion would be more severe. If that can't be proved, the driver will be charged with operating left of center, which can be done, even if the road is not marked. There is a state RSA that states every vehicle must operate nearest to the right side of the road. Drivers are permitted to cross the yellow line to avoid a bona fide emergency, such as pedestrians and cyclists, without being found liable. Two things have been determined at this point: the vehicle was not speeding and the vehicle was operating in the left lane causing the impact in the southbound or left lane.

L. Willette asked if there was any indication there was any use of substances.

F. Douglas replied, no, that was ruled out. There are so many aspects of accident reconstruction; there is a lot of paperwork and it can't be done in two (2) days. There are mechanical search warrants, required to search vehicles. Blood work goes to the state, and unless there is a rush on it, it may take six (6) month to get the results back. He took it upon himself to look back over the last five (5) years for accident reports on Ball Hill Road; there were six (6). That number does not include vehicles off the road due to inclement weather, etc. This is a country road that is steep and windy and the accidents are all over the place on the road. As far as sign enhancements go, there are several signs indicating blind driveways. There is no need to change the yield sign coming down Ball Hill Road; if the weather is poor and there is ice on the road, cars won't be sliding through while attempting to stop at a stop sign. He would almost suggest a stop sign be placed on Melendy Road and let the traffic from Ball Hill Road pass through. He noted two (2) accidents happened in February but this road is similar to South Street in that people know what to look for and are aware of the conditions. There have been no accidents on South Street – just a lot of mirror damage but people know they have to go slow.

F. Richey noticed, as Osgood Road and Annand Drive have become more developed, Ball Hill Road is used as access to Melendy Road to Route 13 South. She understands the town does not have the budget to put people on duty up there but there should be some attempt to remind people of the speed limit and road hazards. She does agree the road is what it is.

R. Richey noted the terrain of the road sometimes dictates where cars are going to go and there is no banking of the road.

B. Ruoff asked the board if there were any comments.

G. Daniels asked if there was any speed limit sign before heading down onto Melendy Road.

R. Richey replied there was not. He stated the hills were the problem in the winter, traveling west to east on Melendy Road. He felt the yield sign was the best compromise in that situation; a stop sign would prevent drivers from making it up the hill in winter.

F. Richey noted the town does a good job keeping the hills passable in winter.

B. Ruoff stated the hills around town are treated first but if it's snowing between one (1) and two (2) inches per hour, it's hard to keep up.

G. Daniels noted, after reading through the letters, drivers are not the only problem; the letters state pedestrians seem to walk in the middle of the lane at times and hardly move when the cars go by.

R. Richey replied the vegetation that is not cut back may be the problem there.

B. Willette noted signs have been covered up by vegetation in the past but they have been more visible as of late.

B. Ruoff asked if there were any additional comments from the residents; there were none so he thanked them for their input and said he would put a laundry list of their concerns together for the next meeting.

#### *4. Amherst Street – Request for a reduction of speed limit (From the BOS)*

B. Ruoff stated a letter had been sent to the BOS regarding the reduction of the speed limit on Amherst Street. They reviewed it and sent it to the TSC for discussion. He invited Matthew Willette, author of the letter to address those concerns.

M. Willette stated he had grown up on Souhegan Street and currently lives there. He noted there have been several close calls over the past few years and there are many pedestrians, cyclists and pets that use the road and cross it. The road is wide open from Amherst and he thought it would be a good idea to slow the speed down. Maybe the installation of signs stating the area was densely settled would slow the speed limit. He

also thought if they slowed the traffic down, it would lessen some of the congestion on the weekends at the busy intersection of Amherst and Mont Vernon Streets.

B. Ruoff asked if there were any comments.

B. Willette stated he also lived on Souhegan Street for many years and thought Amherst Street dropped four (4) feet from Amherst to the intersection at Mont Vernon Street, which may cause cars to increase their speed going down the hill.

D. Wheeler asked if he thought the problem was worse in one direction over another.

M. Willette thought the speed was high in both directions. He spoke with Yvonne Wallace, owner of 49 Amherst Street who has had people drive into her yard after speeding and losing control.

G. Daniels asked what the speed limit on Elm Street was.

F. Douglas replied it was 30 mph.

G. Daniels noted Union Street and Mont Vernon Street are 30 mph while Nashua Street is 25 mph but probably is the most congested.

F. Douglas replied the speed limit used to be 30 but he asked for a reduction to 25 mph. NH has a prima facie speed limit and it is difficult to enforce the charge of unreasonable speed. It would never hold up in court. He worked with the owner of the store across from Shepard Park and he noticed the reduction in the squealing of tires and other speed indicators. Everyone cheats so if the speed limit is reduced to 30 or 25 mph, the speed goes down to 35 or 40 mph, down from 45 and 50 mph. It's a psychological thing.

G. Daniels thought there was more congestion on Union Street than on Amherst Street with school traffic and all of the streets that lead to it.

M. Willette stated there was no crosswalk at the church and that is busy twice a day on Saturdays and Sundays.

B. Willette noted there are three (3) businesses, two (2) churches, a condo complex and six (6) or seven (7) streets that empty onto Amherst Street, and thought it was difficult to compare it with Union Street or Mont Vernon Street.

M. Willette thought that the several committees looking at the Oval improvements would have taken Amherst Street into consideration.

F. Douglas wondered what it would take to get a traffic count done by the state; it would be a way to determine how much traffic is out there.

B. Ruoff thought it would be through NRPC and he would talk with B. Parker about it. He thought one may have been done already with the Oval improvement projects but he would ask B. Parker about it. He thanked M. Willette for his comments and insights and noted they would discuss them at the next meeting.

F. Douglas noted state statute requires some sort of traffic study must be done before a change in speed limit can happen. He is surprised there haven't been more accidents on Amherst and Souhegan Street with the electrical box on the corner. He thought that intersection was similar to Cottage Street and Elm Street where the trees were planted on the corner at the new bank.

G. Daniels wondered if the town could look at the count independently and if they can act on the data independently.

F. Douglas stated if NRPC will do the traffic count, they will take into consideration the typical amount of traffic on the road and compare it with other similar roads in the state. There was some discussions regarding state roads and the difficulty in getting the speed limit reduced on them. An engineered study must be done and usually the speed limit remains the same.

B. Ruoff asked if there were any additional comments; there were none.

## OLD BUSINESS:

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

B. Ruoff asked if there was any additional business; there was none so he asked for a motion to adjourn.

R. Tortorelli made the motion to adjourn.

G. Archambault seconded; all were in favor. Meeting was adjourned at 4:30 pm.