

(7) Study Session – Pedestrian Safety Study Update and Initial Discussion on General Process

Public Works Director Young said Town Manager Dennis had sent out the link for the online study report and provided extra copies. He explained that tonight his presentation would include points of discussion regarding processes. He said the technical discussion will come back when the traffic consultant shares their presentation.

Public Works Director Young provided background of how this safety study came about. He said there were site meet-ups with parents to gather feedback, which resulted in a scope being approved by the Bicycle, Pedestrian & Traffic Safety Committee (BPTS) and a budget being approved by the Council to enter into a study. Krupka Consulting, a traffic engineering and planning consultant, was retained to conduct the study. Public Works Director Young said there was a lot of public outreach with very well noticed meetings. The report was posted on the Town's website, input was consistently solicited, and exhibits were posted at the Library.

He said that on April 22, 2019, the BPTS accepted the report and recommended it be forwarded to the Town Council for consideration. Staff requested input from the Council regarding next steps. Public Works Director Young asked the Council to consider if they envisioned additional public process during the study phase. He asked which Committee or Commission should be part of the process, what their roles would be, what level of involvement they should have, and how much inter-committee back-and-forth feedback there should be. If approved, he asked if subcommittees or chairs should be assigned as liaisons in order to provide timely responses throughout the process.

Public Works Director Young said installation of signs can be controversial and they want to develop a full process that everyone around town is comfortable with. He said once the work is complete, a final report will go to the Town Council. If approved, the final program may consist of a plan within priority orders, funding in Capital Improvement Program, etc.

Public Works Director Young defined some of the unfamiliar nomenclature found in the report and shared photos of the different types of signs and markings. He explained the guidance and legal protection provided by the Caltrans Standards and the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices approved by the Federal Highway Administration.

Public Works Director Young said they've received a lot of positive input on the Crossing Guard Pilot Program. Town Manager Dennis asked about the usage counts. Public Works Director Young said there were about 10 to 15 children and parents at the Priory, which was low compared to Alpine and Corte Madera, which was approximately 30 children. Town Manager Dennis said they anticipate that more people may choose to walk if they know there is a crossing guard. Councilmember Hughes said the car traffic has been better behaved since the crossing guard has been there.

Public Works Director Young said when they bring back the formal presentation, they will ask Council for guidance regarding short and long-term improvements and potential funding options for improvements.

Town Manager Dennis said tonight's goal is not to get into specifics of the study but to understand the Council's general approach on how to tackle the issues. He said Councilmember Hughes, who was Mayor at the time, and BPTS Chair Ed Holland, attended all of the pop-ups around Town. Town Manager Dennis emphasized the signs are required to match the Uniform Traffic Control Devices Standards.

Mayor Wengert invited questions from the Council.

Councilmember Hughes thanked the Council for agreeing to fund this proposal. He said the approach was to look comprehensively at a lot of different areas in Town. He said there is a lot of potentially low-hanging fruit that can be gotten to at less expense.

Councilmember Richards agreed that this is a great first step. He said if there are options to the signage, it makes sense to take it to ASCC, but if there are not any options, that would not be necessary. He said, as pointed out in the report, people need to pay more attention to their driving behaviors.

Mayor Wengert agreed there are a number of short-term fixes that are relatively easy to accommodate. She said there is quite a Capital Improvement budget that will need to be worked through this year, with an ever-growing list of funding requests. She said things like meeting Caltrans standards cannot be deferred and will likely be prioritized. She said it is a very comprehensive report and will be a prioritization exercise, which will be matched with funding.

Councilmember Richards said there is nothing extremely major in the report other than moving one crosswalk, which will include the signage and lights and likely an additional study about where to move it.

Councilmember Hughes said there is some flexibility in the Uniform Traffic Control Devices Standards with some options such as size, which flashing beacon. He said there are some choices the Town will want to standardize. He said it might be appropriate to have the ASCC approve a standard school crosswalk assembly, for instance. Mayor Wengert agreed and said in a situation where something is referred to ASCC, it will be with clear direction that there are limitations as to what they can prohibit. She said the Town has been reluctant to adapt to Caltrans standards because they are generally perceived as too urban and too visible for Portola Valley. Vice Mayor Aalfs said wherever appropriate, the discussions can consist of a Chair or a subcommittee as opposed to a full ASCC hearing process.

Town Manager Dennis said a while ago, then-Mayor Hughes indicated some interest in having an overall look at reducing the signage in Town. Town Manager Dennis said this may also be a good time to fold some of that work in.

Town Manager Dennis asked Council if the crossing guard needs to be reexamined as part of the budget discussion coming up in a month. He also asked Council for feedback related to the flashing beacons. He said that may feed into the immediate Capital Improvement Program for year one. He said he is interested in pursuing grants, but there may also be interest in doing something sooner than grants can be made available.

Mayor Wengert asked if there was ever any assistance coming from the school district for the cost of the crossing guard. Public Works Director Young said they've met with the school representatives and have decided on some cost-sharing methodology. Mayor Wengert asked if there was a willingness to continue that cost-sharing. Councilmember Hughes said historically the school district paid 100% of the crossing guard. He asked if the Woodside Patrol crossing guard costs are more or less than what they used to pay the crossing guard. Public Works Director Young said the Woodside Patrol costs more. Town Manager Dennis said the school district did make a very sincere attempt to find someone to do this and weren't able to do so. He said the risk going into the pilot program was that the Town may have to make an ongoing contribution. He said he is not aware if the other partners are willing to go into a longer-term agreement than this pilot program. Councilmember Hughes said the school district likely has some budget for a crossing guard.

Caroline Vertongen said the crossing light at Brookside should be a priority. Public Works Director Young explained that the repair required for that crossing light is very expensive and the Town was waiting for the study results so they do not go to that expense to repair it and then end up moving it. He said the study has advised moving the crosswalk or using rapid flashing beacons. He said at this point the crossing guard addresses the issue. Town Manager Dennis said the initial conversations that led to the Pedestrian Safety Study came from the community of people on Brookside and Corte Madera and their concern about that intersection and it has always been the focal point of this discussion. Councilmember Hughes added that the report has provided detailed suggestions for appropriate short- and long-term solutions.

Mayor Wengert asked if flashing beacons were required for any of the town locations. Town Manager Dennis said they were not required, but the consultant found that they were useful and a best practice. Councilmember Hughes said the report discusses that the goal is not just to be uniform with other towns

and cities nationwide, so that people are familiar with the devices, but is also for uniformity throughout town. For example, if there is a school crosswalk in front of the Priory with one situation and completely different thing in Corte Madera, it may cause confusion. The strong recommendation is for uniformity. Councilmember Richards said most people hate the flashing lights, but they are very effective. He said if there are options such as varying brightness, height, speed of flashes, then those options should be reviewed before a choice is made. Public Works Director Young said that is understood and added that decisions are made looking through the lens of the rural character of the town. Councilmember Hughes pointed out that some installations may be relatively inexpensive and some may be more expensive and also involve waits for PG&E to run wire. Mayor Wengert said the driver will be the agreed upon uniform standard. Councilmember Hughes said the Town's General Plan talks about rural character but also says it should be balanced with safety.

The Council recommended that staff bring the study back to the Town Council so they can review the priorities and provide guidance.

Town Manager Dennis suggested July or August for staff to come to Council for feedback regarding uniform signage before taking it to the ASCC. Mayor Wengert suggested not focusing on the overall town at this point but limit the focus to what has been covered in this study.

Town Manager Dennis asked if flashing beacons should be brought back for part of the upcoming budget cycle. Councilmember Hughes said it would be worth assessing if, for example, at the Priory crosswalk it would be relatively simple to install them because the power is already there. He said, given the timeline, bringing something to the ASCC over the summer, there may be some simple things that could be put in place before the start of the next school year. Vice Mayor Aalfs agreed and said it is worth getting the flashing beacon item on an agenda so people have a chance to weigh in.

Town Manager Dennis asked Public Works Director Young for a rough cost estimate for flashing beacons. Public Works Director Young said it could range anywhere from \$25,000 to \$50,000 per installation.

Public Works Director Young said the study itself is a planning document. He said once staff gets into it, there will be analysis and design required. It will also have to be bid out, equipment acquired, etc. In response to Town Manager Dennis's question, Public Works Director Young said the installation of a flashing beacon assembly should take a couple of weeks. In response to Mayor Wengert's question, Public Works Director Young said the solar powered beacons are totally self-contained but the issue would be locations where the sun would work. He said the public outreach is what will take time, notifying neighbors, then design, potential relocation of the crosswalk, pole installation, electricity, grinding out old crosswalks and legends, reinstalling thermoplastic markings, etc.

Mayor Wengert asked if there should be outreach to invite the public to the next Council discussion regarding this process. Town Manager Dennis said he can discuss this with Public Works Director Young and how that will work from a timing perspective if they want to install something prior to the school year. Councilmember Hughes said he could see that coming in stages with perhaps the signs first and the flashing beacons installed but not yet wired.

Town Manager Dennis said the renegotiated contract with the Sheriff's Office includes a broad set of responsibilities, including enforcement. He said the Town has a very good relationship with Capt. Corpus and she has been very responsive when they've requested increased enforcement, which is best done in waves. He said Capt. Corpus certainly has this on a high priority and deploys it effectively. Councilmember Hughes said a Sheriff's Deputy always comes to the BPTS meetings and makes adjustments based on that feedback.