



PUBLIC HEARING OF THE CITY COUNCIL, HYATTSVILLE MD MONDAY, MARCH 1, 2021 6:30 PM

Kevin Ward, W1, Interim Mayor
Carrianna Suiter, W3, Council Vice President (*arrived at 6:37 p.m.*)
Bart Lawrence, W1
Robert Croslin, W2
Danny Schaible, W2
Ben Simasek, W3
Edouard Haba, W4
Daniel Peabody, W4 (*arrived at 7:08 p.m.*)
Joseph A. Solomon, W5
Erica Spell Wolf, W5

Absent: None

Also present were the following City staff members:
Lesley Riddle, Director of the Department of Public Works
Hal Metzler, Deputy Director of the Department of Public Works
Laura Reams, City Clerk

Notice of Public Hearing

The City of Hyattsville Mayor and Council will conduct a Public Hearing on Monday, March 1, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. (prior to the City Council Meeting). The purpose of the Public Hearing is to allow residents to comment on a petition for the implementation of traffic calming device(s) for the 3900 block of Oliver Street.

The Mayor and Council will announce their decision to approve, approve with modifications, or deny the requested traffic calming device(s) within fifteen (15) days of the close of the hearing, unless, due to extraordinary circumstances, the time limit is extended by a majority vote of the City Council. The petitioners will be notified of the decision of the Mayor and City Council by the City Clerk and the decision will be published in the Hyattsville Public Hearing Minutes.

The Public Hearing will be held virtually and can be accessed through the following link:
https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_v4plUZusR-SngmWwtuy5sg

1. Call to Order and Council Roll Call

Interim Mayor Kevin Ward called the hearing to order at 6:34 p.m.

2. Introduction and Background Information

2.a) Traffic Calming Petition - Oliver Street

[HCC-245-FY21](#)

Sponsor: At the Request of the City Administrator

Co-Sponsor(s): N/A



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[210109 - 3900 blk oliver st - extended speed summary \(2\) \(1\)](#)

[210109 - 3900 blk oliver st - stattrak traffic analysis report \(1\) \(1\)](#)

[PetitionOliverStSpeedBump_Redacted](#)

[Traffic Calming Flowchart_073119](#)

Presentation to Council on proposed traffic calming - 3900 block of Oliver Street

Director of the Department of Public Works (DPW) Lesley Riddle addressed the Mayor, Council, and residents introducing the item explaining that the City had placed traffic counters twice on the 3900 Block of Oliver Street with minimal instances of vehicles exceeding the speed limit and noted that the Police Department has reported very few citations in relation to the area.

Interim Mayor Ward inquired as to the dates in which the traffic counters were placed and operational to which Deputy Director of DPW Hal Metzler responded that data was collected from December 31, 2020 through January 10, 2021. The Interim Mayor stated that the dates were significant because they were reflective of a decrease in the frequency of traffic when compared with previous months that did not include precautions taken by residents and visitors due to the COVID-19 pandemic regulations and personal preferences.

Director Riddle concurred with the inclination of the Interim Mayor stating that, in almost every aspect, traffic had changed and that it would be in the best interest of the City to reassess traffic in the area after the effects of the health crises had subsided and traffic resumed to patterns and frequency more similar to years past. Ms. Riddle continued that the capabilities of the City were under the authority of the Maryland State Highway Administration (MDSHA), but that the decision to incorporate traffic calming and of what type was to the discretion of City Council reiterating the benefit of revisiting the site in the future with the intention of collecting more adequate, tangible data.

Ward 3 Councilmember Ben Simasek recognized the construction of the new Hyattsville Middle School (HMS) which would affect traffic Oliver Street and asked if the initial petition was submitted during a period of in-school sessions and noting that it would be years before traffic patterns in the area returned to a regular standard. Director Riddle responded that the request was made in November of 2020 in which there was no students attending school in person and that a more accurate assessment could be made when scheduling was back to regular order. She anticipated some peripheral impact as the school was under construction and, after construction, traffic would lessen on Oliver street and toward Queens Chapel Road.

3. Public Comment, Limit 2 minutes per speaker

City Clerk Laura Reams read public comments submitted electronically prior to the public hearing.

The Thomes family addressed the Mayor and Council in support of installing speed bumps on the 3900 Block of Oliver street stating that vehicles regularly exceeded speed limits on that particular roadway.



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Suzanne Alolga addressed the Mayor and Council expressing concerns about speeding vehicles, drivers who do not regard stop signs, and drag racing. Ms. Alolga stressed the danger to residents, children, and pets and relayed that homeowners in the area express full support for traffic calming.

Ward 2 resident, David Marshall, addressed the Mayor and Council through the Question and Answer (Q&A) feature stating that he and his family were in opposition to any and all traffic calming, speed humps or bumps, and traffic circles in the City of Hyattsville.

Joe LaHood was given the opportunity to speak and addressed the Mayor and Council in support of traffic calming describing that vehicles regularly exceed 40 miles per hour (mph) on the streets disagreeing with the data submitted noting that over 40 children lived on the street and that the issues in question had worsened over the previous three (3) years.

Ward 1 Councilmember Bart Lawrence recalled a conversation with Mr. LaHood noting that the confluence of 41st and 40th Streets regularly have vehicles moving at dangerous speeds and confirmed that he had seen a great number of drivers move through stop signs without slowing down, let alone coming to a full stop. He supplemented that Council had discussed the possibility of lowering the speed limit on City streets to 20 mph because residents did not feel safe with the driving behavior as it stood and stated that the initiative should be taken under consideration.

Council Vice President Carrianna Suiter stated that she was familiar with the area and confirmed that the subject stop sign was confusing stating that it had been a great concern of residents for several years.

Resident Ben Kaczmarek addressed the Mayor and Council in support of traffic calming stating that he had been a resident of the City since 2016 noting that seasonality had an effect on the volume of the incidents. Mr. Kaczmarek relayed that during the summers it was a normal occurrence to see drag racing on the street in excess of 70 mph and expressed his concern for the safety of his children.

Resident James Wigley addressed the Mayor and Council in support of traffic calming on the roadway reporting that he had also witnessed a constant disregard for signage and stating that about one (1) in every five (5) cars is being operated in a dangerous manner and expressed great concern for the safety of children who are regularly outside and were potentially at risk. Mr. Wigley added that the issues did seem to decrease in the colder months and, while he was usually not in favor of traffic calming, he would welcome any type of mitigation due to the severity of risk.

Resident Amanda Fenton addressed the Mayor and Council in support of traffic calming of any type and echoed the sentiments of her neighbors.



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Resident Scott Wilson addressed the Mayor and Council in support of traffic calming throughout the City in general, but specifically in the case in question stating that one-way streets are more susceptible to this type of behavior because of the absence of oncoming traffic. Mr. Wilson questioned the direction of traffic enforced by the City as a result of the construction of the new HMS to which Deputy Director Metzler responded that he believed it was a proposal from the County but had not yet been confirmed to be implemented. Director Riddle relayed that DPW would work with the County and provide their assessment of the safest and most logical traffic pattern to institute.

Interim Mayor Ward assured Mr. Wilson that the proposed traffic pattern that he questioned was not a directive of the City of Hyattsville.

Councilmember Lawrence supplemented that the statement may have been taken out of context and confirmed that the Task Force did not make the recommendation.

Interim Mayor Ward read a comment submitted by Jonathan Lewis in support of traffic calming referencing consistent speeding in the area and expressing concern for the safety of the children on Oliver street.

Ward 5 Councilmember Joseph Solomon sought clarity regarding the specific recommendation regarding the item to which City Administrator Tracey Douglas replied that the process began with City staff performing a traffic study of the proposed area followed by discussions and feedback from residents. Ms. Riddle stated that after hearing from the affected residents, they have 15 days to make a recommendation which usually takes place at the following Council meeting.

Councilmember Solomon stated that the Public Hearing was usually held to hear resident feedback on a recommendation already made by the City and requested clarity regarding whether the next steps should include conducting further studies or formulating a recommendation to which Ms. Douglas replied that after the hearing staff would discuss the item and would likely implement temporary traffic calming and perform studies through the summer after which time further recommendations could be made.

Director Riddle explained that they preferred to return to the site after receiving resident feedback at a public hearing and reiterated that if prompt action should be taken, staff would then meet with Hyattsville City Police Department (HCPD) personnel to make sure that all parties are aware of the situation and potential changes. Ms. Riddle continued that the process is not always simple and recalled other occasions in which studies were continual before reaching a solution and many times there is engineering needed and infrastructure augmentation that is needed while also keeping all residents safe and with as few obstacles as possible.

DPW Deputy Director Hal Metzler added that the department generally starts with one (1) of three (3) solutions until there is a better understanding of exactly what the issue is and, at that time, will create a more effective tool. Mr. Metzler noted that he had heard residents express concern regarding not adhering to stop signs stating that in similar cases they could look into the options of adjusting the parameters of intersections to minimize long, straight, streets that would allow cars the needed distance to reach excessive speeds.



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City Administrator Douglas clarified that the public hearing process had changed approximately two (2) years prior so that City staff could hear from residents before making a recommendation. She stated that during the resident feedback phase, staff conducted traffic studies simultaneously, and relayed that the Council found it to be an error in process to not first assess the perspective of residents before making a recommendation.

Ms. Riddle cited several community meetings with residents and stakeholders regarding Jefferson Avenue stating that the concerns with Oliver Street would conduct the same process and allow input from as many affected parties as possible before moving forward with any traffic calming measures.

Councilmember Solomon stressed the importance of hearing from residents and having an executable plan, but stated he was confident in the current process and the attention being given to the issue.

Michelle Lara addressed the Mayor and Council expressing concern echoing her neighbors and stating that there were many children and pets in the area, and that she had witnessed countless incidents of speeding and violations of traffic laws as well as a vehicle striking a dog. Ms. Lara expressed great distress and stated that the concerns were shared by her neighbors opining that stop signs were ineffective and other means should be explored.

Ward 2 Councilmember Danny Schaible thanked all of those who had come forward to voice their concerns and stated that the Body must be sympathetic to their needs and was confident that the City would find a solution amenable to all.

Council Vice President Suiter commended those who had provided their comments noting that she lived not far the affected area and shared the same concerns about the safety of her own children stating that the problem needed to be resolved in short order.

4. Motion to Adjourn

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Simasek
SECONDER:	Solomon
AYES:	Ward, Suiter, Lawrence, Croslin, Schaible, Simasek, Haba, Peabody, Solomon, Spell Wolf
ABSENT:	None

**ATTEST:
March 15, 2021**

Laura Reams, City Clerk

Sean Corcoran, Deputy City Clerk