

Vernon County Highway Safety Committee Meeting

January 2, 2019 at 1:30 p.m.

Members Attending: Dan Nelson – Vernon Memorial Hospital, Dan Breeser – Wisconsin State Patrol, Brad Byom – La Crosse WI DOT, Rick Olig – WI DOT BOTS, Viroqua Police Chief Daron Jefson, Dr. Kehl Arnson – Viroqua Area Schools, David Eggen – Vernon County Board, Sheriff John Spears – Vernon County Sheriff’s Office, and Tim Hundt – WVRQ

Members Absent: Cary Joholski – Vernon County Board, Justin Running – Vernon County Board, Brandon Larson – Vernon County Emergency Management, Luke Yahn – Wisconsin State Patrol, Joe Schneider – La Crosse WI DOT, Phil Hewitt – Vernon County Highway Commissioner

Guests: Darrel Clark – Vernon County Board

Highway Safety Committee meeting was called to order by David Eggen at 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, January 2nd, 2019 at the Vernon County Sheriff’s Office.

Affirmed proper public notice was made. David Eggen asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Sheriff Spears made a motion to approve the minutes of the October meeting. Dan Nelson seconded the motion. All voted Aye.

Audience to Visitors:

Darrel Clark from the Vernon County Board, District 21, appeared on behalf of Kickapoo Area Schools Transportation Director Jeffrey Wendorf. Clark raised the concern about the speed limit in front of Kickapoo Area Schools on State Highway 131. Clark addressed that the speed limit is currently a “marked school zone.” Clark mentioned they are only asking the situation be reviewed for the potential of reducing the speed limit. A discussion ensued.

Darrel Clark also brought forward another concern. Clark raised the concern about the Amish Community not equipping horse-drawn vehicles with amber lighting. Clark referenced the 475 Assembly Bill. Clark emphasized the Amish are not complying in the area where he resides. Clark questioned what can be done as a community for safety issues to make the roads safer. Sheriff Spears answered that more Amish are complying slowly, but it will take a while for them to transition. Spears added the sheriff’s office will continue to communicate with each Amish Community’s Bishops. A discussion occurred.

Sheriff Spears – The quarterly report was handed out. Sheriff Spears reported, compared to last year, total crashes are down by 17 (crashes). Spears recapped the year to year differences as follows:

- Reportable accidents decreased from 2017 by 19
- Non-Reportable accidents increased from 2017 by 2
- No fatal accidents since the last meeting
- Injury Accidents increased from 2017 by 7
- Non-Injury Accidents decreased from 2017 by 22
- Car v. Deer Accidents decreased from 2017 by 1

Sheriff Spears mentioned the sheriff's office will be participating in the drive sober campaign. Spears added the speed trailer has not been deployed. Rick Olig asked questions about the speed trailer. Spears said the trailer is placed in troublesome areas, based on complaints, and events. Spears added the sheriff's office is gearing up for the winter weather. Spears commended Highway Commissioner Phil Hewitt and the highway department for the job well done. Spears said the sheriff's office supplied the highway department with a portable radio, so the on-call worker can listen to radio traffic to help with road response. Olig commended Sheriff Spears for only have one unmapped accident.

Luke Yahn – Not present. Trooper Dan Breeser appeared on behalf of Yahn. Breeser had nothing to report. Breeser added Ryan Smith will be the new trooper working for Vernon County.

Chief Jefson – Chief Jefson reported the Viroqua Police Department also displays a speed detector / hand cart. Chief added they purchased a new speed trailer, which will detect speeds, dates, and times.

Phil Hewitt – Not present.

Joe Schneider – Not present. Brad Byom appeared in place of Joe Schneider. Brad reported there wasn't much new to report. Brad mentioned the roundabout at the intersection of US Highway 14, County Road T, and State Highway 27 was approved. Brad said the roundabout will be designed soon. A discussion progressed.

Rick Olig – Rick Olig informed the committee a group gathered in Madison for a speed study, so the general public understands why speed limits are assigned. Olig reported by almost year end, there were no more fatal accidents. There were 509 fatal accidents, which increased from the five year average. Olig added more to the Amish compliance discussion. Olig agreed communicating with the Amish is better off, as Sheriff Spears is doing. Olig added issuing citations will not gain compliance, and once the Bishops are in, they will all comply. Olig ended his report by announcing the Governor's Conference is on August 20th-22nd at the Wilderness in Wisconsin Dells.

Dan Nelson – Dan Nelson stated he had nothing to report, but mainly had some questions. Nelson asked about the two lanes that merge into one by Vernon Memorial Hospital and Kwik Trip. Nelson said semi-trucks seem to merge into the one-lane fairly fast. Nelson asked if this issue has been looked at in the past because it's a little dangerous with exiting traffic. Chief Jefson answered that he doesn't recall any accidents in that area stemming from the situation. Brad Byom confirmed there hasn't been any accidents in the transition area from 2008 – 2017. Nelson added it's a challenge to get on and off the main road. A discussion lapsed. Nelson asked who plows the streets, and the answer was the city. Another discussion was initiated.

Dr. Kehl Arnson – Dr. Kehl Arnson stated everything is going well. Dr. Arnson reported their school bus drivers are more cautious on the roads due to the weather and flooding, especially on the damaged roads. Dr. Arnson stated so far, school hasn't been delayed due to the weather. Dr. Arnson mentioned parents wanted to move prom to Vernon Vineyards, but after realizing the extra cost, they are okay with it being at the fairgrounds. Dr. Arnson added they wanted to switch off-site because the fairgrounds might not have the water turned on in time. Dr. Arnson said they will start prom education, which includes accident demos.

Brandon Larson- Not present. David Eggen discussed damages to roads, FEMA, and grants.

Tim Hundt – Tim Hundt requested to speak after Sheriff Spears, so he could make it to another obligation. Hundt didn't have much to report, but thanked the highway department.

Next meeting Wednesday April 3rd, 2019 at 1:30 p.m. at the Vernon County Sheriff's Office.

Adjourn. Motion made by Rick Olig, and seconded by Dan Nelson. All voted Aye. Time: 2:15 pm.

/s/ Morgan C. Paulson

Morgan C. Paulson on behalf of Emergency Management Director Brandon Larson.