

**CITY OF EAGLE LAKE
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
MAY 22, 2023**

CALL TO ORDER

- Mayor Norton called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

- Council Members present: Garrett Steinberg, Beth Rohrich, Anthony White, John Whittington, and Mayor Lisa Norton.
- Staff present: City Administrator Jennifer Bromeland, Police Chief John Kopp, and Deputy Clerk Kerry Rausch.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Mary Maul, 509 Linda Dr, stated there has been a multitude of accidents and one fatality and that the most recent upgrades to Highway 14 are a bandage. Nicollet has an overpass and with Eagle Lake's growth it is time to do something.
- Robert Gospeter, 209 Ann Drive, asked where the initial design came from and how did we get to the point of needing to cross over 2 lanes of traffic and the line-of-sight issue never fixed.
- Gabriel Norton, 212 Ann Drive, stated he does not like the current design of the J-turn saying it is difficult to judge which lanes cars are in when turning west onto Highway 14.
- Josh Norton, 212 Ann Drive, stated he has witnessed cars in the winter having difficulty crossing the lanes of traffic and accelerating to get across on poor road conditions. He also stated his concern with the line-of-sight issue and that he feels the J-turn is not safe. He believes there needs to be a better design.
- Mike Guentzel, 60374 224th Lane, Madison Lake, stated he lives north of Highway 14 on County Road 27 and has personally witnessed several illegal uses of the J-turn at this intersection and that this intersection needs to be closed down. He understands an overpass is not feasible, and that none of the current designs make sense. He went on to say that the City has pigeon holed itself and that the people need another option to get to Mankato. He also stated this was all brought up with the EAW with the Motorsports Park and that forward thinking is needed.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Conversation with MnDOT District 7 Traffic Engineer Scott Thompson about Highway 14 Safety Concerns in Eagle Lake
 - Scott Thompson, an engineer with MnDOT District 7, explained that the current circumstance is due to funding and that MnDOT's funding was cut. MnDOT has since realized the error of their way and that is why other cities have grade separation. He explained that Eagle Lake is land locked to the north and development to the south.
 - Mr. Thompson stated that MnDOT is willing to work with the City of Eagle Lake to look at options for road design by working with MAPO to do a study of Highway 14 from County Road 12 to Highway 60. This study would look at where access is needed. The partners for this study would be the City of Eagle Lake, Blue Earth County, and MnDOT. He encouraged the City Council to consider adopting the revised resolution.
 - City Council discussion included the potential closing of left turn lanes. Mr. Thompson stated the goal should be to look at interim and future safety improvements and to pursue funding. MnDOT would like to

continue the discussion. He also explained that 60% of the accidents were left turning accidents, 30% were rear end accidents, and 10% were fluke accidents.

- The Council asked if any size vehicle could utilize J-turns. Mr. Thompson responded stating the MnDOT uses a semi-trailer as the design vehicle when designing J-turns.
- Also discussed was the differences between all the intersections, specifically at County Roads 56, 17 and 27 and asking to compare these intersections with the stop lights on Highway 14 in Bryon. Mr. Thompson responded stating that MnDOT's experience is that traffic signals along high-speed roadways show severe traffic safety concerns and that MnDOT is contemplating their removal, but this would be based on funding.
- Ryan Thilges, Blue Earth County Engineer, addressed a comment about Blue Earth County available funding for road work. He stated that the cost to construct an interchange would be shouldered by MnDOT, Blue Earth County and the City of Eagle Lake. He stated he is passionate about the County Road 17 intersection and its safety concerns. The signage has been changed to an LED enhanced stop sign. The line-of-sight concern is related to the curvature of the road and is affected when the sun rises. Blue Earth County is eager to get external funding, but the County is not able to pay for a project of this magnitude. He also stated that he personally and Blue Earth County are in favor of this study. He urged people to use County Road 12 for safety purposes.
- Dennis Terrell, 60604 211th Street, asked about lowering the speed to 55 mph on the highway by Eagle Lake. Mr. Thilges stated he does not believe this would be effective and that people drive at the speed that feels safe for the road design. Mr. Thompson stated that by dropping the speed, more people will offend the speed limit and it would result in increases of crashes. Mr. Thilges explained that Minnesota Statute 169.14 calls out speed limits on divided highways and that the Commissioner of Transportation is the only person who can set speed limits.
- Mr. Thilges stated that the proposed study would be the first step in a long process and that the study through MAPO would begin in 2024 and is estimated to be finished by mid-2025, possibly sooner. The study would be paid for with MAPO funding and MnDOT would pay for any cost in excess of MAPO's funding amount.
- It was pointed out that conducting this study does not automatically mean there is a project. The purpose of the study is to identify options and determine feasibility.
- Mayor Norton stated that members of the fire department were not able to attend due to a call, but wanted to voice concerns that there is no access to Highway 14 when a training goes through Eagle Lake and that there should be consideration given for emergency vehicles ability to access Highway 14.
- Mr. Thompson explained that the study would be a fact-finding exercise and would identify future growth locations, collect traffic counts for roads that connect to Highway 14 and would be conducted by a third party. No roadways would be shut down as part of the study. The City of Eagle Lake, Blue Earth County and MnDOT would be partners in this study, and all would contribute to identifying short-term solutions. When asked if this study could undo construction that was already done and limit access point, Mr. Thompson responded by stating everything is on the table.
- Mr. Thompson stated that since the J-turn has been installed there have been 4 accidents, all of which have result in property damage only. When asked if the lower usage of highway access roads could be the reason for the decrease in accidents, he responded with that could be possible. There are over 60 J-turns installed in Minnesota and these have resulted in a dramatic reduction in the severity of accidents. He also stated that J-turns typically do not have acceleration lanes. He address the comment that J-turns are not suitable for large/heavy vehicles which are not able to get up to speed quickly by stating that this is a common concern, but data does not support this. He addressed a comment stating that when the redesign of Highway 14 took place a few years ago, the design was not intended to force traffic to County Road 12 and that it is MnDOT's goal to balance safety and access to the City of Eagle Lake.

- Discussion on Eagle Lake’s historic and future growth was discussed which tied into the need to look to the future needs of the City and where road access will be needed.
- Drivers need to be reminded to slow down, to be patient, and to wait until it is safe to proceed when entering onto Highway 14. It was also mentioned that the City may want to consider reserving future right-of-ways to be able to plan ahead.
- Council Member Rohrich moved, seconded by Council Member Whittington.
- Discussion included the desire to conduct the study prior to closing access points. When asked, Mr. Thompson indicated that it may be possible to close the east bound access left turns and keep open the west bound left turns, if it is deemed necessary to limit left turn access points.
- The motion carried with Council Members Steinberg, Rohrich, White, Whittington, and Mayor Norton voting in favor.

ADJOURNMENT

- Council Member Steinberg moved, seconded by Council Member Rohrich, to adjourn the meeting at 8:31 p.m. The motion carried with Council Members Steinberg, Rohrich, White, Whittington, and Mayor Norton voting in favor.

Lisa Norton, Mayor

Kerry Rausch, Deputy Clerk