

To: Traffic Committee Members

From: Kristel Dickerson, Administrative Liaison

Date: September 27, 2019

Subject: Traffic Committee Meeting Agenda – October 1, 2019

The Town of Blacksburg Traffic Committee will meet on Tuesday, October 1, 2019 at 9:00 a.m. in the Blacksburg Motor Company, Conference Room #1, located at 400 S. Main Street in Blacksburg, Virginia.

Citizens are always provided the opportunity to voice their views/concerns regarding any item before the Committee. It is the policy of the Traffic Committee to move the agenda item to the beginning of the meeting when citizens are in attendance to avoid detaining guests for the entire meeting. However, citizens are always welcome to stay for the full meeting.

Financial Update:

Capital Project: C10412 (820-3101-852.70-99)

• Previous Available Funding:	\$23,634.01
• July 1, 2019 Credit (FY2019-2020 budget)	\$15,000.00
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Current Total Available Funding: (balance available to spend in this project to date)	\$38,634.01

Old Business:

- 1. A concern has been received from James Bilowus regarding safety at the crosswalk on S. Main at Eheart due to drivers not observing the 35 mph to 25 mph speed transition at S. Main and Hemlock. His correspondence follows:**

“In the 4.5 years that I’ve lived in Blacksburg, I’ve not felt safe crossing in the crosswalk at S. Main and Eheart (even with the new flashing lights, people are going too fast to slow down in time). And even merging on to S. Main street in my own vehicle due to traffic exceeding the posted speed limit after the northbound 35-25mph transition at Hemlock Dr. and S. Main. I don’t think the speed limit signs are very noticeable as I sometimes even see marked police cars continue at speed, without their blue or brake lights on, until they reach the Blacksburg motor company. I also constantly see cars accelerating above the posted speed limit when they are headed southbound on main street and pass the Blacksburg Motor Company. It makes crossing the street very intimidating and I’ve had several near misses from people almost hitting me in the crosswalk because they’re simply going too fast. I would like to propose that the Northbound S. Main and Hemlock speed limit sign be changed to a flashing sign with built in radar to visually alert people that there’s a speed change and they should slow down. I would also like to propose that a similar sign be posted ~100’ south of Miller & Southbound S. Main. I think at least changing the one at S. Main and Hemlock will really make my neighborhood safer.”

Committee Recommendation from July 2019 Meeting: Tabled

Due to a series of complaints, the Town recently spent \$8500 to install flashing signage for the crosswalk in this location. To install a flashing radar sign would be a challenge due to the need for electricity, and while there are solar options, the area is shaded making it hard to pull enough sunlight to power a solar unit. Additionally, with the upcoming development at the old Blacksburg Middle School site, the whole intersection will come out and be re-configured. Before the first certificate of occupancy is granted for the OBMS project, a signal must be installed at the S. Main/Eheart intersection, and at this time fencing will soon begin for the start of grade work. The Committee agrees it would not be an efficient use of funds, and could increase pedestrian/vehicle conflict by providing a false sense of security. The Committee further agrees that a better approach will be increased enforcement action. Lt. Goad will speak with the Operations Division Captain of the Police Department regarding potential alternative enforcement solutions, such as standing LIDAR and motor units, since there's not an ideal place for a police vehicle to sit for RADAR. **Tabled for August 2019 Meeting**

Committee Recommendation from August 2019 Meeting: Tabled

No further to report at this time. Stats collected from increased enforcement action will be presented at a future meeting. **Tabled**

Committee Recommendation from September 2019 Meeting: Tabled

No further to report at this time. Increased Police enforcement continues to be the most effective short-term solution. **Tabled**

2. A request has been received via the Mayor's Office from Ethan Lee regarding his concern for safety at the Prices Fork Road and Brightwood Manor Drive intersection. An excerpt of his correspondence to the Mayor follows:

"I and others feel unsafe at this intersection due to incredibly poor visibility of traffic coming from Prices Fork as we turn to leave our neighborhood in Brightwood Manor. A combination of unnecessary trees, a bend in the road, and a slight hill all compound into a dangerous situation. [...] I believe trees need to be trimmed or removed to ease the blind spot, and potentially a traffic mirror as well. I would describe myself as a busy individual who wouldn't take the time to reach out if I did not think this was an important matter of safety for me and others."

Following is an excerpt of an email that he also sent to the Town of Blacksburg Engineering Department:

"I have a concern about an intersection I and other Brightwood residents find dangerous (to the point I dread turning right onto Prices Fork during the day). It is the intersection of Brightwood and Price's Fork Road, across the street from The Reserve. Turning right requires having faith in a large blind spot where traffic coming from the left as you turn off of Brightwood onto Price's Fork is zooming by with little notice. On the Price's Fork Road there is a sign that says "hidden entrance. This is the hidden entrance that it warns of. A low-cost solution that I have seen implemented in a similarly dangerous area is a convex mirror so that people leaving Brightwood can see oncoming traffic that is around the corner on Price's Fork. Another solution--which would ideally be implemented in tandem with the mirror--is to have the trees trimmed that obstruct some of the view."

*** Communication has also been taking place between the Police Department and the Town Engineering Department regarding the conflict at the intersection of Brightwood Manor Drive and The Retreat on Prices Fork Road. Residents of The Retreat continue to make illegal left turns out of the development, which creates a conflict with drivers turning off of Brightwood Manor Drive onto Prices Fork.**

Committee Recommendation from September 2019 Meeting: Tabled for October 2019 Meeting

Concerns surrounding this intersection have been voiced in years past, and at that time it was determined that the vegetative obstructions noted in Mr. Lee's correspondence occur on private property. A representative from Public Works approached the property owners with a proposal to remove the trees at the intersection and install privacy fencing, but at that time they were not agreeable to the change because this growth was their only buffer against the highly traveled Prices Fork Road that runs directly adjacent to their property. In addition to the vegetation, the actual characteristics of the road make it difficult to safely turn off of Brightwood onto Prices Fork. The Committee speculates that at one point Brightwood was perhaps supposed to connect to Sherwood or straight to Huntington, but both options involve private roads/property. The Committee looked at ownership of

Brightwood, with the thought that the HOA could potentially purchase a right of way to connect in some fashion, but it was showing individually owned in GIS. Removal of the left turn option off Brightwood was also discussed, but it is felt that may make the U-turn at Plantation a difficult maneuver in such a short distance. From that possibility, additional discussion ensued, noting that perhaps the speed limit on Prices Fork should be reduced, which would provide for larger gaps in traffic and more of an opportunity to maneuver to the left lane to make the U-turn, but it was agreed that adjusting the speed limit along this corridor would take a long term traffic study and significant strategic planning. The Committee agrees that the best potential short term solution will be remediating the vegetative obstructions via a cooperative action with the Oak Manor HOA, and suggesting the exploration of an alternative connection to Prices Fork utilizing the private roads/property within the developments. A meeting will be scheduled by John Boyer for he and Lt. Goad to approach the Oak Manor HOA with the concern and supporting calculations and measurements in an effort to initiate a cooperative solution.

Tabled for October 2019

- 3. Mr. Kim has an additional concern surrounding parking on Kentwood that he plans to submit for future consideration. He hopes that eventually no parking can be extended to the southwest side of Kentwood Drive (700 Kentwood Drive side). His description follows:**

"On a separate matter, for unknown reasons only the 700 block of Kentwood is lacking a concrete curb along the Fiddlers Green units. It is not uncommon to see cars parked into the grass strip bordering the street during football weekends. Also lacking is storm water drain along the Fiddlers Green units on the 700 block. (Curb is also lacking alongside Fiddlers Green units on Palmer.) A request had to be made with the town and a berm was put in place to help stem storm water runoff into our yard and front walk at 700 and will need to be addressed at 702 which sits much lower. We hope, in the future, the no parking can be extended on our property side of Kenwood as is the case on the block towards Graves Ave."

Committee Recommendation from September 2019 Meeting: Tabled for October 2019 Meeting

Town staff members report that an open earth berm has already been installed for his property to help with drainage. The Fiddler's Green development opted not to install curb and gutter at the time of construction, and to go back and install it on existing lots would be very expensive and not cost effective. On the map, the narrowest part of the street appears to be 21-23 feet, but a site visit will be done to obtain an actual measurement and assess the current parking situation. **Tabled for October 2019 Meeting**

- 4. A request for a stop sign at the corner of Progress Street and Watson Avenue has been received from Katie Hanton, resident of 1011 Progress Street NW. Her correspondence follows:**

"I live at the corner of Progress St and Watson Ave and last night there was a drunk driver that hit our telephone pole, hit our tree and flipped through our yard landing inside the home of our neighbors. We understand that this may be considered a freak drunk driving accident, however, since moving in we have noticed an excessive number of drivers speeding past our house. Also, after speaking with our neighbors, they informed us that there have been multiple cars hit, crashes and even a pedestrian that was hit near our home in recent years. We are very concerned about the safety of Progress street in front of our home and this particular incident brings to light the very real possibility that a car could strike our house or any surrounding houses. We would feel much safer with a stop sign put in to mitigate any future issues."

Committee Recommendation from September 2019 Meeting: Tabled for October 2019 Meeting

This was the site of a DUI accident during the week prior to her request, and a stop sign would have had no effect on the outcome of that situation. A Stealthstat study will be requested for this intersection to obtain a traffic count to assess whether the warrants are met for a stop condition, which will be 300 cars/hour for 8 hours on Progress Street. **Tabled for October 2019 Meeting**

- 5. A request has been received via the Town of Blacksburg Planning Department from a citizen who lives in the area of Glade Road. She wants to know if there can be anything done about signal timing of the lights on UCB. Her request surrounds the timing through the whole UCB corridor, not just at the UCB/Prices Fork intersection. She states that she'll see lights turn green ahead of her and never make it through to them because she's**

stuck behind traffic somewhere else. She also states that the signals back up into one another.

Committee Recommendation from September 2019 Meeting: Tabled for October 2019 Meeting

This item came to Traffic Committee via a neighborhood meeting regarding an item off Glade Road. During this meeting, a citizen voiced her concerns regarding the signals on UCB, and questioned whether any measures could be taken in regards to timing to make the area flow more efficiently. John Holst, with WRA, will return to the area to adjust timing plans as the traffic volume and patterns allow for. ***Tabled for October 2019 Meeting***

Update from J. Holst (WRA) 09/10/19: *"Signal timings along the UCB corridor have been updated to add coordination for the signals at Kroger Fuel/U-Mall and Old Glade/Starbucks. We had only been running Midday and PM coordination at University Crossroads previously just to prevent backups into Prices Fork Road, but with the changes all 3 signals are now in coordination with each other for AM, Midday, and PM peaks during the weekdays, and middle of the day to early evening on weekends. They are all running a half-cycle compared to the primary Prices Fork Road timings, so operations are a lot more responsive due to the lower traffic demand. The basic premise is favoring southbound traffic to Prices Fork Road in the morning, and northbound traffic away from Prices Fork Road in the afternoon/evening, with the midday plan trying to balance bi-directional demands and traffic from all the various restaurants and shopping destinations."*

- 6. A concern has been received from Ken Lee who resides at 2814 Glade Road regarding traffic in town. His main concern is drivers who do not respect the 3-foot law with bicyclists, particularly on N Main St in the 4 lanes. He expressed interest in attending the Traffic Committee meeting with a bicycle group to share his concerns.**

Committee Recommendation from September 2019 Meeting: Tabled for October 2019 Meeting

Bicyclists in this particular area utilize the travel lanes as there are not bike lanes that extend out to this location. Bike traffic seems to be heavier here on the morning commute more so than at any other time of day. The consensus is that there's a possibility the general public may not realize that there is a 3-ft rule, and given the ratio of police officers on duty to square miles of coverage area, an officer is not always going to be in the vicinity to witness the violation, particularly during the morning commute with the priority of enforcement being on school zones. There is a possibility that there is MUTCD compliant signage available that could raise awareness and serve as a reminder of the 3-ft rule, but then the question of the actual potential effectiveness of the signage was debated. The idea of adding a 2nd sign on the existing "Share the Road" signage was discussed, and there are various signs available, but the group found that none are MUTCD compliant because every state's law differs a bit. The idea of an educational/awareness campaign pushed out via the Town's website was also discussed. ***Tabled for October 2019 Meeting***

- 7. Kay Moody, resident of 804 Preston Avenue, has spoken with Chief Wilson (PD) regarding her request for the addition of several 4-way stops at intersections on Preston Avenue to mirror Draper Road. She's not requesting a 4-way stop at every intersection, but rather for them to be strategically placed, making it flow equivalent to Draper Road.**

Committee Recommendation from September 2019 Meeting: Tabled for October 2019 Meeting

Upon meeting with Ms. Moody, Chief Wilson requested that two Stealthstat studies be completed on Preston Avenue focusing on the downhill section towards Miller, one prior to the return of the students and one after the return of the students, for comparison purposes. The final study was completed on the day prior to this meeting, and the data will be available for discussion at the next meeting. Long-term there could be a stop condition added at the intersection of Eheart and Preston, with thru traffic continuing on Eheart and the stop on Preston, as part of a larger project. There is a funded CIP project to study Eakin in regards to the cycle track from the new development on S. Main to connect to the Huckleberry Trail. It may be that this item would be more effectively handled as part of the larger CIP project. The item will be tabled at this time to review the Stealthstat data at the next meeting. ***Tabled for October 2019 Meeting***

New Business:

- 1. A request has been received from Jim Tokuhisa via the At-Your-Request system for deer crossing signage to be installed on S. Main in the Cohee/Palmer area for northbound traffic and another in the area of Eheart Street for southbound traffic. He reports a great deal of deer crossing activity in this area, especially at dusk.**
- 2. A concern has been received via Twitter regarding the loading zone on Wilson Avenue. Mr. Hart suggests removing the loading zone altogether due to daily violations. (image)**
- 3. A concern has been received from Joan Bellis, resident of Trillium Lane N., regarding the Prices Fork/N. Main traffic circle. Her correspondence follows:**

"1. There is a growing concern for pedestrians who use the crosswalks at the Prices Fork and N Main rotary. While trying to drive oneself around the rotary, which is too small to allow margin for error, one must also be ready to stop for pedestrians.

2. Pedestrians who refuse to walk a bit further cross Prices Fork anywhere between Prices Fork and the rotary. A solution would be to have a pedestrian bridge built along Prices Fork.

The same situation may have to be addressed in the future west of 460. I would like the Committee to seriously address this concern before a pedestrian is injured or killed."

- 4. An anonymous concern has been received via the At Your Request system regarding the vegetation in the area of the pedestrian crosswalk across Main Street at Alumni Mall. The description follows:**

"This is a request to replace the hedges in the median bordering the pedestrian crosswalk across Main St. at Alumni Mall to improve the visibility of pedestrians by motorists. I suggest replacing the hedges and landscape bordering the crosswalk with either very low landscaping or colored bricks. This will improve drivers' ability to see pedestrians in the traffic island and crosswalk and to realize that this is a crosswalk. I have encountered many close calls at this intersections. I think many drivers headed south do not realize there is a crosswalk there, since there is no sign for it and they can't see the pavement paint because it is just one lane wide and hidden by cars ahead. The current bushes block the view of pedestrians on the traffic island trying to complete their crossing east. Crossing west has it's own dangers, since cars making a left turn from Alumni Mall often don't realize there is a crosswalk there and are accelerating out of their turn. Let's keep Blacksburg safe!"

Beth Carson, Town Horticulturist, has been consulted about this concern as well. She too requests that the Committee review the area and advise on the shrubs.

- 5. A concern has been received from Patrice Hart-Schubert following a close call at the intersection of Owens Street and Roanoke Street. Her correspondence follows: (image)**

"To the Traffic Safety Committee: At 10:14 AM today, I was travelling south on Owens St. in front of the cemetery when a maroon sedan heading north from Roanoke St. to Owens St. crossed the center line on the curve and was headed straight for me. I slammed on my breaks and pressed on the horn to get their attention. They barely missed me. If I had not stopped there most certainly would have been an accident. There were two gentlemen working right at that location in the cemetery. I was shaken up and rolled down my window and asked them if they saw it. They stated that yes, they saw the whole thing and they see it "all the time". I know that there have been accidents on that curve before and even at a low speed, a head-on collision can cause serious injuries. Please consider some sort of safety measure for this intersection. I travel this route every day to work and back for the past 13 years and there is also a pedestrian crossing issue at the this location."

Ms. Hart-Schubert has also included a screen capture from her dash cam: She reports "It shows that the passenger side tires were almost on the double yellow line. I hope this helps illustrate the issue."

- 6. A concern has been forwarded for Traffic Committee review from the Town Manager's Office and Town Council regarding safety on E. Roanoke Street. The Committee is tasked with looking at the area from a crosswalk safety and pedestrian landing zone standpoint. The citizen letter follows:**

"Dear Members of Town Council,

Five years ago, I made presentations to the Corridor and Traffic Committees to encourage the town to install a sidewalk on E. Roanoke Street near the Westview Cemetery, from Jefferson Street to Owens Street. At that time, I was told the project was high on the town's sidewalk priority list, since the area is on the school route to Harding and along a corridor used by renters in Jefferson Apartments and elsewhere to access downtown and campus. I understand from Kali Casper that it remains high on the priority list.

To address my immediate concerns five years ago, the town arranged for a curb to be dropped, pedestrian signage to be installed, and an additional streetlight to be erected. Those were very welcome changes that no doubt have improved the safety of that area. My neighbors and I are grateful. However, I'm disappointed that more than five years after those initial conversations, no further improvements have been made.

This stretch of road is barely wide enough for two cars to pass, creating serious problems when pedestrians are present. There is still no safe place to wait to cross the Owens/E. Roanoke intersection--pedestrians stand on a tiny piece of scrubby (and often muddy) grass between an overgrown bush and a light pole. I've included an image of the intersection below so you can get a sense of how hazardous it is. It's a crosswalk that leads directly into the path of oncoming cars. The danger was emphasized last week when a car struck the guardrail a few feet from that crosswalk. Imagine standing there with a stroller, a dog, and a kindergartner in tow as parents of Harding kids must do. Imagine a VT student crossing there at night in the rain on her way to or from town.

After discussing this with the Mayor and with Anne McClung, I revisited the idea of going back before the Corridor Committee. However, after additional discussions with Town staff, it's clear that the only thing the Corridor Committee would be able to do is reiterate that this area remains on the high priority list. They don't control funding allocations, nor can they direct Town staff to devote time to finding grants or other avenues to unlock the needed resources.

It seems that political influence is what's needed to break this years-long deadlock. I'm asking that you help me find a solution to improving the safety of that area. There must be some practical steps we can take right now, while we wait for the Benevolent Sidewalk Gods to rain money on us. And if we need to petition the Benevolent Sidewalk Gods, let me know who they are, and how many goats need to be sacrificed to make this happen.

*Many thanks,
Mindy Quigley
President, Knob Hill Homeowners Association"*

- 7. A request has been received via P&E from a citizen for signage on N. Main at Mount Tabor to protect pedestrians until the sidewalk is installed in this area. There is a section without sidewalk, which is on the priority list, but there is no project timeline at this point. The concern is for pedestrians walking in this section on N. Main to Tabor Village Drive. There is not sidewalk on either side, and the citizen understands that the sidewalk installation is in the long-term plan, but the request is for signage to alert drivers and encourage pedestrians to walk facing traffic in the interim.**
- 8. A concern has been received from a citizen via Officer Harris regarding the intersection at N. Main and Giles Road. She reports that bicyclists and pedestrians disregard the crosswalk, and she damaged her vehicle as a result of having to swerve to avoid hitting one.**

Additional Discussion:

➤ **Woolwine Street**

Ms. Joann Price, 507 Woolwine Street, has requested a “hidden driveway” sign at her residence, or some means to help her get out of her driveway more safely because she has had several “close calls”. She reports difficulty backing out of her driveway because cars crest the hill and come up on her quickly. She advises that there are not any obstructions to visibility such as trees, but the problem is the hill itself, and a lot of speeding cut through traffic.

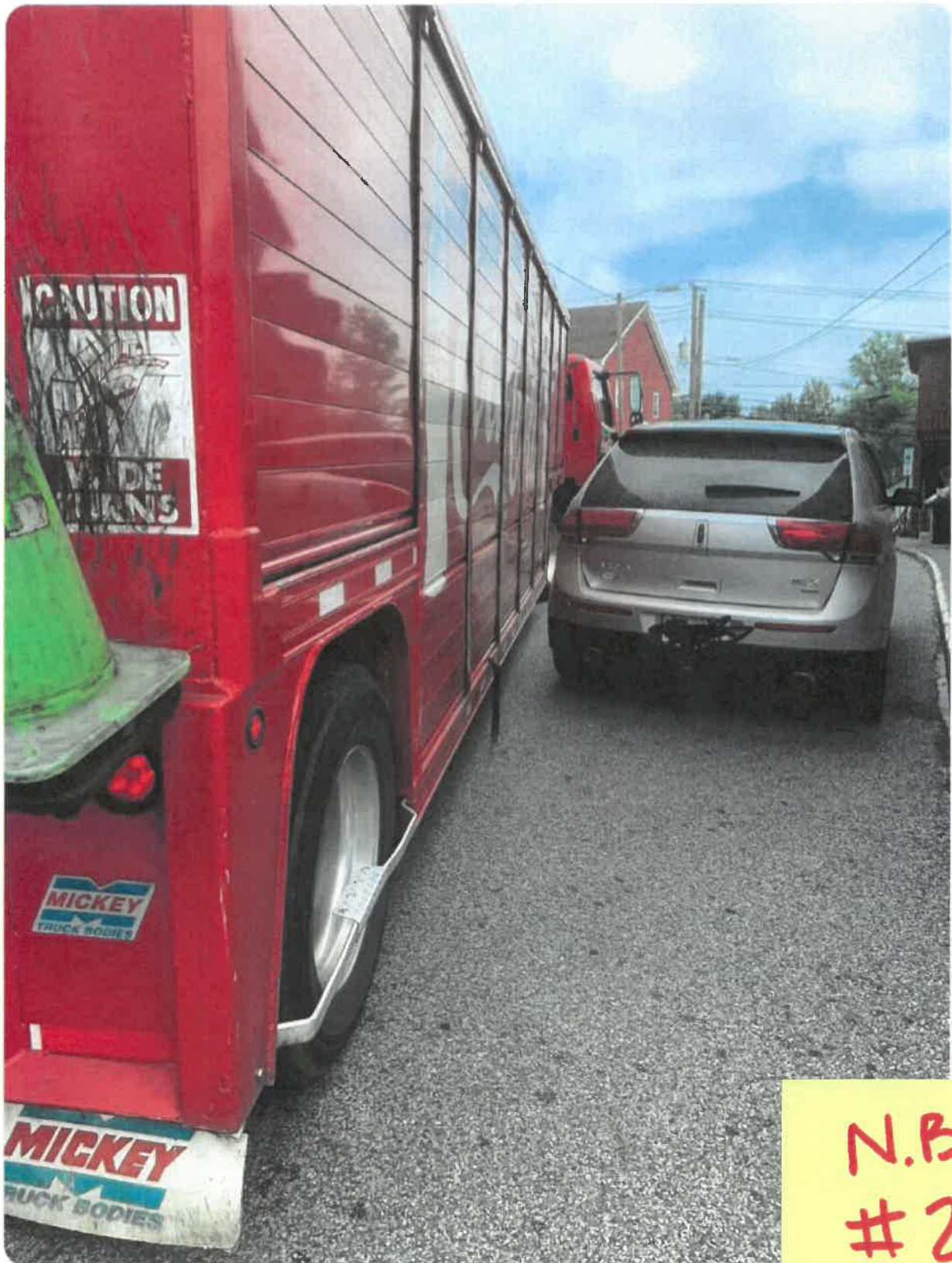
- ***NEXT MEETING DATE: The next Traffic Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 5, 2019 at 9:00 am in the Blacksburg Motor Company, Conference Room #1, located at 400 S. Main Street in Blacksburg, Virginia.***



Jeremy Hart
@NRVLiving



Hi, @Blacksburg_Gov? Let's just get rid of the loading zone on Wilson Ave altogether. This happens on a daily basis.



N.B.
#5



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