

Imperial Beach City Council Votes To Do Away With Roundabout At Ninth And Donax

by Alessandra Selgi-Harrigan | Posted: Friday, March 27, 2015 4:54 pm

After a trial period of a few months the roundabout demonstration at Ninth and Donax has ended. The City Council decided to do away with it with a vote of 3 to 2.

City Manager Andy Hall said the city has received a petition signed by 95 residents who were against the roundabout as well as emails and correspondence for a total of 103 against the demonstration. He received only six in support.

Hall recently observed traffic at the roundabout and reported that the city was able to take a video of the intersection. He observed that some vehicles go through the roundabout in a straight line, and that the area seems busy with color, signs and cones. Some of the concerns raised were the radius of the center circle, 16 parking spaces have been eliminated, and pedestrians don't feel safe crossing at the crosswalk. Some of the comments he received concerned the traffic moving at a faster speed than at a regular intersection. Last year one accident was reported at that intersection versus two this year. Hall said that perhaps if the center circle was bigger the traffic would move at a slower pace.

About nine residents opposed to the roundabout spoke during the public comment period. Resident Agustin Rojas who lives on Ninth Street said two driveways are blocked by the roundabout, and he recently saw a city worker almost getting run down by a car. Rojas is worried about children crossing at the crosswalk. "I recommend you remove it, redraw itit's a problem waiting for an accident to happen," he said.

Another resident who has problems with his peripheral vision said he is worried about getting hit by a car. Other residents raised concerns about near misses, the poorly lit area, drivers doing donuts around the circle, and emergency vehicles not having enough room to maneuver around the roundabout.

Fire Chief Thomas Clark said he has not seen a reduced response time due to the roundabout. The traffic engineer was asked to speak about the issue. He recommended increasing the central radius for further slowing of traffic and addressing the lighting issue.

Councilman Brian Bilbray cited two studies by Kansas State and Washington State that concluded that roundabouts decrease the following: crashes by 39 percent, fatal crashes by 90 percent and 76 percent injury producing crashes. He said he believes by making some changes to the roundabout by increasing the circle, moving the yield paint to before the crosswalk and raising the crosswalk could improve the situation. "We should not give up on this ... it will save lives," he said. Councilman Robert Patton agreed with Bilbray. "We should give it a chance," he said.

The cost to make the roundabout permanent was estimated at \$300,000.

After some discussion Councilwoman Lorie Bragg made a motion to remove the roundabout at a cost of \$500 for materials and labor due to the many concerns raised. The motion was carried with Mayor Serge Dedina, Councilman Ed Spriggs and Bragg voting yes and Councilmen Bilbray and Patton voting no.

In other business:

- An Imperial Beach resident was recognized for successful cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Lori Mahoney was honored by Fire Department Engineer/Paramedic Tyra Moe for performing chest compressions on her husband Stephen who had developed a chemical or electrolyte imbalance which caused a potentially fatal heart rhythm.
- Mayor Serge Dedina read a proclamation declaring April Environmental Awareness Month.
- Cindy Gompper-Graves, president and CEO of South County Economic Development Council presented a five-year economic development visioning project. She discussed some projects including Brown Field, a new cross border port of entry, Chula Vista University, and the bay front development in Chula Vista. The organization will focus on six specific industries: healthcare, aerospace, tourism, advanced manufacturing, food processing and distribution and maritime related industries.
- A regional transportation congestion improvement plan fee for fiscal year 2015-2016 was voted on and approved by the council. The fee was raised from \$2,254 to \$2,310 effective July 1, 2015 for new residential units.
- The council received a report on the recovery strategy for the Tijuana River Valley by the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board. It was reported that a 5-year action plan for clean up and abatement of the river valley for \$1.55 million is in the works addressing sediment and trash.
- A resident who had purchased properties as short term vacation rentals on South Seacoast Drive has not been allowed to rent them for their intended purpose because a city ordinance does not allow short term rentals in that area. The resident explained that he sold two of his properties and the new owner has been operating them as short term rentals. The resident asked the city to enforce the ordinance. He said he has seen his former properties advertised on line as short term rentals.
- Fire Department Capt. John French asked city council for direction as to a preferred disposition of a 1993 Westates Fire engine. The options provided were: donation to a Fire Technology program; donation to a city in Mexico; or selling it at auction. The council voted to donate the fire engine to a fire technology training center.
- The council voted to approve the interview procedure for candidates for community boards, committees and commissions with a process to reduce the number of candidates and inclusion of a

written supplement to obtain information that should not be part of a public interview.

The next city council meeting will be held April 1 at 6 p.m.