

To: Douglas City Council

From: Tracey Shafroth
271 Water Street

Date: 17 January 2023

Re: Water Street Concerns

Thank you for allowing me to address the Council this evening and discuss the many concerns I, and my neighbors, have about the health and safety of Water Street. One of the reasons I have asked for this meeting is that we have quite a few new members of the Council who are likely not aware of the concerns we have shared with Council and staff many times over the course of the last five years.

Brian Alexander, a resident of Water Street, with a degree in Industrial Design, spent hours several years ago studying the corner and the challenges that the slope and angles present. He will shortly share a study that he presented to Council several years ago. Put your seatbelts on because you'll learn a lot.

I believe that the conditions along the road have deteriorated in the last few years. There are certain qualities of the road that we just can't engineer our way around. The road is narrow, there are regular 12" deep gullies that form after a hard rain and the bridge that goes over Tannery Creek is narrow and drops off precipitously. It's not clear to me if sidewalks are even an option. The street, with its two sharp turns, steep hill, blind corner, and unstable roadbed, makes for a deadly combination.

In the last two years there has been a steady increase in the number of large trucks along the road. They primarily come from the southeast of Douglas and use Water Street as a cut through to Blue Star Highway. It saves them about one and a half minutes. However, in the process they make the road more precarious for residents, pedestrians, and cyclists. Their size and weight damage the already unstable edges of the road. Are we willing to take on that cost to save the trucks 90 seconds?

I recently consulted with an attorney, as well as the Allegan County Road Commission, after the City indicated that they were not aware of who set speed limits, signage or the types of vehicles allowed on Water Street. It turns out that you, the City Council, makes those determinations. You can decide, knowing what you know about this road, exactly what you want to do to make this road safe.

So here are some proposed solutions:

- Lower the speed limit to 15 or 20mph on the entire road. The speed is currently 25mph.

- Aggressively enforce the new speed limit during the times of day cited in the traffic study when excessive speed is most significant.

- Rethink the signage to make it clear and less confusing.

- Carry out a sustained public education effort that will inform traffic of the new speed limit.

- Prohibit big trucks from using the road. Hammer out an ordinance that will dictate the kinds of small trucks that are permitted on the road.

I call upon all of you to make this a priority. I believe that as neighbors we have been conscientious and responsible citizens in our efforts to make this street safe. We need your help. Let's get it done.