



TOWN OF MIDDLEBURG

Loudoun County, Virginia

TOWN COUNCIL MEMO

TO: Mayor and Members of Town Council

FROM: Shaun Jones, Chief of Police
Will Moore, Deputy Town Manager
Danny Davis, Town Manager

DATE: July 11, 2024

SUBJECT: Reduction of Speed Limits in Middleburg

BACKGROUND

- At the June 27, 2024 Town Council Meeting, the Town Council discussed staff's proposal to lower speed limits in Town based on new enabling legislation.
- The Town Council in general supported the proposal and discussed a few additional options:
 - Move the 20MPH zone on West Washington Street as far west as possible.
 - Consider adding The Plains Road to the reduced speed limit areas.
 - Consider the entire Town – specifically Ridgeview – in the reduced speed limit areas.

DISCUSSION

- Washington Street:
 - Staff continues to support changing the speed limit to 20MPH near the National Sporting Library and Museum.
 - The initial focus of this speed reduction effort was to slow down traffic in the core of Middleburg, specifically where there is significant pedestrian traffic.
 - By creating multiple transition zones, staff believes that it will be more effective in getting drivers to slow from 25MPH to 20MPH in the core area where pedestrian crossings are most common.
 - Furthermore, the transition from 25MPH to 20MPH near the top of the hill naturally results in drivers letting off the gas (or using the brake) near the crest of the hill – which supports slower speeds entering the core of Middleburg.

- Fiscal Impact: Minimal
- Staff also notes that Council supported moving the 25MPH further west to the end of the “dual lanes” (near 1103 West Washington Street). With Council’s approval, staff will send a formal request to VDOT to make this speed limit change.
- Speed Limit on Side Streets:
 - Staff initially recommended reducing the speed limit to 15MPH on certain side streets.
 - After further review and discussion, staff believes that having a consistent lowered speed limit through Town will be more effective, and recommends only reducing the speed limit to 20MPH.
 - In driving through Town, trying to maintain 15MPH can be very difficult, and instances like this could result in the unintended consequence of drivers becoming *more* aggressive due to a very low speed limit.
 - Furthermore, staff would recommend reevaluating the speed limit after 12 months to understand if the 20MPH limit is appropriate, and further decisions can be made at that time, if necessary.
- Extent of Speed Limit Reductions:
 - The Town Council discussed adding additional streets to the reduced speed limit areas.
 - Staff would support adding The Plains Road from Washington Street to the Town boundaries as a 20MPH zone.
 - Staff also recommends extending the reduced speed limit on W. Marshall Street to the western end of Stonewall Avenue (it is one continuous road, even though it changes names).
 - As of this time, staff recommends not changing speed limits in Ridgeview or other streets.
 - Fiscal Impact: Minimal
 - The primary issues of speeding, especially from those who do not live in Town, occur on Washington, Federal, Marshall, Madison, and The Plains Road. These roads also afford the most effective areas for enforcement.
 - Furthermore, changing the speed on certain streets in Ridgeview would require changing the speed limit on ALL streets in Ridgeview, which requires additional signage, VDOT approvals, and time to implement.
 - If Council wishes to change the speed limit in Ridgeview, then staff recommends phasing the changes so that the most immediate issues (stated above) can be addressed, and the changes in Ridgeview to follow.
 - Fiscal Impact: Moderate

ENFORCEMENT

- Traffic patterns in Middleburg continue to change, as we see an increase in the volume of traffic passing through Town. In addition, visitor trips to the shops and restaurants in Town continue to grow.
- Trends across the country since the pandemic have demonstrated that drivers tend to be more aggressive, less patient, and in general less willing to follow stated speed limits and laws.

- One of the top priorities for our police department is to ensure the safety and well-being of our residents, visitors, and children.
- It is paramount that the Middleburg Police Department enhances its visibility and enforcement of traffic and speed laws. This will help ensure a safe community where everyone can walk and drive in a safe manner.
- The more that the Department is visible and is seen as enforcing traffic laws, the more people will understand that Middleburg is still a small, pedestrian-oriented Town where speeding will not be tolerated.
- Chief Jones will take the initiative with the Department to provide training and education on community safety, recognize employees who demonstrate a commitment to traffic safety, clearly communicate the community expectations around traffic safety, and provide feedback opportunities so that the Department can improve its traffic safety activities.

Furthermore, we will be pursuing the following items:

- Grants
 - We are exploring applying for grant opportunities from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles to implement the key items stated above.
 - These grants will pay for overtime for officers to work traffic enforcement. The grants will also provide funding for education for citizens, training for our officers and equipment.
- Recruitment and Additional Staffing
 - We continue recruiting to fill our vacant officer position. When that is filled, it will provide additional flexibility for greater enforcement during the business day when the Chief and Lieutenant will be working.
 - Additionally, we are still exploring changes to the organizational structure of the Department and will work with Council over the coming months in preparation for the FY26 budget cycle.
- Public Education and Awareness
 - Emphasize Community Responsibility
 - We would like to encourage a collective responsibility among residents and visitors for the safety of all community members, particularly pedestrians.
 - Consistent Messaging
 - We plan on using consistent and frequent messaging through various outlets such as social media, local news outlets, community meetings such as Biz Buzz to reinforce the importance of adhering to speed limits.
 - Collaborative Approach
 - This will involve local businesses, schools, and organizations in promoting and supporting the initiative.
 - Public Announcements
 - We would like to utilize local media and social media to announce the speed limit changes and take the opportunity to explain the reasons behind the changes.

FISCAL IMPACT

The physical cost to replace a speed limit sign on an existing post is less than \$100. The additional cost to place a new sign post and sign is around \$200.

Staff would need to procure contractor services if a significant amount of new signage is going to be installed in Town (such as, throughout Ridgeview).

Furthermore, the Town would need to develop a signage plan to submit to VDOT for obtaining appropriate permits. If just a few signs are added, staff can do this in-house.

If all of Town were to be reduced in speed limit, it would take staff a more significant amount of time, or we would need to procure support from an engineering firm. An initial proposal from Kimley-Horn indicates a cost of \$15,500 to develop a set of plans to cover all of Middleburg that would be ready to submit to VDOT.

DECISION POINTS

To support the Council's review, below are decision points:

WASHINGTON STREET SPEED LIMIT

- Staff recommends a 20MPH speed limit from approximately Reed Street to Pinckney Street
 - o Does Council concur?
 - o Does Council wish to move it further west?

SIDE STREET SPEED LIMITS

- Staff recommends a 20MPH speed limit on Federal Street, The Plains Road, Madison Street, and Marshall St/Stonewall Ave.
 - o Does Council concur with a 20MPH speed limit?
 - o Or does Council wish to have it lowered to 15MPH?

ADDITIONAL LOWERED SPEED LIMIT AREAS

- Staff recommends not reducing the speed limit on other streets at this time (some are marked, some are unmarked)
 - o Does Council concur?
 - o Or does Council wish to extend the reduced speed limits throughout Town?
 - If Council wishes to go in this direction, will Council support a two-phased approach, with immediate changes taking effect on the main streets noted above, and additional changes taking place throughout Town once a signage plan can be developed and approved by VDOT?

DRAFT MOTION

I move that the Town Council adopt **AN ORDINANCE TO REDUCE SPEED LIMITS ON CERTAIN HIGHWAYS WITHIN THE TOWN OF MIDDLEBURG**, reducing the speed limit on certain streets in Town to 20MPH. I further move that the Town Council direct the Town Manager to send a letter to VDOT, requesting that the 25MPH zone on West Washington Street be moved west past Windy Hill Road to enhance safety in the Town of Middleburg.

**AN ORDINANCE TO REDUCE SPEED LIMITS ON CERTAIN HIGHWAYS WITHIN
THE TOWN OF MIDDLEBURG**

MOTION:

SECOND:

WHEREAS, the Virginia General Assembly adopted House Bill 1071, effective July 1, 2024, which allows the governing body of towns to reduce the speed limit to less than 25 Miles Per Hour (MPH), but not less than 15 MPH, on highways within its boundaries that are located in a business district or residence district; and,

WHEREAS, after reviewing the recommendations of the Police Chief and Town staff, the Council desires to reduce the speed limits on certain highways in the Town limits in order to protect its citizens and visitors;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED that the Town Council of Middleburg here by reduces the speed limit in the following manner:

20 MPH Speed Limit:

- Washington Street, between Reed Street and Pinckney Street
 - Madison Street, between the northern Town boundary and the southern Town boundary
 - Marshall Street, between Pickering Street and its eastern terminus
 - Stonewall Avenue, between its western terminus and Pickering Street
 - Federal Street, between The Plains Road and Jay Street
 - The Plains Road, between Washington Street and the southern Town boundary
- and;

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that the Town Manager is authorized to provide written notice to the Commissioner of Highways of the change in speed limits and, no less than 30 days after said written notice, to install required signage in accordance with this Ordinance, to inform the public of such changes, and to enforce the revised speed limits; and

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that revised speed limits shall be enforced by the Middleburg Police Department or any other authorized law enforcement agency in the same manner as all other speed limits which may have been approved by the Commissioner of Highways.

Adopted:

Vote: Aye:

Nay:

Abstain:

Absent:

APROVED:

Trowbridge M. Littleton, MAYOR

ATTEST:

Rhonda S. North, MMC
Town Clerk