

Excerpt from December 17, 2024 Common Council Minutes

16. Discussion and Possible Action regarding the closure of Starin Road between Prairie Street and Warhawk Drive to vehicular traffic- **Public Works**

Motion made to lower speed limit to 15 mph, add additional stop signs, and speed bumps/tables and come back and re-evaluate in 6 months by Councilmember Hicks, Seconded by Council President Singer. Voting Yea: Council President Singer, Councilmember Hicks, Councilmember Dawsey Smith, Councilmember Schanen Voting Nay: Councilmember Brown, Councilmember Majkrzak, Councilmember Smith

Motion made to direct staff to bring back at the June 17, 2025 meeting by Councilmember Smith, Seconded by Councilmember Brown. Voting Yea: Council President Singer, Councilmember Hicks, Councilmember Brown, Councilmember Dawsey Smith, Councilmember Majkrzak, Councilmember Smith, Councilmember Schanen

Motion made approve lowering the speed limit, add stop signs and speed bumps and bring back to council at the June 17, 2025 meeting for re-evaluation by Councilmember Majkrzak, Seconded by Councilmember Smith. Voting Yea: Council President Singer, Councilmember Hicks, Councilmember Brown, Councilmember Dawsey Smith, Councilmember Majkrzak, Councilmember Smith, Councilmember Schanen

Steffanie Hicks (Tower Hill Pass) spoke in opposition of the Starin Rd closure.

Jay Craggs (178 N Park St) spoke in favor of the Starin Rd closure.

Douglas Bradley (S Cottage St) spoke in favor of the Starin Rd closure.

Dean Lesch (1260 Tower Hill Pass) spoke in opposition of the Starin Rd closure.

Jane Mortensen (N219 Cty Rd N) spoke in opposition of the Starin Rd closure.

Ben Holden (resident) spoke in opposition of the Starin Rd closure.

Larry Kachel (457 S Buckingham Blvd) spoke of a compromise of both sides, suggested stop signs, lights, speed bumps, lowering the speed limit, force students to use crosswalks. Suggested trying it for a semester and then come back to reevaluate.

Jeff Knight (405 Panther Ct) Suggested looking into the past traffic study.

Chuck Mills (336 S Whiton) spoke in opposition of closing Starin Rd.

Brenda Jones, Vice Chancellor of Finance and Admin Affairs from UW Whitewater spoke in favor of closing Starin Rd from 6 am to 6 pm while students are on campus.

Councilmember Hicks read the following statement into record:

To start, I want to state that at the DPW meeting on December 10th, I was not for this closure, but a motion and a second with a 3-vote committee, ensured it was coming to the council. I did vote YES to

bring it to the council for further public scrutiny and get it in front of the 7 council members who are elected to make these decisions for the community.

I had asked for additional attempts to resolve this issue by use of signs, street lighting, flashing lights, etc – to only have it labeled as a band aid. This supposed issue on Starin did not start this year, not last year, not even before COVID. Adults have been crossing this stretch of road for 50+ years. Suggesting we MUST close the road, and NOW – is keen to amputating your arm to heal a papercut. However, there are things we (the city & the UW) can do together to prevent accidents, while not cutting off a major artery of the city. In the last 5 years, there has been only 5 incidents on the stretch of Starin road we are considering, and NONE of them involved pedestrians. In comparison, on Main Street, there were 46 incidents, and 5 DID involve pedestrians!

This test showed some movement of traffic, both north to Schwager and south to Main Street. Schwager may have had a 68% increase in traffic, but even with Starin closed, Schwager still only had 25% of what Main Street has on a daily average traffic count. Additionally, the UWW noted an increase of 400 cars per day on Prince Street. The intersection of Prince and Main will become congested and create additional safety concerns. In the last 5 years, there have been 19 incidents at the intersection of Prince and Main, 3 of which involved pedestrians. Prince Street contains walking traffic for elementary aged kids attending Lincoln. Adding this additional traffic to an already hazardous intersection is foolish. We don't shut down Prince Street in front of the school for the busses offloading K-5 elementary school kids, who would be more distracted and possibly make more erratic decisions, such as darting out in traffic. As part of the transportation committee discussions with the Whitewater Unified School District, Nelsons Bus service and the city department of public works – we have learned that parents are not sending their kids to school due to the unsafe nature crossing Main Street.

We don't shut down Elizabeth Street in front of the middle school, to avoid students running across the street to their parents' waiting cars on Laurel, Melrose and Court Streets.

We don't shut down possibly the busiest intersection in the city from 745 to 8AM at Elizabeth and Walworth, to allow middle school traffic, high school traffic, bus traffic and resident commuter traffic to safely pass thru; all while middle school and high school students also walk thru that intersection.

However, just this past fall, the UW police department promptly worked with WWUSD under an existing memorandum of understanding, to add a paid crossing guard to that intersection in the morning and afternoon.

Shutting down Starin road goes against the recommendations of the City Manager, the Chief of Police, the Chief of the Fire Department, and the streets department. I am completely against the idea of closing down Starin road, in any capacity.

I would move to table this discussion until June 2025, and direct staff to communicate with the university on other potential resolutions to cross walks on Starin Road.