

*Excerpt from Chapel Hill Town Council Draft Minutes of January 12, 2004***Item 11 - Petitions:****a. By the Mayor and Council Members.****1. Petition to Terminate the Town's Contract with ACS, Inc. regarding the SafeLight Program – Council Member Kleinschmidt.**

Council Member Kleinschmidt asked Council members to receive and refer his petition to end the red light camera program at the next Council business meeting. He made a distinction between concerns about privatization of a police function and issues of privacy. Council Member Kleinschmidt said that he did not feel anyone's privacy rights were being implicated by the program but was concerned about whether or not cameras at intersections make the community safer. The SafeLight Program had reduced red light violations to a civil action where someone can pay a fine and be done with it, he said. Council Member Kleinschmidt stated that violators do not receive points on their licenses or insurance, as they would have in the traditional courtroom after being stopped and ticketed by police.

Council Member Kleinschmidt argued that the SafeLight Program undermines the deterrent effect and creates a disincentive to not drive through red lights. In a community where the median house costs \$400,000, he said, paying a \$50 fine with no insurance/ license points does not seem like a powerful measure. Council Member Kleinschmidt noted that a number of citizens had brought forward alternatives when this issue first came before the Council. He asked Council members to include in his original petition to add a request that the staff come back with a plan for ensuring that those other kinds of measures were taken to improve safety at intersections where red light running is a problem.

COUNCIL MEMBER KLEINSCHMIDT MOVED, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER GREENE, TO RECEIVE AND REFER THE PETITION, AS AMENDED, TO THE MANAGER.

Mayor Foy noted that some people had signed up to speak on this issue, but added that the Council does not generally hear public comment on the night a petition is received. Mayor Foy verified with Mr. Horton that the item could come back at the January 26, 2004 Council meeting, with information on an alternate plan coming back at a later date.

Council Member Ward argued against bringing the item back so soon, since valuable data would not yet be available from a study that was currently in place.

Council Member Greene asked for specifics on that, and Mr. Horton explained that the Town had been working with the Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE) on the first study of its kind on red light running. The goal was to determine whether or not the SafeLight Program makes any difference in motorists' behavior, he said. Mr. Horton predicted that the study would take until September 2004 to produce worthwhile data, but offered to find out if ITRE would have any useful data sooner than that.

Council Member Kleinschmidt determined that the Town had made no investment in the program other than staff time and minor administrative costs. He pointed out that any reconsideration at this point would not jeopardize Town funds and that ACS, Inc. had taken the risk with a provision that allows for termination of the agreement.

Council Member Greene, referring to a 2001 ITRE report, read a statement that cameras should not be installed as a response to red light running without first working through engineering solutions.

Mayor Foy recommended that the Council vote on whether or not to refer the petition to the Manager to come back for debate. The Council would then be in a better position to speak from the same set of information, he said. Mayor Foy recommended taking no action tonight.

Council Member Ward asked how the Council would inform the community of the program's status. Mr. Horton replied that they would continue to make monthly reports and would present the results from ITRE at some future time.

Council Member Harrison requested information on whether the alternatives being proposed were feasible with the signal system that the Town has. Mr. Horton replied that the staff would address the suggestions that had been presented in the past.

Council Member Ward commented that many of the measures taken to prepare for the cameras were the same as those suggested as alternatives to cameras. This had been done with significant input from the Town's engineering staff, he said.

COUNCIL MEMBER KLEINSCHMIDT AMENDED HIS MOTION MOVED, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER GREENE, TO RECEIVE AND REFER THE PETITION, AS AMENDED, TO BRING BACK AN ALTERNATE PLAN TO COME BACK TO THE COUNCIL ON JANUARY 26, 2004. THE MOTION WAS ADOPTED (8-1), WITH COUNCIL MEMBER WARD VOTING NAY.

Petition from Citizen:

12. Bobby Clapp, regarding Red Light Cameras.

Mr. Clapp spoke in favor of red light cameras at traffic intersections. He said that national statistics report a correlation between safety and cameras. Mr. Clapp suggested that some leaders might be overly influenced by small local interest groups rather than being in touch with the community as a whole. He presented a petition signed by residents asking the Council to retain the red light camera policy.

COUNCIL MEMBER STROM MOVED, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER WARD, TO RECEIVE AND REFER THE PETITION TO THE MANAGER AND ATTORNEY. THE MOTION WAS ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY (9-0).