Case 007-15

STAFF PLANNING REPORT

STREET NAME CHANGE: HEARNES BOULEVARD

The City of Joplin is requesting the name change of Hearnes Boulevard to South Main Street. Currently, South Main Street ends at 33rd street. Hearnes Boulevard continues south from 33rd street to the south city limits of Joplin. Local citizens do not often know about or acknowledge the street name change at 33rd street, but it can be confusing for those who are traveling.

A name change from Hearnes Boulevard back to South Main Street would allow the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) to mark the I-44 exit 6 as "Main Street" exit. This is not currently permitted due to Federal Highway Standards because Main Street does not touch this interchange. If visitors are trying to access Main Street or downtown, this can be confusing. This is especially important for those visiting the new Mercy Hospital situated at the interchange of I-44 and Hearnes Boulevard.

Case 007-15: Beginning at 33rd Street and extending south to the current City of Joplin boundary – A request to rename the existing public right-of-way from "Hearnes Boulevard" to "Main Street" – City of Joplin.

Mr. Eastman opened the public hearing for Case 007-15.

Mr. Patrick Tuttle, Convention & Visitors Bureau, City of Joplin, stated that in 1965, the Joplin City Council renamed Main Street from 33rd Street south as Hearnes Boulevard in honor of the 46th governor of the State of Missouri. Governor Hearnes was significant in granting Missouri Southern State University (MSSU) the status of a four-year university.

Mr. Tuttle stated that 50 years forward, there are three primary reasons for renaming the roadway as Main Street. He has solicited most of the businesses along the street, with all the owners being in favor of going back to South Main Street for business purposes. With the opening of Mercy Hospital, the roadway will be redeveloping as a hospital corridor in getting patients between Freeman and Mercy. There will be a significant interest for providing patients the simplest directions between the two facilities. This corridor will also become a rich area for the development of new offices and new retail and commercial opportunities.

Mr. Tuttle stated that on the tourism side, the City has been unable to place Main Street on signage on Interstate 44. Travelers heading into the Joplin area do not see a Main Street exit since Main Street does not touch I-44. Based on the Missouri and federal highway standards, Joplin cannot legally put Main Street on signage on I-44, which has an impact on events along Main Street, retail along Main Street, and people finding downtown Joplin and the Joplin Regional Airport.

Mr. Ramsour asked about renaming another street after Governor Hearnes. Mr. Tuttle replied that, according to the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) highway naming system, Governor Hearnes would qualify for maybe a portion of Route 249 between Zora Street and Newman Road, Newman Road coming into MSSU, or Seventh Street coming into the university. Most of those roadways are not in Joplin's city limits, so the City staff would need to solicit MoDOT's approval. This is part of the memorial highway program that would draw attention to Governor Hearnes as people are coming to MSSU, and his significance for that purpose.

Mr. Cortez asked if MoDOT is prepared to change the exit signs on I-44 to reflect Main Street instead of just Missouri Route 43. Mr. Tuttle replied that would happen through attrition, as some of the signage has recently been replaced with the interchange being reconstructed. Once the City Council approves the name change, MoDOT would change the signage to a Main Street exit.

Mr. Duncan stated the commissioners have a proposal to rename Main Street, but they don't really have a proposal to do something for Governor Hearnes. He expressed concern that a proposal to do something for Governor Hearnes may get lost or not happen for several years. He asked about tabling this request until a proposal is brought forth to do something for Governor Hearnes at the same time Main Street is renamed.

Mr. Tuttle stated that MoDOT will not begin the signage process until the street name is changed, so they will not place Main Street signage on I-44 until City Council approval is received. He hopes the signage can be changed before maps are generated showing the new hospital. He also

stated that a new trail is being constructed between MSSU and Northpark Mall, so MSSU could name something differently on their campus.

Mr. Tuttle has contacted the Hearnes family. Even though Governor Hearnes has passed away, Mrs. Hearnes is still alive. She and her children did not express concern about renaming the street.

Mr. Tuttle agrees with the educators in this community that the process to name something after Governor Hearnes should begin immediately. Mr. Duncan expressed concern about honoring someone, with that honor not being convenient 50 years later and just being taken away. He stated the people who named the roadway after Governor Hearnes though it was very important to do so.

Mr. Tuttle thought about transitional signage versus arbitrarily just dropping "Hearnes Boulevard." He understood part of that roadway is controlled by MoDOT, but dual signage could be handled through the Joplin Sign Shop. The post office indicates a quick turnover on their part, with the utilities taking lead from the City of Joplin.

Mr. Smith asked Mr. Tuttle about the business owners being favorable to the name change. He visited with all the business owners and a couple of residents, with everyone being in favor of the name change.

Mr. Smith asked about the residents, and Mr. Tuttle replied most of the residential properties are rental properties. There are several vacant lots and several vacant houses. The businesses would have a greater financial investment with regard to business cards and stationery.

Ms. Cunningham stated that the City staff mailed letters to property owners within 185 feet of Hearnes Boulevard to notify them of the public hearing. She received a call from one resident who already uses South Main Street for her address and had no problem with the name change.

Mr. Ramsour remembered Governor Hearnes and thought he should be honored for what he did for Joplin. Mr. Tuttle will begin the process to seek the City Council's endorsement to proceed on that factor. Mr. Duncan stated it is great if MSSU constructs the trail, but he did not want to swap a major thoroughfare for a trail.

Mr. Tuttle stated MSSU has named a building for Governor Hearnes, with his portrait hanging in Hearnes Hall. He is part of the orientation for students, so it is well-fitting that the university maintains his honor, and the City of Joplin should do the same thing.

Mr. Eastman asked for comments from the commissioners and the audience, and none were received. He then closed the public hearing for Case 007-15.

MR. DUNCAN MOVED, SECONDED BY MR. SMITH, THAT CASE 007-15 BE FORWARDED TO THE CITY COUNCIL WITH RECOMMENDATION FOR APPROVAL, BASED UPON THE COMMENTS RECEIVED IN THE PLANNING REPORT AND DURING THE PUBLIC HEARING. THE MOTION CARRIED, WITH MR. BROWN, MR. CORTEZ, MR. DERMOTT, MR. DUNCAN, MR. EASTMAN, MR. RAMSOUR, AND MR. SMITH VOTING "AYE" (7 IN FAVOR, 0 ABSENT).