

Committee to Elect  
Ron Smith

Chairman  
**Rex Moen**

Treasurer  
**Jamie Smith**

Finance Chair  
**Rita Burleson**



## PLANNERS TO LOOK AT SPEED LIMITS

Members

**Steve Baker**

**Mary Faux**

**Lynn Harrison**

**Barbara Little**

**Fran Marroquin**

**Hernando Marroquin**

**Sethu Madhavan**

**Steve Milar**

**Tom Pigott**

**Bill Rourke**

**Marissa Belles**  
**Antelope Valley Press**  
**January 15, 2006**

LANCASTER— Speed kills. The city wants to play it safe on its sometimes dangerous streets, officials say, but there's not much they can do to apply the brakes.

This month the Planning Commission will take a new look at ways to keep streets safer.

Planning Commission Chairman Ron Smith is behind the wheel of a Jan. 16 staff presentation on how speed limits are set and on traffic-calming design elements.

"The city is very limited in their authority to lower speed limits," Smith said.

"Implementing certain road-design elements can help slow traffic without having to lower those limits."

According to Smith, the commission will discuss the need for a set of design guidelines the city can employ to help regulate — and calm — traffic.

California speed limits are set after traffic surveys determine how fast drivers like to drive on certain thoroughfares; then speed limits are set at 85% of that speed. Speed limits set lower than that rate usually are not enforceable in court.

Smith said the key is to ask, "Why do drivers feel comfortable driving at a certain speed?"

"A city could lower the speed limits, but this has been found not to lower driving speed in all cases," Smith said. "As an example, if you were to place a wooden beam three inches off the ground, a person could walk back and forth without a problem and may never fall; put this same beam 20 feet in the air and the same person would probably not be able to take a step without losing their balance — perception."

Smith said it's the same with driving: By designing intersections and roads with the goal in mind of calming traffic, communities can greatly decrease the speed at which drivers

## **PLANNERS TO LOOK AT SPEED LIMITS**

### ***Continued***

hurtle across town.

“Take a look at 30th Street West and Avenue J, the recent scene of a fatal accident, “ Smith said. “Going north on 30th Street (West), you have six lanes of asphalt as far as the eye can see. If drivers feel they can drive faster, they will.”

Smith recalled a seminar on traffic he attended in Monterey; attendees were taken to a street where drivers regularly zoomed along in excess of the speed limit. Monterey responded by building a small median with landscaping at one point along the street in question.

“As we stood there with a radar gun, we clocked drivers approaching at 50 to 60 miles per hour,” Smith said. “Even though the lane by the median was wider than a lane on a freeway, the drivers slowed down to 20 miles per hour.”

