



What is Stopping You from...Stopping?

Frances Rippondi—MCA General Manager

We're all in a hurry now and again, but remembering to slow down especially when driving can be a matter of life and death. The National Highway Traffic Standards Association estimated even though Americans drove less in 2020 due to the pandemic (430.2 billion miles less) there was still 38,680 people who died in motor vehicle crashes – resulting in the largest projected number of fatalities since 2007. Reason being speeding, failure to wear seatbelt and impaired driving.

Speeders have become prevalent everywhere, on major highways and community streets. It seems that speeding is something that can be found everywhere you go, unfortunately also in The Meadows. Each month the Safety committee meets to discuss safety concerns throughout The Meadows and the reoccurring theme is speeders, stop sign violators and what can be done about it. The speed limit in The Meadows is 25 MPH when not otherwise posted. Unfortunately, we have all witnessed drivers who are not willing to slow down and others who drive straight through stop signs.

The lack of consideration to stop or slow down mounts frustration on those who are concerned for their safety and safety of others. Therefore, it is not surprising, the Safety Committee receives a range of questions from residents looking for an answer. “Can we add more flashing stop signs/speed detector signs?”, “Can we have the community patrolled more?”, “Can we add speed bumps/speed tables?” to name a few.

The issue of Safety is a very real

concern to the board, so much so that the issue of speeders, sheriff patrol and safety has been elevated to the Long-Range Planning Committee. **Amy MacDougall**, the Chair of the Safety Committee along with an outside consultant, has been selected to investigate traffic safety measures (traffic control devices, striping and pavement markings) along Longmeadow, our longest thoroughfare in an effort to slow drivers down.

For public patrolling of Longmeadow, Sarasota County requires that a traffic engineer certifies that all signage and traffic devices conform to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). Once the county receives the engineer’s certification, along with the necessary paperwork the package is then reviewed by the county engineer and the Traffic Advisory Council, to determine if county requirements are met. If approval is granted, the package is prepared and placed as an agenda item for the County Commission to approve (unless waived in writing by the Sheriff). Information gained from this study will be used as a tool to assess other areas throughout The Meadows.

Today more than ever, Sarasota County law enforcement resources are being strained due to labor shortages, growth and the increasing number of new communities needing service. While, the presence of law enforcement has an immediate



effect on slowing drivers, the reality is that communities may only experience limited patrolling and an occasional law enforcement presence. Therefore, regulating one's own speed, is by far the most effective way to keep our roads safe.

However, in an effort to make a difference, the MCA has taken positive steps to remind drivers to STOP and Slow down. A drive down Longmeadow and you will see the new blinking stop signs in order to attract drivers’ attention. In addition, speed detector signs flank each end of the construction zone, reminding drivers to use caution and slow down. Currently, the MCA owns three speed detecting signs and is planning to purchase another one next fiscal year. To prevent “sign



blindness” where drivers no longer notice the signs, signs are moved throughout the community to grab driver’s attention and alert drivers to their speed of travel.

Speed bumps and tables can also be

a useful device in slowing speeders, however it has been the MCA’s decision to use them wisely only placing them on Longmeadow where there is sufficient distance to be used effectively. Using speed bumps sparingly can remind drivers to slow down, however having too many can have a negative impact on emergency provider's response time, cause harm to those being transported and damage to emergency vehicles. This is why The Board of Directors, with input from local Emergency Services, passed a resolution that no more speed bumps be added to The Meadows.

At risk of stating the obvious, speeding, passing on a double marked lane or not coming to a complete stop is dangerous, however most people forget just how dangerous. Below are a few statistics to keep in mind:

- National statistics reveal that 1/3rd of all intersection crashes in the United States occur at stop sign-controlled intersections.
- Not stopping at a stop sign, causes around 700,000 crashes annually.
- More than 40-percent of fatal crashes that take place every year are caused at stop sign-controlled intersections.

The Meadows prides itself on a being peaceful, relaxing place to live and enjoy life. Speeding and running stop signs destroys the peaceful ambiance of our community and endangers the lives of all who live here. **With so much at stake, what is stopping you from stopping?**

Why Low Maintenance Zones (LMZ)?

Bob Hueter

POND HEALTH

- o LMZs filter runoff into the ponds by trapping nutrients, pesticides, and other chemicals, keeping these out of the pond water and sediments.
- o LMZs reduce the amount of grass cuttings going into the ponds, decreasing the load of organics going into the water.
- o LMZs provide habitat for feeding and refuging by shore birds and fish.

- o LMZs stabilize shorelines and effectively stop shoreline erosion, greatly reducing the inflow of sediments that degrade water quality and fill up the ponds.

SAFETY

- o LMZs keep landscape workers and others off the weak banks of ponds, reducing the risk of people falling into the ponds (fatalities on heavy

mowing equipment have occurred in other communities.)

- o LMZs discourage alligators from hauling out on residents’ properties, as opposed to bare banks without vegetation.

COST

- o LMZs essentially cost nothing to implement and maintain – “natural engineering” that is free.

- o When pond shoreline erosion occurs, it costs tens of thousands of dollars to engineer and install shoreline stabilizers such as geotubes. Assessments to homeowners can be very costly.
- o Healthy, natural, attractive ponds protected by LMZs enhance property values and quality of life in the community.