

By IMPERIAL VALLEY PRESS STAFF

2:20 a.m. PDT, September 15, 2011

Streets in Seeley, the community closest to Naval Air Facility El Centro, haven't been much to look at lately. In fact they haven't been much to look at, much less travel on, for a few decades, residents say.

Chock full of potholes and described by one longtime resident as worse than streets in Mexicali, weather such as Tuesday's thundershowers render this small township nearly nonnavigable.

Pumps empty water collecting from the biggest potholes, and residents find themselves meandering down one street to another to find decent passage to their destination.

#### Topics

- Defense
- Armed Forces

The roads do a number on vehicles; residents claim mufflers and hub caps fall off and tires get damaged.

Pallets are placed over potholes in front of Seeley School to allow students and staff to cross over. A crack in the middle of the street in front of the school divides one lane from the other, a school district official said.

Many of the children whose parents are stationed at NAF, which sees thousands of visitors in the form of military attached to visiting squadrons, not to mention the tens of thousands making a pilgrimage to the annual air show starring the Navy's Blue Angels flight demonstration team, attend Seeley School.

The base essentially has adopted the nearby community and its school. Pilots visit the school and, most recently, Navy personnel spent hours cleaning an overgrown memorial.

Shoddy streets on which off-road vehicles might feel more at home — roads akin to those in a Third World country instead of one of the world's leading nations — don't give a very good first impression of our county to these men and women benefiting from NAF El Centro's top-notch training facility.

Residents deserve better from their county government, and they're about to get it.

A half-million-dollar project, funded by a state Safe Routes to Schools grant, will put sidewalks on El Centro Avenue.

Another grant application has been submitted by Imperial County for a second round of funding to put sidewalks on Rio Vista Avenue.

A hazard mitigation grant from the California Emergency Management Agency is being worked on to get the storm drainage system in the township overhauled.

Work has already been done to overlay parts of Evan Hewes Highway, and a grant will see Evan Hewes from Austin to Silsbee roads repaved by spring.

And on Tuesday, the county Board of Supervisors approved paving all of Seeley's interior roads — six miles' worth. Niland also will see its streets paved.

The \$1.5 million project will go out to bid within the next two months, with construction expected to last about three months.

Just in time for the air show.

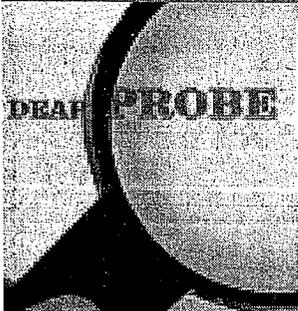
# Local & Region

## QUOTE OF NOTE

**"I wanted to do a portrait of these people that work hard in these lands, stepping away from the political aspect."**

Daniel Rosas, documentary director

**QUESTIONS?** Contact Local Content Editor Richard Montenegro Brown at [rbrown@lvpressonline.com](mailto:rbrown@lvpressonline.com) or 760-337-3453



**What do you want to know?**

Submit your questions and read responses to others at [lvpressonline.com](http://lvpressonline.com)

**Q** I've lived in Seeley for many years now and can't really recall when the county went out to actually pave the streets. They have covered a few of the huge holes, but not paved the streets. I understand we are in the middle of nowhere, but we do deserve some of the county's attention. Who is to blame for the neglect that our poor town gets? Who can we complain to? What is the reason why our streets look so bad? Just wait until this winter; if it rains, our children have to walk in at least 4 to 5 inches of water.

— Help, Seeley

**A** It's true, Seeley's streets are in horrible condition and the county public works director knows this. Seeley, believe it or not, will be an area of emphasis for the county in the coming year.

We spoke with Public Works Director Bill Brunet, who gave us a rundown on what has been done, what is slat-

ed and what is on the wish-list for Seeley, and it's plenty.

A half-million dollar project to put in sidewalks on El Centro Avenue thanks to a state Safe Routes to Schools grant is about to get underway, he said.

Brunet has already submitted a grant application for a second round of Safe Routes

funding to put in sidewalks on Rio Vista Avenue near the school.

A hazard mitigation grant from the California Emergency Management Agency is being worked on to get the storm drainage system in the township overhauled.

Brunet said the master drainage study needed to apply for the grant

was just finished.

He said work has already been done to overlay parts of Evan Hewes Highway, and a grant is going to pave Evan Hewes from Austin to Silsbee by the spring.

The biggest project proposed, however, is a \$1.5 million street overlay project that will encompass all of Seeley's

streets and all of Niland's streets, Brunet said.

He will make an oral report to the county Board of Supervisors on the project Sept. 13. The engineering study for the project is 75 percent complete.

Seeley's streets are about to get some love, because they are in "bad shape," Brunet said.

## HOMEGROWN



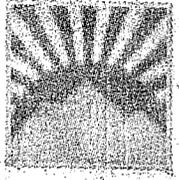
## IMPERIAL VALLEY JOB PRESERVATION

# Senate committee sends resolution to Senate floor

BY ELIZABETH VARIN

Imperial County's press re-

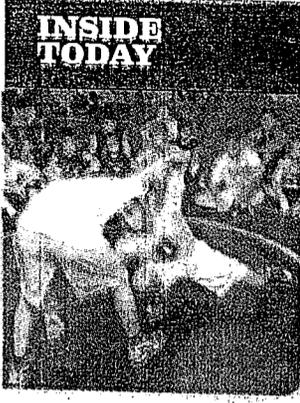
# IMPERIAL VALLEY PRESS



**DEAR PROBI**  
 Who muddied up cemetery headstones?  
 WE ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS  
 IMPERIAL VALLEY PRESS  
 ANSWER | A4

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**INSIDE TODAY**

**Wrestling**  
Annual Brawley camp has another successful outcome. B1

**Our Opinion**  
Extreme ends of political system know no middle ground. A6



**PRINT EXCLUSIVES**

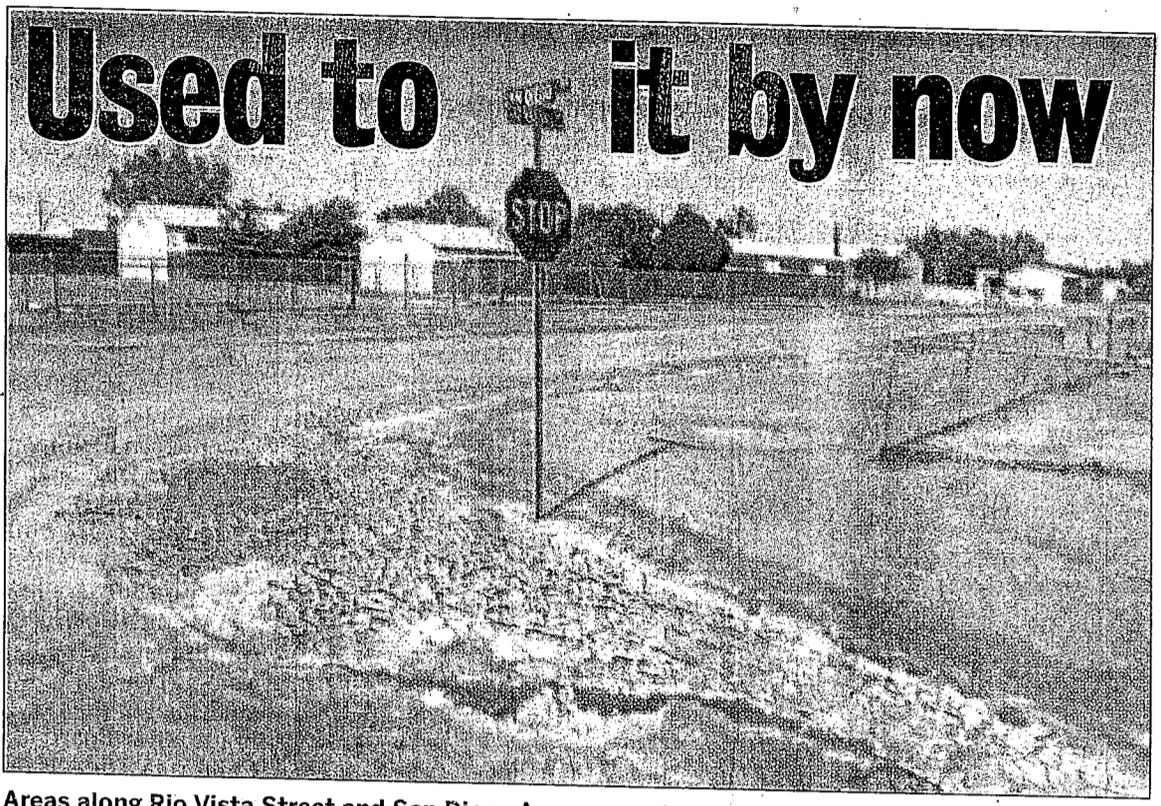
**Summer Family Night**  
Parents, children join forces for fun. A4

**Community photos**  
See the Imperial Valley through readers' eyes. A2



**SMILE OF THE DAY**

"I'm very happy because I'm with my dad and I haven't seen him in a bunch of days."  
Ethan Flores, 4, Heber



## Used to it by now

Areas along Rio Vista Street and San Diego Avenue are drying up in Seeley on Wednesday. JOSELITO VILLERO PHOTO

# Folks in Seeley adjust to flooding

BY KARINA LOPEZ  
Staff Writer

**S**EELEY — Dina Ortiz has lived here for eight years. During the course of her eight-year stay, the 20-year-old has become accustomed to the inundated roads after a heavy rainfall — heavy for the Imperial Valley, that is.



A man crosses a flooded street Friday in Seeley. ELIZABETH VARIN PHOTO

On July 13, certain parts of the Valley experienced between 1 inch and 2 inches of rain in about a one-hour time frame, according to Imperial County officials.

Despite Ortiz's acclimation to the problem, she said it would be nice if something were done to help the small town.

"They tried to fix the roads awhile back and install sidewalks," Ortiz said. "But then they stopped and only did one side of the road."

While the flooded areas are a nuisance to get around, other Seeley residents felt the same as Ortiz and adjusted to the flooded roads accordingly.

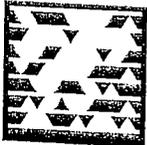
"It is what it is," said Mike Stewart. "The good thing is, it doesn't happen too often and they're getting good about clearing the streets afterward."

Although it takes days to clear an hour's rainfall, county officials have no immediate plans to develop a system that would help expel storm water.

"We've tried to get money to build a storm-water system, but we always get turned down," county Public Works Director Bill Brunet said. "It just doesn't rain continually to the point where we would receive money."

SEE SEELEY | A5

ceive up to \$2 million in loans from the Successor Housing Agency if an upcoming state grant loan application isn't successful.



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eight CA, Irene Shelton of El  
 the Bird Centro, Betty Zinn of Im-  
 Girls' perial, Dr. William God-  
 years, dard, III of Pasadena, CA,  
 Calex- Charles Ferrell of Beau-  
 s, and mont, CA, and Dorothy  
 school Meir of Beaumont, CA.  
 many Pauline is moreover sur-  
 was a vived by her  
 of the brother-in-law, James  
 chapter Gordon Ferrell of Calex-  
 eastern ico. She is also survived  
 erving by her beloved dog,  
 y Ma- Cody.

ne was Pauline was preceded  
 ber of in death by her parents,  
 ty Hu- Willis and Frances  
 nd a Whitsitt, brothers, Wil-  
 of the liam and David, and sis-  
 men's ters, Maude, Georgia,  
 m of- Mary, and Dorothy.

Graveside services will  
 be held at Evergreen  
 Cemetery in El Centro,  
 on July 21, 2012 at 9:30  
 a.m.

In lieu of flowers, dona-  
 tions can be sent in her

## SEELEY

Continued from A1

Despite the amount of damage a 2-inch rainfall can cause, the Valley is continually turned down for grants because the costs would out way the benefits.

"Storm water systems are some of the most expensive to build," Brunet explained. "We have received some money to help when it rains, but it's more for preventative measures."

The systems that are in place are equipped to handle a yearly, not hourly 3-inch rainfall, Brunet said.

"Storms like (last) Friday's happen every 50 years or so," Brunet said. "With no funding and a limited budget, we can't build a storm-water system."

Staff Writer Karina Lopez can be reached at [klopez@ivpressonline.com](mailto:klopez@ivpressonline.com)

A Holtville resident reported that his or her house had been broken into, though nothing had been taken.  
 The reporting party said Wednesday they wanted a report taken for a burglary that had happened at Hartstorn Road and Holt Road north of the city, according to Sheriff's Office logs. However, nothing was stolen from the house.

## Home is reported burglarized

HOLTVILLE

— Alejandro Dada  
 adavilla@ivpressonline.com  
 The county's Child Protective Services also responded to the call, the logs read, and the mother, Diana Elizarraraz, arrested for child endangerment and booked at the Imperial County Jail. — Alejandro Dada  
 A 37-year-old teen was arrested Tuesday night after police received a call in reference to an unattended minor. El Centro police received the call around 7 p.m., according to the logs, after the reporting party noted two child ages 5 and 13 were left attended for several hours. The county's Child Protective Services also responded to the call, the logs read, and the mother, Diana Elizarraraz, arrested for child endangerment and booked at the Imperial County Jail.

endangerment  
 over child



# CALIFORNIA RURAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE, INC.

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July 27, 2011

Sent via U.S. Mail and Fax (760-353-3606)

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**Re: California Public Records Act Request: Seeley Sidewalks**

Dear Mr. Brunet,

Thank you for your department's timely response to my July 11 Public Records Act request. I've reviewed the documents provided in your responses dated July 15 and July 21, 2011. My client was very happy to learn more about the County's plans in Seeley. Nevertheless, he and other residents of the community still have a number of serious concerns about the planning process, and potentially the design, of the planned projects that were not allayed by the documents provided to date.

These concerns are based on experiences living in the community for decades, experiences which have given Mr. Arredondo and other residents an intimate and well-founded understanding of how the community floods, where residents experience the greatest impacts of living without sidewalks, as well as about where and how the County's previous sidewalks project in Seeley failed to live up to its full potential. For example, as constructed, because of the slope that typically exists in Seeley between sidewalks and streets, during the rainy season it's often too difficult for residents to get from the street to the sidewalks. Thus, the sidewalks go unused and residents continue to walk in the streets in wet, dark and dangerous conditions despite the County's investment in infrastructure.

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with your department in person to discuss these concerns with staff coordinating the current sidewalks project. We propose a short meeting, no more than half an hour, with Ms. Rowin either tomorrow or Friday this week. Please feel free to contact me at (760) 353-0220 ext. 308 if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Juan Carlos Cancino  
Staff Attorney  
California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.

ivpressonline.com/news/ivp-news-local-seeley-disrepair-concern-school-20110115,0,5145152.story

## ivpressonline.com

### Seeley street disrepair concern for school

By ELIZABETH VARIN

Imperial Valley Press Staff Writer

4:00 AM PST, January 15, 2011

Seeley has some of the best-made pallets in the Valley. And for good reason.

If the pallets have holes too big, kindergarteners would fall through them while walking to school, said Superintendent Cathy Denton.

Every time it rains, those pallets come out to provide safe passage for students, yet it's still dangerous, she said. The roads flood in the tiny township and residents are left feeling ignored.

"It doesn't happen often, but when it does, it's a big concern for the students," she said.

Denton went before the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday to ask the board to keep Seeley in mind when thinking about future budgets.

"Seeley doesn't have a lot," she said. "We always try to build pride with the students and parents, and when we see this it's not very inspiring."

Roads are deteriorating such that some students couldn't go to school during the last storms in December, she said. Parents are having to weigh whether it is safer for their students at school or home.

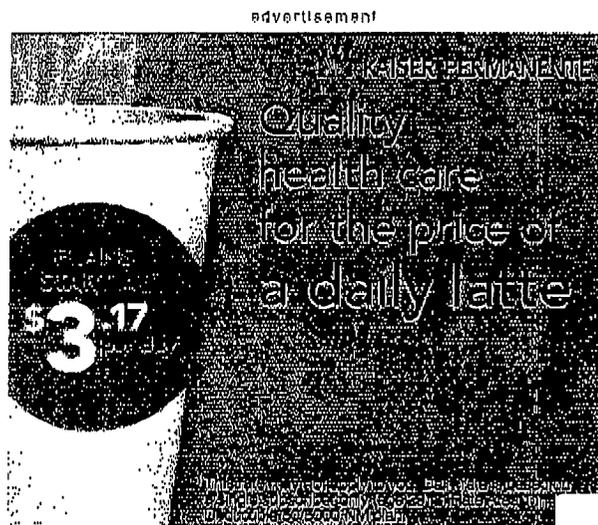
These are not new concerns for Vice Chairman Michael Kelley, he said. He's even brought the public works director on a tour of the area and its bad roads.

Work is almost complete on a drainage plan for the area, which should relieve the standing water problem, Kelley said.

In the fiscal situation the county is in, some things can't be helped, he said. However, money has been set aside to cover the situation in Seeley.

Staff Writer Elizabeth Varin can be reached at [evarin@ivpressonline.com](mailto:evarin@ivpressonline.com) or 760-337-3441.

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ivpressonline.com/probe/ivp-news-living-in-a-seeley-is-like-live-20101124,0,5822297.story

# ivpressonline.com

## Living in a Seeley is like living in a Third World village

IMPERIAL VALLEY PRESS STAFF

12:46 AM PST, November 24, 2010

**I'm new to Imperial County and can't understand why Seeley looks like a Third World village. Streets are unpaved, and during the recent rains the floods were impassable due to no drainage. — Concerned resident, Seeley**

Complaints about the drainage in Seeley aren't new, and it doesn't look like the issue will be solved soon. However, progress has been made on creating a drainage system in the township.

The county Public Works Department has completed a master drainage plan, said Bill Brunet, public works director. It was funded through a community development block grant.

The plan was an initial step in the process, but it doesn't mean that drains will go in tomorrow, he said.

"This is not a process that will happen in six months," he said. "These are several-year projects we're putting together here."

The county is now looking for grant funding, but in this economic climate it's hard to find, Brunet said. "Storm drains are very expensive," he added.

The county needs grant money, because drainage systems can cost millions of dollars, he said. When Brunet was the city engineer in Blythe, two projects to help drainage in the downtown area of the city each cost a million dollars.

There has been some recent success. The county received a \$407,000 Safe Route to Schools grant to install sidewalks, curbs and gutters near the school, Brunet said. And the department is continuing to look for any funding source it can.

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Rio Vista, Seeley







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October 5, 2011

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**Re: Seeley Sidewalks Meeting, 9/13/11**

Dear Mr. Gay,

Thank you and your colleagues for meeting with us in Seeley. I understand from Lupe and Mr. Arredondo that the meeting was a success, and provided an excellent opportunity for you all to see and discuss the infrastructure and flooding issues that continue to plague Seeley. It meant a great deal to Mr. Arredondo both to discuss his experiences and views about these subjects with you all in person, and also to hear from you about past project decision-making and future plans for improving infrastructure in his community. He is committed to supporting your work, whether by petition, writing letters, or communicating directly with other local and state government officials and agencies. However, he also hopes and expects that together we can ensure greater community participation and information sharing in these projects. We look forward to working with your office to accomplish these initiatives.

I understand that Lupe and Mr. Arredondo pointed out and described conditions in the community that create serious obstacles to the use of existing sidewalks. As you can now envision, when it rains in Seeley, the significant dirt slopes that exist between sidewalks and streets, especially at many intersections, create a serious impediment to the public's use of sidewalks. This difficulty is compounded by flooding that occurs at these same intersections, and that requires descending a slippery dirt slope from sidewalk to street, wading through pools of water at both sides of the street, only to then have to ascend another slippery dirt slope to the opposite sidewalk.

I understand that proper drainage would alleviate flooding, but even with proper drainage, the muddy slopes would remain a serious deterrent to the use of Seeley's sidewalks. As you know, residents of Seeley often resort to walking in the streets on rainy days, and this creates a significant public safety hazard. We would appreciate a response from your offices about whether and how the difficulty presented by these slopes, again particularly at intersections, may be addressed in the nearer term. Other issues we would appreciate more information about are the logic behind the placement of existing sidewalks, and about what has happened or is happening with the area in the northwest of the community that appears to have undergone some abandoned development.

Thank you for your consideration, as well as for your commitment to Imperial County and its many people. We look forward to keeping in touch.

Sincerely,

Juan Carlos Cancino  
Staff Attorney  
California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.



#### Administration

Cathy D. Denton, Superintendent  
Ruben Castro, Principal/Projects Director  
Kristy Curry, Chief Business Official  
Teresa Morales, School Secretary

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Board of Trustees: Patti Burton Elisa Carlos Mary Locke Donald Turner Leslie Villanueva

January 22, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

Due to excessive weather conditions and the prediction of high winds, Seeley Elementary School cancelled the ASES program for Thursday, January 21, to ensure that all students were able to reach home safely.

Steady rain started falling the night before and continued throughout the day yesterday (Thursday). Several local schools cancelled regular school due to excessive flooding for both Thursday and Friday. Seeley Elementary remained open for the regular school day but continued to monitor the weather predictions and noted that the ground was saturated and very flooded. Sump pumps were used throughout the day in an attempt to keep the sidewalks clear. The National Weather Service issued a wind advisory at 9:33 a.m. predicting continued rain and that "strong west winds will develop this afternoon and continue until midnight. West winds of 30 to 40 MPH... with gust to near 50 MPH". At that time, students were advised that there would not be any after school programs and phone calls to parents were made. The message was also immediately placed on the electronic sign in front of the school advising parents that the ASES program was closed due to extreme weather conditions.

The ASES program will be open today.

Sincerely,

Cathy D. Denton  
Superintendent  
Seeley Union School District

IMPERIAL COUNTY  
TRAFFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
December 29, 2010  
10:00 a.m.

<b>Roll Call</b>	Neil Jorgenson	Imperial County Public Works
	Brenda Olivas	Imperial County Risk Management
	Jesse Obeso	Imperial County Sheriff's Office
	John Swaim	CHP/Winterhaven
	Wes Boerner	CHP/El Centro
	Brian Bradshaw	CHP/El Centro
	Codie Rowin	Imperial County Public Works
	William S. Lutynech	Salton Sea R.V. Park
	Mike Dickerson	Heber Elementary School District
	Jaime Silva	Heber Elementary School District
	Diahna Garcia-Ruiz	Heber Elementary School District
	Cathy Denton	Seeley Union School District

Meeting convened at 10:07 a.m. Minutes of the previous meeting (October 27, 2010) were read by Neil Jorgenson. There were no additions or corrections. Wes Boerner moved to approve the minutes and John Swaim seconded the motion.

**Old Business**

(a) **Call boxes** - Project to be awarded to CASE Systems, Inc. at the January 26, 2011 SAFE meeting.

(b) **Traffic on State Route 8 through Palo Verde.** Neil Jorgenson reported that the warning signs have been installed by Caltrans.

(c) **Traffic Congestion at Border Crossing.** Wes Boerner said the congestion is still a big problem. Officers place cones, close down the roads, and cite people who ignore the cones and closures. He believes there should be a more permanent solution, as CHP does not always have adequate staff to send to the location. Mr. Jorgenson said he will attempt to contact Mike Powers of Caltrans to see if Caltrans can speak with the Mexican Government about the problem.

(d) **Training for the Burn Ordinance.** The Ordinance was passed by the Board of Supervisors and is effective January 7, 2011. The issue is now out of the Committee's hands.

(e) **Status of Road Closures Remaining after the Easter Sunday Earthquake.** Mr. Jorgenson reported that the Drew Road project is now under contract and should be complete within approximately 70 days.

(f) **Southbound traffic control on English Road at Wilkins Road.** Per Mr. Jorgenson, it is in the process of being approved by the Board of Supervisors.

(g) **School Signs on Marina Drive.** It was reported that the signs are up for both schools.

#### **New Business**

(a) **Traffic concerns from the general public.**

1. **Speeding on Sea View Drive at entrance to parking lot.**

William Lutynech showed sketches of the mobile home park. He said the problem is vehicles driving on Sea View Drive to Salton Bay Drive go by at 60 – 70 miles per hour. Mr. Lutynech stated there is a hand-made 10 MPH sign at the entrance to the park. He would like a speed bump at that location. The Committee informed Mr. Lutynech that the statutory speed limit for residential streets is 25. Wes Boerner suggested installing a permanent 25 MPH sign. Mr. Jorgenson said that he will call Mr. Lutynech within the next 10 days to discuss the problem.

2. **Signage for new elementary school on Dogwood Road adjacent to Correll Road.**

Jesse Silva, Superintendent of Heber Elementary School District, stated the new Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade school will open on January 3, 2011. He asked that the current 25 MPH School sign be replaced with a “15 MPH When Children are Present” sign along Correll Avenue. He also said there is currently no cross walk at the corner of Heber Avenue and Correll. Neil suggested the speed limits in front of the school be 25 mph as per the California Vehicle Code and be analyzed later, as any change needs to be justified by an engineering study.

Mr. Silva said the speed limit on Dogwood is 55 MPH, but the signalization at Dogwood and Correll helps, and they will have crossing guards at that location. He would like the speed limit reduced to 25 MPH on Dogwood when children are present and have some signage that gives warning to slow down. Neil said this will be done in accordance with the MUTCD

The Committee informed Mr. Silva that in order to reduce the speed limit in a school zone to 15 MPH, it must go through the Board of Supervisors, along with justification by a traffic study. Mr. Jorgenson said that signs will be placed as soon as possible that say “Speed Zone Ahead”, and the County will install crosswalks at the corner of Heber Avenue and Correll Road, with appropriate signs. CHP suggested there should

be a third crosswalk at this location to give vehicles an indication of where they need to stop (limit line).

Mr. Jorgenson said he will have a sign placed on Dogwood that says, "25 MPH when Children are Present".

3. **Traffic concerns at Seeley Elementary School.** Cathy Denton of Seeley Union School District brought photographs that illustrate the drainage problem in Seeley and the damage it causes to the roads by the School.

Ms. Denton also showed a picture of flooding at a crosswalk by the school. She said the school places wood plank walkways for the children to cross, but the water takes days to recede; the wooden walkways are often not long enough to alleviate the problem; and the walkways rot and disintegrate quickly. She believes it is a health and safety issue. Mrs. Denton also said that when parents are not able to drive their children to school when the flooding occurs, those children stay home, causing a financial hardship to the School District.

Neil Jorgenson stated he believes Public Works is working on the drainage problems in Seeley. He said that he will meet with Mr. Brunet and point out the serious problems the poor drainage causes to the School. Neil said he will inform Mrs. Denton of the outcome of the meeting.

Ms. Denton stated she also was going to request that Seeley School's speed limit be changed to 15 MPH, but after hearing the discussion with Heber School she understands that the change would need to go through the Board of Supervisors. She will go back and inform her School Board.

Ms. Denton also asked if a 4-way stop could be placed at the corner of Haskell and Rio Vista. There is currently a 2-way stop, with Haskell having the right of way. In addition she would like a 2-way stop at the corner of San Diego and Rio Vista. There are currently no stop signs at that intersection.

Wes Boerner said he would recommend the 2-way stop at San Diego and Rio Vista, but would not recommend the change at the corner of Haskell and Rio Vista.

4. **Status of sidewalk projects in Seeley and Heber.** Not discussed at this meeting, as Mr. Delgado was unavailable.
5. **Traffic concerns from Salton City Area.** Not discussed as Shirley Palmer was unable to attend the meeting.

(b) **Traffic concerns from law enforcement agencies.**

1. **Speed zones in Winterhaven-Bard area.** Officer Swaim had to leave the meeting; however says that the issue of a speed study needs to be raised.
2. **Sign at SR7 (Directional to Carr Road)**  
CHP stated that the street sign shows Carr Road going both ways, so that although the sign indicates someone is driving on Carr Road, they are actually on SR-7. This is a Caltrans issue and a Caltrans representative was not present at the meeting. Mr. Jorgenson will contact Caltrans about their attendance at the TAC meetings.
3. **Construction at Highway 111 and IVC.** Wes Boerner expressed continued concern about the location of the stop light, and stated that the signal light will back traffic up to SR-111. Mr. Jorgenson stated that the City of Imperial is in charge of the project. He also pointed out that temporary traffic signals are proposed at the west entrance of the college. It was mentioned that it might become a right turn only coming out of the college at that location.

(c) **Traffic concerns from the Engineering Department.**

1. **Haul Road on Andre Road for Brawley By-Pass Construction.**

(d) **Traffic concerns from Risk Management.**

Brenda Olivas had no immediate concerns, however it was briefly mentioned that there are several lawsuits pending against the County. These include a fatality at the corner of Aten and Forrester, and another fatal accident at Shank Road and Highline Canal.

**Next Meeting:** February 23, 2011

Meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.