

**Minutes of the Transportation Commission Meeting held on Wednesday, November 9, 2005 at 7:00 p.m.** in the Council Room at Village Hall, 1200 Wilmette Avenue, Wilmette, Illinois 60091.

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Members Present: Amy Panici, Chairperson  
Paul Chouinard  
Jim Grosh  
Clay Weaver  
Mark Wagstaff  
Eileen Miller-Girson

Members Absent: Rachel Nocera

Staff Present: Brigitte Mayerhofer, P.E. Director of Engineering  
Linda Reilley, Engineering Assistant II  
George Carpenter, Police Chief

Also Present: Mike Murdock, 939 Romona  
Tom Sullivan, 2028 Elmwood  
Myrna Smith, 2138 Iroquois  
Lois & Robert Horton, 2024 Elmwood  
Sheila Lang, 2018 Elmwood  
Jim Dadura, 2131 Elmwood  
Bob Horne, 162 Fuller, 847-446-4257  
Judy Plathe & Ellie Guzzio, 2030 Elmwood  
Michelle Prassas, 2228 Greenwood  
Patrick Collins, Wilmette Police Department  
John LaPlante, TY Lin International  
Andrea Anderson, 2139 Elmwood

Chairperson Panici called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

**1. Review of Minutes**

**Motion to approve the October 19, 2005 minutes.**

**Motion by:** Commissioner Grosh

**Second:** Commissioner Chouinard

**Discussion:** Comments reflected in revised minutes.

**Action:** Approved by unanimous voice vote

**2. Ronald Knox Montessori School (RKMS) --Discussion of Parking and Traffic Issues**

- Chairperson Panici welcomed the audience and introduced Mike Murdock representing the RKMS.
- Mr. Murdock, 939 Romona, provided a summary of the information in the agenda packets. He stated that the school has been in the neighborhood for 40 years and that the enrollment has stayed the same since 1968. The RKMS has been working with the Sisters of Christian Charity to expand their site as much as possible.
- Mr. Murdock stated that the current drop off area can stage four vehicles and that the remaining cars queue on Elmwood Avenue, often past 21<sup>st</sup> Street. He stated cars are supposed to enter from the west and exit to the east. Currently, several of the teachers park on Elmwood Avenue, because there are only six on-site parking spaces. The proposal will increase the number of parking spaces from six to sixteen.
- Mr. Murdock stated parents have been known to disobey the circulation patterns and often use driveways on Elmwood to turn around. RKMS is also concerned with the pedestrian traffic. He stated many of these issues are common to other Wilmette schools and that RKMS has tried to address concerns through communication with the parents. He stated School staff assists with pick-up and drop-off.
- There are currently 72 students in the AM and 72 students in the PM. There are also 36 students at the 2221 site, spread over three sessions, with a maximum of twelve students per session. The 2221 site also offers a parent /child class of 8. The total enrollment at both sites is 188 students.
- In the proposed plan, all of the students will be consolidated at the subject property at 2031 Elmwood for a total enrollment of 192. In the AM, the enrollment will increase from 84 to 96. In the PM, the enrollment will be 72 students.
- Mr. Murdock reminded the Commission that all of the students for both locations are already on Elmwood Avenue.
- The proposal includes a sixteen vehicle staging area for on-site student pick up and drop off. This improvement will remove cars from Elmwood Avenue and significantly improve traffic problems. Under the proposal, all faculty and staff will park on-site, which will also improve traffic flow. On a temporary basis, four parking spaces at the Sisters of Christian Charity property are being used for RKMS staff for parking. The current on-street parking numbers do not reflect the typical scenario.
- Although not the most desired, pick up and drop off traffic will circulate in a counter clock-wise manner. This is so vehicles do not have to turn left against traffic to enter the School property.
- Dan Brinkman, Gewalt Hamilton and Associates introduced himself and gave a presentation on the traffic study that was completed for

the RKMS. He said the morning and afternoon peak times are intense but short in duration.

- Mr. Brinkman said he used traffic projections that were higher than the published data for schools, resulting in an assumption of 12 additional cars in the morning. Mr. Brinkman stated that Elmwood is the first street north of Lake Avenue and therefore it may carry more traffic than desired.
- He observed that the traffic on Elmwood near 21<sup>st</sup> Street becomes very congested during certain times. He stated the proposal to move cars off the street and onto the School's property will improve the current situation.
- Chairperson Panici introduced Ms. Mayerhofer who gave a summary of the information in the agenda packets. Mr. LaPlante was then introduced.
- Mr. LaPlante of the consulting firm TY Lin International gave a presentation on behalf of the Village regarding the RKMS proposal. His observation is that the morning and afternoon peak pick-up and drop-off times seem to clear within twenty minutes. He addressed the counter clockwise drop off proposal by stating most kids were in the backseat, so this would not be a concern.
- Mr. LaPlante stated the afternoon pick-up took longer than the morning drop-off, but in general, the process was very organized and effective. He noticed cars "blowing" the stop sign because the queuing vehicles blocked it. He observed that the on-street parking has a traffic calming effect.
- Mr. LaPlante stated the longest queue he observed on Elmwood was seventeen vehicles which occurred during the afternoon pick-up at 3:30. He observed the use of private driveways to turnaround.
- Mr. LaPlante summarized his comments by offering the following suggestions:
  1. Paint stop bars at the all-way stop on Elmwood and 21<sup>st</sup> Street.
  2. Double face the stop signs on Elmwood at the all-way stop at 21<sup>st</sup> Street.
  3. Move the eastbound school zone sign further west near the Sisters of Christian Charity Convent drive.
  4. Access to the School drop-off/pick-up line should be prohibited from 21<sup>st</sup> Street. All School traffic should enter School property from Hunter Road and head east on Elmwood.
  5. Post a "No Left Turn" sign for westbound cars at the entrance to the Montessori School.
  6. Install a sidewalk on the south side of Elmwood Avenue.

7. Move the south curb line by approximately 3-feet to the south to provide additional clearance and better line of sight for through traffic to pass staged vehicles.
  8. Open the school exit to accommodate two lanes (one for right turns and one for left turns) out of the School property.
  9. Post “No Parking, Stopping or Standing” signs within 20 feet of the all-way stop on Elmwood at 21<sup>st</sup> Street.
  10. Paint crosswalks across Elmwood when the sidewalks are installed.
- Chairperson Panici welcomed resident comments.
  - Tom Sullivan, 2028 Elmwood, stated the school worked with everyone but the neighbors. He said that 60-percent of the students are from outside of Wilmette and that there are many negative impacts caused by the traffic situation. He stated the parking at the Convent is only temporary and that the directives to the parents are only recommendations. He said parents do what they want regardless of what the School asks. He concluded by saying the Commission would feel the same way if they lived in the area. He thanked the Commission for their service.
  - Robert Horton, 2024 Elmwood, gave a presentation consisting of various photos from 2002 to the present that illustrated the congestion problem. He said that a new building means more cars and therefore more traffic.
  - Jim Dadura, 2131 Elmwood, suggested the Commission should solve the existing problems before adding to it. He said an “after-the-fact” resolution is too late.
  - Eleanor Guzzio, 2030 Elmwood stated the traffic data was skewed. The building is proposed to be twice as big as it is now and that the enrollment may increase in the future. She stated the safety problem is recent and indicated displeasure with the circular drive in the rear of the property creating more blacktop in the vicinity of Mallinckrodt and loss of trees.
  - Police Chief Carpenter asked if the Village can restrict the number of students enrolled at RKMS. Director of Community Development John Adler indicated the Village can if it is a recommendation of the Zoning Board of Appeals.
  - Myrna Smith, 2138 Iroquois, said she has been a faculty member for 19 years and that she has been outside every single day. Parents are given detailed instructions each year. If there are infractions, she confronts the parents and corrects their actions. She stated there are at least five faculty assisting with pick-up and drop-off every day. She said the pick-up and drop-off times are very short and occur only four times a day.

- Commissioner Chouinard asked if there are repeat offenders who disregard the School's directives. Ms. Smith stated there were in the past, but not currently.
- Bob Horne, 162 Fuller Lane, Winnetka, stated he is a Board member of RKMS. The School has taken steps to improve the current situation, but there is still more work to do. He stated the School's intentions of creating a contract relating to pick-up and drop-off traffic procedures with the families to educate them and keep continuity from year to year. He suggested the idea of assigning a Board member to address neighborhood issues. The School wants to take responsibility for its traffic problems.
- Mr. Murdock summarized the petition by stating RKMS has tried to be upfront with the residents and the Commission. The School has heard the concerns of the community and wants to continue to improve the current situation.
- A discussion ensued concerning the change in student enrollment and the times of day the additional students are expected.
- Mr. Sullivan asked the Commission to consider that many residents signed a petition against the expansion and that there is evidence that the proposal will negatively impact property values. He said the current School Board members will be gone in three years and then the chance of an enrollment increase is likely. He said the concept of the Montessori school is a great idea, but this is the wrong location for the proposed size.
- Chairperson Panici asked Mr. Sullivan if the neighbors would prefer the School remain as it is with the existing traffic problems. Mr. Sullivan said the neighbors would gladly prefer the current condition to the expansion.
- Chief Carpenter asked where visiting parents will park, to which Mr. Murdock stated on the street. Chief Carpenter stated he thought the concept of a contract with the parents is a stellar idea and also supports the appointment of a Board member to address neighborhood concerns.
- Commissioner Wagstaff asked about a partial one-way or do not enter time restriction on Elmwood during school times. Mr. LaPlante stated this type of restriction is common near other Wilmette schools. He said such time restrictions are effective, but confusing if drivers are not familiar with the signage. Mr. LaPlante also stated there was a suggestion to prohibit right turns from 21<sup>st</sup> Street. He does not recommend this, but suggested the School ask parents to use Hunter Road.
- Commissioner Weaver stated his observations are relatively recent. He observed one hundred percent compliance with the right-in/right-out circulation to and from the School. He stated this is a change from the Gewalt report which stated a 60-percent compliance rate. He continued to say that when the queue

extended west of 21<sup>st</sup> Street, there were significant problems with congestion and traffic flow. In the afternoon, the volumes doubled on Elmwood and the speeds dropped. He said parents queued on the sidewalk on the east side of the driveway, which placed them in conflict with exiting cars. He recommends they move to the other side of the driveway. Commissioner Weaver stated he is in favor of the sidewalk and suggests the three foot widening will provide additional clearance. He observed a maximum queue of 17 cars. The plan seems to offer some opportunities, although it would be desired if the proposal included parking spaces for visitors. Commissioner Weaver recommends a by pass lane to help with circulation on the proposed plan. He said some parents had difficulty making a right turn onto Elmwood without encroaching into the opposing lane. This is largely because of the size of the vehicles driven by the parents.

- Commissioner Miller-Girson concurred with the sidewalk and parent contract idea. She also likes the idea of one-way westbound on Elmwood from Ridge Road.
- Commissioner Wagstaff suggested changing the geometry of the driveway to better accommodate turning movements.
- Commissioner Grosh stated he is concerned with pedestrian traffic and that crossing the street mid-block is unsafe. He recommends designated crosswalks and sidewalks. He also supports a bypass lane around staged cars.
- Commissioner Chouinard concurred with many of Commissioner Weaver's recommendations and stated his observation of the pick-up and drop-off process is that it is very well organized. He is concerned about cut-through traffic and westbound speeding. He believes the situation will improve with the proposal.
- Mr. LaPlante stated he does not recommend a bypass lane because it would create an unsafe condition given the number of small children in the parking lot.
- Chairperson Panici said she is bothered by cars entering the queue from 21<sup>st</sup> Street. She stated many of the suggestions being discussed should be implemented regardless of the expansion. She questioned if the southwest and southeast spaces in the parking lot would be difficult to enter and exit. Mr. Murdock said those spaces will be used by staff that are on the property all day. She agrees removing cars from Elmwood is a positive change and that the Zoning Board proposal should include a provision such that if the enrollment numbers increase, the Transportation Commission has an opportunity to revisit the plan. She agreed with all of Commissioner Weaver's recommendations and said the Village needs to do something to alert motorists of school zones. She suggested a "no right turn" from southbound Ridge to westbound Elmwood from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

- Jeremiah Shannon, 1030 Timber Lane , said his home faces Elmwood and that he is confused by the number of cars being discussed. He stated there has to be more traffic, because the RKMS is adding more students.
- Chairperson Panici stated the total number of students is not as critical as how they are distributed throughout the day. In this case, there is a small impact because the class times are staggered. She encouraged the residents to alert the Commission of any problems that arise related to the RKMS in the future.

**Move that Village staff make the following changes:**

- **Paint stop bars at the all-way stop on Elmwood and 21<sup>st</sup> Street.**
- **Double face the stop signs on Elmwood at the all-way stop at 21<sup>st</sup> Street.**
- **Move the eastbound school zone sign further west near the Sisters of Christian Charity Convent drive.**
- **Post “No Parking, Stopping or Standing” signs within 20 feet of the all-way stop on Elmwood at 21<sup>st</sup> Street.**
- **Post a “No Left Turn” sign for westbound cars at the entrance to the Montessori School.**

**Motion by: Commissioner Weaver**

**Second: Commissioner Wagstaff**

**Action: Approved by unanimous voice vote.**

**Move that the Transportation Commission finds the proposed traffic circulation and parking plan will generally improve current conditions at the Ronald Knox Montessori School (School) based on the proposed student population, and that the Commission hereby recommends the following conditions, changes and modifications to the Zoning Board of Appeals:**

- **The School shall install a sidewalk on the right-of-way across the frontage of their property west to the existing sidewalk near the Sisters of Christian Charity. (Note: The School has indicated they will build the sidewalk at their earliest possible opportunity.)**
- **Access to the School drop-off/pick-up line shall be prohibited from 21<sup>st</sup> Street. All School traffic shall enter School property from Hunter Road.**
- **The School exit will be designed to accommodate two lanes (one for right turns and one for left turns) out of the School property.**
- **The turning radii shall be increased to make turning movements easier.**
- **If the expansion is approved and the School is built, the staging area from west of 21<sup>st</sup> Street to the east exit drive shall be evaluated for possible widening. This will consist of moving the south curb line by approximately 3-feet to the south to provide additional clearance and**

**better line of sight for through traffic to pass staged vehicles. The Transportation Commission will evaluate the need for the widening and the School shall pay for the widening if it is determined that this work is necessary.**

- **If the School requests to increase student enrollment above the proposed maximum of 192 in the future, the Transportation Commission would like the opportunity to re-evaluate the potential impact on traffic patterns.**
- **It is highly encouraged that the School create a Committee to address neighborhood concerns related to traffic, parking, circulation and pedestrian issues.**
- **It is highly encouraged that the School develop a procedural method to ensure parental compliance with the procedures established by the School related to traffic, parking and circulation.**

**Motion by: Commissioner Weaver**  
**Second: Commissioner Wagstaff**  
**Action: Approved by unanimous voice vote.**

**3. Old Business / Pending Matters / Next Meeting**

- Ms. Mayerhofer mentioned that the 25 mph speed limit signs are being installed on LeClaire Avenue. She also indicated that John LaPlante will be assisting staff with the traffic calming study on Hunter Road.
- The next meeting is scheduled for December 14.

**Feedback**

- None

**Motion to adjourn.**

**Motion by: Commissioner Chouinard**  
**Second: Commissioner Miller-Girson**  
**Action: Approved by unanimous voice vote**

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Brigitte Mayerhofer.