

Minutes of the Transportation Commission Meeting held on Wednesday, April 26, 2006 at 7:00 p.m. in the Second Floor Training Room / Council Chamber at Village Hall, 1200 Wilmette Avenue, Wilmette, Illinois 60091.

Members Present: Jim Grosh
Paul Chouinard
Eileen Miller-Girson
Mark Wagstaff

Members Absent: Clayton Weaver, Chairperson
Rachel Nocera

Staff Present: Brigitte Mayerhofer, P.E., Director of Engineering
Linda Reilley, Engineering Assistant
Brian King, Deputy Police Chief
Ron Andrews, Police Department

Also Present: Sr. Adrienne Piennette, O.P., Regina Dominican
701 Locust Road
Sheldon L. Epstein, 624 Knox
Belle Lerner, 511 Romona
Russ Olsson, 1620 Forest
George Randolph, 472 Highcrest
Michael & Jennifer Gervasio, 1501 Forest
Leo Finn, 1539 Forest
E. Jean & Walter T. Prange, 1507 Forest
Leo & Resa Himmelblau, 2839 Birchwood
John Glynn, 1535 Forest
Mark Buchmann, 810 Romona
Shirley & Paul Jeffrey, 1522 Forest
Jodi & Stuart Urkov, 2928 Washington
Martin McConahay, Wilmette School District 39
Barbara Moore, 725 Romona
Cathy Albrecht, 906 Forest
Mary Louise O'Reilly, 641 Romona
Betty & Jack Sander, 1511 Forest
Jason Weller, 820 Chilton
Brian Baker, 1219 Ashland
Elizabeth Berge, 2550 Laurel Lane
Rick Frank, 801 Romona
Lynda Al-Najjar, 2618 Greenleaf
Sharon & Joel Greenburg, 722 Romona
Wendy Schuman, 207 Valley View Drive
J. Weinstein, 236 Locust

Chairman Chouinard called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

1. Review of Minutes

Motion to approve the March 8, 2006 minutes.

Motion by: Commissioner Miller-Girson

Second: Commissioner Grosh

Approved by unanimous voice vote

2. 1500 Block of Forest Avenue, Request for Permit Parking from 8 AM to 10 AM.

- Chairman Chouinard introduced the petition and asked staff to provide a brief description of the request. Ms. Reilley explained that the petition meets all of the requirements for permit parking per Chapter 18 of the Village Code. She indicated this is one of the few streets in the area that does not yet have permit parking.
- Commissioner Chouinard asked for resident comments. Ms. Gervaisio, 1501 Forest Avenue, explained that she circulated the petition. She said the 1500 block of Forest Avenue is often lined with commuters, making the street unsafe for children and pedestrians. It is also difficult for her and her neighbors to utilize the street for their own cars.
- Shirley Jeffrey, 1522 Forest Avenue, concurred with her neighbor and also supports the petition.
- After brief discussion by the Commission, there was consensus that the request was justified.
- **Motion to approve the request for Resident Permit Parking on the 1500 block of Forest Avenue from 8 AM to 10 AM, Monday through Friday.**
Motion by: Commissioner Miller-Girson
Second: Commissioner Grosh
Action: Approved by unanimous voice vote.
- Ms. Reilley indicated the signs will be installed within the next two weeks. She will contact everyone via mail with information on how to obtain their permits.

3. Romona Road (Lake Avenue to Wilmette Avenue) Petition for One-Way Northbound traffic during certain school times

- Ms. Mayerhofer introduced this item by reviewing the materials that were in the agenda packets. Commissioner Chouinard opened the floor for resident comments.

- Ms. Belle Lerner, 511 Romona Road, stated she drafted the petition and that the issue is that students cannot walk on the west carriage walk because cars drive on the sidewalk. She stated the TY Lin study does not mention this concern. Commissioner Chouinard agreed that this is clearly is a concern.
- Lynda Al-Najjar, 2618 Greenleaf, stated she is in support of the petition. She asked why the Police Department does not have a greater presence.
- Resident of 2625 Greenleaf Avenue and PTA President for Romona School said this is all about the safety of the school kids. She said this issue is very important to the school. She said the school opened eight new classrooms since 2000. This is the only school that does not have a one-way designation.
- Mary Louise O'Reilley, 641 Romona Road, stated she is a long time resident and against the petition. She indicated there have been more and more restrictions placed on parking and traffic the last several years. She said the parent drivers are the issue. The neighbors of the block are generally respectful of the school. The one-way proposal is where she draws the line.
- Sister Adrienne Piennette, Principal of Regina Dominican, stated she is not sure whether she is for or against the petition. She is, however, very concerned of the impact the one-way configuration will have on the drive at Regina that connects Romona Road to Locust Road. She believes it will be used as a cut-through. She said the congestion will just move to Locust Road, which is already a problem because of Wilmette Junior High.
- Sharon Greenburg, 722 Romona Road, said she thinks it would impossible to have signs at all of the cross streets. She thinks the proposal would be confusing and will cause people to drive the wrong way at the wrong time.
- Mark Buchmann, 810 Romona Road, said Romona Road is a cut through street with high speeds. He understands that the Police Department cannot be at the school at all times. He is an advocate of speed humps.
- Mr. Stuart Urkov, 2928 Washington, stated most residents want to travel south. He said the crossing guard at Central Street cannot manage the traffic.
- Sheldon Epstein, 624 Knox, reviewed the letter he sent the Commission. To summarize, he stated the one-way option will not solve the problem, but offered other circulation and signage changes which he believes would improve the situation. He referred to several photos where cars were double stacked improperly on the street.
- Joel Greenburg, 722 Romona Road, said Romona Road has turned into a speedway. He said the Police have not been patrolling Romona Road.

- Rick Frank, 801 Romona Road, stated he is two year resident. He asked what the dynamics of the streets surrounding the other Wilmette schools were.
- Liz Berge, 2550 Laurel, indicated she is the PTA President Elect. She suggested that Mr. Epstein's observations were incorrect, because the car in his photo was of a parent of a handicapped student. She stated the school population has grown and people are driving larger cars. She supports the petition. Commissioner Chouinard stated the PTA is an important organization and their support for any changes is critical.
- Mr. Epstein responded to Ms. Berge's comments saying he did not observe a handicapped child.
- Commissioner Chouinard asked if the cars of the special needs children are marked in some way. Mr. McConahay indicated they were not, but that he would look into this possibility.
- Barbara Moore, 725 Romona Road, asked why the one-way designation has to go all of the way to Lake Avenue.
- Leo Himmelblau, 2839 Birchwood, stated he observes multiple traffic violations every day. He often observes three rows of stacked cars. He said it is a problem when cars stop at the intersection of Central and block traffic. He said the proposal would increase the traffic exiting to Lake, which is unsafe.
- Jason Weller, 820 Chilton, declined to sign the petition, but believes there is a real problem with traffic. He said most of the traffic would be cutting through Washington, where another crossing guard would be necessary. He said the Commission needs to consider the impact to pedestrian traffic as well.
- An anonymous resident stated there should be a traffic signal at Lake Avenue and Romona Road. He said the current situation does not work.
- Judy Murphy, 3007 Washington Avenue, said she is close to the school, but will not let her kids ride their bikes. She said many of the Romona parents do not follow the rules.
- Martin McConahay, School District 39, handed out a letter by Dr. McGee, indicating full support for the petition. He said the school is fortunate to have good neighbors, but that the safety of the children is the district's top priority. He indicated the school has increased enrollment by 10-percent since 2000 and that the elimination of free bussing will likely add significantly more drivers. His experience is that the one-way option offers more orderly drop-off, but that this may not be the only solution.
- Commissioner Chouinard said a partnership with the school is important to make the area safer.
- Brian Baker, 1219 Ashland and a volunteer on the Regina Board, stated turning west onto Lake Avenue is a problem and that Police

enforcement is the key. He is concerned about cut-through traffic on the Regina property.

- Ms. Mayerhofer offered several comments. She discussed the geometry of the street and the sidewalk, which is currently inadequate. She discussed the street classification system and suggested that Romona Road has some characteristics of a collector street, because it connects local residential streets to arterials such as Lake Avenue and Wilmette Avenue. She provided information about traffic calming and the process to be considered for speed humps. She stated that while the one-way option may seem like an obvious solution, traffic has to go somewhere. She indicated there is not a logical southbound alternative for those parents coming from the south and west. She stated any solution that causes more cars to make unprotected left turns at Lake Avenue and Skokie Boulevard is a concern. She is concerned that one-way traffic will encourage side by side stacking, which will force children to weave through staged cars. She also indicated that speeds often rise with one-way configurations, because on-coming traffic and parked cars cause drivers to slow down. She stated that parent education and a partnership with the school are critical to implementing changes. She observed inefficient use of the frontage area and circle driveway.
- Deputy Chief King responded to the requests for more Police enforcement. He indicated there is limited Police manpower and that their presence everyday is not possible. He stated that a traffic solution that only works when the Police are present is a failure. He discussed the three “E’s” of success, including engineering, education and enforcement. He observed long delays (2 minutes) for cars wanting to turn westbound onto Lake Avenue. This scenario encourages cars to make dangerous movements, which is not desirable. Deputy Chief King stated the key to improving the drop off and relieving congestion is utilizing the entire frontage area. There is 386 feet of unutilized space for student drop-off and pick-up. Currently, cars are stacked south of the driveway, causing congestion and general travel problems. Deputy Chief King summarized his comments by indicating the Police Department will commit resources, but at the same time, the school needs to make a commitment and follow through.
- The President of the PTA indicated that the reason cars stop south of the driveway is because they do not want to wait for the crossing guard at Central Avenue.
- Cathy Albrecht provided some information on the recent changes at Central School. She stated that representatives from the school help with the drop off and pick up process, which has improved circulation.

- A discussion ensued concerning the need for a traffic signal at Lake Avenue and Romona Road. Ms. Mayerhofer indicated a national warrant must be met for a signal to be installed. The Commission also discussed the one-way restrictions at the other Wilmette schools. There was consensus that each school is different and the surrounding streets serve different functions as well.
- Commissioner Chouinard asked why the sidewalk recommended in the TY Lin report was never installed. Mr. McConahay indicated he did not know, but that the school district is working on updating their capital improvement plan for each school and an updated TY Lin report would be helpful in this endeavor.
- Commissioner Grosh thanked the audience for their comments and stated he is also very concerned about school safety. He said it sounded like there were some things that the school could try. He said Romona Road is different than the streets around McKenzie School, for example.
- Commissioner Miller-Girson also thanked everyone for coming. She indicated that there is likely more than one solution, but that school involvement is necessary. **ACTION:** A resident of the audience suggested that the decision on the one-way petition and any suggestions be placed on the web-site and that a notice be sent to the neighborhood.
- Commissioner Wagstaff indicated he is not convinced that the one-way option is the correct solution and that it could actually cause unintended consequences. He also indicated it would be a good idea for TY Lin to update their study to address the new concerns.

Motion to request that TY Lin update their 2000 traffic study for Romona School, before the end of the 2005/06 school year.

Motion by: Commissioner Wagstaff

Second: Commission Miller-Girson

Action: Approved by unanimous voice vote

- The discussion concluded with the Commission asking staff, led by Ron Andrews, to set up a meeting with the Romona School Principal to discuss some of the suggestions from the meeting. The key request is for the school to provide staff assistance to help with vehicle circulation during drop off and pick up times. The additional person can encourage cars to utilize the entire frontage space for queuing, relieving congestion south of the driveway.

4. Review of Bike Task Force Meeting Minutes

- Ms. Reilly updated the Commission on the Bike to Soccer event and the activities of the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation.

5. School Crossing Guard Annual Review and Approval

- Officer Andrews provided a summary of his memorandum. He stated that while the Police Department is not recommending any changes to the crossing guard program, there is concern with low usage of the guard at Wilmette Avenue and Skokie Boulevard. It was determined that eliminating the free bussing could change the number of students that walk and therefore no change is recommended at this time.
- Commissioner Grosh asked if the crossing guards provided by the schools are trained. Officer Andrews indicated the Police Department would provide training if they were asked, but typically they do not.

Motion to approve the 2006/2007 School Crossing Guard Report as provided by the Wilmette Police Department.

**Motion by: Commissioner Grosh
Second: Commission Wagstaff
Action: Approved by unanimous voice vote**

6. Old Business / Pending Matters / Next Meeting

- Ms. Mayerhofer asked for the Commissioner's comments and suggestions on the traffic study requirements that will soon be adopted by the Village Board.

The next meeting is scheduled for June 14, 2006.

Feedback

- None

Motion to adjourn.

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Brigitte Mayerhofer.