

Minutes of the Transportation Commission Meeting held on Wednesday, May 9, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. in the Second Floor Training Room at Village Hall, 1200 Wilmette Avenue, Wilmette, Illinois 60091.

Members Present: Clayton Weaver, Chairperson
Mark Wagstaff
Paul Chouinard
Cathy Albrecht
Eileen Miller-Girson

Members Absent: Rachel Nocera
Jim Grosh

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

Also Present: Silviu Gansca, 1211 Washington
Jim & Martha Lettner, 1320 Central
Jeff Martin, 732 Park
Jason Schellenberg, 736 Park
Susan Wobbekind, 736 Park
Glenn Warning, 712 Park
Barb Bischoff Kleeman, 1223 Washington
Shelagh Donoghue, 220 Wood Court
Ann Jonaitis, 814 Park
Steve & Karen Thompson, 242 Wood Court
Robert McWilliams, 228 Wood Court
Richard Roche, 258 Wood Court
Carolyn Holtermann, 248 Wood Court
Diane Fite, 212 Wood Court
Tom & Nancy Cooper, 1304 Central
Debora Morris, 1215 Washington
Aaron Alt, 722 Park
Ramaa Krishnan, 1217 Washington
Joe Slezak, 1215 Washington

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

1. Review of Minutes

Motion to approve the March 14, 2007 minutes.

Motion by: Commissioner Wagstaff

Second: Commissioner Chouinard

Discussion: Correction noted in the approved minutes.

Action: Approved by unanimous voice vote

2. Review of Bike Task Force Minutes

- Ms. Reilley highlighted the activities of the Bicycle Task Force, including the progress on the proposed Skokie Valley Trail project. Commissioner Chouinard asked where the north and south connections to the path were to which Ms. Reilley indicated Lake-Cook Road and Dempster Street in Skokie.

3. Washington Avenue / Park Avenue Parking

- Chairman Weaver provided opening remarks and Ms. Mayerhofer reviewed the materials in the agenda packets. Chairman Weaver stated it is the Commission's consensus that parking changes be made on an incremental basis, given the changing dynamics in the neighborhood. Chair Weaver opened the floor for audience comments.
- Silviu Gansca, 1211 Washington, stated he did not see a need for 30 minute parking. Ms. Mayerhofer indicated that the surveys showed that several businesses have customers who need short term parking. Commissioner Chouinard concurred stating the spaces closest to the businesses should be preserved for business patrons.
- Susan Wobbekind, 736 Park Avenue, stated she lives at the southeast corner of Park and Washington and believes Washington is a cut-through street. She said the parking and traffic problems will get worse when the Starbucks opens.
- Barb Bischoff Kleeman, 1223 Washington, indicated she doesn't believe six spaces can fit on the north side of Washington between Park and the alley. She spoke of the existing view obstruction coming out of the south alley and cautioned the Commission not to create another obstruction on the north side. Staff indicated the parking spaces will begin at least eight feet west of the alley.
- Glenn Waring, 712 Park, suggested that the intersection of Park and Washington is confusing because Park Avenue does not stop. He is concerned that Washington will be too narrow. The Commission discussed the benefits of on-street parking and Chair Weaver indicated on-street parking is one of the most effective traffic calming techniques available.
- Jeff Martin, 732 Park, asked how many spaces were on the east side of Green Bay Road in the taxi stand, because he would like to see business parking there. Chief Carpenter stated he was not sure but thought these spaces were heavily used by taxis. In addition, the Chief would not encourage pedestrians to cross Green Bay Road in this unprotected area.

- The Commission discussed the options available to the 700 block of Park Avenue relative to resident permit parking. Commissioner Chouinard indicated this was still an open issue.
- A business owner indicated that if all of Washington has short term parking there will be no place for the employees to park.
- Commissioner Albrecht suggested that if the 700 block of Park presented a petition for no parking 7 to 9 (except by permit), commuter parking would be discouraged and long term parking would be available for the Washington businesses. However, this pushes all of the business parking to the 700 block, because the 800 block of Park Avenue is currently signed no parking 8 to 6 (except by permit.) She asked if the 800 block restriction could be changed. Staff indicated that the Village Code does not have a mechanism to reverse permit parking, unless a petition is received by the block in question.
- A discussion ensued concerning the ability to add parallel parking on the north side of Washington and there was consensus that despite the narrow roadway, it would work and drivers would have to slow down like when they drive on Park Avenue. A resident also asked about an all-way stop at Park and Washington and Chief Carpenter indicated this was reviewed a few years back and warrants were not met. He will, however, ask his staff to review the accident reports for the past five years for this intersection.
- Commissioner Chouinard asked if traffic counts were recently taken to which Ms. Reilley indicated they were and confirmed that warrants were not met for an all-way stop.
- Chair Weaver stated that we are not looking to add more traffic to the neighborhood; we are just trying to change the parking to match the needs of the neighborhood. He said it is positive to provide customer parking close to the businesses because it reduces the likelihood that patrons will be driving around the neighborhood looking for a place to park.
- Susan Wobbekind stated that the Starbucks will change everything and asked if this issue will be reviewed again. The Commission concurred that additional follow up is necessary. Chair Weaver indicated there are at least 7 or 8 spaces in the proposed Starbucks parking lot.
- The Commission discussed site lines for vehicles exiting the alley and Ms. Mayerhofer indicated the Village Code requires a certain setback for parking spaces (believed to be 8-feet) adjacent to a public driveway. This will be considered when signing parking on the north side of Washington.
- A resident asked if the businesses can use the metered spaces serving the Metra lot to which staff indicated they could.

Approved at the June 13, 2007 Transportation Commission Meeting

- Commissioner Chouinard asked if the Police Department would be able to enforce the proposed hourly parking restrictions on Washington, to which Chief Carpenter indicated they could.
- Ms. Nancy Cooper, 1304 Central, stated she is very concerned with an increase in volume on Park when the new Starbucks opens.

Motion: To accept the following recommendations and do a follow up parking review 60 days after the signs have been installed:

1200 block of Washington Avenue

Green Bay Road to the Alley

- **Convert 15 of the 28 parking spaces on Washington Avenue to 2 hour parking 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Saturday (currently 4-hour parking)**
- **Convert 5 of the 28 parking spaces on Washington Avenue to 30 minute parking (currently 4-hour parking)**
- **Convert 8 of the 28 parking spaces on Washington Avenue to 3-hour parking, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Saturday (currently 4-hour parking)**

Alley to Park Avenue

- **Change the north side of Washington to 3 hour parking 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Saturday for a net gain of 6 spaces (currently no parking)**
- **Keep the south side as no parking anytime**

1200 block Central Avenue

Green Bay Road to the Alley

- **Convert 9 parking spaces to 2 hour parking 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Saturday (currently 30 minute parking)**

Motion by: Commissioner Chouinard

Second: Commissioner Albrecht

Oppose: None

Action: Approved by unanimous voice vote.

- After the motion was made several business owners thanked the Commission and staff for their efforts in reviewing this issue.

4. Walker Brothers / Wood Court Alley

- Chair Weaver introduced this issue and Ms. Mayerhofer provided a brief history of the proposed planned unit development on Green Bay Road and the traffic study that was completed as part of the review. She stated the traffic counts taken in June of 2006 showed a volume of 500 cars using the Wood Court alley and 85-percentile speeds close to 25 mph. The residents were concerned with these statistics, which is why they submitted a petition asking for the Commission's review. The new traffic data shows that the volume has decreased by approximately 20-percent and the speeds have also gone down.
- The Commission discussed the traffic counts that were recently taken. Ms. Mayerhofer indicated that the current traffic calming policy does not include alleys, so the "tool box" of options is limited. One recommendation is to add a no through traffic sign on the north side of the alley at Green Bay Road.
- Shelagh Donoghue, 220 Wood Court, asked if it was necessary to add the site plan to the record to which Ms. Mayerhofer stated that this review is independent of the development. She stated the counts that were taken represent an existing condition and the incremental volume added by the proposed development is negligible. Ms. Donoghue continued to review the concerns outlined in the petition and the traffic patterns observed by the residents. Although southbound traffic was believed to be the primary route for cut-through traffic, staff indicated the counts show actually more northbound traffic. Several residents concurred.
- Commissioner Chouinard asked if it was possible to cul de sac or eliminate access to an alley. Ms. Mayerhofer indicated this was within the Commission's purview. Commissioner Albrecht and Wagstaff stated this would just redirect traffic to other areas.
- The Commission discussed the alignment of the alley connection to Green Bay Road and Ms. Mayerhofer indicated the developer will be revising the connection to make it more of a right angle.
- Robert McWilliams, 228 Wood Court, said he supports the use of the alley by the existing and proposed businesses because the purpose of the alley is for access. He does, however, have a concern with the amount and speed of the traffic cutting through the alley. He stated the same problem is occurring in other alleys like the Walgreen's alley because drivers are trying to avoid major streets like Green Bay Road.
- Diane Fite, 212 Wood Court, stated she would not support closing the alley because Wood Court is already difficult to get to.
- Commissioner Albrecht suggested adding a "no through traffic" sign on the north side of the alley. Staff indicated this would be done.
- Carolyn Holtermann, 248 Wood Court, stated that the Walgreen's alley is signed as no through traffic. Chief Carpenter expressed the challenges with enforcing this type of signage, but believes a good number of drivers obey it.

- Ms. Mayerhofer suggested that there are a number of traffic generators in the alley including the apartment complexes, restaurant, and other businesses. She indicated that if a study were completed, it would show there is only a small percentage of cut-through traffic.
- Commissioner Chouinard suggested that the traffic with higher speeds are likely the cars cutting through.
- Chair Weaver stated the volumes are consistent throughout the day, with small peaks during the morning and afternoon.
- The residents asked for speed humps in the alley. Ms. Mayerhofer explained the criteria outlined in the traffic calming policy stating that residential streets with 1200 cars per day have a tremendous cut-through problem. She indicated that the decision to keep speed humps on streets is a budget consideration. The list of street eligible for traffic calming is already several pages long.
- Ms. Mayerhofer also suggested there are some logistical problems with speed humps in alleys such as placement between the large number of garages and drainage. Commissioner Wagstaff suggested speed bumps, which are often used in parking lots. Ms. Mayerhofer indicated her concern is that they are very noisy when driven over.
- Richard Roche, 258 Wood Court, stated many of the drivers are repeat offenders. His concern is that it is difficult backing into the alley because of the speeding traffic.
- The residents discussed the challenge of trying to exit their garages and their general safety concern. There was consensus that people drive very aggressively.
- Commissioner Albrecht stated that the speeds are not very high during the peak travel times.
- One resident stated that he already hears the train so speed bump noise is not a concern to him.
- Chair Weaver asked if the speed humps the Village installed were effective in reducing volumes to which Ms. Mayerhofer and Ms. Reilley indicated they were.
- Commissioner Chouinard asked if this has been addressed before to which Ms. Mayerhofer indicated that the Village has not formally looked at traffic calming in alleys.
- Commissioner Albrecht asked is any other town has a policy to which Ms. Mayerhofer stated she did not know but will talk to Evanston.
- Commissioner Wagstaff asked if the same methodology that was used for developing the traffic calming policy would be used for alleys. Ms. Mayerhofer stated that it would be difficult to come up with a set volume criteria because each alley functions differently. The Commission concurred that a uniform speed could be used. Commissioner Chouinard stated that a lower ratio should be used because the posted speed is only 15 mph, instead of 25 mph.
- A discussion ensued concerning roadway classification and the need for an alley classification system.

- A resident asked if we hear from residents with other alley complaints. Chief Carpenter stated other than the alley behind Walgreens, the Department does not hear many complaints. Ms. Mayerhofer concurred, stating residential alley complaints are infrequent.
- Chair Weaver concluded the discussion by stating the dialogue will continue on this issue.

5. School Crossing Guard Location

- Officer Andrews reviewed the memo provided to the Commission regarding his recommendations on the crossing guard locations.
- He stated the recent Romona School and Central School changes were effective in improving pedestrian safety and traffic circulation. Commissioner Albrecht noted that when even one car is parked on the 800 block of Central the congestion and double parking causes a problem. She stated a school sponsored parapro is essential to address this condition and keep traffic moving.
- Officer Andrews indicated it was a difficult year relative to crossing guards because there were many substitutions.
- Chief Carpenter asked the Commission to review the low number of children crossing at the intersection of Skokie Blvd and Wilmette Avenue. He reminded the Commission that this was pointed out last year and the guard remained because free bussing was recently eliminated for students west of Skokie Boulevard. Given that the numbers have not increased, the Police Department recommends eliminating the guard.
- Chief noted the other locations where guards were removed because of low usage.
- Commissioner Albrecht asked staff to confirm there are pedestrian signals at this intersection to which staff indicated there were. Officer Andrews noted the majority of the students who cross in this location are older students and not elementary.

Motion to accept the Police Department's recommendation to maintain the current guard locations, with the exception of the intersection of Wilmette Avenue with Skokie Boulevard contingent upon the Police Department sending a letter to all school families west of Skokie Boulevard with a notice of a future Commission meeting to discuss the elimination of this crossing guard.

Motion by: Commissioner Miller Girson
Second: Commissioner Albrecht
Oppose: None
Action: Approved by unanimous voice vote.

- Commissioner Albrecht discussed a concern about the Sheridan Road construction and the detour which will add more traffic on Wilmette Avenue and Lake Avenue. Ms. Mayerhofer stated she met with the Police Department who is aware of this and will monitor the traffic.
- Officer Andrews discussed some suggestions for improved traffic flow at Highcrest School. He noted observation of 70 cars which drove through the DO NOT ENTER signs posted at the entrance to the school, which he recommends for removal. He stated that busses drop the kids off in the west part of the parking lot which leaves the circular drive open for vehicular traffic.
- The Commission discussed the general circulation and suggested Officer Andrews discuss his recommendation with the School District.
- Commissioner Albrecht referenced the staffing changes at Highcrest School as well as other schools in Wilmette.
- Commissioner Albrecht indicated that she and other parents use the fire lane close to the front door during mid-day hours for pick up and drop off. Officer Andrews stated he will discuss this issue with the Fire Department.
- Officer Andrews noted the pedestrian signal on Lake Avenue between 15th and Park Avenue has been working well. On a few occasions, cars “jump” the red light after students have safely crossed the street.
- Officer Andrews also mentioned that previously there has been discussion about the safety of crossing the students at Illinois and Hunter Roads in a diagonal pattern, instead of perpendicular. He indicated this is the quickest and safest way to cross a large number of students. Commissioner Albrecht indicated her support for this method of crossing.
- Chair Weaver asked if there is a recommendation to extend any of the guard times to include early morning programs. Officer Andrews and Chief Carpenter indicated if they extend hours at Highcrest, they would have to consider this with other schools. Officer Andrews noted that one of the concerns is that it is physically difficult for the guards to be out for an extended period of time.

6. Old Business / Pending Matters / Next Meeting

- None
- Next meeting is scheduled for June 13, 2007

Motion to adjourn.

Motion by: Commissioner Wagstaff

Second: Commissioner Miller Girson

Action: Approved by unanimous voice vote

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Brigitte Mayerhofer