



VILLAGE OF WILMETTE

1200 Wilmette Avenue
WILMETTE, ILLINOIS 60091-0040

MEETING MINUTES

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2009

7:00 P.M.

SECOND FLOOR TRAINING ROOM OF VILLAGE HALL

Members Present: Commissioner Jim Grosh
Commissioner Mark Wagstaff
Commissioner Eileen Miller-Girson
Commissioner Keith MacKenzie
Chairman Clay Weaver
Commissioner Cathy Albrecht
Commissioner Paul Chouinard

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Brigitte Mayerhofer, P.E., Director of Engineering Services
George Carpenter, Police Chief
Jorge Cruz, Assistant Director of Engineering Services
Linda Reilley, Engineering Assistant
Ron Andrews, community Service Officer / Traffic Coordinator

Guests Present:
Christy Coughlin, 917 Greenleaf
Connie Coll, 1025 Greenleaf
Blake Mackenzie, 623 Greenleaf
Robbie Joseph, 711 Greenleaf
Kent Davidson, 702 Greenleaf
Dan O'Bara, 915 Greenleaf
Jim Phillips, 625 Greenleaf
Steve Bufton, 714 Greenleaf
John Hairston, 631 Greenleaf
Jay & Edie Rowell, 901 Greenleaf

Doug Steffenson, 614 Greenleaf
Nancy Grieshaber, 1107 Greenleaf
Diane & Brian Wilson, 1029 Greenleaf
Werner Suter, 618 Greenleaf
Alan Kalmikoff, 619 Greenleaf
Robert Widlansky, 622 Greenleaf

CALL TO ORDER.

Chairman Weaver called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES; TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING OF DECEMBER 12, 2008

Chairman Weaver directed the Commission's attention to the draft minutes of the Transportation Commission meeting of December 12, 2008. Commissioner Wagstaff noted two changes that will be reflected in the approved minutes. Commissioner Miller-Girson moved that the Commission approve the minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wagstaff. No further discussion occurred on the motion. Action: The motion was approved with unanimous voice vote. **The motion carried.**

II. REVIEW OF TRAFFIC CALMING ON GREENLEAF AVENUE (POPLAR DRIVE TO 4TH STREET)

Chairman Weaver provided introductory remarks to the audience noting that the decision to stripe Greenleaf was a unique situation. He stated that timing was a function of the quickly approaching inclement weather and lack of future funding. He noted that the Village was trying to be responsive to resident concerns that were brought to staff's attention. He stated that when Ms. Mayerhofer contacted him about the idea of striping he thought it was an appropriate decision. He apologized to the residents for not being included in the process.

Chairman Weaver then asked Ms. Mayerhofer to provide a summary of this agenda item.

Ms. Mayerhofer introduced herself and the other members of the Engineering staff. She noted staff recognizes this issue is of great concern to the residents of Greenleaf and therefore the packet contains ample information for the Commission's benefits as well as for the benefit of the residents. She referred to the memorandum in the Commission's packet dated February 4, 2009 which describes a detailed history of the issues surrounding Greenleaf Avenue. She noted the posted speed limit is 30 mph and the 85% speeds range from 33-39 mph. Speeds that exceed 7 mph over the posted speed limit are concerning. The average daily traffic counts are 1872 vehicles/day. The street width is 38 feet wide, which is significantly wider than a typical local residential street. The parking restrictions are no parking from 2 a.m. to 5 a.m. and the land uses are residential with commercial near Poplar. Greenleaf is classified as a local road with collector

street volumes. The pavement section is an asphalt surface. The street was originally brick overlaid and later with asphalt. In 1993, the sewer contractor removed the brick base. On this note, Ms. Mayerhofer explained the brick street policy which states that streets with existing brick are eligible for reconstruction in brick. In this case, the bricks have been removed so it would be the Village Board's policy decision whether or not they would fund a brick street.

Ms. Mayerhofer explained that Village staff was contacted by several Greenleaf residents on various occasions in 2008 regarding their concern for traffic and pedestrian safety on their street. They expressed particular concern with the significant width of Greenleaf, poor sight distance at the intersections, high pedestrian population (especially around St. Francis School) and traffic speed. As a result, staff collected speed and volume data in April and September of 2008. The results showed that the 1000 block of Greenleaf had the highest traffic speed with an 85-percentile speed of 39 miles per hour in the westbound direction. She further explained that the unusual width of Greenleaf Avenue suggests it is a candidate for traffic calming techniques that provide lane narrowing and lane definition. She also noted that as a part of this process, additional school zone signs were added to improve safety.

She listed the benefits of pavement marking as follows:

- Creates a visual narrowing of the road which encourages slower driving (ex. freeway versus local street)
- Identifies Greenleaf as a two-lane roadway instead of four lanes. (Absent on-street parking and lane delineation, Greenleaf Avenue could be driven as four 9.5-foot lanes.) She referenced the positive experience of roadway striping on Wilmette Avenue from Green Bay road to Ridge Road.
- Striping discourages drivers from passing cars that are driving at or below the speed limit.
- Parking lanes define the limits of on-street parking next to intersections which increases visibility and creates a safer zone for pedestrians to cross.
- Striping does not impact emergency services.

Ms. Mayerhofer acknowledged that the decision to stripe and the impending work happened very quickly. Given the lateness of the year and the fact that pavement marking is extremely temperature sensitive, there was not enough time to bring this issue to the Transportation Commission for discussion. And because of budget constraints, not acting this year would have likely resulted in many years without the opportunity to address the problem.

Ms. Mayerhofer summarized the before and after traffic speeds results as follows:

<u>Greenleaf Avenue</u>	<u>Before Striping</u>	<u>After Striping</u>	<u>Difference</u>
1000 block westbound	39 mph	29 mph	-10mph
1000 block eastbound	35 mph	34 mph	-1 mph
900 block westbound	33 mph	34 mph	+1 mph
900 block eastbound	35 mph	28 mph	-7 mph
800 block westbound	33 mph	31 mph	-2 mph
800 block eastbound	34 mph	34 mph	No change

Ms. Mayerhofer concluded her remarks by noting the following documents are included in the binder for the Commission’s reference:

Tab 1: Traffic volumes and 85-percentile speed data on the 800, 900 and 1000 blocks of Greenleaf Avenue.

Tab 2: Summary speed data results for Wilmette Avenue and Hunter Road.

Tab 3: Traffic crash history on Greenleaf Avenue.

Tab 4: Stop sign applications from the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) and the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).

Tab 5: E-mail correspondence between staff and Greenleaf residents

Tab 6: E-mail from Ron Andrews regarding the 9th and Greenleaf Crossing Guard’s perspective on the pavement striping

Tab 7: Correspondence from staff to the Greenleaf residents

Tab 8: Various articles on street narrowing

Tab 9: Traffic calming policy

Tab 10: Petition from Greenleaf residents signed by 24-percent of the impacted households.

Tab 11: Whitepaper on Greenleaf Avenue Striping authored by Robert Widlansky, 622 Greenleaf Avenue.

Tab 12: Letter and e-mail correspondence against the Greenleaf Avenue striping.

Chairman Weaver asked for testimony from those who have a time constraint and wish to speak first.

Ms. Christy Coughlin, 917 Greenleaf, noted she has young children and safety is her biggest concern. She has been working with Village staff and completely supports the striping. She noted that the striping has significantly improved pedestrian safety and has made it easier for children to cross the street. She noted she is open to other traffic calming suggestions as well. She concluded by stating she finds the beauty of Greenleaf in the trees and not what the pavement looks like.

Mr. Alan Kalmikoff, 619 Greenleaf, noted he is a ten year resident on Greenleaf. He believes everyone will concur that safety is paramount. He asked for an explanation of the Transportation Commission's jurisdiction and how striping could be accomplished without discussion. He said the street is a residential street and not a commercial street. He said the residents should have been asked before action was taken. He asked for an explanation on what the due process should have been.

Chairman Weaver addressed the question by stating that some issues come through the Commission but often times, safety concerns are addressed by staff. Striping has not been clearly defined as something that requires Commission input. In this case, Chairman Weaver indicated that the lateness of the year coupled with the fact that striping has been proven effective elsewhere, led him to support the decision to stripe Greenleaf. He said we can go back and look at the history or spend productive time talking about how to address the situation.

An anonymous resident asked how it can be determined whether or not the striping has been effective. Chairman Weaver explained that traffic counts that register speed are taken. The Chairman questioned the adequacy of the data collected in January that showed speed reductions in several segments. Ms. Reilley noted that there was a week with no precipitation or snow on the pavement.

Ms. Coughlin concurred with staff's comment that the striping has reduced the number of times that cars pass on Greenleaf. She said this is very apparent at night when cars aren't parked on the side of the street.

Mr. Robert Widlansky, 622 Greenleaf, handed out his presentation on Greenleaf striping that is attached hereto and made part of the record. He began his presentation by stating he has three children and is also concerned about safety. He thanked the Commission for volunteering to review this situation. He summarized his presentation into the categories of presenting the situation, proposing solutions and finally the rationale for the solutions. His neighborhood survey results indicate that the majority of the residents want a 25 mph speed limit reduction, brick restoration and stop signs. His proposed solutions are to 1) Eliminate the center yellow line within 45 days, 2) Reduce speed limit from 30 to 25 mph within 60 days and 3) Begin process to restore Greenleaf as a brick street within 90 days.

Ms. Edie Rowell, 901 Greenleaf, asked what the barriers were to reducing the speed limit immediately. Chairman Weaver stated speed limits are set in several ways including looking at the characteristics of the street and establishing a speed limit that drivers are comfortable with. Ms. Mayerhofer concurred and indicated that speed limits are not arbitrarily established, but rather through a speed policy established by the Illinois Department of Transportation. She noted concern with artificially reducing the speeds limit and creating a condition that would result in a high number of violations. Chief Carpenter stated that unfortunately hanging a sign does not automatically result in cars slowing down. He noted that constant enforcement by the

Police Department is not realistic. Finally, he stated that lowering the speed limit without doing anything physical to the road to slow people down would be unsuccessful. Chairman Weaver concurred stating the Commission looks for techniques like striping and on-street parking to make the road look narrower.

The residents asked how Lake Avenue could get the speed limit reduced to 30 mph to which Ms. Mayerhofer described the process for the reduction. She noted the jurisdiction of Lake Avenue is the County. She explained that the traffic signal interconnection encourages drivers to follow the speed limit.

Connie Coll, 1025 Greenleaf, noted that she is concerned about safety and speed. She said the stop sign at 11th has had a big impact. As a realtor, Ms. Coll suggested that the perception is that the street has changed form a residential street to a thoroughfare. She believes property values will be impacted.

Robbie Joseph, 711 Greenleaf, indicated he does not have a concern with the striping. He believes it has helped control the parking. He believes that putting brick down is not a responsible choice in this economy. He concluded by stating he does not believe property values will go down.

Chairman Weaver stated that in the documents provided by the petitioners there was recognition that lowering the speed limits without justification and installing unwarranted stop signs can have the opposite effect of improving safety.

Commissioner Chouinard asked Ms. Coll if the concern about lower property values was generated by the yellow center stripe or the parking lanes. She indicated the yellow center stripe.

Mr. Jim Phillips, 625 Greenleaf, stated he purchased his home last September and never would have bought his house had he known Greenleaf would be striped. He also has young children and is concerned about safety. He said no one should be surprised that speeds are high because the street is long and does not have any stop signs. He believes his kids aren't safe. The Commission needs to listen to the community and do what's right for the Village. He stated the same speed limit on Greenleaf is also on Green Bay Road and other busy streets.

Mr. Werner Suter, 618 Greenleaf, said he appreciates that the Commission is taking the time to study the issues on Greenleaf. He concurs that safety is paramount. He wants to keep Greenleaf a nice neighborhood street. He wants the Village to invest in a long term solution like brick. When he saw the striping, he thought the next thing would be parking meters.

Mr. Blake Mackenzie, 623 Greenleaf, said he purchased his home in May. He ruled out living on Central Avenue because it is too busy. Now he feels like Greenleaf is just as busy as Central. He also doesn't understand why there isn't a stop sign on the entire stretch of

Greenleaf.

Chief Carpenter stated that the purpose of stop signs is to prevent accidents, not to slow down cars. It was noted that the crossing guard is supposed to look for gaps in traffic rather than to stop traffic. The Commission discussed the warrants for stop signs. Chairman Weaver asked the audience if children are more likely to cross the street at 9th Street because the crossing guard is present during school times. The audience concurred.

An anonymous resident stated that the traffic volumes on Greenleaf are artificially high because of the Sheridan Road project.

Mr. John Hairston, 631 Greenleaf, indicated he moved into his home three weeks ago. He stated he has small children. He couldn't tell if there were stripes down or not, but from his observation cars are speeding much more now than when he looked at purchasing his house last fall. He concluded by stating the solution needs to be a combination of statistics and "gut feeling."

Mr. Dan O'Bara, 915 Greenleaf, also believes there are higher speeds now. He is concerned about safety and suggested brick crosswalks be installed if the Village cannot afford to build a brick street.

Mr. Brian Wilson, 1029 Greenleaf, said the centerline makes people drive close to the parked cars. Prior to the striping, they used to hug the center of the road. He said the yellow stripe is not safe because cars are too close to parked cars.

Mr. Widlansky asked the Commission what the purpose of the yellow stripe was to which Chairman Weaver indicated it was to create narrower lanes and narrow lanes encourage people to drive slower. Chairman Weaver indicated the literature provided by Mr. Widlansky did not seem to suggest that center line stripes result in an increase in speeds.

Mr. Doug Steffenson, 614 Greenleaf, is also concerned about safety but even more concerned about the process. He asked how something like this could move so quickly. He said he used to live on Oakwood where the brick street is effective in slowing traffic.

Mr. Jay Rowell, 901 Greenleaf, indicated he is a 35 year resident and asked if there was a traffic calming method that could be recommended now. He asked what the next steps in the process will be.

Mr. Steve Bufton, 714 Greenleaf, stated he shares most of the other perspectives that were previously discussed. He asked the Commission how they measure success. He concluded by saying he is not convinced that the speed results are necessarily a measure of success.

Chairman Weaver concluded the public portion of the meeting and conveyed to the audience

that it was time for the Commission to deliberate. Chairman Weaver stated that the Commission's arsenal of options to calm traffic depends on the budget. Traffic calming techniques that have been used in the past include speed humps, curb extensions or "bump outs," encouraging on-street parking and pavement marking.

Commissioner Wagstaff said the issues could be summed up into the categories of due process, safety and aesthetics/property values. He said the process was not typical and apologized for the swiftness with which the striping was executed. He used the example of Hunter Road in which there was several meeting with the residents to discuss the ultimate traffic calming plan which included striping. While he understood the reasons why the striping was installed, he said there should have been resident input. Commissioner Grosh noted his agreement with Commissioner Wagstaff.

Commissioner Wagstaff tried to determine if the striping was the cause of the safety problem, or if there was an existing safety problem prior to the striping. He indicated that the data shows that the block with the highest speed showed the greatest speed reduction after the striping. The Commission suggested the speed reduction may be a seasonal effect. The residents stated the 600, 700 and 800 blocks are worse than the 900 block.

Commissioner MacKenzie suggested that safety is the common concern for the Commission and the residents. He noted that he is a traffic engineer and evaluated the situation from an engineering perspective. His evaluation began with determining the cause of the safety issue, which is the unusual width of the road. He suggested that while stop signs might appear to be a solution, warrants have to be met before stop signs can be installed. He stated the obvious solution is to narrow the roadway, which can be accomplished through striping. He said he did not expect to see a dramatic reduction in speed, but also would not expect to see an increase in speed. Finally, he noted that the visibility at the intersections has improved. He apologized for the lack of due process and stated the Commission may or may not have come to the same conclusion. With respect to other measures that would improve safety, he indicated there are other options such as installing brick, but striping was available and relatively economical. An anonymous resident asked to explain the warrants for stop signs. Ms. Mayerhofer provided information about the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices and explained that the volume and accident warrants are not met for an all-way stop at Greenleaf and 9th Street. This is because there is not enough traffic on 9th Street to result in a right-of-way conflict. An anonymous resident asked how stop signs were installed at Linden and 9th to which Ms. Mayerhofer indicated she did not have that information available.

The Commission briefly discussed the purpose of the center line stripe and Commissioner Wagstaff asked staff if center lines have been used elsewhere. Staff indicated there are other roads in Wilmette with centerlines including Old Glenview Road and Hunter Road. A member of the audience challenged the need for a centerline and cited case studies which showed centerlines to be ineffective. Commissioner MacKenzie stated he would be interested in knowing more details about the studies because there are many variables that make each street

unique.

A hypothetical discussion took place regarding whether or not the striping would have been recommended by the Commission if the majority of the Greenleaf residents were against it. Commissioner MacKenzie noted that is a tough decision. He said that if the collective wisdom of the Commission was that striping would make the road safer for children and the public, the question is would the Commission make a decision based on safety or what the residents want. Chairman Weaver speculated that had the striping been discussed in advance and had evidence been presented that striping would be effective, the residents may not have objected.

Commissioner Chouinard stated that the decision to stripe was predicated on the fact that a valid concern was brought to the Village's attention. Safety is the driving force behind the decision to stripe. He continued to say that there is not a large arsenal of options to address the safety issues because of the economic climate. He noted that Village Hall is even closed early on Wednesdays to save money. Many of the physical improvements are not viable options at this time. Commissioner Chouinard reminded the Commission that it is not good practice to just reduce the speed limit by putting up new signs and expect a change in driver behavior. He asked staff to perform a speed limit study to determine if a reduction is warranted.

Commissioner Chouinard noted he is concerned that the perception is that the yellow stripe may reduce property values, but supports the retention of the parking lanes. He stated he is leery of the petitioner's process for conducting a survey and questioned whether or not the methodology favored those who were not in favor of the striping. Commissioner Chouinard asked how the Village determines how streets are classified. Ms. Reilley stated that the Village Code establishes classification and that in general streets with more than 1500 cars per day are considered collector streets. A comparison to Linden Avenue was discussed and Ms. Mayerhofer noted the volumes are similar to Greenleaf. Ms. Reilley stated the speed limit was reduced to 25 miles per hour on Linden because of the high crown in the road.

Commissioner MacKenzie asked staff if other traffic calming techniques are an option for Greenleaf down the road. Ms. Mayerhofer responded by stated that other options are available depending on future budgets. She noted that the estimate to brick Greenleaf from 11th Street to 4th Street is approximately \$3.2 million. She reiterated that it would be a Village Board decision whether or not to convert Greenleaf to a brick street. With respect to other capital projects, Ms. Mayerhofer stated that although Greenleaf is not in the current five year program for road improvements, when it does come up for rehabilitation there are many other options such as moving the curb line in to narrow the street and / or build bump outs, raised crosswalks etc.

Commissioner Albrecht asked for clarification on when counts were taken to which staff noted April and September of 2008 and January of 2009. She suggested that additional counts be taken this spring and emphasized that the effectiveness of roadway striping is very provable. She also concurred that the Commission might have come to the same conclusion and recommended striping. Commissioner Albrecht noted that the Commission's approach to

traffic calming has typically been to act incrementally to see if the least impactful solution works. She noted that sometimes even staggering on-street parking can have an impact on slowing cars. She reiterated the Commission's experience that roadway narrowing has been effective and also concurred that engineering standards and warrants have to be followed. Commissioner Miller-Girson stated that she hears and understands the resident's concerns about the yellow center line. She supports the idea of collecting additional traffic data in spring. The Commission requested that staff take traffic counts on all of the blocks instead of focusing on only the west end.

Werner Suter, 618 Greenleaf, suggested that during spring break, counts will be skewed because speeds will be excessive. He again stated the process was completed in a hurry and misfired. While he believes the striping was installed with good conscience, the Commission should plan for a long term solution and think beyond today. He concluded his comments by stating the goal of the Commission is to make things better for the residents.

Chairman Weaver commented that he was concerned that the residents believe the striping changed the character of the road, but believes channelizing the cars has been effective. He is not convinced, however, that the unanticipated consequences outweigh the benefits. He stated that Greenleaf Avenue is a wide street and believes a speed limit reduction study and intersection study at 9th Street should be completed.

An anonymous resident noted that she has lived on Greenleaf for 17 years and that she is very fearful now that the striping has been installed.

Commissioner Mackenzie summarized the Commission's options to include taking additional traffic counts, performing a speed study, removing the center stripe, removing all of the stripes and looking at long term solutions. He asked his fellow Commissioner's what action should be taken tonight.

STAFF ACTION: There was Commission concurrence that a stop sign warrant analysis should be revisited and a speed limit reduction study should be performed.

With respect to the striping, Commissioner Chouinard stated he supports leaving the parking lane in place but is not sure about the center line. Commissioner Albrecht added she does not know if the striping has been effective yet and would like to see more data.

Commissioner Chouinard made a motion to eliminate the yellow stripe without further study. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Miller-Girson. A roll call vote was taken and all Commissioners voted no. **The motion did not carry.**

Community Service Officer Ron Andrews provided testimony on the benefits of the striping from his point of view and the experience from the crossing guard. Both believe the striping has made Greenleaf safer for children and pedestrians.

Upon leaving, Mr. Jim Phillips, 625 Greenleaf, told the Commission they had disappointed the community. This concluded the discussion.

III. OLD BUSINESS / PENDING MATTERS/ NEXT MEETING.

NONE

IV. ADJOURNMENT.

At 10:20 p.m., Commissioner Chouinard moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Albrecht. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote. **The motion carried.** No further discussion occurred on the motion.

The meeting was thereafter adjourned.

Minutes Respectfully Prepared by Brigitte Mayerhofer, P.E., Director of Engineering Services