



VILLAGE OF WILMETTE

1200 Wilmette Avenue
WILMETTE, ILLINOIS 60091-0040

MEETING MINUTES

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 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

Members Absent: Commissioner Paul Chouinard

Staff Present: Brigitte Mayerhofer, P.E., Director of Engineering Services
Jorge Cruz, Assistant Director of Engineering Services
Linda Reilley, Engineering Assistant
Brian King, Deputy Police Chief
Ron Andrews, Community Service Officer / Traffic Coordinator

Guests Present:
Dan McKenna, 808 Linden
Merwin Crow, 1015 Greenleaf
Kathy Kempf, 607 Greenleaf
Peter Chadwick, 715 Greenleaf
Robbie Joseph, 711 Greenleaf
Dan O'Bara, 915 Greenleaf
Jim Phillips, 625 Greenleaf
Liz Murray, 1005 Greenleaf
Amy Hairston, 631 Greenleaf
Jay & Edie Rowell, 901 Greenleaf
Doug Steffenson, 614 Greenleaf

Loryn Kogan, 1020 Greenleaf
Brian Wilson, 1029 Greenleaf
Larry LaBoda 1004 Greenleaf
Kevin Lawler 530 8th Street
Robert Widlansky, 622 Greenleaf
Bob Zielke, 603 Central

CALL TO ORDER.

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

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES; TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING OF FEBRUARY 11, 2009

Chairman Weaver directed the Commission's attention to the draft minutes of the Transportation Commission meeting of February 11, 2009. Commissioner Grosh moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner MacKenzie. There was no discussion on the motion. Action: The motion was approved with unanimous voice vote.

The motion carried.

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

Chairman Weaver opened the meeting by asking staff to summarize the items in the agenda materials. Ms. Reilley stated that staff was asked to review three items related to Greenleaf Avenue, including 1) possible removal of the striping, 2) warrants for a stop sign and 3) speed limit reduction.

With respect to the striping, she referenced the latest traffic counts which showed several segments had a one mile per hour reduction in speed and the 800 block westbound movement showed a reduction from 33 miles per hour to 27 miles per hour. She noted the included memorandum from John LaPlante, the Village's traffic consultant from TY Lin, who suggested there was no down side to removing the centerline striping. Staff and Mr. LaPlante, however, recommend retaining the parking lanes because of the benefits including organizing the travel and parking lanes and opening up sight distance at the intersections.

Ms. Reilley continued with a discussion of the possibility of a speed limit reduction. She noted that staff used IDOT's template to conduct the speed limit reduction study. Speed limit reduction points are warranted for the number of driveways and the on-street parking. A speed limit reduction from 30 miles per hour to 25 miles per hour is warranted.

Finally, Ms. Reilley discussed the warrants for an all-way stop sign on Greenleaf at 9th Street or 8th Street. Neither location meets the warrants for accidents or volume. Option "D" under the MUTCD offers other criteria, however, that the Commission can consider. Ms. Reilley noted

that the Police Department is concerned with an all-way stop at 9th Street because of the presence of a crossing guard. Staff suggests considering 8th and Greenleaf as an alternative to 9th and Greenleaf.

Chairman Weaver asked Officer Ron Andrews about the striping on Greenleaf. Officer Andrews stated the crossing guard is a proponent of the striping changes. The cars park in an orderly manner resulting in improved sightlines. He stated there are enough gaps in traffic to cross children and that the crossing guard is able to manage both vehicles and kids.

Chairman Weaver reviewed the traffic study results noting that the southbound volume on 9th Street is low.

Chairman Weaver opened the discussion to the members of the audience.

Mr. Bob Widlansky, 622 Greenleaf, thanked the Village for all of their work on this issue. He noted that he reviewed striping data with a Northwestern professor, the author of a book on traffic, and local traffic engineers. He stated the conclusion to remove the striping is consistent. He said the results were skewed because of the presence of a portable speed trailer on the 700 block of Greenleaf. He cited data that suggests removing the striping will decrease speed and increase safety. Mr. Widlansky challenged the accuracy of one of the speed counters.

Mr. Daniel McKenna, 810 Romona, introduced himself as the principal of St. Francis School. He stated that he often observes high speeding vehicles on Greenleaf, which is concerning because of the kids playing on school property. Safety is their primary concern. He noted he grew up on Linden and Greenleaf was always known as the fastest route. He told the Commission that there are 8 weeks in the fall and spring where there are after school programs that dismiss at 4:15 pm without a crossing guard present. This area generates much activity because of the churches and funeral home parking on Greenleaf. He is an advocate for a stop sign to help facilitate pedestrian traffic through this area.

Mr. Brian Wilson, 1029 Greenleaf, stated that the striping has negatively affected home prices on Greenleaf.

Mr. Jay Rowell, 901 Greenleaf, lives across from the church. He asked why the speed trailer was present during the study. Ms. Reilley explained that the speed data was collected over multiple days, compared to the trailer that was only up for a day or two. Officer Andrews suggested that the speed trailer did not have a speed limit sign on it, so he was not convinced it would have impacted speeds.

Ms. Amy Harrington, 631 Greenleaf, asked if they could get speed humps installed. She noted that she used to live on similar streets when stop signs were erected. The result was an increase in accidents. She likes the idea of speed humps. Chairman Weaver stated her observance of an increase in accidents for unwarranted stop signs is accurate. He said the

Commission did not spend a lot of time talking about speed humps at the last meeting. He indicated certain volume and speed thresholds must be met in order for a street to be eligible for traffic calming. The Village Board has a policy which also requires that residents requesting traffic calming submit a petition. Chairman Weaver also reminded the audience that speed humps are signed and striped so they are visible. He concluded the discussion by indicating there is no budget for traffic calming this year.

Mr. Peter Chadwick, 715 Greenleaf, said he is a 20 year resident of the street and has never observed a speeding problem, either before or after striping. He said he would be disappointed if the Commission voted to spend taxpayer money to remove the striping. He advocates for leaving the striping as it is.

Mr. Mer Crow, 1015 Greenleaf, concurred with Mr. Chadwick, noting special interest legislation serves a small percentage of the population. He cited several examples of inconsistent signage including Oak Circle and Prairie and Isabella. He stated there should be sunset laws on such signage. He applauds the Village for the striping Greenleaf and suggested squad cars and emergency vehicles are the main offenders of the speed limit. He suggested more enforcement.

Mr. Robby Joseph, 711 Greenleaf, stated he is happy about the striping on Greenleaf and wants it to remain. He said it is nice to see pedestrians when approaching intersections. He asked how much the striping cost to which Ms. Mayerhofer noted approximately \$7,000.

Ms. Cathy Kemp, 607 Greenleaf, stated that property values are impacted because Greenleaf is striped like Lake Avenue. Homes have been for sale for 12 months. She liked the wide open feel of Greenleaf before the striping.

Ms. Lauren Cogen, 1020 Greenleaf, noted that she is disappointed in the process, but now that the striping is in, she sees nothing wrong with it. She doesn't want to spend tax payer dollars to remove it.

Mr. Larry Labode, 1004 Greenleaf, said he is tired of dodging people driving down the middle of the road. He thinks the striping is fabulous. Nothing else needs to be done.

Ms. Edie Rowell, 901 Greenleaf, said the striping should remain in the business district, but the rest should be left to wear away.

Mr. Dan O'Bara, 915 Greenleaf, asked how much it cost to remove the striping to which Ms. Mayerhofer indicated \$1200 to remove the center lines.

Mr. Daniel McKenna asked the Commission to keep the children in mind when the decision is made.

Mr. Jim Phillips, 625 Greenleaf, thanked the Committee and picked up on what Principal McKenna said. Child safety should be a priority. He said a 30 mph speed limit like Green Bay Road is unacceptable. He said the centerline removal makes sense. The decision to stripe was made in a vacuum. Should the residents have to live with what was done in an irresponsible manner? The decision should be based on children and safety in the area.

Chairman Weaver asked for the Commission's comments.

Commissioner Jim Grosh said that safety is the Commission's top priority as well.

Commissioner Wagstaff thanked everyone for coming and stated there are several options available to the Commission with respect to striping. He believes that the parking lanes have been successful because it delineates the travel lanes from where people should park. He does not see enough evidence to support an all-way stop on Greenleaf. He concluded by indicating he supports the reduction of the speed limit if brought to a vote.

Commissioner Albrecht asked how it would look if the centerline stripes were removed. Ms. Mayerhofer said you would see a black stripe. Commissioner Albrecht noted that the center striping has resulted in no measurable improvement. She stated she would support removing the centerline, but keeping the parking lanes. She suggested the parking lanes give the impression of a narrower street. With respect to the speed limit, she noted that artificially reducing the speed limit typically does not work unless coupled with physical improvements. Ideally the Police Department could step up enforcement, but she recognizes there is not enough manpower and consistent enforcement is not realistic. Commissioner Albrecht suggested curb "bump-outs" would be an effective option if funds were available. She said that although the warrants for a stop sign are not met, she would like to see one at 9th and Greenleaf. She said she would also support a stop sign on 8th Street if this were a better option.

Commissioner MacKenzie discussed the radar trailer during overlap of speed count and stated he agreed that it would impact the results. He noted that he is embarrassed that occurred and that there should be better communication between Engineering and the Police Department. He stated the reduction of the speed limit seems justifiable based on the number of access points. He noted the striping appears to have marginal benefit. He suggested that if the centerline stripes are removed, the parking lanes should also be removed, with the exception of at the intersections. As a taxpayer, he would prefer to let it wear off.

Commissioner Miller-Girson agrees that since an all-way stop and a speed limit reduction are warranted, they should be considered. With respect to striping, she noted support for the striping in the business district. She supports letting it wear out in the residential area.

Ms. Reilley picked up on Commissioner MacKenzie's statement about the quality of the traffic data and noted that only the 700 block had the overlapping trailer and counts. She also indicated the counters gathered data before and after the time the trailer was on site.

Chairman Weaver stated the traffic data appears to be fairly consistent. He agrees with the consultant who said that removing the center striping would be acceptable, but the parking lanes should be retained. With respect to the speed limit reduction, Chairman Weaver asked about the effectiveness of the change on Lake Avenue. Deputy Chief King noted the 85th percentile speed dropped. Ms. Mayerhofer stated her anecdotal observation is that all of the resident feedback has been positive.

Chairman Weaver said he understands that the striping has altered the feel of the street and would support removing the center stripe to make the street feel more residential in character. He also supports reducing the speed limit to be more consistent with other residential streets in the area. Finally, he noted the addition of stop signs is a serious issue. If this is recommended, it should be done carefully and with proper notification and advance warning. He finds the length of Greenleaf concerning given its residential character.

An anonymous resident stated she was before the Commission a couple years ago asking for stop signs. She said the last chairman said stop signs do not slow traffic down, but actually speed it up. He asked if this is true. Chairman Weaver noted that was possible if unwarranted stop signs are installed.

Another resident stated he has lived on Greenleaf for 20 years and sees no purpose in adding stop signs at 8th. Another resident asked how long it will take for the striped to fade away, to which Ms. Reilley stated snow plows damage the striping so it could be within a few years.

Ms. Mayerhofer asked the Commission to consider the questions in the bottom of the memo with respect to the MUTCD warrants for installing an all-way stop sign on Greenleaf. She stated it is important to justify the warrant for the stop sign for precedent purposes. Chairman Weaver noted Option D which references pedestrian activity.

Deputy Chief King stated he respects John LaPlante's opinion and is open to a speed limit reduction. He indicated a squad car running radar could be stationed a long time to get a single infraction with the current traffic counts. He indicated he is less enthusiastic about the addition of stop signs on Greenleaf, because of the general concern about installing unnecessary traffic control devices. That said, he assured the Commission the Police Department would enforce the stop signs if installed. Staff noted there would be a grace period for citations and noticeable flags installed with any new stop signs.

Commissioner MacKenzie asked what the next step was if the Commission were to recommend that the striping be removed. Ms. Mayerhofer noted the unbudgeted expenditure of funds would have to be approved by the Village Manager.

Commissioner MacKenzie moved to reduce the speed limit on Greenleaf Avenue from 30 miles per hour to 25 miles per hour. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Miller-Girson. **The motion to reduce the speed limit carried with a roll call vote of six ayes.**

Commissioner Grosh moved to remove the center line striping. The motion was seconded by Commission Albrecht. Voting aye: Commissioners MacKenzie, Albrecht and Chairman Weaver. Voting no: Commissioners Grosh, Wagstaff and Miller-Girson.

The motion to remove the center line striping did not carry.

Mr. Widlansky interjected the points from his previous testimony and urged the Commission to reconsider.

Commissioner Wagstaff made a motion to remove the parking lane striping. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Albrecht. **The motion to remove the parking lane striping did not carry with a roll call vote of six no votes.**

A resident from the audience asked if the striping would be maintained or left to fade. Ms. Mayerhofer noted that Greenleaf will not be restriped without giving the Commission an opportunity to revisit the issue.

Chairman Weaver suggested the Commission discuss the placement of stop signs before a vote is taken. He indicated it is important to make the rationale for a stop sign clear for the motion. He noted a stop sign should be considered at 8th Street because of the higher traffic volume and conflict with a crossing guard if a stop sign is placed at 9th Street.

Commissioner Albrecht asked if there are any other locations with an all-way stop and a crossing guard to which Officer Andrews mentioned Highcrest School at Illinois and Hunter Roads.

The Commission discussed under which warrant a stop sign would apply. Ms. Mayerhofer suggested Option D (b) of the MUTCD which reads “The need to control vehicle/pedestrian conflicts near locations that generate high pedestrian volumes.”

A resident stated the street is very long without any interruptions. 9th Street is the logical place to break up traffic.

Chairman Weaver stated that although the 9th Street corridor seems logical, a crossing guard could create an extra burden for the crossing guard. Commissioner Albrecht noted that the major pedestrian traffic is on 9th Street, because of the placement of the schools. This is where kids cross the street, even on Sundays and when school is not in session. Commissioner MacKenzie agreed that the warrant applies more to 9th Street than 8th Street, but asked to hear from the Police Department.

Deputy Chief King said that traffic calming should be used to slow traffic instead of stop signs. Stop signs are not intended to slow traffic. He continued to say that it is much easier for crossing guards to control traffic without the four-way stop control. Commissioner Wagstaff concurred indicating stop signs are not designed to “break up a street.”

The Commission discussed possible future traffic calming measures including raised crosswalks or intersections.

Commissioner Albrecht asked if the Village advocated for temporary stop signs to which Ms. Mayerhofer indicated not unless one was warranted under a temporary condition. Commissioner MacKenzie asked if there is a crossing guard at 8th Street to which staff indicated there was not. A resident asked Ms. Reilley to repeat the recommendation from John LaPlante. Chairman Weaver noted Mr. LaPlante's report was silent on the issue of a stop sign.

Commissioner Miller-Girson moved to install stop signs on Greenleaf at 8th Street. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Grosh. Voting aye: Commissioners Grosh and Miller-Girson. Voting no: Commissioners Wagstaff, Albrecht, MacKenzie and Chairman Weaver. **The motion to install stop signs on Greenleaf at 8th Street did not carry.**

Commissioner MacKenzie moved to install stop signs on Greenleaf at 9th Street. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Albrecht. Voting aye: Commissioners Grosh, Miller-Girson, Albrecht and MacKenzie. Voting no: Commissioner Wagstaff and Chairman Weaver. **The motion to install stop signs on Greenleaf at 9th Street carried.**

III. OLD BUSINESS / PENDING MATTERS/ NEXT MEETING.

Officer Ron Andrews presented his report on crossing guards for the 2009/2010 school year. His only concern is the low turnout at Wilmette and Skokie Boulevard. He stated that in the winter kids don't walk or bike. He said it costs the Village \$7,000 per year to cross a child or two in the morning.

At the other locations, there have not been any safety issues that have been brought to his attention. He stated the raised crosswalk at Hunter and Thornwood makes a positive difference.

Chairman Weaver noted the Commission looks at Skokie Blvd every year, but has been reluctant to make the change. Officer Andrews noted that the Civics and Safety Committee asked if the guard could return in the future to which he indicated he/she could return if the demand for a guard increased.

Commissioner Albrecht stated if the guard is eliminated staff needs to make sure notice goes out to every home west of Skokie. Officer Andrews noted he would work with the School on this communication.

Commissioner Wagstaff made a motion to approve the crossing guard report from the Police Department. Commissioner Miller-Girson seconded the motion. Voting aye: Commissioners

Miller-Girson, Albrecht, MacKenzie, Wagstaff and Chairman Weaver. Voting no:
Commissioner Grosh. **The motion carried.**
This concluded the discussion.

IV. ADJOURNMENT.

At 9:34 p.m., Commissioner Wagstaff moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Grosh. 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