



VILLAGE OF WILMETTE

1200 Wilmette Avenue
WILMETTE, ILLINOIS 60091-0040

MEETING MINUTES

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8, 2009

7:00 P.M.

SECOND FLOOR TRAINING ROOM OF VILLAGE HALL

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

Members Absent: Commissioner Mark Wagstaff
Commissioner Keith MacKenzie

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: Ray Lechner, District 39 Superintendent
Duncan Wardrop, 1514 Central Avenue
Denise Welter, McKenzie School Principal
Bob Schultz, 511 15th Street
Tina Schultz, 511 15th Street
Chris Smith, 1507 Highland
Sandy Reitman, 640 Prairie
Rebecca Moe, Glenview, Illinois
Marianne Wright, 1600 Highland
Marty Houlihan, 1500 Central Avenue
Charles Martin, 1522 Highland
Liz Martin, 1522 Highland
Ricki Podorovsky, 524 Koerper Court

Guests Present: Tracy Kearney, Glenview, Illinois
Erin Kopes, Glenview, Illinois
Shane Evanston, 602 15th
John Delmonico, 1504 Central

CALL TO ORDER.

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

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES; TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING OF MAY 13, 2009

Chairman Weaver directed the Commission's attention to the draft minutes of the Transportation Commission meeting of May 13, 2009. Commissioner Grosh moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Miller-Girson. The motion was approved by a unanimous voice vote. **The motion passed.**

II. SCHOOL CROSSING GUARD at WILMETTE AVENUE and SKOKIE BOULEVARD / DIAGONAL CROSSING at HUNTER and ILLINOIS ROADS

Chairman Weaver introduced Officer Ron Andrews and asked that he provide background information on the school crossing guard status at Skokie Boulevard and Wilmette Avenue. Officer Andrews stated that this intersection is more widely used than what was previously reported. Instead of taking counts in early spring (prior to April) he indicated he will modify the data collection process in the future to reflect higher guard usage in fall and spring. Based on the new student counts, Officer Andrews recommended that the crossing guard be retained.

Commissioner Chouinard noted that this is not the first year the issue has come up. Because of low numbers, it has been on the Commission's radar for several years. Chairman Weaver agreed noting this is a unique intersection. He asked for audience comments.

District 39 Superintendent Ray Lechner stated that the school district is looking at "green" school programs that encourage bike riding, walking etc.

Commissioner Albrecht asked about the diagonal crossing at Highcrest, noting that the recent accident between a bike and a passenger vehicle has raised concerns with parents. Recognizing that budgets are tight, she asked if the crossing guard hours could be extended to earlier in the AM to accommodate the junior high students.

Officer Andrews stated that when this was looked at in the past, there was not much usage in the early morning. Commissioner Albrecht reinforced the large number of junior high students that use the crossing. She noted the diagonal crossing is a problem because students continue to cross

diagonally when the guard is not present. Deputy Chief Brian King noted that this intersection has historically been very safe. He suggested looking at the pedestrian numbers first.

Superintendent Lechner offered two suggestions including striping diagonal crosswalks at the intersection of Hunter and Illinois Roads and/or assigning another crossing guard to help with this large intersection.

Chairman Weaver asked for other comments on the Skokie Boulevard / Wilmette Avenue intersection.

Ricky Podorovsky, 524 Koerper Court, stated 15 years ago her niece was hit by an elderly driver at this corner and severely injured. She stated there are many elderly folks in the area. In addition, the skateboard park causes more people to travel through the intersection. Although she walks her kids to school, she avoids the Skokie/ Wilmette intersection.

Chairman Weaver asked the Commission for a motion. Commissioner Grosh moved to retain the crossing guard for the 2009 / 2010 school year at the intersection of Skokie Boulevard and Wilmette Avenue. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Miller-Girson. The motion was approved by a unanimous voice vote. **The motion passed.**

Superintendent Lechner asked about adding a diagonal crossing or a second guard at Highercrest. Ms. Mayerhofer indicated the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices guides the Village's striping methods. The MUTCD does not recognize diagonal crosswalk striping. Staff will research what other physical measures can be implemented to further improve safety.

An anonymous resident stated the intersection is confusing. Deputy Chief King stated that no one has ever been injured from crossing in the diagonal pattern. He noted this current method is the most efficient and safest method to cross. He stated the goal is to limit the time the students are in the intersection.

Commissioner Chouinard stated it becomes confusing when traffic is stopped on all legs of the intersection, because it is hard to determine who has the right-of-way. Officer Andrews stated that even in this case, the crossing guard should not direct traffic.

Deputy Chief King reiterated that although the crossing method is unusual, it is not unsafe. He stated that the Police Department has quarterly meetings with school officials so the discussion can continue. In the meantime, they will monitor this intersection.

III. SCHOOL DISTRICT 39 REQUEST FOR PARKING PERMITS FOR TEACHERS AT MCKENZIE SCHOOL

Ms. Mayerhofer introduced this discussion by indicating the Police and Engineering Departments have been working with School District 39 to find parking alternatives for their teachers. In a

recent letter by the Superintendent, the School is requesting 15 stickers for teachers to park in a resident parking zone on 15th Street. She noted that staff evaluated the request and believes that providing permits for school use is not supported by the Village Code. She also stated there are some practical problems with this request including parking congestion and safety concerns that already exist on 15th Street near Highland Avenue.

Superintendent Lechner stated he is before the Commission to discuss alternatives. He stated that he believes the School is a long standing “member of the community” and they want to be good neighbors. He introduced Ms. Denise Welter, principal of McKenzie School. She indicated the enrollment is up to 530. Most days there are 80 staff members at school who compete for 60 on-site parking spaces. This causes stress for staff, leaves students waiting for teachers, and requires teachers to carry large items for a long distance. She noted that despite walking the entire neighborhood, she could not find a good solution short of teachers walking two to three blocks.

Superintendent Lechner stated the School District annually reviews space needs at each school. He noted that most recently a set of dumpsters was relocated to create four new spots, but there is a need for additional spaces. He said the south side of the school is ear-marked for an outdoor garden. He hopes saving green space is a priority for the community as well.

Chairman Weaver stated this is a difficult and real problem noting the Commission received many comments from concerned neighbors in the area. He asked for comments from the Commission.

Commissioner Grosh asked about the possibility of a remote lot and suggested the lot at St. John’s Church. Chairman Weaver noted there is an existing parking shortage in this neighborhood, stating the Library and the West Village Center have the same problems. Chairman Weaver suggested building diagonal parking spaces off the alley. The Commission and the School District believe this option has merit. The School District will look into it further.

Commissioner Chouinard asked who owns the play lot south of alley to which staff noted the Park District. He further asked about the spaces behind the Post Office to which staff indicated the Post Office, the Village and the Library all own a portion of the parking lot east of Park Avenue.

A resident suggested using the parking lot at the end of Spencer and 17th Street. She indicated this parking is always open. Another resident suggested that the on-site parking spaces be assigned based on seniority.

Commissioner Chouinard asked if McKenzie School expects further increases in staffing. Ms. Welter indicated staffing has been 80 people the last couple of years.

Ms. Maryann Wright, 1600 Highland, indicated she can’t park in front of her home, because there are regular parkers taking these spots including deliveries, construction workers etc. She noted there have been three tear downs in the recent past which has created a nightmare for six years.

A discussion ensued regarding the existing parking restrictions in the neighborhood. Ms. Welter noted that their staff is expected to be at school from 8:15 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. A resident noted that the current restrictions are in place to control commuter parking. Ms. Mayerhofer explained the purpose of residential permit parking is to have a mechanism to place parking restrictions in areas that generate large volumes of overflow parking including schools, commuter stations etc. Commissioner Chouinard pointed out that the same parking restrictions that keep commuters from parking in the neighborhood also create a hardship for teachers. He asked if parking is available on Wilmette Avenue to which Ms. Mayerhofer indicated there is street parking west of 14th Street. Commissioner Chouinard asked if teachers can drop off materials at the school and then find a place to park. Attention was paid to the aerial map and specifically the large vacant area on the north side of building.

Shane Evanston, 602 15th, asked for more information about the outdoor classroom.

Tina Shultz, 511 15th Street, mentioned a school in Winnetka that has angled parking spaces similar to what is proposed in this location. Chairman Weaver noted that Central School also has diagonal parking on the street.

Charlie Martin, 1522 Highland, suggested the school encourage car pooling. Chairman Weaver followed up on that thought and asked if the school has a transit credit for employees. Superintendent Lechner noted the School will look into this.

Commissioner Albrecht asked about the pockets with the “No Parking 6:30 AM to 8:30 AM” restriction to which Ms. Reilley indicated these areas were established for the commuters, Post Office employees and the teachers. Commissioner Albrecht stated that if the restriction time was moved to accommodate the teachers, the commuters would likely take the spaces.

Mr. Chris Smith, 1507 Highland, stated that moving the restriction time to 8:00 AM instead of 8:30 AM will make the streets too congested. He stated busses cannot turn left onto 15th street. He does not see how five spots could be created on 15th for teacher parking.

Commissioner Albrecht asked if busses still use 15th Street to which it was noted that the noon busses stop on 15th. Otherwise, 15th Street is used for parent pick up and drop off. Several residents in the audience noted that the area of 15th and Highland is very congested because of the small children mixed with school traffic and parking.

Mr. Smith asked how 15th Street is rated as an interior street. He noted that 15th Street is used as a cut through street to Lake Avenue and asked if any studies were performed. Ms. Mayerhofer explained the traffic calming process and suggested a study could be initiated on 15th Street.

Duncan Wardrop stated that Central Avenue is very narrow. If more cars are able to park on 15th Street then they will also overflow to Central Avenue. He wants to know where he is going to

park. He said he wants the School to add parking to their property and noted he will have to move to 16th or 17th Street if a change in parking is made.

Sandy Reitman, 640 Prairie, said there is a hardship because she can't park in front of her house. She can't have people over to her house because there is no parking. She said it took her 20 minutes last week to get to her home because of the congestion on Prairie. She pays high taxes and should be able to park.

A discussion ensued regarding whether or not Central and Prairie could be made permit parking. Ms. Reitman, was asked to contact staff to discuss the process.

Mr. John Delmonico, 1504 Central, asked if there were really 6 to 7 students to every teacher. The school responded by indicating this also includes custodial staff, cooks, teachers, etc.

An anonymous resident asked if the property on Green Bay Road could be bought for parking. Chairman Weaver explained the status of the proposed parking garage between the Library and Post Office.

Commissioner Albrecht noted she does not think it is unusual for a school to ask for help with parking. Although she is most familiar with Central School, Commissioner Albrecht stated the McKenzie School problem is unique because of the concentration of commuter parking in the area. She noted that the Village Code will not allow the Commission to create a "school only zone" on public property.

Superintendent Lechner stated this meeting has given him several ideas that he will look into, including the Howard Park parking lot and a parking area off the alley to the south of the school.

Chairman Weaver suggested looking at permeable pavers for the alley lot. A resident suggested talking to the residents along Wilmette Avenue to see how they would feel about a parking area off the alley.

The Commission discussed whether it had the legal authority to assign permits for the school's exclusive use. The conclusion was that it did not, unless changes to the Village Code were made.

Commissioner Chouinard made a motion to issue parking permits to McKenzie school for parking on 15th. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Albrecht. The motion was denied with a unanimous no vote.

Chairman Weaver concluded the discussion by indicating staff will continue to work with the school on parking options.

IV. OLD BUSINESS / PENDING MATTERS/ NEXT MEETING.

V. ADJOURNMENT.

At 8:34 p.m., Commissioner Miller-Girson 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