



# VILLAGE OF WILMETTE

1200 Wilmette Avenue  
WILMETTE, ILLINOIS 60091-0040

## MEETING MINUTES

### TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2012

7:00 P.M.

SECOND FLOOR TRAINING ROOM OF VILLAGE HALL

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Members Present: Chairman Clay Weaver  
Commissioner Eileen Miller-Girson  
Commissioner Cathy Albrecht  
Commissioner Paul Chouinard  
Commissioner Pat Lilly

Members Absent: Commissioner Mark Wagstaff

Staff Present: Brigitte Mayerhofer, P.E., Director of Engineering Services  
Dan Manis, P.E., Civil Engineer  
Brian King, Police Chief

Guests Present: Susan Faurot 251 Greenleaf  
Fran Dudzinski 246 Greenleaf  
Dave Dudzinski 246 Greenleaf  
Michelle Smale 822 Sheridan  
Sue Hertzberg 220 Greenleaf  
Renee Lanam 1425 Maple  
Sue Sklansky 515 Central  
Laura Hine 832 Sheridan  
Mindy Rittner 315 16<sup>th</sup> St.  
Laura Waechtler 241 Wood Ct.  
Emily Waechtler 241 Wood Ct.

### CALL TO ORDER.

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

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES; TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING OF JULY 27, 2011**

Chairman Weaver directed the Commission's attention to the draft minutes of the Transportation Commission meeting of June 8, 2011. Commissioner Chouinard moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Miller-Girson. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote. **The motion passed.**

### **I. DISCUSSION OF PEDESTRIAN SAFETY WHEN CROSSING AT UNPROTECTED CROSSWALKS**

Ms. Mayerhofer introduced the discussion by announcing the Village was on the candidate list to receive \$28,000 in Safe Routes to School grant funds for a pedestrian-activated flashing beacon at Wilmette Avenue and Prairie Avenue. She thanked all of the parents and staff at McKenzie School who assisted with the application process. Ms. Mayerhofer noted the topic of crosswalk safety is on the agenda today because she has received calls from many concerned residents requesting improved safety and better signage at unprotected crosswalks. In particular, residents in the neighborhoods surrounding Wilmette Avenue and Sheridan Road have expressed a need for better signage.

As an example, the crosswalk at Wilmette Avenue and 15<sup>th</sup> Street utilizes a crossing guard during the school year, but parents and students expressed a difficulty crossing Wilmette Avenue outside of the times the guard is available. Similarly, Sheridan Road has unprotected marked crossings at Chestnut Avenue, Washington Avenue and the Gillson/Michigan Avenue entrance to the park. These crossings are most often utilized during the summer months.

Several years ago, the Village adopted a policy for "in street pedestrian signs" (like the ones located at 12<sup>th</sup> and Central and 11<sup>th</sup> and Central) to bring awareness to unmarked crosswalks. Staff has observed that these signs have been marginally effective, however.

Ms. Mayerhofer introduced a new MUTCD sign (R1-5 B and R1-5C) noting the Illinois state law requires vehicles to stop for pedestrians in a crosswalk. MUTCD states this sign can be used in conjunction with a stop bar. When a pedestrian isn't in the crosswalk, the driver can proceed through. However, when a pedestrian is in the crosswalk, the driver is required to stop and allow them to cross.

Chairman Weaver asked if the stop bar was a requirement to which Mr. Manis said MUTCD does not require it but recommends it as an option.

Ms. Mayerhofer pointed out that the Village suffers from sign pollution and the Village Board has targeted staff to reduce the number of signs in the Village. Ms. Mayerhofer suggested that any change in signage be supported with a policy and guidance as to where the new signs would be appropriate. Ms. Mayerhofer asked Mr. Manis to review the items in the agenda packet.

Mr. Manis reviewed the agenda materials and also provided photos of the signs that are currently in place in Evanston. Two examples shown in the photos are Central Avenue and Gross Point Road. Chairman Weaver asked when Evanston installed the signs to which Mr. Manis responded 2010.

Ms. Mayerhofer told the Commission that the Village received a petition signed by neighbors in the McKenzie school area requesting a pedestrian-activated signal at Wilmette and Prairie. She indicated that the Village will receive a state grant to install it. Commissioner Chouinard asked if this was a full signal like the one on Lake Avenue to which Ms. Mayerhofer indicated it is not.

Chairman Weaver asked if the flashing beacon was an “on demand” light. Ms. Mayerhofer said it is pedestrian activated.

Chairman Weaver discussed the blog from the Evanston article noting several concerns from residents that the new signs cause an increase in rear-end accidents. Chief King responded by commenting he has been in communication with the Evanston Police in regard to their experiences with the new pedestrian crossing signs. Chief did not have any accident data, however. He noted the Illinois Vehicle Code is confusing and explained that as written, a driver has an obligation to stop for a pedestrian that is already within a marked crosswalk. Commissioner Lilly asked if there is a difference in legal obligation between signed crosswalks and any other marked crosswalk, to which Chief indicated there is not. Commissioner Lilly noted he likes the “yield” part of the sign as it helps not confuse the driver.

Ms. Mayerhofer said MUTCD has an Illinois supplement that requires drivers to “stop” as opposed to “yield” at crosswalks.

Commissioner Chouinard said he likes the idea and feels the Village should give the signs a try. He said educating the kids about crosswalk safety is important so they know what to do.

Chairman Weaver stated his perception on Central Street in Evanston is that the pedestrian crossing is narrow and the bump-outs really help slow the traffic down. He thought the signs in Evanston were temporary, however, to encourage a change in driver behavior.

Ms. Mayerhofer said a bump-out is an option on Wilmette Avenue where there is a parking lane, but there is no traffic calming budget in 2012.

Commissioner Chouinard referenced a corner on Sheridan Road where there was a motorcycle accident. Chief King said there were multiple factors involved in that accident.

Ms. Mayerhofer noted the Wilmette corridor is a school zone so there is already a lot of signage. She would like to look into consolidating signs to prevent over-communication. Chairman Weaver noted that with the strobe on the pedestrian signal there may not be a need for an advance sign.

Chairman asked the residents to address the board with their concerns.

Michelle Smale, 822 Sheridan Road, said when driving people really don't see the crosswalks. Drivers are busy texting and not paying attention to pedestrians. She feels the signs and white crosswalk paint would be helpful. She also feels that on Sheridan Road there are many walkers and runners and it is incredibly difficult to cross the road at 7:00 am. She said drivers need a sign because they don't stop. She concluded her comments by saying when she drives in Evanston she notices the drivers do stop for pedestrians.

Laura Hine, 832 Sheridan, concurred that crossing Sheridan Road is a challenge, especially because the underpass is temporarily closed.

Dave and Fran Dudzinski, 246 Greenleaf, stated the crosswalks at Washington and Chestnut have no white paint so drivers don't even realize there is a crosswalk. Ms. Mayerhofer said striping is easy to add and can be installed in spring.

Sue Sklansky, 515 Central, said the signs work on Central but farther down near Crawford, they do not work.

Renee Lanam, 1425 Wilmette, said she uses the 15<sup>th</sup> street crosswalk and would love to see a bump out. She also asked about lighted crosswalks. Ms. Mayerhofer stated they are more costly and not part of our existing budget. A short discussion ensued about lighted crosswalks. Ms. Mayerhofer explained the reflective striping would accomplish the same thing.

Chairman Weaver noted that the signs would have to be installed in the appropriate environment with low speeds and where they would be expected.

Mindy Rittner, 315 16<sup>th</sup> Street, said it is difficult to see pedestrians especially at night. She supports the bump-outs and suggested a closer look at 15<sup>th</sup> Street. She stated public education is important.

Laura and Emily Waechtler, 241 Wood Ct., stated they frequently cross at Wilmette and Prairie and support some pedestrian enhancements to improve safety.

Commissioner Chouinard asked how far back the stop bars would be on Wilmette Avenue. Ms. Mayerhofer said there are single lanes so the bar would be approximately 5 to 7 feet back from the crosswalk. Mr. Manis noted 20 to 50 feet is for multi-lane roadways. Evanston uses 20-feet for

all applications. Commissioner Lilly noted it should be a reasonable distance but left up to engineering judgment.

Ms. Mayerhofer said the R1-5b sign in the MUTCD would apply in Illinois. Commissioner Chouinard said he likes the option that spells out the word “pedestrians.” This will help clarify the confusion about stopping all the time.

Mr. Manis said Evanston initially installed the “yield for pedestrian” signs then the supplement came out in the 2009 MUTCD. They have since changed the signs to “stop” and installed stop bars.

Commissioner Albrecht asked how many signs are in Evanston on Sheridan Road near Northwestern. Mr. Manis answered there is only one near Chicago Avenue. Commissioner Lilly stated if the budget allows, he likes the idea of some better signs along Sheridan Road for the summer and making the crosswalks more visible.

Chairman Weaver asked if the Village has a policy on crosswalks. Ms. Mayerhofer indicated we do not and said the one thing she would like to gain from this meeting is if the Commission is interested in pursuing this further. She said she is not necessarily looking for a recommendation other than for staff to draft a policy and / or pilot project locations.

Commissioner Chouinard asked if there is the same level of pedestrian traffic near Langdon Beach. Ms. Mayerhofer said it’s one area she gets calls about.

Commissioner Albrecht said she drove Sheridan Road at night and said she could not see the crossings at all. She said she feels we absolutely need to have better striping. She also noted there are several crossings along Wilmette Avenue and asked if perhaps there are too many crossings. She noted once we add the new signage and striping, we will get requests for them everywhere.

Commissioner Albrecht stated a concern that only signing some of the crosswalks may create confusion for the unsigned crosswalks. Will the driver be confused as to which crosswalks they are to stop at and which ones they don’t?

Ms. Mayerhofer agreed and explained that driver expectation and consistency are important when adding signage. It is important not to create any confusion. Commissioner Albrecht suggested eliminating the crosswalk on 14<sup>th</sup> if we sign the crosswalks at Prairie and 15<sup>th</sup>. She explained it would clean up the area and eliminate conflicts with pedestrians and cars.

There was concurrence that when adding signage we should consider the entire corridor rather than an individual intersection. If we create an expectation for pedestrians to cross at a particular crossing, then we should make it as safe as possible.

An anonymous resident stated that Evanston added them at many intersections and suggested Wilmette should do the same. Commissioner Albrecht stressed the importance of consistency. Commissioner Weaver concurred and explained the purpose of the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

Commissioner Chouinard said places with high density of pedestrians would be the focus. If there were more instances of these signs at places where there were a lot of pedestrians it would create the expectations that you should pay attention to pedestrians. Ms. Mayerhofer indicated that although Evanston does not have a policy, they install the signs in areas with the highest density of pedestrians.

Chairman Weaver said the crosswalk in front of the Wilmette Theater creates the expectation to stop for pedestrians and there is a need for this expectation on Sheridan Road as well. Ms. Mayerhofer noted that the crosswalk on Wilmette Avenue between Village Hall and Hotcakes is one of the Village's highest complaint areas. She noted the crosswalk is marked but there are no special signs.

The Commission agreed they would like to see things move forward and strongly encourages pavement markings at the Sheridan Road crosswalks.

Commissioner Albrecht asked if Sheridan Road was the only place where there are brick crosswalks. Ms. Mayerhofer replied yes. She indicated the crosswalks would be marked as soon as the weather gets warmer.

The Commission continued discussions about various crosswalks that could benefit from striping, including Green Bay Road and Washington Avenue.

Chairman Weaver asked about the cost of the flashing signs to which Ms. Mayerhofer said its \$28,000 for a pair.

The Commission briefly discussed in-laid lighting for crosswalks and determined this measure is costly, difficult to maintain because of snow plows and not widely used and recognized in this area.

Ms. Mayerhofer told the Committee the next meeting will likely be in April and that the Commission will be down two Commissioners, so four of the five members are needed for a quorum.

## **II. OLD BUSINESS**

None

### **III. ADJOURNMENT.**

At 8:32 p.m., Commissioner Chouinard motioned to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lilly and 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