

TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING COMMISSION
Minutes – July 22, 2020
Council Chambers – Village Hall
801 Burlington Avenue, Downers Grove

Chairman Carter called the July 22, 2020 meeting of the Transportation and Parking Commission to order at 7:02 P.M. and led the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chairman Carter, Commissioners Wilkinson, Novak, Saricks, Shiliga, Heverin

Absent: Commissioner Carlson

Staff: Public Works Director Andy Sikich, Public Works Traffic Engineer Will Lorton, Officer Chris Fisher

Visitor Roster: Elynn Cunningham, Janice Fellows

A quorum was established.

Chairman Carter reviewed the procedures to be followed for the meeting, explaining that the Commission will forward a recommendation to the Village Council for approval.

APPROVAL OF MARCH 11, 2020 MINUTES

COMMISSIONER NOVAK MOVED TO ACCEPT MEETING MINUTES AS PRESENTED. COMMISSIONER WILKINSON SECONDED THE MOTION.

ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE 6:0.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

No public comment on non-agenda items.

Chairman Carter proceeded to files on the agenda.

File #2-20 District 99 Pedestrian Safety Study

Public Works Director Andy Sikich presented the study findings. Dr. Hank Thiele, Superintendent of District 99 was unable to attend the meeting and sent the following statement read by Mr. Sikich:

“Members of the Transportation and Parking Commission: Thank you for inviting me to attend your meeting this evening. Unfortunately, I have a conflict and am unable to be there in person.

Our school community suffered a tragic loss in February 2019, when junior Beth Dunlap was struck by a car on Main Street, just outside her school, Downers Grove North High. This great tragedy united our entire community in many ways, including to improve safety not only on Main Street, but on all streets surrounding our schools.

District 99 and the Village of Downers Grove came together with a shared mission of pedestrian safety. We conducted a search for an outside expert to conduct a comprehensive study. We retained Sam Schwartz Consulting, a renowned expert in the field. In the spring of 2019, we conducted community engagement forums that were well attended by concerned students, parents, and residents. Their feedback helped us to better understand specific concerns and safety issues. In addition, an online interactive map allowed residents to pinpoint and comment about exact intersections that caused concerns. We gathered 463 comments, many of which zeroed in on specific locations.

Through the research, Sam Schwartz provided detailed recommendations about changes to make on both sides of town. Their recommendations are based on Best Practices, and range from reducing road lanes from four to three lanes, extending curbs, painting intersections, installing traffic signals, and other strategies. These are all detailed in a 31-page report.

We are already acting on some of the recommendations. For example, this summer we are creating a new drop off/pick up area off of Dunham, which will alleviate congestion in the area. We thank the Village of Downers Grove for their work in expediting this project.

We are looking forward to continuing our close collaboration with the Village, and moving forward with continuing to enhance pedestrian safety for our community.

The most important job we have is to keep our students safe. We can only do that in partnership with you.

Thank you for your time, and for your important work.

Dr. Hank Thiele”

Mr. Sikich continued with his presentation stating that the project is a partnership with District 99 and the Village of Downers Grove, with the goal to improve pedestrian safety at Downers Grove North and South High Schools. Sam Schwartz Consultants were hired to prepare the study and an extensive public engagement was done. The plan was formally accepted by the Village Council in February of 2020.

Mr. Sikich explained that the initial safety enhancements included temporary message boards encouraging safe driving behaviors in front of both schools, temporary speed feedback signs on Main St. & 63rd, a pedestrian safety awareness campaign at both schools, a 20 mph speed zone established on Main St. in front of Downers Grove North, speed limit reduction on Main from Ogden to Lincoln to 25 mph, and the approval of the installation of a traffic signal with pedestrian crosswalks at the intersection of 63rd and Springside, which should begin shortly.

Details of the Report

Mr. Sikich provided an overview of the recommended improvements.

Downers Grove North: The primary recommendation is to convert Main Street from 4-lanes (2 northbound and 2 southbound) to 3 lanes, with one in each direction and a center median or turn lane area. Mr. Sikich emphasized that the consultant believes that even though it’s being reduced from 4 through-lanes to 2 through-lanes, the traffic on Main St. will not be negatively impacted

and the functionality of some of the intersections could even be improved due to the dedicated turn lanes.

Additional proposed improvements on Main Street include a painted intersection and refuge island at Main & Grant. The signal at Main & Grant already prioritizes pedestrians, but the pedestrian timing can also be modified, and a curb extension would shorten the pedestrian crossing distance. The south end of the improvement at Prairie & Franklin would also have a 3-lane section with a painted median and turn lanes.

Highland Ave improvements include conceptual traffic calming measures between Grant & Lincoln, and curb bump outs at the intersection to shorten the pedestrian crossing distance. The Village has used some of these traffic calming techniques in a few other areas and it has been successful. On the Saratoga side of North High, the recommendations include additional sidewalks on Saratoga, Grant, and Sherman. The study also recommends a raised intersection at Prince & Sherman, which will slow traffic down and call motorists' attention, giving pedestrians a safer location to cross. On Ogden Ave from Saratoga to Main there is a gap in the sidewalk network on the south side of Ogden that is proposed to be closed. The Village will have to work with IDOT in regards to "no turn on red" restrictions and possible pedestrian timing signal changes.

Downers Grove South: A new signalized intersection is proposed at Main & Oxford. Main is under DuPage County jurisdiction in this location, and this signal would need approval by the County. The recommendation is to eliminate the crosswalk at Norfolk and move it to the new signal at Oxford, making it a safer location for pedestrians to cross Main St.

A signalized intersection at 63rd & Springside is one of the recommendations of the study. This is already underway as a joint project between the County and the Village and will begin construction very soon. Some of the improvements that DGS will eventually be making on their campus include a new proposed entrance along 63rd St with fencing and streetscape improvements. This project is District 99 led and will happen at some point in the future. At Dunham & 63rd pedestrian signal timing modifications, and curb bump outs to shorten crossing distance, are proposed. North of 63rd, the study recommends adding a sidewalk along the east side of Dunham so students parking in the church parking lot have a way to get safely down to the intersection and across 63rd St.

Along the Dunham Road side of DGS, a new drop off area is already under construction on Dunham as part of the District 99 project. Once the work at Dunham & 63rd and some of the other improvements are in place, the study recommends taking another look at the intersection of Dunham & Norfolk to see how the intersection is functioning.

Cost & Timelines:

Mr. Sikich gave an overview of relative costs and timelines. Some projects are easier, less expensive, and could be accomplished more quickly. Proposed projects that will take the longest are those on DuPage County and IDOT roads: 63rd St, Oxford & Main signal, and Ogden.

Mr. Sikich concluded the presentation by recommending that, at this time, the Commission discuss, review and consider the study information and proposed projects, and then develop a prioritized work plan at next month's meeting to be recommended to the Village Council.

CHAIRMAN CARTER OPENED DISCUSSION AMONGST THE COMMISSION

Chairman Carter opened the discussion by asking Staff if there is a schedule of priority for the projects at North and at South. Mr. Sikich stated there is not a priority, but that could be part of Commission's recommendation to the Village Council. Chairman Carter then asked if that would be contingent on funding. Mr. Sikich stated that the Council would take the Commission's recommendation into consideration and determine the appropriate funding level. Chairman Carter also asked about signal modernization at DGN and if there would be a countdown timer. Mr. Sikich stated there are already countdown timers at Main & Grant, but those details would be handled during the project design phase.

Commissioner Novak expressed a concern that the reduction of Main St. from four lanes to three might exacerbate traffic congestion, and asked if the consultants could provide information on any locations where similar improvements have been implemented with positive results. Mr. Sikich stated he would reach out to the consultants and get data on other places that have implemented this type of improvement. Commissioner Novak questioned the need for pedestrian refuge islands if pedestrians are crossing at the traffic signal. Mr. Sikich stated that refuge islands provide a safe place for pedestrians to rest if they cannot cross in the allotted amount of time, and they also typically tend to slow traffic as well. Commissioner Novak asked if introducing a "no right turn on red" at Ogden will reduce the volume of cars coming through when light is red. Mr. Sikich replied that he believes it is more for drivers turning right on red that may not notice a pedestrian in the roadway. Commissioner Novak is concerned that if a "no turn on red" is put in, additional measures may be needed to prevent vehicles from cutting through the BP lot.

Commissioner Saricks, regarding Main St. south of 63rd and 63rd St, questioned if there could be a cost share with DuPage County. Mr. Sikich stated there could possibly be opportunities for cost sharing.

Commissioner Heverin asked about prioritizing relatively inexpensive and easier recommendations such as the painted intersection at Main & Grant, which had a high level of community support. Mr. Sikich stated yes, part of the plan would be looking at some of the less expensive, faster and easier projects to do first.

Commissioner Shiliga questioned the type of paint that is used to paint intersections. Mr. Sikich stated that the type of paint would have to be determined. Commissioner Shiliga asked about maintenance and upkeep cost of the improvements after initial construction. Mr. Sikich stated that they all require some kind of maintenance at some level. Staff can provide the Commission with additional information on future maintenance.

Commissioner Saricks asked if the intersection at Main & Grant would be raised. Mr. Sikich stated that the recommendation is not to raise that intersection.

Commissioner Wilkinson stated a concern that these projects would take precedence over other needed projects, such as striping at grade schools or other needed sidewalks. Mr. Sikich stated that would be discussed by the Village Council in their long range planning and budget discussions, but that this concern could be included in the Commission's recommendation to the Village Council.

CHAIRMAN CARTER OPENED UP THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEM

No public comment.

CHAIRMAN CARTER CLOSED THE PUBLIC COMMENT DISCUSSION

Chairman Carter thanked Staff for the presentation and stated that this discussion would continue at the next meeting.

File #3-20 Norfolk Sidewalk Petition

Director Andy Sikich gave a presentation on the subject petition. He stated that the petition was received in December, and that the request is for a new sidewalk on the south side of Norfolk from Saratoga to Carpenter, to improve safety of children walking to Kingsley School. The request was signed by 5 residents. There is currently an existing sidewalk on north side of Norfolk.

Pedestrian safety has been a primary focus of the Village for many years. For 30 years there has been a policy of constructing a sidewalk on one side of every street, and this has been accomplished for the most part, with very few exceptions. The rationale behind the policy was that every street should have a least one side with a sidewalk where pedestrians can safely walk. However, constructing sidewalks on both sides was cost prohibitive, and it can also be difficult and disruptive to a street's grading, drainage, and tree canopy to construct sidewalks in mature neighborhoods that were not originally designed for sidewalks. As a result of this policy there are many streets around the Village, some within close proximity to elementary schools, where sidewalks exist only on one side.

Mr. Sikich showed exhibits depicting similar circumstances at several schools around town, such as Highland, Puffer, Belle Aire, Lester, Fairmount, and O'Neill. Some schools do not have many instances of this, such as El Sierra, which was constructed at a time when the standard was to put curb and gutter and sidewalks on both sides of the street.

The issue of putting a second sidewalk on both sides of the street near schools has been raised before and discussed at the Village Council level. Discussion by the Council generally revolved around the margin of safety gained with a second sidewalk on the street versus limited resources, competing capital projects, and changes to the neighborhood character caused by the addition of sidewalks.

Mr. Sikich gave a brief history of capital improvements within the Downers Grove Estates subdivision. On Norfolk there is limited storm sewer on the north side and a ditch/culvert system on the south side with several large parkway trees. The approximate length of the proposed sidewalk is 665 feet, which in 2020 dollars equates to about an \$80,000 project. However, Mr. Sikich emphasized that the price could go up once the extent of drainage improvements are known, and if it can't be bundled with other projects to keep unit prices at a reasonable level.

The District 99 pedestrian study refers to completed sidewalk networks at certain locations: Saratoga, Sherman, Grant, and a small stretch of Dunham north of 63rd St. These are recommended because they are locations with significant potential for pickup and drop off traffic conflicting with pedestrians. The sidewalk being requested on south side of Norfolk could be considered in the same context, if it's warranted by the pedestrian and traffic volumes. Changes in the neighborhood character would also have to be considered. Another consideration is the study recommendation to relocate the Main St crosswalk from Norfolk to Oxford, and the impact that might have on pedestrian flow.

Staff recommends that, if the Village desires to begin constructing sidewalks on the second side of certain streets adjacent to schools, this should not be done on a request by request basis. A comprehensive analysis should be performed so that decisions can be made on a systematic basis as to where sidewalks should be constructed, which locations take priority, and what the budget and construction schedule should be. A second sidewalk along Norfolk at the requested location could be considered as part of this larger, comprehensive analysis.

CHAIRMAN CARTER OPENED DISCUSSION AMONGST THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Shiliga asked why projects should only happen comprehensively, and not on a case by case basis. Mr. Sikich stated that similar situations exist at many elementary schools around town, and a comprehensive analysis is the most cost effective way to determine where to expend Village resources.

Commissioner Novak questioned the purpose of the petition form if the Village prefers to focus on issues overall, instead of reacting when residents raise an issue. Mr. Sikich stated that the petition has been used for those areas that still do not have a sidewalk on one side of the street. This is the first petition he is aware of requesting a second sidewalk on a street that already has a sidewalk, which is not the current Village policy. Commissioner Novak stated that he prefers to operate on a case by case basis and take care of items when they become an issue.

Commissioner Saricks asked if Downers Grove Estates has been part of a neighborhood traffic study area in the past. Mr. Lorton stated that it has not, but has been identified as possibly being included in traffic study number 8. Commissioner Saricks feels that increases in traffic on Norfolk need to be taken into consideration for the safety of students, as would be done with a traffic study.

Commissioner Heverin asked if anyone at other schools with one sidewalk has filed a petition for an additional sidewalk. Mr. Sikich replied that as far as he knows, this is the only instance where a petition was filed for a sidewalk on a street that already has a sidewalk. Commissioner Heverin stated that it is unclear as to whether there are unique dangers at some of the other schools. She emphasized that these residents are identifying a problem, when residents at the other schools are not identifying that a problem exists, which could indicate there might be a unique concern at this location. Commissioner Heverin asked if there are other options to make the streets safer short of putting in a sidewalk that could be done quickly before school starts. Mr. Sikich stated that the Village has been working with Kingsley over the last year or so, adding changes such as the temporary 3-way stop at Saratoga and Norfolk to see how it operates, as well as additional measures with crossing guards, etc.

Commissioner Wilkinson asked how long ago the new sidewalk construction program was stopped. Mr. Sikich stated it was maybe 2014 or 2015. Mr. Lorton stated that a new sidewalk was put in last year as part of neighborhood traffic study number 6, but that was by petition and part of a larger drainage project. Commissioner Wilkinson stated that there has been a period of 5 years where there really hasn't been a focus on construction of new sidewalks, which may need to be revisited. He is concerned with serious injuries that have occurred.

Chairman Carter stated that he feels that there is a safety issue with kids crossing streets twice, and that a global approach is good when making modifications to a Village program. He believes

there is a need here and would like to know if there are things the Village can implement now, in the interim, to help the situation.

CHAIRMAN CARTER OPENED UP THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

1. Elynn Cunningham: wished to emphasize that DGS is a block away from the school. The street that students are crossing twice is a street that many people are using to get to Kingsley and DGS. The stop sign at Saratoga is much appreciated and believes it has already been helpful. Does not have a suggestion of something other than a sidewalk, because students do have cross twice and she doesn't have any suggestions other than what parents are doing by walking them there.
2. Janice Fellowes of 1127 Norfolk: Lives in one of the homes on the south side of Norfolk and proposing to get sidewalk on her side of street. Has 3 children and knows that potentially getting a sidewalk may not be possible during their time at Kingsley, but thinks it's critical to look at the neighborhood in the long term. Thanked the Commission for recognizing her concerns and addressing these issues. Thinks stop sign is fantastic and wants to know what will make it permanent along with stripes on the street. Understands that requesting a sidewalk on the second side of the street is unique, but this is a unique situation where they actually cross the street 3 times. Most of the kids don't do that and walk through neighbor's yards instead. There are many other families walking from Oxford and streets north and south. This is not just for her street, but for the entire neighborhood crossing the street and dealing with dangerous traffic. Thinks long term they should not wait for a study or for an accident to happen. Does not believe it should be based on money. Does not know if there is a short-term solution. Neighbors are walking through lawns right now, and she would be willing to offer her lawn to anybody who wants to walk through it.

CHAIRMAN CARTER CLOSED THE PUBLIC COMMENT DISCUSSION

CHAIRMAN CARTER OPENED DISCUSSION AMONGST THE COMMISSION

Chairman Carter thanked school staff members for attending meeting. Asked school staff if there could be a safety awareness outreach by the school. Asked the Village staff to look at placing pedestrian crossing placards at the 3-way stop to help slow traffic down at those crosswalks, stop cut-through traffic, and get new striping out there.

Commissioner Wilkinson asked if the sidewalk could be put on the other side of the trees opposite the street side, and instead of putting down concrete putting a mulched pathway. Mr. Sikich stated he does not think mulch paths are considered ADA compliant. Commissioner Wilkinson disagreed. Commissioner Wilkinson stated it could be a temporary solution since the resident is offering her front yard. Mr. Sikich stated that if easements could be obtained from all of the property owners it could be possible to put something behind the trees.

Commissioner Wilkinson stated that he does not disagree that it needs to be looked at overall, but the Village needs to try something. Human life outweighs all of the discussion in terms of cost.

Commissioner Heverin asked if there is a possibility that the ten homeowners on the block could give easements for the duration of the school year. She also asked if there are crossing guards on

these streets and if it could be a potential solution. Mr. Sikich stated there are two crossing guards on Norfolk at Barrett and Powell.

Commissioner Novak agrees with prioritizing safety. The residents have brought the issue to the Village's attention, and the Commission needs to be accountable for the safety of the children. He would like to take a case by case basis look at this issue.

Chairman Carter asked to push this issue to next month's meeting. Thinks the easement idea is a great idea even on a temporary or schoolyear basis. Would like to see what extra measures, such as striping and signage, can be put into place in the next month. Does not feel comfortable recommending the global approach at this time.

Commissioner Saricks asked if there is a timeline for doing a traffic study for this area, or area 8. Mr. Sikich stated not at this time. The traffic study area for this year was cancelled due to the pandemic. Commissioner Saricks asked to confirm that the study for this year would not have included Downers Grove Estates. Mr. Sikich confirmed this, also stating that when traffic studies resume, it will start with the one that was cancelled this year first, and then Downers Grove Estates may be the next area after that. Commissioner Saricks does not want this study is being pushed into the future.

Chairman Carter wants to give staff one month to see what kind of timeline a global approach might have, so that the Commission can make an educated decision and recommendation.

Commissioner Shiliga asked, if going down the road of a holistic approach, should this be prioritized as the first issue to be addressed, as a pilot project for ensuring schools have sidewalks on both sides of the street.

Commissioner Wilkinson asked to grandfather this project, so it is done now, and then everything else could be part of the systematic study.

Commissioner Novak stated that these residents took the time to fill out the petition and show up for the meeting, and he thinks they should be first. He then asked when school is starting. Multiple attendees stated that it is starting August 27th. He stated that this is a major issue and does not know if it can wait.

Commissioner Saricks requested that action occur between now and the next meeting in response to the issues that have been raised this evening. He requested that staff come back with a short term possible solution that will work in this neighborhood and not have to wait indefinitely for a neighborhood study.

Commissioner Novak asked what it takes for a traffic study. Mr. Sikich stated that for this purpose we would want a study that included both cars and pedestrians, which would take some time. Commissioner Novak stated that an ideal study would be during the school year when there are students and buses. Mr. Sikich confirmed this,

Mr. Sikich stated that the trial stop sign at Saratoga and Norfolk was just extended, because the last 180 days were not a good test of whether it would be effective. This extension is the limit of staff's ability to put this stop sign in place. After that it would need to go to the Village Council for approval to become permanent.

Commissioner Novak believes that, in a meeting where the Commission was addressed by the Superintendent of District 58, he stated that there is a problem at this location. Commissioner Novak feels that it is on the Commission to act now.

Commissioner Wilkinson stated that the District 99 study talks about Norfolk, which impacts the Kingsley school.

Commissioner Heverin is interested to hear from District 58 Superintendent Russell to know if he has any information as to whether there are additional concerns at other schools. She believes that a traffic study will not be a representative study until we're out of the pandemic due to some students not attending school in person.

Public Comment: Ms. Fellowes asked if a lane could be marked with striping or cones on the south side of the street to give the impression of a sidewalk there, as a temporary solution.

Commissioner Heverin asked if the idea would be similar to the outdoor dining spaces downtown where barricades are creating a gap at the side of the road.

Chairman Carter asked if Ms. Fellowes is suggesting students walk on the side of the street right next to traffic. Ms. Fellowes responded if there is some kind of barrier designating it as a walking path lined with cones or something where cars do not go as a temporary solution.

Commissioner Novak stated that it's a great idea, but there is concern over how wide the roadway is for buses and cars and if it encroaches into the street.

Chairman Carter asked Mr. Sikich for final comments. Mr. Sikich stated that staff can look at temporary solutions. He does not think there is a simple quick fix, aside from putting in a sidewalk.

Chairman Carter asked staff to return next month with some additional information, and a timetable for a global approach.

WITH RESPECT TO FILE #3-20, MR. SARICKS MOVED TO TABLE THE CURRENT RECOMMENDATION UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING WITH THE PROVISIO THAT STAFF WILL RETURN WITH SOME SPECIFIC CONCRETE SUGGESTIONS AS TO WHAT CAN BE DONE IN THE SHORT TERM PRIOR TO THE POSSIBLE CONSTRUCTION OF A SIDEWALK OR THE COMPLETION OF A REGIONAL STUDY SO THAT THIS IS NOT FURTHER POSTPONED, AND TO TRY TO IMPLEMENT SOME NEAR TERM IDEAS. WOULD LIKE TO HEAR STAFF PROPOSALS AT THE NEXT MEETING.

SECONDED BY MR. NOVAK.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE 6:0.

Commissioner Novak asked if the next meeting can be virtual, if COVID-19 restrictions were again strengthened so that the issue could be discussed and not delayed again if meeting in person is not possible. Mr. Sikich confirmed it would be allowed as long as regulations allow.

DISCUSSION OF OLD BUSINESS

1. Mr. Sikich stated that the last two meetings were focused on the downtown parking study. Due to changes that have occurred during the pandemic, parking is not occurring normally. Staff feels that this discussion should be put on hold to see what commuter parking is like after the pandemic, and educated changes can be made at that point. If traffic continues as it was pre-pandemic, then the Village can move forward with recommendations.

Communications

No communications at this time.

ADJOURN

**MR. SARICKS MOVED TO ADJOURN, SECONDED BY MR. NOVAK.
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE 6:0.**

Chairman Carter adjourned the meeting at 8:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Andrea Banke
Recording Secretary