

**TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING COMMISSION**  
**Minutes – July 14, 2021**  
**Council Chambers – Village Hall**  
**801 Burlington Avenue, Downers Grove**

Chairman Carter called the July 14, 2021 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 O’Malley, Novak, Saricks, Shiliga,

**Absent:** Commissioners Carlson & Heverin

**Staff:** Public Works Director Andy Sikich, Public Works Traffic Engineer Will Lorton, Community Service Officer Jim Hartleb, and Police Support Services Manager Bill Budds

**Visitor Roster:** Laura Temple, Karen Laio, Stephanie Slavkin, Andrew Wood, Karen Thomas, Jacqueline Erickson, Bridget Ryan, Vito Siciliano, Caroline Shields, Angie Winslow, Brandon Gabry, Brian Erickson, Lisa Lockerby, Louis Buttny, Bill Sweeney, Toni Gabry, Megan Sweeney, Gary Kline, Jean Franklin

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 OCTOBER 22, 2020 MINUTES**

**Chairman Carter asked for one amendment to show that he was not present at the October 22, 2020 meeting.**

**COMMISSIONER NOVAK MOVED TO ACCEPT MEETING MINUTES AS AMENDED. COMMISSIONER SARICKS SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE 5:0.**

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

No public comment on non-agenda items.

Chairman Carter proceeded to the files on the agenda.

**File #1-21 Prairie Avenue & Forest Avenue Traffic & Safety Improvements**

Public Works Director Andy Sikich presented information regarding the intersection of Prairie Avenue & Forest Avenue located approximately 300 feet from the traffic signal at Main Street & Prairie Avenue. The primary reason this is being addressed is due to the high number of traffic

accidents at this intersection since 2015. Twenty-four accidents occurred at the intersection between January 2015 and April 2021. The majority of these accidents involved vehicles on northbound Forest Avenue colliding with vehicles on eastbound Prairie Avenue, totaling 14 out of 24. Contributing factors to most of the incidents appear to be traffic volume and speeds on Prairie Avenue, the traffic volume on Forest Avenue turning onto Prairie Avenue, and sight distance obstructions primarily looking west from northbound Forest Avenue.

Mr. Sikich explained that traffic volumes on Forest Avenue are quite high compared to other side streets off of Prairie Avenue between Main Street and Belmont Road. Most of the other streets carry anywhere from 300-1,000 cars per day, but Forest Avenue is consistently at or above 2,000 cars per day. Prairie Avenue averages between 6,000-6,500 vehicles per day. The sight line of motorists northbound on Forest Avenue looking west is obstructed, causing drivers to move past the stop sign to get a better view of oncoming traffic. When residents reached out regarding this intersection, the Village's initial response was to prune parkway trees to improve sight lines and to deploy driver speed feedback signs at the intersection. Police presence and enforcement has also been increased at this intersection.

Mr. Sikich said that a neighborhood meeting was held on March 30, 2021, where staff presented proposed improvements including a median on Prairie Avenue, additional striping and signage. These improvements would prevent left turns and would prevent traffic on Forest Avenue from crossing Prairie Avenue. It would also provide traffic calming on Prairie Avenue and increase pedestrian safety. Also in March, a petition was presented to staff representing 10 of the 17 households on the block of Forest Avenue south of Prairie Avenue and north of Franklin Street, requesting northbound Forest Avenue be completely blocked at Prairie Avenue.

In May, staff installed temporary improvements to simulate the proposed improvements, consisting of a median of water filled barricades, and additional striping and signage. Baseline traffic counts were taken throughout the neighborhood immediately prior to the installation. The intent was to leave the improvements in place for 60 days and then take another set of traffic counts to determine the effect of the improvements on neighborhood traffic. However, the improvements were removed after less than two weeks due to observed dangerous driving behaviors, such as drivers making a left turn into oncoming traffic on Prairie Avenue, drivers making three-point turns at the end of the median, and a significant number of drivers rolling the stop sign on northbound Forest Avenue.

Mr. Sikich then presented several potential options for improvements at this location, along with the anticipated benefits and challenges associated with each. The three primary options identified by staff included (1) Stop signs, 3-way or 4-way; (2) Right-in/Right-out on Forest Avenue, applied to just the south leg or both legs of Forest Avenue; and (3) Permanent closure of Forest Avenue at Prairie Avenue, applied to just the south leg or both legs of Forest Avenue.

In addition to the primary options, additional striping and signage will be added to the intersection to call attention to crosswalks, stop signs, etc., and sightlines will be improved to the extent possible. If desired by the Commission, additional traffic calming elements can be added to Prairie Avenue as well. This could consist of programmable signal heads on the eastbound side of the traffic signal at Main Street, and/or a median or curb-bump outs in the vicinity of the intersection at Prairie Avenue and Forest Avenue to slow traffic and improve pedestrian safety.

## **COMMISSIONER CARTER OPENED DISCUSSION AMONGST THE COMMISSION**

Mr. Shiliga asked about the financial cost of the options. Mr. Sikich stated that specific costs have not been developed, but that he does not believe cost is a major factor.

Mr. Novak is concerned about any improvements relocating the problem to another intersection along Prairie Avenue, and asked about best practices that have been done in other communities. Mr. Sikich stated that the options presented are what staff believes are the best practices that are most applicable to this situation, and that a trial of the improvements is recommended before actual implementation so that the impacts on neighborhood traffic could be evaluated.

Mr. Saricks asked about the possibility of having a roundabout. Mr. Sikich stated there is not enough room to incorporate a roundabout with adequate pedestrian safety.

Ms. O'Malley asked if there has been any impact to the neighborhood traffic subsequent to the changes at 55th Street and Washington Street. Mr. Sikich stated that he does not know if there is any data on changes to the traffic patterns since that work was done by the County.

Mr. Saricks asked if this meets warrants needed to install stop signs. Mr. Lorton said that yes, the number of crashes within a 12 month period would warrant a stop sign at this location.

Mr. Shiliga is concerned that a 4-way stop sign would back cars up onto Main Street, and asked how many cars on average could be stopped at the stop sign before it would be a concern. Mr. Sikich believes that about nine cars would be able to be stopped and not cause an issue on Main Street.

Chairman Carter stated that he is not opposed to closing Forest Avenue, but that it may impact traffic using the Forest Avenue railroad crossing. Mr. Sikich stated that is one of the things that would be evaluated during a trial period.

Chairman Carter asked if signaling the intersection was considered. Mr. Sikich believes it would likely have to be combined with the signal at Main Street and it would be expensive. He believes that the three options presented are the best solutions at this time.

Mr. Shiliga asked if there is a staff preferred option. Mr. Sikich stated that all of the options have pros and cons, and will have varying degrees of impact to the neighborhood traffic. Staff is asking for input from the Commission, and supports any of the options presented.

## **COMMISSIONER CARTER OPENED UP THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

### **PUBLIC COMMENT ON FILE #1-21**

Laura Temple, 1115 Prairie Avenue, stated that she is concerned that the median would block her driveway if moved further west, and also would be between her house and the fire hydrant on the opposite side of the street. She is concerned that the trial counts were taken when school was out at North High School. Ms. Temple stated that Forest Avenue is busy in the morning on the way to and from North High and the Forest Avenue circle is a key drop off point. She is not in

favor of closing Forest Avenue. She would prefer to see increased enforcement at this intersection.

Karen Laio, 4608 Forest Avenue, stated that North High school changed the drop off pattern to the school in about 2015 when they changed the parking areas. She saw a significant increase in cars on Forest Avenue after the change, with a line of cars past Chicago Avenue waiting to drop kids off. She believes that Prince Street. should be opened up for drop offs, as well as Main Street. Her husband walks every morning and has almost been hit on that block by a car on several occasions. Her husband feels that trees block the view of pedestrians, and cars drive very fast.

Stephanie Slavkin, 4640 Forest Avenue, stated that she walks from the train to her house and crossing Prairie Avenue during rush hour is dangerous. She would like to see a stop sign farther west on Prairie Avenue.

Andrew Wood, 1115 Prairie Avenue, has observed many accidents at this intersection over the 27 years he has lived there. Feels that the issue is primarily eastbound and northbound traffic, with eastbound going too fast, and northbound not stopping. He believes these solutions are going too far, and would like to see more attention paid to the stop signs that are already in place.

Karen Thomas, 4713 Forest Avenue, is a teacher at North High school and frequently walks up and down Forest Avenue. She stated that it is very difficult to see down Prairie Avenue, and she agrees that parkway trees are a sight obstruction and that additional stop signs should be added on Prairie Avenue, possibly at Oakwood Avenue and Saratoga Avenue. She stated that North High school closed Prince Street for drop off because the busses drop off in that location.

Jacqueline Erickson, 4800 block of Forest Avenue, stated that she would like to see stop signs or speed bumps on Prairie Avenue. She thinks people will speed to make the green light at Main Street, even if a stop sign is placed on Prairie Avenue at Oakwood Avenue.

Bridget Ryan, 4800 block of Forest Avenue, believes that too much traffic is using Forest Avenue as a bypass to avoid Main Street.

Vito Siciliano, 4808 Forest Avenue, stated that these same issues were discussed 20 years ago and all that was done was to restrict left turns from westbound Prairie Avenue to southbound Forest Avenue. He stated that nobody adheres to that restriction. He believes that speeding is out of control on Forest Avenue, and that drivers will even pass cars that are going to slow. He believes that stop signs on Prairie Avenue would be ignored by drivers. He believes that cars avoid Main Street because the lights at Franklin Street and Main Street and at Prairie Avenue and Main Street are not synchronized. He would like to see Forest Avenue blocked off at Main Street, and Franklin Street changed to one-way eastbound.

Caroline Shields, 4820 Forest Avenue, believes that the problem is that everyone is acting as if Prairie Avenue and Forest Avenue are Ogden Avenue or Main Street. She has three young kids ages six to eleven and she and other moms do not want to let their kids cross Prairie Avenue anywhere, and definitely not at Forest Avenue, because it's unsafe. She agrees with closing Forest Avenue on the south side, while also ensuring traffic is not directed to Prince Street.

Angie Winslow, 4816 Forest Avenue, is in agreement that the speeding on this block is ridiculous. She has video of cars passing other cars on Forest Avenue. She understands there is a concern about moving the problem somewhere else, but something has to be done to get some of the traffic off of their block. She is not in favor of a three or four-way stop at the intersection of Prairie Avenue and Forest Avenue. She is in favor of closing Forest Avenue at Prairie Avenue.

Brandon Gabry, 4826 Forest Avenue, understands the concern about the railroad crossing on Forest Avenue, but believes that traffic should take Franklin Street to Main Street, and not the 4800 block of Forest Avenue. He is in favor of closing Forest Avenue at Prairie Avenue with a bump out into Prairie Avenue to help with traffic calming. He is concerned about driver complacency with a right-in/right-out northbound to turn east onto Prairie Avenue.

Brian Erickson, 4800 block of Forest Avenue, stated that the speed data on Forest Avenue was taken 18 feet from the stop sign, and he does not believe that putting a stop sign on Prairie Avenue will address the issue of people speeding on Forest Avenue and ignoring the stop sign. He is concerned that a kid on a bicycle will be hit by a car that does not stop at the stop sign. Mr. Erickson stated that the traffic counts on the blocks to the west on Prince Street, Saratoga Avenue, Linscott Avenue, Oakwood Avenue, etc. collectively have less than 2000 cars. He stated that Prince Street averages 320 cars per day, and Forest Avenue has 2500. He referenced an engineering study that categorizes local streets by the amount of daily traffic, with a “poor” rating given to any street with over 1,200 cars per day. He stated that Forest Avenue sees 2,500 cars on a day when the high school is closed. He disagrees with the stop sign option, and believes it may cause more accidents. He submitted a FOIA request which showed that 4 accidents have occurred at this intersection since April 15th. One of his neighbors recently got into an accident going into his own driveway. Mr. Erickson stated that he and his wife do not feel safe. He believes the only option that makes it a safer intersection for both drivers and kids would be to close Forest Avenue at Prairie Avenue. He requested that, if Forest Avenue is not closed off, at least 5 speed bumps be installed curb to curb on his street because they should not be seeing 2,500 cars every single day.

Lisa Lockerby, 4732 Forest Avenue, asked if she remembered correctly from the neighborhood meeting that many of the accidents were caused by people who were not from the area. Mr. Sikich stated that he believes so, but does not recall for certain. She said that every time she calls 911 for an accident the people say they thought there was a stop sign and they could not see because of all of the parkway obstructions. Her kids have also said they cannot see due to parkway obstructions such as trees and utility boxes, which she believes is part of the problem, especially for people who are not from the area.

Louis Buttny, 4828 Forest Avenue, was hit by a car heading northbound on Forest Avenue while he was backing into his driveway. He believes that something needs to be done. He found a study from 1998, and all they got was a “no left turn” sign. If something could be done for them they would appreciate it.

Bill Sweeney, 4641 Forest Avenue, stated that he appreciates the safety concerns, but he is opposed to permanently closing off Forest Avenue. As a resident he does use Forest Avenue to get downtown, and when it was temporarily blocked off he used Prince Street instead of Forest Avenue. He believes increased enforcement would help. He thinks something needs to be done, but he believes some of the other measures should be tried first, before closing off the street.

Vito Siciliano, 4808 Forest Avenue, stated that he is for blocking Forest Avenue off at Prairie Avenue from both directions. He also believes that if speed bumps are used, there would need to be at least five of them on this block of Forest Avenue. He also would like the Village to synchronize the lights at Franklin Street and Main Street and Prairie Avenue and Main Street, and that Franklin Street has to be one-way.

Toni Gabry, 4826 Forest Avenue, is in favor of permanently closing Forest Avenue on the south end, because the 4800 block alone sees 2500 cars per day. She understands that the 4600 and 4700 blocks will be inconvenienced, but they are not seeing the high traffic volumes that the 4800 block is seeing per day.

Megan Sweeney, 4641 Forest Avenue, does not believe that closing Forest Avenue will help with speeding on Prairie Avenue. Pedestrians will still have to cross Prairie Avenue and that solution will not slow people down or make children safer crossing Prairie Avenue. She also believes that most of the traffic will move to Prince Street. She asked if there are problems with the intersection of Prairie Avenue and Washington, due to the railroad crossing at Washington. Mr. Sikich said that intersection is a bit of a different situation, but he is not aware that it has the significant number of accidents that Prairie Avenue and Forest Avenue does.

Gary Kline, 4742 Forest Avenue, stated that he has been working from home for the last 1.5 years, and every day he hears horns honking and tires screeching at that corner.

Brian Erickson, 4805 Forest Avenue, believes that the number of accidents is alarming, but what isn't captured are the near misses and horn honkings as Mr. Kline reported. He has sent a number of videos to Mr. Sikich and the Village Council, some have 10-13 year old kids riding bicycles, and the horn honks are chilling. When the barricade was implemented, people never stopped at the stop sign. He feels that the impact of the barricade was that people never stopped to go left or straight, and there was a parade of cars going one after the other right through the stop sign. He feels that a right-only will continue the issue of people not stopping.

Jean Franklin, 4716 Forest Avenue, stated that when the barricade was up she was very concerned with all the bicyclists, because there was no room for a bicycle to get down Prairie Avenue with a car. She saw a group of boys riding bikes going north on the 4800 block of Forest Avenue and they were all over the road due to the narrowness. She stated that she does not want the street blocked off at Forest Avenue 4700. She feels that everyone just went around to Prince Street when the barricades were up. She felt it was confusing for motorists. She prefers the 4-way stop sign option, and would like to see more stop signs all along Prairie Avenue. She understands that there is a lot of traffic on the 4800 block of Forest Avenue, and there have always been a lot of accidents at that corner since she's lived there.

Andrew Wood, 1115 Prairie Avenue, stated that he would be most affected by options 1 and 2. He stated that putting in a 3 or 4-way stop sign will create backups going well west and east on Prairie Avenue preventing them from getting in and out of their driveways. He also stated that a right-in/right-out with a median extension would go well west of their driveway, impeding their ability to get in and out. He feels that stop signs will create more fender benders there.

## **CHAIRMAN CARTER CLOSED THE PUBLIC COMMENT**

## **CHAIRMAN CARTER OPENED DISCUSSION AMONGST THE COMMISSION**

Chairman Carter asked if the Main Street project at North High school is still planned. Mr. Sikich confirmed that it is still planned, but the design process has just started. Chairman Carter stated that he is concerned that if Main Street is reduced to one lane in each direction, even the perception of impeding traffic could exacerbate the cut-through traffic on Forest Avenue. He asked what enforcement efforts have been done to help decrease the accidents and concerns. Mr. Budds said that enforcement has increased and since June 8th, 30 officers have spent extra patrol time at this intersection resulting in 13 traffic stops, and 12 tickets issued. The feedback received from officers mirrors what residents are seeing: cars not stopping completely at the stop sign and rolling through.

Chairman Carter would like staff to reach out to school District 99 to see if anything can be done to help alleviate the issue with drop off. He stated that he is not sure the stop sign option is viable, because it relies on enforcement. He asked if Prairie Avenue would get a stop sign if Forest Avenue were closed. Mr. Sikich responded no, but that traffic calming could be added to Prairie Avenue to help slow the traffic down, and programmable signal heads could be used to avoid speeding to “catch the light.” Chairman Carter questioned if the stop sign on Prairie Avenue could be done along with the dead end on Prairie Avenue. Mr. Sikich responded that he believes there would be significant non-compliance in that case.

Mr. Shiliga stated that Prairie Avenue is a long road without stops and is a major thoroughfare that could use additional stop signs. Mr. Sikich responded that stop signs are not generally used for speed control, because unwarranted stop signs tend to be ignored, and could potentially increase rear-end collisions.

Chairman Carter believes that there needs to be some additional hybrid options, combining some of the options together to meet the needs and safety of the public.

Mr. Novak stated that he is not sure about stop signs, and believes the timing of the Main Street signals is important. He asked if Downers Grove could implement speed cameras. Mr. Budds stated that the City of Chicago and the Department of Transportation are the only ones that can use speed cameras currently in the State of Illinois. Mr. Novak is concerned with sight obstructions on Prairie Avenue, and that there is not a lot of traffic calming. He stated that he does not think stop signs are a good option, and that the temporary barrier did not work. He does not want to impact property value, and believes that maybe there is another option.

Ms. O’Malley stated that traffic on Prairie Avenue does need to slow down.

Mr. Saricks asked if there was a plan to introduce traffic calming on Prairie Avenue to the west of this location, or just at Forest Avenue. He believes that coordinating the signals at Franklin Street and Prairie Avenue on Main Street is an excellent concept. He asked if a full area study needs to be done first so traffic is not diverted and dumped onto other areas. Mr. Sikich said the west part of Prairie Avenue is currently being studied in a neighborhood traffic study, and he believes the safety at this intersection can be improved with traffic calming and other improvements within this 1-2 block section.

Mr. Novak asked if anything at Warren has been considered, where cars coming over the tracks on Forest Avenue would have to go east on Warren Avenue to force them to Main Street. Mr. Sikich stated that he believes the signal at Burlington Avenue and Main Street is not efficient enough to move that much traffic onto Main Street due to its proximity to the tracks.

Chairman Carter asked what dictates putting signalization at an intersection. Mr. Sikich stated that there are warrants that need to be met, and the traffic volumes here would not warrant a signal. Chairman Carter asked if the signals on Main Street could be interconnected. Mr. Sikich said that they are Village signals, and that part of the District 99 Pedestrian Safety Improvement project includes an evaluation and possible modification to signal timing on Main Street.

Chairman Carter said the stop sign option does not work for him. He feels that it would not really be addressing the issue of speeding. He likes the idea of changing lenses on the Main Street signal to prevent people from seeing that they can catch a light. He stated that the right-in/right-out would depend on how it's constructed and what could be done to improve sight lines and move utilities. He believes that permanently closing the legs of Forest Avenue seems like a viable option, but it wouldn't stop the speeding on Prairie Avenue. He believes a hybrid solution is the best solution. Mr. Sikich said that traffic calming could be added to any of the options, to help slow traffic on Prairie Avenue.

Chairman Carter is in favor of temporarily closing the north and south legs of Forest Avenue for evaluation, and also adding programmable signal heads at Main Street and Prairie Avenue, and some sort of traffic calming to slow traffic on Prairie Avenue. Mr. Saricks agreed.

Mr. Novak believes a conversation should be opened with District 99 regarding drop offs, and he agrees that Forest Avenue should be closed at Prairie Avenue on a trial basis. He asked that whatever notices are sent to the neighborhood residents be extended further north to the 4600 and 4500 blocks of Forest Avenue.

**WITH RESPECT TO FILE #1-21, MR. NOVAK MOVED TO RECOMMEND:**

- 1. CLOSURE OF BOTH THE NORTH AND SOUTH LEGS OF FOREST AVENUE AT PRAIRIE AVENUE;**
- 2. ADDING TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES ON PRAIRIE AVENUE AT FOREST AVENUE;**
- 3. ADDING PROGRAMMABLE SIGNAL HEADS ON THE MAIN STREET TRAFFIC SIGNAL AT EASTBOUND PRAIRIE AVENUE;**
- 4. DISCUSSING DROP OFF PATTERNS WITH DISTRICT 99;**
- 5. EVALUATING TRAFFIC PATTERNS OFF OF WARREN AT FRANKLIN; AND**
- 6. DOING THESE MEASURES ON A TRIAL BASIS FIRST TO ASSESS THE IMPACT ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD.**

**SECONDED BY MR. SHILIGA.**

**ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE 5:0.**



**DISCUSSION OF OLD BUSINESS**

No old business at this time.

**Communications**

No communications at this time.

**ADJOURN**

**MR. NOVAK MOVED TO ADJOURN, SECONDED BY MR. SARICKS.  
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE 5:0.**

Commissioner Carter adjourned the meeting at 8:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Andrea Banke  
Recording Secretary