

PARKING & TRAFFIC COMMISSION
Minutes of Public Hearing
February 12, 2003

Downers Grove Public Works Facility
5101 Walnut Avenue, Downers Grove

Chairman Johnson called the February 12, 2003 meeting of the Parking and Traffic Commission to order at 7:05 p.m. He then asked for a roll call.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Commissioners: Mr. Carlquist, Mr. Kren, Mr. Thurston,
Mr. Wendt and Chairman Johnson.

Absent: Mr. Stapleton and Mr. Yeksigian.

Present: Staff: Mr. Dorin Fera, Sgt. Jim Nehls,
Mr. Tim Sembach, and Mrs. Chris Chalberg,
Recording Secretary.

Visitors: Mr. George Kopcha, 7403 Woodward Ave.,
Woodridge.

Chairman Johnson informed the public that the meeting was being recorded on Village owned equipment to aid in the preparation of the meeting minutes. He then asked the Commission if they had any comments or changes regarding the minutes of the January 8, 2003 meeting.

COMMISSIONER WENDT MOVED THAT THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 8, 2003 PARKING AND TRAFFIC COMMISSION MEETING BE ACCEPTED AS SUBMITTED.

COMMISSIONER CARLQUIST SECONDED THE MOTION. Motion carried 5:0.

NEW BUSINESS

File #03-03 Regulatory Control at the Intersection of Oxnard Drive and Stonewall Avenue

BACKGROUND

A request has been received to investigate and recommend, if necessary, modifications to the existing regulatory control for the Oxnard Drive and Stonewall Avenue intersection. This intersection is currently operating as a 2-way Yield controlled intersection, with Stonewall Avenue traffic required to stop. The posted speed limit on both Stonewall Avenue and Oxnard Drive is 25 miles per hour (mph).

STUDY

Staff has measured and observed vehicular traffic traveling at this intersection and the nearby streets as well. Traffic information that has been gathered has been compared to warrants as suggested by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD-2001 edition). Based on the Village street classification map, both streets are designated as local roadways. The Average Daily Traffic (or ADT) volume on Stonewall Avenue is approximately 290 vehicles per day north of and 660 vehicles south of Oxnard Drive. On Oxnard Drive, the ADT volume is approximately 600 vehicles west of and 230 vehicles east of Stonewall Avenue.

In accordance with the MUTCD warrants for a multi-way stop, an average of 300 vehicles per hour entering from the major street for 8 hours of an average day, or a combination of 200 vehicles/pedestrians/bicycles entering from the minor street, or if five or more accidents occurred during the last 12-month period, would warrant multi-way stop control. The requirements for multi-way stop control are far from being satisfied, and therefore should not be considered at this intersection.

For consideration of 2-Way stop control, the threshold volumes should be at least half of those for 4-way stop control. As a minimal measure, at least 3,000 vehicles per day should be entering the intersection. Based on the recent traffic count data, approximately 900 vehicles are entering the intersection daily.

The 85th percentile speed observed along Oxnard Drive is 34 mph eastbound and 32 mph westbound at Stonewall Avenue. Along Stonewall Avenue, the 85% speed is 32 mph northbound and 26 mph southbound at Oxnard Drive. Sight distance has been observed to be sufficient in each direction. Within the last 3 years, there was one (1) reported crash at this intersection; it was an angle crash in June 2001, with a minor injury.

The traffic volumes at this intersection have actually decreased since the last counts were taken, by approximately 30% along Oxnard Drive and by 45% along Stonewall Avenue. The 85% speeds however, have generally stayed the same.

RECOMMENDATION

It is Staff's judgment, based upon detailed observation that this intersection is operating within safe parameters. Based upon the data collected, it is staff's position that based on this traffic engineering analysis, regulatory control upgrades or modifications are not needed at the Stonewall Avenue and Oxnard Drive intersection. The current traffic volume is not enough to upgrade the current Yield control. The existing 2-way Yield control is sufficient.

In accordance with other locations within the Village, staff would suggest the replacement of the current Yield signs with newer signs, and also a new Yield ahead warning sign for southbound Stonewall Avenue traffic.

Chairman Johnson welcomed Mr. Kopcha to come forward with any questions or comments.

Mr. George Kopcha, 7403 Woodward Ave., Woodridge, stated he recently moved to the area. He read the public notice in the newspaper regarding the Parking and Traffic Commission meeting and decided to attend. He was interested in the discussion as this was his field of study in college.

Chairman Johnson stated that the current regulatory control was posted as the result of an accident at the Stonewall Avenue and Bolson Avenue intersection in previous years. The accident resulted in a young man being struck and killed at the intersection. As a direct result and contrary to the Parking and Traffic Commission recommendation, the intersection was posted with yield signs. The intersection did not meet warrants for regulatory control at that time.

He further questioned why the Parking and Traffic Commission was readdressing the issue at the present time.

Commissioner Wendt replied that he brought the issue up at the January 8, 2003 Parking and Traffic Commission meeting. He stated he resides in the area and was approached by several area residents regarding the issue.

Mr. Kopcha asked if the majority of the traffic was cut through traffic.

Chairman Johnson replied that the volume would indicate motorists are utilizing Oxnard Drive as a means of traveling to or from Woodward Avenue. He said the overall roadway volume is low compared to other areas of the Village.

He further stated that sight distance does not appear to be an issue at the intersection.

He said the emails received from area residents' reference several accidents at the intersection. The information included in the staff report documents only one accident at the intersection within the last three years. He asked Mr. Fera if he was aware of any additional intersection related accidents.

Mr. Fera replied that the accidents might have occurred prior to the accident history dates included in the report. There may have also been near miss accidents that were not documented.

Commissioner Wendt expressed concern over the close proximity of the No Parking signs to the posted yield sign on Stonewall Avenue. There appears to be approximately a ten foot distance between the signs. He feels a visual distraction is created for approaching motorists with the current placement of the No Parking signs.

Mr. Fera replied this could be easily corrected in the field as they were installed too closely to the yield sign. Staff could also post newer yield signs along with an advance warning yield sign for southbound traffic. This would better highlight the intersection for approaching motorists.

Commissioner Wendt asked if the signs would be constructed of high visibility material.

Mr. Fera replied that the signs would be constructed of the brighter more reflective material.

Chairman Johnson asked if reflective material could be placed on the posts similar to the regulatory control near the high school.

Mr. Fera replied this material could ultimately be used, but presently the reflective panels are targeted for school zones.

He further stated that speed appears to be an issue on Stonewall Avenue. Motorists appear to travel through the intersection at a high rate of speed not paying attention to their surroundings.

Commissioner Wendt said another issue is that vehicles are traveling downhill and gain speed without even accelerating.

Chairman Johnson questioned if the yield sign could be reversed forcing Oxnard Drive to yield to Stonewall Avenue.

Mr. Fera replied that Oxnard Drive is not a long through street. He expressed concern over motorists ignoring the yield sign.

Chairman Johnson said in cases where unwarranted regulatory control is placed motorists tend to disrespect the signage. He feels one of the reasons motorists' speed is due to the low volume of traffic on Oxnard Drive and Stonewall Avenue.

Commissioner Wendt said he feels there is a speed factor on Oxnard Drive. He said short of a speed control device installation, traffic would not slow down. He does not feel reversing the yield signs will alleviate the issue it may in fact worsen.

COMMISSIONER CARLQUIST MOVED TO DIRECT STAFF TO REPLACE THE CURRENT YIELD SIGNS WITH NEWER SIGNS, AND ALSO A NEW YIELD AHEAD WARNING SIGN FOR SOUTHBOUND STONEWALL AVENUE TRAFFIC.

COMMISSIONER WENDT SECONDED THE MOTION.

**Roll Call: AYE: Mr. Carlquist, Mr. Wendt, Mr. Thurston, Mr. Kren and
 Chairman Johnson.**

NAY: None.

Motion Carried: 5:0

NEW BUSINESS

File #04-03 Village-Wide Speed Limit 25 mph Program

BACKGROUND

The Village of Downers Grove receives an enormous number of traffic speeding complaints. The areas of concern are generally all over town and not specific to any one area. Staff has been reviewing and addressing this issue for many years. The previous solutions put forward were not very successful, because the remedies were targeted generally to one location at a time. It was not possible to address the traffic speeding needs as a whole throughout Downers Grove.

In recent history, the Parking and Traffic Commission has also discussed this item at the August 14, 2002 meeting. Prior to that, a specific speed reduction item was on the July 12, 2002 agenda. After the August 14th meeting, it was decided to put aside all future Village speeding issue requests until a comprehensive Village-Wide speed reduction program is established.

Now there is an opportunity to discuss a comprehensive Village-Wide Speed Limit 25 mph program to modify the Village speed limit criteria, adjust the ordinance accordingly, and address a fundamental defect in the manner speed limits were assigned to the roadway system years ago. Staff has prepared the following summation of the reasons behind this new program.

STUDY

As the Commission is aware, staff is developing a Village Traffic Calming program at this time. A Speed Limit 25 mph program is considered an integral part of any typical traffic calming program. It can be considered as a passive type of speed reduction improvement, versus an active type, such as a speed hump, or bulb-out design. This type of direct speed reduction intervention would precede the adoption of a formal traffic calming program, generally because of its lower cost to implement. It is staff's belief that a combined program of active and passive devices would accomplish the best results.

A primary reason for embarking on this speed reduction program is the need to modify the current Village speed limit ordinance. Presently, all Village streets are Speed Limit 30 mph, unless otherwise posted. Clearly, this condition has been around for a long time, and not serving the desired purpose. For example, according to the current ordinance, a large number of local streets including cul-de-sacs are legally 30 mph, while some collector roads, such as Springside, Fairmount, Washington and portions of 59th Street are posted at 25 mph. Traffic engineering experience suggests that the higher functioning roadways, such as collectors and arterials should carry the larger bulk of the traffic. Local streets should not be subject to higher volumes and the associated higher travel speeds. For effective and uniform traffic operation, this situation needs to be reversed.

It is understood that one of the side effects of such a reversal may be the increased speeds by motorists on adjacent streets to make up for lost time. It is very likely that the 85% travel speeds on many of the speeds may not change very much. Nevertheless, the traffic engineering principle of assigning the appropriate speed limit to the appropriate roadway function must be followed.

A Village of Downers Grove Speed Limit 25 program is not proposed to be part of the national "Keep Kids Alive-Drive 25" program. That program has been copyrighted, and it would require the Village to purchase special signs and banners to be a part of it. Adjacent towns, such as Bolingbrook, do belong to this national program. Downers Grove can accomplish the desired traffic goals without the need to belong to a national program.

This program would be implemented by installing "Speed Limit 25 – Unless Otherwise Posted" regulatory signs on the peripheral streets upon entering the Village of Downers Grove. The current collector roadways would remain posted at their current 30 mph designation. The many local streets currently posted at 25 mph would remain unchanged, except the speed limit signs would be removed. There would be intermittent speed limit 25 mph signs posted in transition areas. Also, speed studies would also be conducted as needed. The full implementation of this program is not yet developed, but would include these elements described herein.

The following adjacent Villages currently have adopted the "Speed Limit 25 – Unless Otherwise Posted" program: Woodridge, Naperville, Westmont, Darien, and Bolingbrook. The continuity of a Speed Limit 25 program between villages would be a significant benefit to the motorist and resident, by providing the same rules, same speeds between towns, and discouraging higher speeds in Downers Grove.

RECOMMENDATION

It is Staff's judgment, based upon need to reduce vehicular speeds through town, the desire to match the posted speed limits in adjacent Villages, and the need to modify the current Village ordinance, that a Village-Wide Speed Limit 25 program be supported.

It should be noted that this staff recommendation for a Speed Limit 25 m.p.h. Village Program could only proceed when the necessary funding is secured for the Public Works Department to develop and implement this program.

Chairman Johnson said the staff report references adjusting the Ordinance to address a fundamental defect in the manner speed limits were set years ago. He asked if the process for determining speed limits was a defect.

Mr. Fera replied that no, the process for determining speed limits was not the defect. Rather, the way the speed limit hierarchy was assigned to the roads was incorrect.

Chairman Johnson said the possibility of implementing a Village-Wide program has been discussed at previous meetings. He asked if input has been received from the Police Department regarding the issue.

He further stated that one criteria utilized for determining speed limits is the 85th percentile formulas. This formula is utilized with the feeling that regardless of the posted speed limit, 85% of motorists will travel at or below what they deem as a safe speed. He feels this may be the situation on Oxnard Drive and Stonewall Avenue. He said if a Village-Wide 25 m.p.h. Program is to be implemented there will be some areas with a higher instance of violations. Motorists will travel at what they feel is a safe speed regardless of the posted speed limit.

Mr. Kopcha asked if the Village has considered traffic calming measures.

He further stated that he does not feel the 85th percentile is true, he feels speed limits are sometimes based on the design of the roadway.

Mr. Fera directed the Commission to examine the handout distributed for this meeting. The handout includes a listing of local streets throughout the Village with unposted speed limits and the 85th percentile speeds. There are criteria for adjustment of the 85th percentile speed based on curvature, driveways, parking, etc. The 85th percentile speed could be adjusted to reflect these criteria.

He further stated there are several good reasons to implement the program. First, the Village would be uniform with neighboring Villages with similar programs in place. This would address any motorist confusion when traveling between Villages. Second, all local streets would automatically be converted to 25 m.p.h., including cul-de-sacs. Third, the collector roadways would be anticipated to be posted at 30 m.p.h., but would need traffic studies to be sure.

Commissioner Kren questioned why there are several one block segments posted with 30 m.p.h. speed limits. He feels this may create confusion for motorists traveling from one block to another. He feels the Village should be posted with a universal 25 m.p.h. speed limit.

Mr. Fera said he can appreciate Commissioner Kren's comments. He said there are some fluctuations but it makes the most sense to have a uniform speed limit for lengthy segments of roadways.

Commissioner Wendt said for continuity sake the Village should adopt a Village-Wide Universal Speed Limit Program. This would alleviate any confusion while traveling into the Village from other municipalities.

Commissioner Carlquist asked if the Village-Wide 25 m.p.h. Program would apply to County streets such as 63rd Street or 55th Street.

Mr. Fera replied the Program would not apply to the County streets.

Commissioner Carlquist expressed concern over motorists traveling 25 m.p.h. on Village roadways speeding to access County roadways with a higher speed limit.

Mr. Fera said the collector, minor arterial and arterial roadways should be posted with a higher speed limit as needed. Each roadway would have to be evaluated on an individual basis. The local roadways would be posted with a 25 m.p.h. speed limit.

He further said the overall goal of the program is to direct motorists to roadways designed for higher travel speeds.

Chairman Johnson asked Sergeant Nehls if the Police Department concurs with the implementation of the Village-Wide 25 Program.

Sergeant Nehls replied that the Police Department does support the Village-Wide 25 Program.

Commissioner Kren questioned how the Village would prioritize areas to implement the Village-Wide 25. He asked if the Village would be divided into quarter sections.

Mr. Fera replied that when funding is secured for this program, staff would proceed with dividing the Village into appropriate sections for more efficient implementation.

Chairman Johnson said notification should be given prior to removing any speed limit signs. He stated they could be removed gradually after the new speed limit is well publicized.

Mr. Fera stated that a Village-Wide media campaign would be developed, and prior notification would be given via the internet web page, newspapers, cable television, etc.

Chairman Johnson said the newspapers could be encouraged to write an article in the newspaper as well as post in the Village Corner.

Commissioner Carlquist asked if there would be an issue posting speed limit signs on the County right of way.

Mr. Fera replied the County would need to be approached regarding the issue.

COMMISSIONER KREN MOVED TO RECOMMEND TO THE VILLAGE COUNCIL TO MODIFY THE CURRENT VILLAGE ORDINANCE TO REFLECT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A VILLAGE-WIDE 25 MPH SPEED LIMIT PROGRAM UNLESS OTHERWISE POSTED.

COMMISSIONER WENDT SECONDED THE MOTION.

Roll Call: AYE: Mr. Kren, Mr. Wendt, Mr. Thurston, Mr. Carlquist and Chairman Johnson.

NAY: None.

Motion Carried: 5:0

Chairman Johnson stated the Council should thoroughly discuss the issue as a means of communicating the proposed modifications to residents.

OLD BUSINESS

File #18-02 Traffic Calming Update

Chairman Johnson asked Mr. Fera to explain the listing of traffic calming candidates to the Commission. He asked if the reason Queens Court was not listed as a possible candidate was due to the regional traffic study not being complete.

Mr. Fera replied that this was correct as well as the recent speed limits collected were not as high as originally reported by the residents.

He further stated the list included local street candidates that would qualify under the initial requirements. The criteria is for: two-way roadways, 85% residential, posted 25 m.p.h. speed limit, grade of less than 5% and vehicle speed exceeding 10 m.p.h. over the posted speed limit. There are several streets that currently qualify under the criteria and other streets that may qualify after additional traffic data is compiled.

He further stated the implementation of traffic calming devices would be subject to available funding. One other factor to consider is a resident cost share program. The cost could then be divided amongst the affected residents.

Chairman Johnson asked if the 85th percentile speed limit on Prince Street was accurate at 43 m.p.h.

Mr. Fera replied the speed limit was correct. He stated the counts were taken over the last few years. If new studies were completed there may be some fluctuations in the speed limit numbers. The high speed may be due to the presence of the high school traffic.

He further reviewed additional handouts outlining traffic calming programs for other communities throughout the United States.

Commissioner Kren expressed concern over motorists not stopping when turning right on a red signal.

Sergeant Nehls said that the Police Department enforces vehicles stopping prior to turning right on a red signal.

Commissioner Kren said there appears to be high traffic volume along with high traffic speed on Second Street from Williams Street to Fairview Avenue.

Mr. Fera stated staff would investigate the roadway.

Chairman Johnson asked when the Knottingham traffic study would be complete.

Mr. Fera replied he is awaiting staff availability to analyze the traffic counts. This issue may be discussed at the March Parking and Traffic Commission meeting.

He further stated the agenda for the March meeting would likely include the Highland Avenue and Prairie Avenue Traffic Study. The staff report will include traffic count information for Main Street / Prairie Avenue and Main Street / Franklin Avenue and pricing for the programmable signal heads.

He said another item for discussion would be the Prairie Avenue and Douglas Avenue regulatory control.

He stated the Traffic Division should be receiving the speed radar sign assembly from 3M in the near future. The Village will be testing the radar device for two to three months.

COMMISSIONER CARLQUIST MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.

COMMISSIONER KREN SECONDED THE MOTION. Motion carried: 5:0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

/cc
staff/p&t/2002/minutes/february 12, 2003