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TRAFFIC & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, November 29, 2005

PRESENT: Aids. Becker, Herzog, Krol, Maher, Purins -5

ALSO PRESENT: W. Kappel, Director of Public Works

Ald. Becker as Chair called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Request for Four-Way Stop at N. 67th and Cedar Streets

Mr. Kappel reported on a request from Barbara Sweeney, 839 N. 67th Street, for a four-way stop at N. 67th and Cedar Streets. Ms. Sweeney submitted a petition signed by 25 residents (at 15 addresses). He noted that both streets are residential with 26-foot pavement, and there are no stop signs at this time. There may be a little more traffic on these streets right now as drivers seek alternate routes because of the Hart Park project and closure of 70th Street. During a recent 10-minute observation period, Mr. Kappel reported, there was no traffic on either street. There were no reported accidents over the past three years. Mr. Kappel said he does not recommend the installation of stop signs at this intersection.

Barbara Sweeney, 839 N. 67th Street, said there was a problem here even prior to the Hart Park project. A car struck a tree this past summer, which should have been a reported accident. Extremely high speed was involved. Six years ago her car was hit twice on the same day. There has been a huge increase in the number of small children in the area, many of whom cross this intersection on their way to Jefferson School. Her own daughter has special needs, and another girl and a young man have special needs as well. Speeds are high, especially during morning and evening rush hours. Ms. Sweeney noted that Mr. Kappel observed the area at 11:20 a.m., a period of time that is not typical.

Lee Horlitz, 832 N. 67th Street, a 32-year resident of the area, said he has seen a tremendous increase in traffic, particularly during rush hour. Speeds are high, and he often has difficulty backing out of his driveway. This is a dangerous area that has gotten worse lately. He strongly supported at least a two-way stop to slow down traffic.

Mike Handzlik, 2315N. 96th Street, reported on being rear-ended because traffic was stopping and starting. He felt that the flow of traffic would be improved if stop signs were installed.

Mr. Horlitz added that the day care facility and restaurant on 68th Street also generate a lot of traffic in the area. Ms. Sweeney noted that the day care children often cross this intersection on their way to Jacobus Park.

Ald. Purins commented on the use of the 67th/Cedar/Maple Terrace route as a shortcut to avoid traffic signals at 68th and Wells. He recommended looking at the intersection during rush hour to get a more realistic traffic count.

Mr. Kappel said that the traffic volume during rush hour would not approach the level of at least 500 vehicles per hour for any 8 hours of an average day, which is the warrant requirement of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). From an engineering standpoint, the warrants are not even met for a two-way stop.

Identical situations can be found during rush hour at other intersections. Without stop signs, the accident record seems to indicate that cars from all directions do slow down because of uncertainty of the right-of-way. There are often more accidents with stop signs because drivers tend to disregard them. The issue here seems to be speeds during rush hour, and studies have shown that stop signs will not control speeds. Drivers actually increase their speed in the next block to make up for having to stop.

Citing his own experience residing formerly near controlled and currently near uncontrolled intersections, Ald. Herzog concurred that stop signs do not control speeds. He has found that drivers do not travel as fast on streets with uncontrolled intersections. He said that stop signs are of value when there are problems such as sight distances, but standards for a four-way stop are high. When following the MUTCD warrants, it is hard to justify the requested signs. He noted that there are probably many intersections where two-way or four-way stop signs are not warranted but were installed in the past without any kind of guidance or policy. Current policy has been to follow the recommendation of the Public Works Director and the MUTCD. Ald. Herzog suggested that residents call the Police Department's community support office to obtain temporary "caution" signs that residents can place along the street and relocate as needed for effectiveness. Increased police enforcement and placement of the speed monitoring board are other options that could help slow traffic.

Ald. Maher concurred with Ald. Herzog's comments. He commented that he has learned that there need to be some fairly substantial circumstances to warrant a stop sign. There does not seem to be enough justification here to ignore precedent.

Ald. Krol acknowledged residents' efforts but said that the committee has to look at the established warrants for stop signs. He suggested calling alderpersons from time to time to ensure that police periodically observe and ticket speeders at high traffic times. The suggested use of "caution" signs can also be effective if used properly. He cited his own problems with living on a busy street and noted that the committee can always look at the situation again in the future, if necessary.

Moved by Ald. Herzog, seconded by Ald. Maher to recommend to Council that the matter be placed on file. Ayes: 4; Noes: 1 (Purins)

Consideration of Four-Way Stop at N. 65th and W. Lloyd Streets

Mr. Kappel reviewed the recent history of measures attempted since 2003 at N. 65th and W. Lloyd Streets to create a more controlled pedestrian crossing. First, a crosswalk was painted on the western side of the intersection. Last year portable pedestrian crossing signs were provided for placement in the intersection by volunteers. Two sets of signs have so far been stolen. The cost of providing replacement signs on a regular basis, the 40-foot roadway width here, and the fact that other measures have been tried were all considerations in staff discussions that have led to a recommendation for a 90-day trial of a four-way stop at this intersection, even though the specific warrants for such signs are not met.

Rezonn Dahlin-Klein, 6223 Washington Circle, said the main issue has been the safety of pedestrians crossing Lloyd Street on their way to Washington School. Almost all children are accompanied by parents, but even adults feel unsafe. Also, it has been dangerous for adults to post the signs in the intersection. They are requesting consideration of upgrading from a two-way to a four-way stop. Ms. Dahlin-Klein noted that traffic counts taken about one year ago show traffic levels of 4,200 cars on one day and 4,700 on another.

Ald. Herzog concurred with the recommendation since other measures have been tried in the past and this has been an ongoing problem.

Mr. Kappel said that he has reviewed traffic measures on Lloyd Street at various times since 2000. He believes that stop signs might be effective in providing safe passage here. The street is wide and pedestrians have a greater distance to cross. Cars travel at rates higher than the 30 mph limit. Asked about reducing the speed limit, Mr. Kappel said that the current limit seems appropriate since this is considered a collector street. He also noted that the telephone junction box that was to be relocated has not yet been moved. A resident is following through on that.

Moved by Ald. Herzog, seconded by Ald. Purins to approve a 90-day trial of four-way stop signs based on the recommendation of the Director of Public Works, the street width, speed of traffic, and past trials of other measures to enhance pedestrian safety –

Ald. Krol questioned conflicting information on traffic volume warrants for four-way stops under the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. Mr. Kappel indicated that he will confirm the warrant levels. Ald. Krol then described the use of pedestrian flags in Madison, which are kept in containers and carried to the other side of the street by the pedestrians.

Vote on the motion, Ayes: 5

The meeting adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Carla A. Ledesma, City Clerk
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

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