



## CITY OF WAUWATOSA

7725 WEST NORTH AVENUE

WAUWATOSA, WI 53213

Telephone: (414) 479-8917

Fax: (414) 479-8989

### **TRAFFIC & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING Tuesday, January 31, 2006**

PRESENT: Aids. Becker, Herzog, Krol, Maher (7:45 p.m.), Purins -5

ALSO PRESENT: W. Kappel, Director of Public Works; Ald. Birschel

Ald. Becker as Chair called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m. -4

#### **Request for Left Turn Arrow on Eastbound W. Wisconsin Avenue at N. 87th Street**

Mr. Kappel reported that John Balzer of Froedtert Hospital has requested consideration of installing a left-turn arrow for eastbound W. Wisconsin Avenue traffic entering the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center (MRMC) grounds at N. 87th Street. In similar cases where a change in signals or signage is requested by a particular entity, costs associated with the change have been paid by that entity. In this case, that would include the cost of a study to determine if the left-turn signal is warranted and installation costs, if warranted and approved. The city would assume responsibility thereafter for routine maintenance.

John Balzer, Vice President of Facility Planning and Development, Froedtert Hospital, 9200 W. Wisconsin Avenue, displayed and distributed copies of a drawing of the MRMC campus, pointing out the intersection. He lives nearby and often observes eastbound traffic backups due to drivers wanting to turn left into the medical center. When the traffic signal turns to yellow, cars shoot through, resulting in many near misses with westbound traffic. He felt that a left-turn arrow is a logical solution that would allow the left-turn movement without endangering westbound traffic. The MRMC would fund the study and, if warranted, the left turn arrow itself. He clarified that the various entities on the medical center grounds would reimburse MRMC for portions of the cost.

Mr. Kappel explained that MRMC would engage a certified traffic engineer who would do peak period counts. He felt that it is likely that the warrants for a left-turn arrow will be met. He noted that there are other Wauwatosa and City of Milwaukee signals in the area that now operate independently. A timing plan to improve traffic flow should be included in the study.

(Ald. Maher present. -5)

Mr. Kappel clarified that although Wisconsin Avenue was recently repaved, it is still striped for one lane of traffic. Given that, Ald. Purins felt that eastbound traffic might still back up behind the left-turning vehicles. Mr. Kappel indicated, however, that parking changes could be made to facilitate through-traffic movement.

Moved by Ald. Krol, seconded by Ald. Purins to recommend approval of a traffic warrant study and installation of a left-turn signal, if found to be warranted, all funded by the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center

with routine maintenance thereafter funded by the city. Ayes: 5

### **Request for No Left Turn for Southbound N. 124th Street at W. Vliet Street**

Mr. Kappel reported on a request from Ald. Birschel for installation of signage to prohibit left turns from 3 to 6 p.m. for southbound N. 124th Street traffic at W. Vliet Street. He summarized results of a traffic study of left turns and backups that was done last week. During a 1 ¼ hour period, 13 cars turned left onto Vliet Street. Traffic on 124th Street backed up to the intersection three times, but only one car pulled into the northbound lane to make a left turn. Based on the traffic study, Mr. Kappel said that he does not recommend prohibiting left turns at this location. In fact, that route should be kept open to relieve congestion from any incident that ties up traffic at 124th and Watertown Plank Road. He noted that at no time during the study did traffic back up as far as the point where a westbound right turn may be made into Elm Grove (Centa Lane), which also could provide relief.

Ald. Birschel said that in his experience, traffic patterns are as mentioned at various times, but there are numerous times when there are backups to the westbound Elm Grove intersection and drivers are seen using the wrong side of the road to get to Vliet Street. There is a slight rise that could obscure oncoming traffic, he believes. He also cited the lack of a stop sign to the east on Vliet Street and possible visibility problems on Vliet Street. If there is a situation at 124th and Vliet, he felt that police could be called upon to direct traffic.

Don Leonard, a 35-year resident at 12325 W. Vliet Street, spoke of 124th Street backups extending to north of Walnut Street, which he attributed to drivers leaving Briggs & Stratton at the end of the workday. That causes impatient drivers to cross the centerline to get to Vliet Street. He mentioned high speeds and an accident on Vliet Street and said it presents a hazard that is getting worse. He commented on the lack of monitoring by either Wauwatosa or Elm Grove police.

Ann Stacey, 1269 N. 123rd Street, said that the traffic signal at Watertown Plank Road keeps traffic moving on 124th Street; it does not back up to a standstill. Motorists often drive three to five car lengths in the northbound lane to turn onto Vliet Street. They screech their tires and sometimes blow the stop sign at 122nd Street. She recounted the hazards and some near-misses and said there were two accidents at 124th and Vliet last fall. Those drivers probably had no reason to turn into that neighborhood, she felt, and she mentioned the possibility of creating a cul de sac. She said that conditions are okay after the rush hour time period.

Tom Stacey, 1269 N. 123rd Street, said that one afternoon doesn't constitute a traffic study. The issue should be looked at in a broader perspective. One component is left turns but the broader issue is whether there is a signalization or time of day problem. People are driving irresponsibly. No sign would control drivers completely, he said, but it could affect some.

Mr. Kappel said he has looked at this intersection every year and found no change. Residents just don't seem to like cars going through their neighborhood. The same could be said about Sunday mornings on his own street, which is across from a church. This is an average street that during rush hour has a lot of traffic, which is true of many streets. Prohibiting left turns is not the answer. With only three exceptions, traffic on 124th Street was flushed out with every signal change during the traffic study. Heavier traffic, probably from Briggs & Stratton, lasted for a total of 15-20 minutes and there was no other problem. There is a 20-minute problem like that at every single school and all over the city during rush hour. Enforcement of the speed limit could be an issue, although no high rates of speed were observed during the study. Mr. Kappel said that he lives in this area and travels here at different times during the week and on weekends, and he hasn't seen anything different than what the study pointed out. Traffic does use Vliet Street to avoid waiting in line, but prohibiting left turns will only force those

people to turn on another street, resulting in similar complaints from those residents. He recommended seeking enforcement action, noting that those drivers who cause the problems would probably disregard any sign that was installed. A sign would not have desired effect of slowing down traffic and stopping violators.

Ald. Maher asked if this would get worse when Burleigh Square is developed. Mr. Kappel said the issue can be reviewed then. The signal timing is fairly good at rush hour because most of the traffic on both streets is being flushed out. Backups are only occasional. He noted that for quite some time SEWRPC has listed 124th Street for widening and extension to Blue Mound Road, although the city is not advocating that plan. More people use 116th Street/115th Street to get to Blue Mound Road than come down 124th Street.

Ald. Maher said he respects Mr. Kappel's opinion, but on the other hand it seems something may be going on due to the number of requests here. Ald. Purins agreed with Mr. Kappel's statements about high volumes at particular times elsewhere in the city. He asked if there would be any benefit to an eastbound stop sign at 123rd and Vliet in order to slow traffic. Mr. Kappel said that the volume of cars here would not meet warrants for a stop sign. He again advocated enforcement action, which would have to come through the police chief. It is likely that the same individuals are involved on a day-to-day basis. Asked about videotaping the southbound lane at specific times, Mr. Kappel explained that videotaping cannot be used for enforcement.

Ald. Herzog said that the committee takes these issues seriously and relies not only on citizens and the local alderperson but also on staff experts. There is a rigorous process involved in approving even one sign. He noted problems on his own street due to drivers trying to avoid North Avenue in the morning and afternoon rush hours. All intersections in that area are not controlled and drivers often do not stop where there are signs. He saw this as an issue of enforcing existing laws. He asked about any record of accidents at this location. Mr. Kappel said that a crash analysis done in the past regarding stop signs at 123rd Street indicated nothing to warrant a sign.

Moved by Ald. Herzog, seconded by Ald. Purins to place this matter in file for return if any new information arises –

Ald. Maher said he would rather see the committee and residents discuss the matter of enforcement with the police chief.

Moved by Ald. Maher, seconded by Ald. Purins to hold this matter for discussion with the police chief at a future meeting. Ayes: 5

### **Report on 180-Day Trial of No Left Turns on W. Blue Mound Road at N. 107th Street**

The committee reviewed a memo from Mr. Kappel on the 180-day trial of no left turns during rush hours for eastbound Blue Mound Road traffic at N. 107th Street. Mr. Kappel recommended making the restriction permanent for morning and evening rush hours.

Moved by Ald. Purins, seconded by Ald. Maher to recommend adoption of an ordinance prohibiting left turns for eastbound traffic on W. Blue Mound Road at N. 107th Street from 6-9 a.m. and 3-6 p.m. Ayes: 5

The meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Carla A. Ledesma, City Clerk  
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

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