



CITY OF WAUWATOSA

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TRAFFIC & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING Tuesday, October 27, 2009

PRESENT: Aids. Jay, McBride, Meaux, Stepaniak, Wilke - 5

ALSO W. Kappel, Dir. of Public Works; Chief B. Weber, Police Dept.;
PRESENT: A. Kesner, City Atty.; J. Archambo, City Admin.

Ald. Meaux in the Chair called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

Ordinance – Parking Restrictions on N. 72nd, N. 74th, Blanchard, and State Streets

Held from the previous meeting, the committee again reviewed a proposed ordinance amending Section 11.32.080 of the Code to change parking restrictions on N. 72nd, N. 74th, Blanchard, and W. State Streets. The ordinance establishes and/or removes the following restrictions, which underwent two successive 90-day trials:

- East side of 72nd Street from State to Blanchard – no parking
- West side of 72nd Street from State Street to 142 feet north - removal of a portion of no parking after driveway is replaced (existing no parking on remainder of west side)
- East side of 74th Street from State Street to 50 feet north - no parking;
- East side of 74th Street from 50 feet north of State to Blanchard – one hour parking 9 a.m.-7 p.m.
- North side of State Street from 140 feet west of 72nd Street to 275 feet east of 74th Street – three hour parking

John Bruhn, 1367 N. 72nd Street; Barbara Mayeaux, 1368 N. 72nd Street; and Bernard Grimm, 7325 Blanchard Street, reiterated concerns expressed at the previous meeting regarding increased speeds on 72nd Street with the lack of parked cars on the east side of the street. Imposing the restriction only after 6 p.m. or after 10 p.m. was suggested. Mr. Grimm felt that residents were divided on the restriction when it was originally discussed and may not have been given all possible options to consider.

Mr. Kappel recalled that the committee recommended the trial restrictions following strong comments from the considerable number of residents present at the meeting about emergency vehicle and snowplow access. Ald. McBride noted that the meeting room was filled when this issue was discussed, and nine out of ten people wanted no parking on one side because of those concerns. There would still be access issues if parking were allowed in the evening. Other residents favor leaving the no parking restriction in place. There would always be an opportunity for review should the situation change. Ald. McBride indicated that he would refer the speed issue to the police department.

Moved by Ald. McBride, seconded by Ald. Stepaniak to recommend adoption of the ordinance. Ayes: 5

Request for Stop Sign at N. 78th and Eagle Streets

Mr. Kappel reported on a request by a local alderperson for consideration of stop signs at N. 78th and Eagle Streets. The police department reports one major crash there within the last several months, which he believes may be due to drivers unfamiliar with the neighborhood using local streets because of construction on Wauwatosa Avenue. Mr. Kappel noted that it has been found that the safest intersections are those without stop signs. He referred to a stop sign map and the federal Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) guidelines for use of these types of signs. He concluded that he would not recommend a stop sign at this location.

Ald. Stepaniak said that he received a request for a stop sign after the recent accident and a related call a few months prior with the same request. He asked about the most relevant guidelines in this case.

In a normal residential area like this, Mr. Kappel said, streets don't have a lot of traffic at any given period except when people are going to and from work. At an intersection with streets having similar traffic volumes, he would look at the number of crashes in the area. Past MUTCD guidelines called for consideration of traffic control devices when there are more than four crashes in a 12-month period. One accident doesn't rise to that level, especially under the condition of ongoing construction.

Ald. Stepaniak commented that he felt it prudent to review the intersection but is aware that traffic is using this area as a shortcut. He indicated that he would support Mr. Kappel's recommendation. If conditions change, it can be reviewed again.

Ald. McBride asked about stop signs at some other 78th Street intersections. Mr. Kappel said those installations precede his tenure but noted that there are sections of the city with stops every other block on a grid pattern. He is trying to abide by MUTCD guidelines. Two things happen when unwarranted or unnecessary stop signs are installed: drivers try to make up for the speed lost at the stop sign, and drivers start doing rolling stops, which can be dangerous to cars on the cross street. He and Chief Weber plan to seek some empirical evidence that unsigned intersections are to some degree safer. That is a statistic that is known nationally, and they would like to see it proven here as well.

Moved by Ald. Stepaniak, seconded by Ald. Jay to recommend that the matter be placed on file. Ayes: 5

Ordinance – Traffic Control Trial Periods

City Attorney Kesner reported that the proposed ordinance amending Section 2.02.180 allows this committee to extend or adjust a 90-day trial up to 90 days at a time but not more than one year total without Council approval.

Moved by Ald. McBride, seconded by Ald. Wilke to recommend to Council adoption of the ordinance. Ayes: 5

Village BID Request – Intersection of Harwood and Wauwatosa Avenues

The committee reviewed an October 29, 2009 memo from the Director of Public Works regarding a request by the Village Business Improvement District (BID) to consider reopening the intersection of Harwood and Wauwatosa Avenues to through traffic. The intersection was closed in the 1970s after the Harmonee bridge was constructed and a new traffic pattern developed. Referring to a map of the area, Mr. Kappel pointed out the triangular grassy area that blocks through traffic. Formerly the site of the

Village fountain, it now includes some benches and pavers. Southbound Harwood Avenue traffic must go through what is essentially a portion of the Pioneer Village mall (Baskin-Robbins/Breadsmith/Starbucks complex) before proceeding downward on the one-way street. He noted that when obstacles are removed, traffic tends to speed up, which might occur if Harwood became more of a throughway. Pedestrian traffic at the base of the hill would be a concern. If the committee wishes to consider this request, Mr. Kappel suggested that it might merit more of an economic development or prime use study than just a traffic study.

Rich Conley, 18650 Corporate Drive, Brookfield, owner of the Lefeber building, expressed reservations about the proposal but said he is not necessarily opposed. He saw the green space as valuable land that could be significant to the community for a variety of activities. He felt that a traffic study would likely suggest an increase in traffic counts on Harwood Avenue should the intersection be opened and that bottleneaking in that area would increase. Any increase in parking spaces would be slight. He suggested looking at the highest and best use of the green space, noting that most merchants would probably benefit more from regular activities there. He indicated that he has an accepted offer for purchase of the vacant Drew's building and said that the green space is definitely a significant part of his plan.

Theresa Millman, 7613 Harwood Avenue, said she would want to be sure that no parking would be eliminated and speeding would not result. Vehicles do speed down the street now, and at least five or six drivers go the wrong way every day. She feared that it would be dangerous for pedestrians and there would be more accidents involving drivers backing out of the angled parking spaces.

Chris Leffler, 644 Honey Creek Parkway, chair of the BID Board of Directors, said he does not have a vested interest in the proposal in terms of his own business but is aware of the interest of businesses on Harwood and on Underwood. The BID sees this as an economic development issue and is asking for consideration in view of planned street construction and other improvements that are coming up. There is a lot of confusion for people coming out of the Pioneer mall area as well as people making deliveries. With Drew's having been vacant for some time, he felt there may be something to be said about use of the green space in connection with that building, which could enhance other leasing on the street.

Pamela Anderson, 3216 Menomonee River Parkway, owner of Underwood Galley, said she had been opposed to the proposal but talked with people knowledgeable about urban planning who said that the city was essentially cut off from coming into the Village unless for a specific destination. She advocated returning the streets to two-way traffic and redesigning the parking area.

Kathy Ehley, 7437 Kenwood Avenue, Executive Director of the Village BID, said that Harwood Avenue historically was the main thoroughfare in the Village; Wauwatosa Avenue dead-ended into Harwood. The need to close Harwood at the railroad tracks is understandable, but the end result created a great deal of confusion. Over the past two years, she has been approached by a number of businesses about the challenges of the one-way streets. Those in the 7400-7500 block of Harwood Avenue feel very disconnected from those in the 7600-7700 block and State Street area, and rentals can be challenging. There are challenges in getting customers to the 7600-7700 block. People are constantly asking for directions. In fact, on-line mapping sites do not provide accurate directions. The confusion creates a hazard as drivers make illegal movements or pick up speed as they hurry down Harwood to exit. Ms. Ehley said that she has 34 signatures in support of finding some solutions. The BID is seeking assistance in solving the problem.

Connor Williams, 1935 Underwood Avenue, supported further investigation. He cited the need for greater pedestrian and economic activity.

Sean Phelan, owner of 7677 W. State Street and speaking on behalf of Café Hollander at that address, supported opening Harwood Avenue.

Kevin Hardiman, 1920 Underwood Avenue, said that the solution arrived at in the 1970s moved traffic around the Village very well but didn't maintain the economic viability of the area. It was supposed to make it more pedestrian friendly but only isolated the area. The triangular green space and the "pocket park" across the street were once the village commons and present an opportunity for creative design solutions. Mr. Hardiman cited the need to circulate traffic, make it easy for outsiders to find, and accept that the right kind of congestion is not a problem.

Mark Rowbottom, 1233 Kavanaugh Place, urged careful consideration and thought of long-term impacts. He commented that the option of opening Harwood across the railroad tracks, which was discussed five years ago, is out of the picture now with the Café Hollander decision on use of the pedestrian bridge. Little decisions are being made that impact big decisions. Turning Harwood Avenue into a two-way street would be a huge challenge, he felt; we can't go back but need a complete redesign.

Ald. McBride said that we need to know the potential traffic volume, but the real question is whether opening the intersection would enhance or detract from the economic potential of the Village. He asked about available funding and possible use of CDBG funds.

Mr. Kappel deferred to the Community Development Director on the question of CDBG funds. He supported an expanded study and suggested that the question of funding could be moved forward by referral to the Budget and Finance Committee. Although not an immediate emergency, this is an appropriate time to look at the situation given planned work in that general area in the next 3-5 years.

Ald. Jay felt that reconfiguring and opening the intersection, keeping enough parking, and prohibiting left turns at State Street would create a nice circle going around the area. She questioned the value of a study, seeing this as more of a common-sense issue. She would not favor making the street two-way.

Ald. Stepaniak commented on the counter-intuitive traffic pattern and saw this as both an economic development and traffic issue. He supported seeking a study. He suggested forwarding the matter to the Community Development Committee and, in the interim, finding out about CDBG funding. He noted that planned street reconstruction that will alter traffic patterns would be an issue. Testing out real changes but altered patterns would make it more complex.

Ald. Wilke also supported a study and asked if the 1976 one, excerpted in aldermanic packets, is the latest. Mr. Kappel confirmed that it is. It was a major long-term plan related to construction of the Harmonie bridge, and not all elements were enacted.

Ald. McBride reported learning from Ms. Welch that administrative CDBG funds have to be spent or allocated by the end of the year. Approximately \$40,000-\$50,000 would be available. She confirmed that, other than a study by UW-M students, the last real studies were done in the 1970s.

Moved by Ald. McBride, seconded by Ald. Wilke to forward the matter to the Budget & Finance Committee with a recommendation for funding a study that would look at the traffic and economic development aspects of the entire Village area and recommend that CDBG funds be applied to that study, if possible –

The Chair suggested referral to the Community Development Committee with a memo from the Community Development Director on available funding sent to the Budget and Finance Committee for concurrent review.

With consent of the second, Ald. McBride amended the motion to refer the matter to the Community Development Committee with concurrent review by the Budget and Finance Committee in terms of funding. Ayes: 5

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Carla A. Ledesma, City Clerk
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

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