

CITY OF WAUWATOSA
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**TRAFFIC AND SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, November 12, 2002**

PRESENT: Alds. Becker, Herzog, Krol, Matthews -4

EXCUSED: Ald. McCarthy

ALSO W. Kappel, Dir. of Public Works; Capt. J. Bozicevich; P. Coffaro, Asst. to Admin.;;
PRESENT: W. Wehrley, City Eng.; Ald. Subotich

Ald. Krol in the Chair called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

Report on Trial of No Parking Signage - Stickney Avenue west of Wauwatosa Avenue

Mr. Kappel, Director of Public Works, said that a no parking sign placed on the north side of Stickney Avenue west of Wauwatosa Avenue helped to delineate the crosswalk area where parking is prohibited. Residents had originally requested a no parking zone for a minimum of two car lengths, but staff had found that the problem they complained of was caused by vehicles illegally parked too close to the crosswalk. Richard Jacobs, who made the original request, indicated last week that he sees no reason to pursue the matter further. Mr. Kappel recommended that the matter be placed on file.

William Scallion, 7733 Stickney Avenue, concurred that the new sign has been effective.

Moved by Ald. Matthews, seconded by Ald. Herzog to recommend
That the matter be placed on file. Ayes: 4

School Crossing on W. North Avenue at N. 90th Street

The Chair indicated that, at the request of a constituent, Jeanne O'Brien, he requested a discussion on safety issues at the school crossing on W. North Avenue at N. 90th Street. He reported that notices of this meeting were sent to principals of McKinley and Christ King Schools.

Mr. Kappel, Director of Public Works, reported that there was an incident last spring of a child being struck. Use of portable school crossing signs and cones has been instituted since that time. There has been at least one school crossing guard change based on discussions with the contractor. He indicated his interest in hearing from parents to see if a viable solution can be achieved.

Joe Schmitz, 8910 Jackson Park Boulevard, said that there have probably been six different crossing guards at this intersection in the last couple of years. The crossing guards mean well, he said, but there is no

consistency in the way they escort children, where cones are placed, or how they stop traffic or make traffic aware of the need to stop. He recommended training to a consistent set of standards. He said that he does not feel confidence in the current crossing guard. He noted that the pylons placed in the center of the street are difficult for drivers in the right lanes of eastbound or westbound traffic to see. Traffic seems to be running between the traffic signals at Ludington Avenue and at Swan Boulevard, and drivers are frustrated when they are stopped. He felt that the crossing guard should catch drivers' eyes and hold the cars until children are all the way across the street. They should make sure all traffic is stopped. The guard stands on the south side of the street in the morning and the north side in the afternoon, which seems right in terms of where the children are coming from, but Mr. Schmitz said he would almost like to propose two crossing guards to monitor both sides of traffic. He said that the crossing guard company told him that they had proposed flashing yellow lights. If they have proven effective at other crossings on Wauwatosa Avenue and Glenview Avenue, he felt that might be something to consider.

Michelle McCalligan, 8410 Stickney Avenue, said she has personally called and complained about two guards at Ludington and North. The first guard was removed due to swearing and the other for belligerent behavior. The next guard also had problems but was "promoted" to the more dangerous crossing at 90th Street after the children were struck there last year. She emphasized that competent people must be hired; children should trust the guards and not be leery of them. An assessment of their physical and mental ability to handle high traffic areas would seem reasonable. Ms. McCalligan felt that the problem with vehicles passing in the right lane could be eliminated by reducing traffic to a single lane. This intersection is a recipe for disaster, she said.

Tom Syburg, 2110 N. 91st Street, said the main safety issue is the right-hand lanes. An easy solution would be to place five cones on an angle from the curb to force traffic into a single lane for 45 minutes in the morning and afternoon. He felt that the only solution for safety is to have only one through lane. Drivers often can't see because of glare from the sun, he noted, but if they're in a single lane and don't see the guard, they would hit the car in front of them rather than a child. He said that the current crossing guard is a liability risk to the city. He is very inconsistent with traffic control for drivers as well as pedestrians. He seems to have an uncooperative and unstable personality and should not be responsible for children's safety. He gets into conflicts with parents regarding things outside of his responsibilities and mumbles to himself, which is confusing to the children, and also yells at them.

Judy Bun, 8011 W. North Avenue, said she doesn't have children attending the elementary schools but takes care of children who go to McKinley. She stated that there is no safe place to cross North Avenue—she has tried them all. She teaches children not to cross until there are *no* cars on the road. The crosswalks and traffic signals don't work, she said. She said that she watches the road continuously from her apartment and has even seen a car go onto the sidewalk to get past another vehicle.

Bill Fontanazzo, 10423 W. Concordia Avenue, said he is the chairman of the Christ King Home and School association. He said that there are similar problems with children from Christ King crossing at Swan Boulevard and at 90th Street. There is a good crossing guard to the north on Swan Boulevard, he said. He felt that increased police patrol would be the most effective way to keep the speed down on North Avenue and on Swan Boulevard.

Ald. Subotich said he has received a lot of comments from parents and has watched the intersection himself. Parents have told of cars careening out of control to avoid hitting pedestrians. He suggested cutting off part of the right lane as an immediate solution.

Candy Lindstrom, 2117 N. 89th Street, said she is one of those who has come within inches of having her life snuffed out; in fact, it happened three times in one week at that intersection. She now drives her children to school and doesn't ever foresee walking again until something is done about the crossing guards and the intersections. Sometimes when lines of traffic in the left lane are long, a car comes through at high speed in the right lane and doesn't realize that a crossing guard is trying to stop traffic until they are through the intersection, she said. She advocated funneling cars into one lane.

Julie Connor, 9109 W. North Avenue, said her children are the ones who were involved in the accident last year. Her son now prefers to be driven to school, or he is taken to the traffic signals and is willing to cross there clasping his grandmother's hand. She said that he is terrified of crossing the street with the crossing guards, and she will not trust them with her children. She supported the idea of additional cones blocking the right lane, since that is where her children were hit.

Jean O'Brien, 9028 Stickney Avenue, said that speed is also an issue. The 20 mph speed limit for the school crossing is not observed. She said that speeds should be monitored and those in excess of the speed limit should be ticketed.

Heidi Rakowski, 8924 Stickney Avenue, said she has had many near misses when walking her child to school every day. Drivers assume when the two center lanes are stopped that the cars are making left turns, so they buzz around on the right side. The first crossing guard used a whistle. He swore at the drivers and got irritated, but people actually listened to him. Many times people respond to someone who is strong, and the current guard isn't a strong person, she felt. He is more interested in conversation or complaining about another parent, and it is hard to understand what he wants. He scares her personally, and she doesn't trust how he crosses people.

Judy Bun mentioned that other states have uniformed police officers at intersections where children cross. Cars will stop upon sight of a police officer. She asked if that would be possible here, at least until people know they absolutely must stop.

Bob O'Brien Hokansen, 8832 Stickney Avenue, said he wouldn't want the necessity for changes at the intersection lost in discussion of a bad guard. Something needs to be done so that drivers know it is a crossing, he said. Staff would have information about the effectiveness of a flashing yellow light to remind people of the speed limit during school crossing times. He said that cones may work, but he was unsure that people would see them since they already don't see the guard. He wondered if there would be a way to install a light triggered by a pedestrian. During times with low pedestrian traffic, it would just flash yellow.

Joe Schmitz said there should be some way to elevate the guard's stop sign. He has even suggested waving it back and forth, he said, to get some motion to attract drivers' attention. It is not high enough to be in the sight line of vehicles in the right lane or far back in the center lane.

Alexandra Poli, a student at McKinley School, said she rarely walks to school because of the crossing guard and because she is scared to go there (but also sometimes because she is late, she acknowledged).

Jeff Poli, 8843 Jackson Park Boulevard, told the committee that they need to come to the intersection and see it for themselves. With drivers trying to beat the traffic signals, it is like a racetrack. He spoke of a former wonderful crossing guard who would walk into the middle of traffic. The people at the intersection have a very difficult job, he said, with cars speeding in both directions. He was unsure if training is an issue. He questioned whether the intersection should even be a crosswalk.

Ald. Herzog noted that this intersection was on the agenda last year shortly after the accident mentioned earlier. One of the changes was putting out standards or cones, but he had envisioned the cones spread out more to give more warning to people passing on the right side. He indicated that he represents the district to the north of North Avenue and believes the intersection is a problem. He asked if we are having problems with Twin City Security, the crossing guard contractor, in connection with other guards.

Mr. Coffaro, Assistant to the City Administrator, said that the program has been managed since August 2001 by Linda Faustmann of the City Administrator's office. She has made numerous calls to Twin City about the current issue. He indicated that in his experience there have been occasional problems here and there.

Ald. Herzog asked if the contract with Twin City allows us to dictate who is put at this intersection. Mr. Kappel responded that he will get together with Ms. Faustmann tomorrow. He said that the City certainly would have objected if we knew we were moving a problem guard. He said that the situation is not one that is lacking attempts to work with the guard company. This is the only location with a problem of which we are aware. He noted that there is a similar setup at 73rd and North where cones and green school crossing signs are placed stretching for a block in either direction. There is plenty of advance warning to traffic, which is confined to one lane there by virtue of the streetscaping.

Asked about results of using yellow flashing lights, Mr. Kappel said that, unless coupled with an enforcement program, the lights are ignored as much as the 20 mph sign within 20 feet of the intersection.

Ald. Herzog said that Elm Grove uses signs with little lights that flash around them, but they don't seem to be effective. He asked if there is a question of putting a flashing yellow light too close to Swan Boulevard. Captain Bozicevich responded that there could be a problem with putting a light there in the sense of adding more clutter to an already cluttered area. It may also give children a false sense of security. In the beginning, a flashing light might be effective; but to cars going through every day, the light becomes just part of the landscape. He has had some discussions with people near Wauwatosa East and Lincoln School who don't believe the lights are effective at all, especially after they are there awhile.

Regarding enforcement, Capt. Bozicevich pointed out that there are six or seven police officers working on the day shift. At any time, about half would be out of service on calls. There are 22 schools and 35 school crossings, so the sheer numbers preclude the presence of officers at the crossings. Officers are, however, encouraged to give top priority to traffic matters in school zones in the morning and afternoon. If not on a call for service or directly involved in something else, they are to be at school safety zones. After last year's accident, there was an officer at 90th and North on and off for about 7-10 days to report on problems he observed. He saw two problems, a personnel problem and an engineering problem in terms of the close proximity to two signalized intersections. The problem isn't just at 90th Street but involves the Ludington and Swan intersections also.

Capt. Bozicevich said that the question should be asked: do you use this crossing because it is convenient or because it is safe? If it is there strictly for the convenience of not walking to the signalized intersections, then you are answering the question of whether this crossing should even exist. He was unsure if any amount of cones or a strong crossing guard would make the crossing safe.

Responding to a question, Mr. Kappel was uncertain if the guard at 73rd and North uses a stop sign on a pole, but he indicated that he is very successful with what he does use.

Ald. Herzog asked if traffic at 90th Street could be reconfigured as it is at 73rd Street by making everyone move to the right. Then a center island could be created with cones where children could stop and go. The

guard could bring children to the middle and then stop traffic in the other direction. Mr. Kappel responded that a full-blown engineering study may be needed, because that could back cars up as far as Mayfair Road. Upon further discussion of a trial, Mr. Kappel referred to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices regarding circumstances for a test situation and proper signage to alert motorists. Mr. Kappel said that motorists are used to seeing cones used for construction and often disregard them. He felt that he could design something that could be tested at 90th Street to channel traffic to the right lane, if that is what is desired.

Captain Bozicevich raised the possibility of using two guards there, one on each side of the street. Each crossing guard costs \$7,100 per year, he indicated, emphasizing that consideration of cost is not meant to detract from the safety issues.

Ald. Matthews said she would be willing to look at options but would like to get some information on the impact on traffic patterns since problems could be increased elsewhere. She also would like to see a copy of our agreement with the guard company. She commented that it is time to review the contract to look at consistency and uniformity that all guards should adhere to as well as a system for someone within the city to report back on their behavior at the intersections. She said that Milwaukee guards use whistles, which can be heard easily above the normal sound of car radios and is something we should consider.

Ald. Matthews asked about traffic tickets at this intersection during increased patrols. Capt. Bozicevich explained that the officer was not there to do enforcement but was assigned to study the intersection and observe any problems there. Capt. Bozicevich noted that because of its location between two traffic lights and with a pedestrian crossing, it is difficult to know where to set up a squad with radar without adding to the problems.

Responding to a further question, Capt. Bozicevich said that at one time there were three guards in this stretch of North Avenue—at Swan, 90th, and Ludington—but the guard at Swan was removed because the number of children crossing there no longer met the warrants. Mr. Coffaro noted that those guard hours were used to place a second guard at Wauwatosa and North Avenues, where traffic volume is significantly higher.

Capt. Bozicevich commented that in 30 years of observing the progression of guards and different companies, he finds that the present company is very responsive when problems are raised. He noted that the jobs are not high-paying, have erratic hours, and are hard to recruit for.

Ald. Becker asked about Ms. Faustmann's absence and requested that she attend the next meeting at which this matter is discussed. He said that we have to find a way to stop the traffic; the only safe crossing is if you can get both lanes to stop. He felt that narrowing to one lane would cause problems at Swan but noted that it should be only for very limited times.

Mr. Coffaro indicated that he would provide a copy of the crossing guard contract and will be certain that Ms. Faustmann is aware of this discussion. He agreed that Twin City Security is a responsible company and was confident they would respond to the complaints. He commented that the biggest issue here is responsible driving, and all of us are at fault. Children won't be safe unless we drive slower.

Ald. Herzog asked Mr. Wehrley, City Engineer, if some sort of traffic study could be done informally within the next two weeks, and he answered affirmatively.

Moved by Ald. Herzog, seconded by Ald. Becker to place the matter in file

for two weeks pending a report from the engineering department on their study of placing cones to restrict traffic to the right-hand lanes during school crossing times, a cost estimate for flashing yellow lights, a report on the contract with Twin City Security, and consideration of whether to provide the guard with a taller stop sign –

Mr. Kappel pointed out that a study over the next two weeks will have skewed results for the week of Thanksgiving. He will start with the study first so that he can come up with some well-founded recommendations on the other questions. He estimated that the duration of the effectiveness of a flashing yellow light is probably three to four weeks. It is effective when enforced, but it isn't possible to have an officer there at all times. He indicated that he would also get a cost estimate for the type of signs that Ald. Herzog indicated are used by Elm Grove. Mr. Coffaro indicated that pedestrian counts could be provided.

Vote on the motion, Ayes: 4

Proposed Ordinance - Elimination of 15-Minute Parking Zone at Madison School

The committee reviewed a proposed ordinance eliminating a fifteen minute parking zone on W. Glendale Avenue from a point 185 feet west of N. 100th Street to a point 80 feet west thereof.

Moved by Ald. Matthews, seconded by Ald. Becker to recommend adoption. Ayes: 4

The meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

Carla A. Ledesma, City Clerk
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

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