

MINUTES
September 20, 2005
City Services Committee
City of Batavia

Chairman Volk called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

1. Roll Call

Members present: Aldermen Volk, Vance, Wollnik, Barnard, Dietz, Liva, and Frydendall (7:55 p.m./ Item 7)

Members absent: None

Also present: Aldermen Schmitz, Sparks, Nelson, and Clark; Mayor Schielke (7:45 p.m./Item 5); Dennis Anderson, Police Chief; Karen Young, Staff Engineer

2. Approval of Minutes

Motion: To approve the following City Services Committee minutes:

- July 19, 2005
- August 16, 2005

Maker: Wollnik

Second: Vance

Voice vote: 6 Ayes, 0 Nays, Motion Carried

3. Items Added/Removed/Changed

None.

4. Discussion on Fire Stations Progress

Volk reported that the project architect was currently developing preliminary concepts for both fire stations. It is anticipated that firefighters will be temporarily housed in trailers at the west side station during part of the construction period, and a determination has not yet been made for the east side station. Staff continues to negotiate with Sigalos and Associates on a contract for construction management services. If possible, the contract will be brought to the October 3 City Council meeting for approval. The project is on target for a March 2006 groundbreaking and completion in spring 2007. A complete set of plans will be developed late this year, and the project will then be taken through the City's development process.

5. Main Street Update: STP Application

Young reviewed her September 16, 2005 memo. The Kane/Kendall Council of Mayors had a call for projects for potential Surface Transportation Project (STP) funding in August. After a staff evaluation, an application for the reconstruction of Main Street was submitted for consideration. Young indicated that the project would be presented to a transportation subcommittee September 29 and it is hoped that a funding determination would be made this fall. Criteria used to evaluate projects include traffic volumes, road conditions, project readiness, safety, air quality, and transportation control measures (bike paths and sidewalks).

Existing conditions vary on this segment of Main Street from Randall Road to Route 31. Staff proposes to improve the roadway to an urban cross section with enclosed drainage, sidewalks, and bike paths. As part of the Phase I process, extensive public information meetings will be held, as well as notification to residents to obtain input on their view of problems in the area. The road will continue to be a two-lane cross section with a minor increase in lane width to meet federal requirements. If funding is received, it is anticipated that the Phase I design process would begin in early 2006 with the assistance of a consultant. Actual construction of the project would depend upon allocation of funds, but it is estimated to occur in 2009-2010.

Due to the specific requirements of Federal Funding, detailed cost estimates have been prepared with the assistance of Civiltech Engineering, The current estimate for the project, including design services, is \$7.6 million of which Batavia is responsible for \$2.6 million.

Volk asked if consultant services would be included in the 2006 budget, and Young said yes. Volk asked that staff work with the school district to straighten out the alignment of the parking lot exit at Batavia High School. Young indicated that staff would also coordinate the project with the potential development of the property at Main Street and Randall Road. She pointed out that the intersection of Main/Randall would be outside the scope of the project; signals at the Route 31/Main Street intersection would be updated.

Liva asked how staff estimated construction costs for a project that was 4-5 years in the future, and Young responded that staff would be better able to predict costs when and if the project is approved for funding.

6. Fox Valley Industrial Park Acceptance of Roadway

Young reviewed Noel Basquin's September 20, 2005 memo. Staff recommends acceptance of Bond Drive, Oswalt Avenue, Beach Street, and a portion of Belleview Lane. The portion of Belleview not being accepted would be utilized as a construction access for the center portion of the site.

Clark asked if construction traffic would need to pass over accepted roads to reach the eastern portion of the property. Young responded that mass grading had been completed on the site, and Basquin told her that once a site is 90% improved the roads final surfaces are typically accepted. Clark said Phases II and III were interior portions of the property, and she did not believe they would be developed anytime soon. Young said that particular section of roadway would not be accepted so it could be used as a main thoroughfare during construction.

Dietz asked if there were any plans to develop the interior lots, and Young said only Building 1 had been submitted for final design approval. Volk commented that this property had been developing very slowly. Mayor Schielke said the site was originally part of American Can's expansion plan several years ago, and it was subsequently sold to another developer when that plan did not work out.

Motion: To recommend to City Council final acceptance of Bond Drive, Oswalt Avenue, Beach Street, and the portion of Bellevue Drive, per the attached plan, upon receipt of a one-year Letter of Credit
Maker: Wollnik
Second: Liva
Voice vote: 6 Ayes, 0 Nays, Motion Carried

Volk requested that this item be placed on the Consent Agenda of the next City Council meeting.

7. Discussion on Residential Speeding

Anderson reviewed his September 16, 2005 memo. This topic was previously discussed by the committee in June. At that time, Anderson was directed to obtain additional information and cost estimates for a residential speeding survey regarding the possibility of reducing the residential speed limit to 25 MPH. He was also asked to research potential traffic calming devices. Traffic counts were completed after a slight delay caused by theft of speed measuring devices.

Anderson said he met with Sergeant Kevin Greco of the Plainfield Police Department, a traffic expert knowledgeable in this area. Greco introduced him to Lou Hausman, an engineer with Baxter and Woodman in Mokena, who has conducted several traffic surveys. The firm recently conducted a survey for Fox River Grove (population approximately 5,000) for a fee of \$4,900; eight locations were studied. Hausman offered to prepare a proposal for Batavia, and Anderson said he would contact him if one is needed.

Anderson reported that Sergeant Greco visited Batavia to observe traffic and did not notice any particular problems, with the exception of the downtown bridge. Greco provided Anderson with several traffic studies, and Anderson thought one from the State of Michigan was particularly appropriate to this discussion. One point in the study was that "driver behavior was an extension of societal attitude." In other words, drivers interpret speed limits based on their own experience. A nationally recognized standard uses the 85th percentile of actual speeds to determine appropriate speeds. The study also states that changing posted speed limits does not significantly affect the 85th percentile speeds.

Speed studies were conducted on North Avenue between Jefferson and Republic; the posted speed limit on this segment is 30 MPH. The 85th percentile speed was found to be 36 MPH (85% of traffic is traveling 36 MPH or slower, 15% is going faster). Anderson believed this meant the Police Department should target the 15% traveling faster for enforcement.

Counters were also placed on Millview Drive, which is posted at 25 MPH, so data could be compared with North Avenue. The 85th percentile speed was approximately 36 MPH, as well. This seems to confirm engineering studies that have concluded that lowering speed *limits* does not necessarily lower actual speed.

Vance asked if the data showed how many vehicles were traveling more than 10 MPH over the posted limit on Millview, and Anderson said yes. Anderson commented that a more appropriate speed limit for Millview would be 30 MPH due to the roadway width, but the limit was established many years ago. More people speed on Millview, which supports the findings of the study that people set their speed according to the environment around them.

Barnard asked for clarification of the environmental factor, and Volk responded that people drive at the speed they feel most comfortable. For example, people seem to drive more slowly on Wilson Street between Lincoln and Van Nortwick because the area feels more constrained. There is more visibility west of Van Nortwick and many people drive faster on that stretch.

Nelson thought that visible traffic enforcement had a significant impact on driver behavior. For example, there is a strong police presence on Golf Road in Hoffman Estate, which slows down traffic. Anderson responded that this situation was different in that the committee was considering *residential* speed limits and it wasn't possible to do enforcement on every residential street. Nelson believed it would be good for Batavia to have a reputation of enforcing posted speed limits.

Anderson then reviewed possible speed calming measures. Speed display devices work for a short time to slow people down, but do not have a long-term effect. Speed humps have been successfully used elsewhere, but have several important drawbacks. Fire Departments do not support them, noise may be unacceptable to some neighbors, motorists may squeal tires to express their displeasure with them, and signs must be posted in yards. In order to install speed humps, there must be neighborhood concurrence in support (suggested at 50-60%). Speed humps are also relatively permanent and may cause people to choose new routes and alter traffic patterns. Each hump costs approximately \$5,000 to install.

Anderson concluded that residential traffic is an emotional issue for residents and should be treated very seriously by city officials. He felt that all decisions should be based on facts. It must be a priority to slow traffic, but the Police Department cannot be in all places at all times.

Mayor Schielke noted that after press coverage of previous discussions, he was contacted by several Batavia residents, as well as an association representing handicapped individuals, all of whom indicated they were prepared to debate the issue if speed humps were pursued. It was pointed out that there were handicapped individuals in the North Avenue neighborhood, and wheelchairs can accidentally release from restraints when vehicles pass over the humps.

Volk commented that Geneva installed speed humps in the Williamsburg subdivision and removed them about six months later because of the problems they caused.

Vance pointed out that speed humps can create a lot of noise from bouncing equipment in trucks, as well.

Barnard noted that Anderson's memo said he intended to request additional officers in the 2006 budget. She asked if these officers would be dedicated to enforcement and also wanted to know the approximate cost of a new position. Anderson replied that the exact costs were not yet available as budget preparations were still underway. He said he intended to dedicate the officers to traffic enforcement whenever possible, although it would not be 100% of the time.

Liva indicated that a recent article about Cook County estimated the cost for an officer at about \$100,000/year.

Nelson requested that the Police Department generate a weekly or monthly report to inform the City Council of traffic enforcement locations and activity. He supported lower speed limits in residential areas, along with increased enforcement. Anderson said if he thought this would solve the problem, he would favor a speed limit reduction, but he did not believe it would be effective.

Volk thought enforcement would lower speeds regardless of the posted limits, and he encouraged the Police Department to step up enforcement. One estimate for the study required to legally reduce resident speed limits was \$20,000 and he believed this money would be better spent on enforcement measures.

Nelson thought it would be a low cost alternative to increase compliance with the speed limits. He favored spending \$20,000 for enforcement and reviewing the results, rather than commissioning a study.

Vance said the reports seemed to show that the problem was not as great as it was perceived to be. She did not want people to receive tickets for exceeding the speed limit by as little as 2 MPH.

Nelson said he still believed that speeds of 37 MPH for a street with a 25 MPH posted limit were still unacceptable.

In response to a question from Wollnik about guidelines for enforcement, Anderson said the 85th percentile speed should be used as a baseline according to studies. Traffic above or below that percentile is in danger of causing accidents. He did not feel that changing the posted speed limit on Millview would significantly affect the speeds.

Vance and Clark both thought the speed limit on Millview should be increased.

Anderson said streets would need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. He thought the traffic/speed counters would provide valuable data to identify problem areas to target for stricter enforcement. Currently, when a speeding complaint is received, an officer responds in a marked vehicle which often skews the results. Anderson then said the two stolen traffic/speed counters were being replaced and the cost will be shared with the Engineering Department; more will be ordered next year.

Barnard asked how long it would take to assess the situation, and Anderson said it is an ongoing process. Officers are deployed to locations for which the most complaints about speeding vehicles are received. Barnard said she supported hiring an additional patrol officer who would concentrate on traffic enforcement.

Dietz asked if priorities could be realigned so that existing personnel could be used. Anderson responded that there are certain days when officers can be dedicated to traffic enforcement, but this may only be 1-2 times per week. He hoped to be able to do it every day.

Barnard asked if the additional officer would be used for other patrol duties that would take him/her away from traffic enforcement. Anderson said his intention was to dedicate that position to traffic enforcement, based on input from the City Council and residents.

Volk encouraged committee members to go on a ride-along with patrol officers to get a clear picture of what patrol officers do on a typical shift.

Frydendall pointed out that Geneva has 25 MPH residential speed limits and asked if any studies were done to show how that affected actual speeds. Volk requested that Anderson follow-up with Geneva on that question for the next meeting.

Barnard asked that the issue be revisited 2-3 months after budget approval.

Frydendall said increased enforcement may not necessarily result in more tickets.

Liva felt the data would identify the hours that officers should target certain streets in order to maximize efficiency.

Susan Fous, 435 North Avenue, asked if Anderson had researched the possibility of using traffic circles. Anderson said he discussed it with Greco, but traffic circles can be problematic in that they alter a street permanently and are very expensive to build. Although they may work, they may not be appropriate for residential neighborhoods with side streets. Fous said Chicago is installing traffic circles in residential areas. She thought that the North/Jefferson intersection was sufficiently large that it could accommodate a traffic study to be used for a pilot study. Fous requested that the committee consider exploring the use of traffic circles where they could be installed without altering curbing, etc. Fous then said she did understand the committee's resistance to addressing a city-wide problem of speeding. She felt there was good reason for emotional concern because of the safety and well-being of children, adults, and senior citizens in the neighborhood. Volk responded that a representative of the Engineering Department was present at this meeting and would look into the feasibility of a traffic circle at that intersection. Volk said there was no reluctance on the part of the committee to take action that would be effective. His personal opinion was that installing signs would not slow traffic down, as illustrated by the data from Millview. Volk said he was reluctant to make cosmetic changes and spend money that would not obtain the desired results.

Barnard felt strongly that there should be increased enforcement.

Nelson supported a 25 MPH enforced speed limit in residential areas.

Dietz believed there should be more enforcement of the 30 MPH speed limit before considering whether to reduce it to 25 MPH.

Frydendall asked if the trailer unit that displays an oncoming vehicle's speed was capable of recording those speeds, and Anderson said no. Frydendall noted that a study is required to legally reduce residential speed limits to 25 MPH.

8. Other

A. Wilson Street Parking Restriction Signs

In response to a question from the committee, Young reported that the Street Department would be installing the parking restriction signs on Wilson Street near the Route 25 intersection within the next few days.

B. Animal Control

Barnard asked that this topic be placed on the next agenda.

9. Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:37 p.m.

Minutes prepared by
Kathy Montanari