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MINUTES
BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PLAN ADVISORY GROUP
Remote Participation
January 23, 2023 – 3:00 p.m.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Advisory Group meeting was held remotely on Monday, January 23, 2023. The meeting was called to order at 3:13 p.m. by Group Member Brian Lee.

Members Present:

Craig Niedermaier
Ticia Doughty-Ashcroft
Peggy Reins
Brian Lee
Steve Sanders

Staff Present:

George Alexopoulos, Commander
Nathan Bruemmer, Staff Liaison
Tom Powers, Village Engineer
Tim O'Brien, Civil Engineer II
Bob Rado, Civil Engineer II
Andrew Vitale, Senior GIS Coordinator
Kathy Thake, Deputy Village Manager
Kelly Mickle, Senior Center Director

Call to Order

Approval of Minutes

Group Member Peggy Reins seconded by Group Member Steve Sanders, moved to approve the minutes of the October 24, 2022. On voice vote all concurred.

New Business

I. Police Accidents Report

George Alexopoulos of the Niles Policed Department presented a report on accidents involving pedestrians or cyclists since the group's last meeting.

On October 25th at Milwaukee and Greenwood a pedestrian was fleeing from the police on foot and was struck by a passenger side mirror of a vehicle that was traveling southbound on Milwaukee. She did go to the hospital, although the injuries weren't severe.

On November 22nd at Dempster St and Merrill St a pedestrian was walking east on the sidewalk along Dempster with her walker. A vehicle traveling south on Merrill didn't see her and bumped her. She did not go to a hospital and the driver was cited.

On December 9th on the 9500 block of Washington a vehicle traveling south on Washington hit a pedestrian crossing the street outside of a crosswalk. The pedestrian was not injured and refused to go to a hospital.

Group Member Ticia Doughty-Ashcroft said it seems like there have been many car accidents in Niles in the last month, and asked if anyone is sensing an increase in accidents around here. Commander Alexopoulos said off the top of his head it doesn't seem like any more or any less than usual, but he could pull the data.

II. 2023 Resurfacing Program

Tim O'Brien, Interim Village Engineer, shared an overview of the Village's resurfacing program for 2023. There are 17 streets and 4 alleys in the program. There are three broad categories for the types of work: streets that are being widened, places like Nordica where parking is being added, and then a typical resurfacing street where they do spot repairs and an overlay of the street. There will be widened sidewalks in the Evergreen Estates neighborhood. They had a public open house for the program on January 11 and got no major comments. The next street he highlighted is Nordica from Howard to Oakton. There will be parking added on the north end of the street. Mr. O'Brien went through a list of streets getting typical routine maintenance and resurfacing.

Group Member Lee asked if there were any areas of work impacted by the Complete Streets policy, or do they all have existing sidewalks. Bob Rado, Civil Engineer, said that on Oriole near Jonquil Park there is no proposed sidewalk along the park area but they are making improvements to the gravel parking lot along the street. He feels people could use that for walking when there aren't games. There are also no sidewalks at NICO Park but there are some on the south side. Chairman Niedermaier asked for more explanation about the Jonquil Park sidewalk. He said it's currently an unsafe place to ride a bike. There was discussion about the pedestrian conditions near the park and at the gravel parking lot. Public Works will be adding a curb and paving the parking lot. Mr. Rado said they're not adding sidewalk because they didn't want to add impervious area, and that pedestrians could walk on the grass or the parking lot when it's empty. Group Member Sanders asked why, instead of widening the road and the parking lot, wouldn't we want to add a sidewalk. Mr. Rado said they can look into that. Chairman Niedermaier suggested putting the parking at an angle, not taking 5' from the grassy area, and adding a sidewalk. Group Member Lee asked if sidewalk was required for ADA compliance. Group Member Reins said it doesn't seem right to force someone with mobility issues onto the grass. Mr. Rado said they could stripe off an area of the parking lot for walking.

Chairman Niedermaier asked if Nora Avenue was due for resurfacing. Mr. Rado said that is not on the list for this year. Mr. O'Brien said they're planning to bid out the project in February, with contractors potentially starting in late spring.

III. 2023 Bike Pavement Marking Program

Tim O'Brien next presented on the 2023 bike marking program. It's a small program to add some bike improvements throughout town. Right now, they are proposing to

do two stretches of shared lane markers that were recommended by the Bike Plan. These two stretches will be on Church/Maryland/Lyons and Ozark/Ozanam from Dempster to Oakton. Both will contain green shared lane markings and directional signage. The cost of these two jobs will be about \$50,000.

IV. Cycling Without Age

Group Member Sanders shared an update on the Cycling Without Age program. He met with staff from the Village to discuss the potential program, and the reception was positive. He is hoping to do one week in May and another in October if it's successful. Nathan Bruemmer, Planner, said we're going to need some volunteers to give rides on the tri-shaws, and that we're hoping to recruit volunteers from the BPAG committee.

V. Summer Bike Ride

Group Member Sanders shared his idea for a summer bike ride for the BPAG committee. All members were supportive of that idea. Chairman Niedermaier asked if there were specific locations we should visit. Group Member Sanders said that ideally we could hit up a local business to see if we could start and stop there. It would be good to highlight new infrastructure in the Village as well. He said he's hoping for a moderate ride length of 5-10 miles. Group Member Reins said she remembers a west suburban group did a ride last fall that really highlighted getting elected officials to participate – could we get all of the Trustees to get on a bike? Chairman Niedermaier said he could ask. Mr. O'Brien asked when we would be doing this. Group Member Sanders said perhaps June or September when the weather is cooler. Mr. O'Brien said the North Branch Trail connection project will kick off around May 1, and should be close to being done by the beginning of July, perhaps the ride could highlight that project.

Kelly Mickle, Director of the Senior Center, rejoined the call and shared some information about an AARP grant that could be used for the Village to buy a tri-shaw of our own for the Cycling Without Age program. The typical award is \$20,000. It's a very competitive grant and applications are due on March 15th. Group Member Sanders said we should go through with it. Chairman Niedermaier said he feels we have a compelling story.

VI. Walking Signage at Parks

Group Member Sanders shared something he heard about in Detroit, where in parks they had signs with maps that provided walking routes from the park of different lengths. He thought this could be a good addition to Niles and would encourage walking. Chairman Niedermaier said putting signs where the Village owns property would be the easiest low hanging thing to do. He also suggested doing a scavenger hunt based on some Niles history or local plantings. He suggested we look into other communities that have done something like that and done it well. Group Member Sanders said maybe we could do that digitally through the website. Group Member Reins asked where we were at in terms of developing a champion in the Park District for biking and walking in Niles – it seems like a natural fit for their mission. Chairman Niedermaier said he could reach out to some folk and see what they're willing to do in conjunction with us. Maybe we could even invite one to attend a future BPAG meeting.

Other Discussion

Group Member Ticia Doughty-Ashcroft wanted to talk about the Waukegan/Cleveland and Caldwell/Cleveland intersections. There was supposed to be an update from IDOT in January but they haven't been able to update us. She is mindful that these things involving IDOT take time, but we're 6 months away from the 3 year anniversary of the accident that started this committee. She expressed her frustration that this is moving at a snail's pace, and wondered if there's anything else we can do to move the needle before another accident happens. Group Member Lee asked if there were any updates from IDOT regarding the rebalancing study and the SRA designation. Chairman Niedermaier gave a history of where we're at with the project.

Tom Powers, Director of Public Works, shared that in November IDOT District 1 (which includes Niles) received the rebalancing report from Springfield. They are still in the process of reviewing it. Chairman Niedermaier asked what the process of removing the SRA designation from Waukegan is. Mr. Powers said he imagines they're looking at how many trucks use Waukegan, and if those trucks get put to Harlem or Caldwell, what does it do to the operation of those roads. This is likely what the rebalancing study will tell us. He also received a call from District 1 Local Roads saying they received a letter from a concerned Niles resident regarding Waukegan/Cleveland, which went up the chain of command at IDOT. Mr. Powers says they're crystal clear on what happened and what the Village is asking for. Group Member Lee asked if there's something we can do or someone we can appeal to get the ball rolling. Mr. Powers said there's a webform that you can fill out that goes directly to Springfield. Chairman Niedermaier said we need to make a subjective appeal since the numbers don't necessarily support improvements at that intersection, and we should talk to IDOT in a language they understand. He wondered if there's a more savvy way to do the letter. Mr. Powers said you could start a letter mailing campaign to the Chief Engineer of District 1. He feels it's better to not come from Niles staff.

Group Member Reins wanted to know what the specific ask we have in to IDOT right now is. Mr. Powers said we're waiting for the results of the volume rebalancing study, they are not giving it to us until they are done reviewing it. Group Member Lee added that we're waiting on those results in order to make the change in the SRA, which is what would allow us to do a road diet on Waukegan. Group Member Doughty-Ashcroft asked when accidents happen at specific places multiple times, are those documented and can they be used to sway IDOT? Chairman Niedermaier said they do document it, but at the Waukegan/Cleveland intersection there hadn't been a pedestrian-involved accident in 13 years prior to the recent one. Mr. Powers gave more history on the Village's interactions with IDOT regarding a proposed road diet on Waukegan.

Group Member Lee asked for the status of the improvements at Caldwell/Cleveland. Mr. Powers said we've gotten comments from numerous departments within IDOT but are still waiting on other departments. Group Member Lee asked if there's a chance we can still get it done this summer? Mr. Powers said there's still a chance. Group Member Reins asked if we could keep this as a standing item on the agenda so we don't lose track. Group Member Lee asked for an update on the Oakton improvements near Caldwell. Mr. Powers said it's been approved and awarded, but there was a conflict with some AT&T utilities that is being worked out. He thinks they will start around spring.

Comments from the Public

None.

Next Meeting

TBD

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Chairman Niedermaier, seconded by Group Member Stephen Sanders; all concurred and the meeting adjourned at 4:26 PM.

Nathan Bruemmer
Staff Liaison