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MINUTES BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PLAN ADVISORY GROUP June 26, 2023 – 3:00 p.m.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Advisory Group meeting was held on Monday, June 26, 2023. The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m. by Chairman Craig Niedermaier.

Members Present:

Craig Niedermaier
Ticia Doughty-Ashcroft
Peggy Reins
Brian Lee

Staff Present:

Kathy Thake, Deputy Village Manager
Nathan Bruemmer, Staff Liaison
Tim O'Brien, Village Engineer
George Alexopoulos, Commander, Police Department
Bob Rado, Civil Engineer II

Also Present:

Beth Norton, Epstein

Call to Order

Approval of Minutes

Brian Lee requested a correction to the May 26 meeting minutes regarding members of the public present. Chairman Niedermaier made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 22, 2023 meeting as amended. Group Member Peggy Reins seconded the motion. On voice vote all concurred.

New Business

I. Police Accidents Report

Commander George Alexopoulos of the Police Department shared a report of pedestrian involved crashes that have occurred since the last BPAG meeting. Since our last meeting, there were not any accidents involving pedestrians or bicyclists on our roadways. There was one minor accident in a parking lot. Chairman Niedermaier asked what the average count of accidents is in a year. Commander Alexopoulos said he would look to see if he can find a number. He would guess there could be an average of two fatalities a year.

II. Engineering Updates

a. Shermer Road

Village Engineer Tim O'Brien introduced the next topic for the meeting, which is a proposal to add bike lanes on Shermer Rd. There are two alternatives as far as the proposed configuration of the road – the first (Alternative 1) includes two bike lanes along with a landscaped center median. The second (Alternative 2) is just the addition of bike lanes along road, with no median. Mr. O'Brien said both proposals were brought to the Village's Technical Review Committee, who recommended bringing both alternatives to the BPAG and the public. They were in favor of pushing Alternative 1 as the primary option. Group Member Reins clarified that both alternatives are just bike lanes, no protected bike lanes. Beth Norton of Epstein explained a little more about the configurations on both alternatives. Chairman Niedermaier asked Commander Alexopoulos if Shermer is viewed as a street that has a lot of speeding. He said they received a complaint recently and have been patrolling, and the most common violations are sign violations at Shermer and Main. Speeding autos aren't a huge occurrence in his experience. Chairman Niedermaier said he could see someone potentially hitting the median late at night. Ms. Norton said that medians typically decrease speeds and aid in traffic calming.

Ms. Norton explained that there will be dashed green lanes where the bike lanes cross other streets. At Kedzie there will be a 10' off street shared use path that connects to the crossing at Cleveland. There will also be a turn box for northbound cyclists to cross from the 10' path to the northbound bike lane. Nathan Bruemmer, Village Planner, asked if the 10' shared use path ends at a regular sidewalk before the Cleveland intersection. Mr. O'Brien said that that portion of sidewalk will likely be changed into a shared use path as part of a different project. Chairman Niedermaier asked about how much parking is being lost, and where. Ms. Norton said for Alternative 2, there are only 3 spots being lost. For Alternative 1, 42 spots. Mr. O'Brien said the majority of the spots are from the cemetery south, which aren't being utilized much anyways. There are no spaces being lost in the multi-family area, and everyone will have a side street they can park on. Chairman Niedermaier asked if there were any beautification tactics we can use to make it feel more "small town walkable." Ms. Norton said they are proposing to straighten the crosswalks to a 90 degree angle, creating less exposure for pedestrians. They also are adding bump outs wherever they can, which shortens the distance to cross the street and increases visibility for pedestrians. You could also put a bench or add plantings to the bump out areas.

Mr. Rado noted the large right of way south of Main, and asked if off-street paths were considered for that portion. Ms. Norton said that would result in a lot of removal of existing trees and would raise the cost of the project. Chairman Niedermaier asked if the off-street paths would be ideal? Ms. Norton said it would be safer. There is also a concern of the impact on utilities if we pursued an off-street path. Group Member Reins clarified that there's a 10' travel lane for cars, and a 5' bike lane for cyclists in Alternative 1. There was discussion about whether this would be a tight fit, and confirmation that the Niles Free Bus would be able to fit with the median. The 10' and 5' would be the same dimensions without the median. There was more discussion of the median and "greenifying," and Mr. O'Brien showed an example of Main Street in Skokie which is similar to what's being proposed in Alternative 1.

Chairman Niedermaier asked if this is a project that would warrant a more robust public outreach process. He suggested going to Shermer with a tent and exhibits and meeting the impacted people where they live. Group Member Reins suggested setting up a table at the upcoming Walk and Roll event. She raised a concern about doing outreach just on Shermer, because the project will be used by more than just the people who live on the street or immediate area. Mr. O'Brien said there is a required public meeting for the project, where people on the street will be notified. Group Member Lee said it could be useful to show specifically what parking spaces are being eliminated on the drawings, especially for public outreach. There was a discussion on what the approach to messaging should be regarding parking. Group Member Reins said the benefits of the median should also be highlighted during outreach.

Group Member Reins asked about next steps. Mr. O'Brien said this was just to solicit comments. The next step is to meet with IDOT, and then have a public meeting. Chairman Niedermaier asked about having a sign up along Shermer showing a project rendering and providing updates to residents about the project progress. There was further conversation about public outreach, including using the Village website, whether materials should be translated into other languages, and more. Chairman Niedermaier asked Group Members Lee and Reins about their preferences with regard to the median. Group Member Reins said the median would be good if it slows traffic, but could cause issues if it makes the travel lanes too narrow. Group Member Lee had a question about if the median is making it too narrow to back out of the diagonal parking in the townhome area. Ms. Norton said they've done turning exhibits and there is enough room. She acknowledged that the diagonal parking near the bike lane is less than ideal. Group Member Lee added that he felt the median would beautify the area. Mr. Rado suggested doing a combination shared use path for portions of Shermer. The group discussed the possibility of this for a while.

b. Milwaukee/Monroe

Mr. O'Brien recapped that the only plan that IDOT is willing to consider at this intersection would greatly impact the properties of area businesses and remove the streetscape that was installed within the last ten years. Group Member Reins said she's inclined to table the item, but we can't have a stretch of Milwaukee from Oakton to Main without one pedestrian crossing. Chairman Niedermaier talked about the antiquated development pattern of the area businesses, and whether there were opportunities for redevelopment more in keeping with the South Milwaukee Corridor Plan. There was further discussion about the configuration of existing businesses and the impact of the proposed plan. Mr. O'Brien said it's essentially do what IDOT says now, or wait until the area businesses redevelop and try to do something then. Group Member Reins said she doesn't want to see the landscaping in the area go away, but she doesn't want to see people not have a safe crossing across Milwaukee. She asked if there was another intersection between Main and Oakton that makes sense. Chairman Niedermaier asked about a mid-block crossing, and whether it would help in the eyes of IDOT to not address an intersection. Mr. O'Brien went through some of the issues with the geometry of the street, and said they've asked IDOT in the past and said it would be hard to make it work. There was some discussion about possible approaches with IDOT, but according to Ms. Norton we're largely

hamstrung by Milwaukee's SRA designation. Chairman Niedermaier said this plan creates many more issues than it solves.

Chairman Niedermaier asked the group what we should do. Is this one of the situations where we feel so strong we need to create some sort of grass roots political groundswell? He is not sure members of the community are that passionate about it. Mr. O'Brien said the stated goal of the Bike and Ped Plan was to have pedestrian crossings every half mile, but there are other areas of town that we could focus our efforts on. Chairman Niedermaier said tabling it doesn't mean we're killing it, it might just mean waiting for the right opportunity or for a shake up to happen at IDOT. Group Member Lee shared that he spent some time out there and traffic is flying through the area. He feels that the proposed plan does not offer a good solution, and there might not be a huge demand for it. Chairman Niedermaier said we'll move on to other intersections and table this one.

c. Other Updates

Mr. O'Brien ran through some other updates. For Cleveland/Caldwell, they're expecting 100% plans in July. For Cleveland/Waukegan, it's still being reviewed by IDOT. They're also looking into some HSIP grant funding for that project. The Bunker Hill trail connection is under construction and looks good. The Oakton trail project is coming along, and plans have been submitted to IDOT for the connection around Morton Grove's water plant. That will probably be constructed next year.

Comments from the Public

There were none.

Other Discussion

Group Member Reins brought up the Safe Routes to School seminar her and Mr. Rado attended, and asked if the Village had any interest in pursuing funding through that program. The grants are for fairly small amounts. She thought maybe it could be used for more "cultural" projects than capital projects, and there could be some interest from the schools to do something. Group Member Reins and Group Member Doughty-Ashcroft said they would go out to the schools to gauge interest and let them know the program exists. Chairman Niedermaier suggested looking at our schools and seeing what routes students take to and from them makes perfect sense. Schools are centers where we know there is mobility happening, so we should make sure the students have safe avenues. He also suggested using Culver as a test sample.

Next Meeting

July 24, 2023

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Chairman Niedermaier, seconded by Group Member Doughty-Ashcroft; all concurred and the meeting adjourned at 5:07 PM.

Nathan Bruemmer
Staff Liaison