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MINUTES BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PLAN ADVISORY GROUP In-Person Meeting May 23, 2022 – 3:00 p.m.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Advisory Group meeting was held remotely on Monday, May 23, 2022. The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m. by Chairman Craig Niedermaier.

Members Present:

Chairman Craig Niedermaier
Stephen Sanders
Brian Lee
Peggy Reins
Ticia Doughty-Ashcroft

Staff Present:

Nathan Bruemmer, Staff Liaison
Tom Powers, Village Engineer
Nick Zakula, Police
Andrew Vitale, GIS Coordinator
Fred Braun, Director of Public Works
Bob Rado, Civil Engineer II

Also Present

Dan Schroeder, Christopher Burke Engineering
Orion Galey, Christopher Burke Engineering

Call to Order

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Craig Niedermaier, seconded by Group Member Steve Sanders, moved to approve the minutes of the April 27, 2022, meeting; on voice vote all concurred.

New Business

I. Fargo Avenue and Jarvis Avenue

Orion Galey and Dan Schoeder of Christopher Burke Engineering gave a brief presentation of the proposed sidewalk infill project on Fargo Avenue and Jarvis Avenue. The Village of Niles 2022 Street Program identified these two streets as streets that need to be rehabilitated, and as part of that recognized that there were sidewalk deficiencies on the street. The infill project will essentially connect the missing links between sidewalks on both streets. Bigger benefits will be ADA compliance for crosswalks across School Street, and granting access to the North Branch Trail. There

are some private landscaping improvements in the public right-of-way, which is why we're having this meeting today. Chairman Niedermaier opened the floor to public comment for feedback on the plans.

Public Commenters:

Christine Buth, 6949 W Jarvis Ave: Ms. Buth wrote the initial letter to the Mayor objecting to the proposed sidewalk infill. Some of the reasons she listed were that she moved to this neighborhood because of the idyllic and open feel of the properties. She noted areas in the Village where infrastructure is in bad shape – why are they focusing on her street? She is not pleased with the way the project has been handled and felt blindsided by it. She said she loves her neighborhood. She noted that the old Ideal Uniform is an eyesore, but yet the Village wants to destroy our greenery. She questioned why we would need a crosswalk on Fargo and Nordica, being that it's two dead end streets. It makes no sense to spend money on sidewalks nobody will use. She noted the adverse environmental impact of sidewalks and complained that the flyers distributed for this meeting had blown all over the neighborhood. She suggested the Village install speed bumps instead.

Cheryl Peterson, 6911 W Fargo Ave: Ms. Peterson noted her displeasure about having the Village having plans without checking with residents first, and felt the Village was not being transparent with the project. She asked why only Fargo and Jarvis and not Niles Terrace, which also doesn't have sidewalks. Why were sidewalks not installed when work was done on that street last year? She purchased her home 36 years ago due to the open feeling, and doesn't want to live in a concrete jungle. She likes her front yard with no sidewalk, why is the Village trying to fix something that's not broken? She walks daily, and has no issue walking in the street. She can count the number of people walking or biking on Fargo, and it's not heavily traveled. She listed the frequent walkers. She said the greatest problem is speeders in vehicles cutting through her neighborhood, and suggested installing speed bumps. She said that they have small setbacks on her street, and people walking on new sidewalks if installed would invade her privacy. She also said installing sidewalks would remove a 6 year old oak tree on her front lawn.

Chris Gelin, 6955 W Jarvis Ave: Mr. Gelin moved to Niles 4 years ago after spending his whole life in Chicago. He moved because it was quiet and safe, and to have a "real home." He said there's no traffic in the neighborhood, but also said there's cut through traffic which speed bumps would solve. Said he'll be losing his whole lawn if this goes through. He implored the BPAG to consider his viewpoint when making their decision, and said that the sidewalks could be placed along the street instead of through his lawn.

Dan Cellak, 6922 W Fargo Ave: Mr. Cellak said he agreed with the previous speakers completely. He was incredulous that the Village would be chopping off the bottoms of driveways with perfectly good cement, to install more cement. He has a pretty new driveway, and doesn't want to pay for it twice with higher taxes. He doesn't feel it's necessary.

Joe Marinac, 6938 W Jarvis Ave: He said on the south side of Jarvis, about 80% doesn't have sidewalk, but on the north side there's only a few missing. He suggested just placing sidewalks on one side of the street, and thinks there must be some place to compromise. He sees no reason for the sidewalk infill. There's very little foot traffic,

but lots of cut through traffic from Howard and Waukegan. He suggested making Fargo or Jarvis one-way streets. He also had some complaints about the bike path crossing at Howard St, and thinks it's an accident waiting to happen with how cyclists blow through the crossing.

David Kraft, 6914 W Jarvis Ave: Mr. Kraft asked if it was a done deal. Chairman Niedermaier confirmed it wasn't. Mr. Kraft noted how little foot traffic there is in the neighborhood, and doesn't want people walking so close to his house. He feels it's a beautiful neighborhood and putting sidewalks in would destroy it.

Voula Vaux, 6941 W Jarvis Ave: She echoed everyone's sentiments. One of her favorite things about this neighborhood is how forested and natural it is. She values the neighborhood for the nature. She said there's minimal foot traffic except for the people that live in the neighborhood. She also has had drainage issues, and has spent money twice to re-grade her lawn. She feels adding sidewalks will undo all of her work to fix her drainage situation. She also has lost two trees, and would hate to lose a third.

Mark Chruscieski, 6906 W Jarvis Ave: He questioned the Village's priorities. He said there's minimal vehicle traffic and foot traffic. He mentioned that there's one handicapped fellow who walks in the street every day and doesn't have an issue. Why are we spending money on building unnecessary sidewalks? He suggested focusing on other things like Lehigh Avenue, which has no sidewalks.

Jim Ciemny, 6941 W Niles Terrace: Mr. Ciemny re-iterated that the former Ideal Uniform is a big problem. He said working on sidewalks is a good thing in some ways, but we have a gigantic problem at the end of the block. There's 22 neighborhoods in Niles, and only 11 have neighborhood park. He said Niles needs to re-align priorities to get a park developed, and then they can focus on other things.

Chairman Niedermaier asked Director Fred Braun to explain the Village's Complete Streets policy. The policy basically says that every time a street is rehabilitated, all efforts will be taken to prioritize the safety of all users of the road, including motorists, pedestrians and cyclists. This is why the Village is proposing the sidewalk infill. A member of the public asked why Niles Terrace didn't have sidewalks installed last year when work was done on the street. Director Braun said the Niles Terrace project was done by the Morton Grove/Niles Water Commission, and sidewalks weren't in the scope of the project. The Village does plan to install sidewalks there in the future. Chairman Niedermaier gave some history on the BPAG, and why we're pursuing sidewalk infill. Chairman Niedermaier noted the bizarre layout of sidewalks on the block, and asked for some history on why it's like that. Director Braun said there used to be a policy where if you built a new house you were required to install a sidewalk if there wasn't one existing. Director Braun noted that the Village's Comprehensive Plan also calls for sidewalk infill, and that the Village has been focusing on sidewalk infill for some time now.

There was further open discussion about how the neighbors in attendance don't feel the sidewalks are necessary. Residents said they are fine with their kids playing in the street, and that kids won't play on sidewalks. Chairman Niedermaier polled how many in the audience don't currently have a sidewalk. All but three in attendance rose their hands. Another neighbor gave some history on sidewalks in the neighborhood. Chairman Niedermaier asked a clarifying question about whether or not the neighbors

felt there was high vehicle traffic on the street, as he's heard conflicting information tonight. The public said during rush hour there is notable cut-through traffic, more traffic now than before. Another neighbor asked about why she was limited for how much impervious surface she could have on her lot when she installed a new driveway, but now the Village wants to add more pavement. Village Planner Nathan Bruemmer clarified that impervious surface coverage only applies to private lots, and that the proposed sidewalks are on public property. Bob Rado, Civil Engineer II said there's a misconception that people's properties go all the way to the curb. The homeowner of 6910 Jarvis said that the proposed sidewalk in front of her house has a ridiculous shape. Dan Schroeder of Christopher Burke said where possible they tried to avoid existing landscaping, but that the plan is not final. There was continued conversation about only having a sidewalk on one side of the street. Tom Powers, Village Engineer, gave some background on why the Village moved quickly, it was to secure pricing on materials.

There was some extended conversation about whether trees would be removed for the project. One homeowner complained about the thousands of dollars in landscaping she installed in the public right-of-way possibly being removed. The public asked to be kept in the loop on these important decisions, and there was discussion about better ways to engage the public.

Aryna Bevzenko of 8252 Oconto Ave gave a comment. She is 15 years old and doesn't live in the immediate neighborhood, but she thinks the repeated comments focusing on the environment are disingenuous. She questioned if it's really good to teach children that it's ok to walk on the street, and she is thankful to have sidewalks. Accessible sidewalks are important, and sidewalks are important for future generations. She is happy that the Village is thinking about sidewalks and pedestrian safety, and encourages them to continue doing so.

There was more conversation among the BPAG, Village Staff, and the public about sidewalk maintenance, snow removal, and whether or not the project is a done deal. Tom Powers said the Bid will be voted on by the Village Board tomorrow. Director Braun clarified that it's just a bid for materials, and reiterated it's not a done deal. An email sign-up sheet was started to keep residents in the loop of next steps. There was continued conversation about what else the money could be used on, the North Branch Trail crossing at Howard St, and types of tree plantings in the Village.

II. Hands-free Pedestrian Detection for Crosswalks

Tom Powers, Village Engineer, gave a brief presentation about available technology for a hands-free pedestrian detection device at crosswalks. There are a few examples of municipalities using them, often either at bike crossings or near schools. Mr. Powers said they could only be installed where there's intersections of two village-owned streets, as IDOT would not allow them. Mr. Powers said it would be \$8,000 for Christopher Burke to conduct a feasibility study, where they would do a deep dive on the equipment and make sure it's an appropriate location and set up safely. Chairman Niedermaier requested that Mr. Powers get a ball park figure for how much it would cost to buy and install the equipment.

Group Member Peggy Reins asked about how the equipment works for cyclists. The example in Bentonville, Arkansas is the only example Mr. Powers has heard of it being used to cyclists, so he can't really speak to it. Chairman Niedermaier thanked

Mr. Powers for researching it, but said it would be good to know the final dollar amount before moving forward.

Other Discussion

Tom Powers asked the Committee what the next steps should be for the sidewalk infill project. Chairman Niedermaier said he'd like to hear from more neighbors, and would like to explore the idea of doing one side of the street. Director Braun said that would be good on one street where one side has lots of sidewalks, but could be problematic for others. Tom Powers said previously they've done anonymous surveys, which can be effective in getting a true opinion from the neighborhood. There was consensus this should be the next step. There was some ongoing discussion about sidewalk placement and connections to the North Branch Trail. Group Member Brian Lee suggested putting the sidewalks along the curb rather than having a parkway. Bob Rado said parkways are generally more aesthetically pleasing and safer, and Group Member Reins said that there are studies saying that parkways improve property values. Director Braun said it's been proven that tree coverage improves safety and slows down traffic.

Chairman Niedermaier said the next step is take the survey, at a future meeting we can absorb the data, and then assess next steps. Director Braun said they will move on taking the survey. Group Member Brian Lee asked the folks from Christopher Burke if they had any thoughts. Orion Galey said getting input for the geometry of the sidewalk from the affected residents would be helpful. Beyond that, deciding whether we'll do one or both sides of the streets and examining how it can connect to the North Branch Trail better. Otherwise it's just getting direction on whether or not we should move ahead with the survey. There was some discussion about what parts of town should be included in the survey. It was suggested that the entirety of the O'Shanter Estates and Dutchman's Point neighborhoods be included. There was discussion about what sort of questions should be included in the survey. Group Member Reins said it's very important that we get this right because it has a larger impact on our Complete Streets policy. It's not just about this neighborhood, it's about what kind of Village we want for future generations.

Group Member Ticia Doughty-Ashcroft asked if there were updates on the Caldwell/Cleveland and Waukegan/Cleveland projects. Tom Powers said they just finished a final hurdle with Caldwell, and that they haven't heard back from IDOT regarding the road diet on Waukegan. Group Member Lee suggested putting a speed radar sign on Waukegan, which Director Braun said they would look into. Tom Powers said maybe it's time to put some pressure on IDOT. Group Member Reins asked for an update on the Oakton St project. Tom Powers said that as far as he knows, we're still on track for a June letting. There had been some hold up with the inter-governmental agreement.

Comments from the Public

None.

Next Meeting

To be determined

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Group Member Lee, seconded by Group Member Sanders; all concurred and the meeting adjourned at 7:45 PM.

Nathan Bruemmer
Staff Liaison