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George D. Alpagianis

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Craig Niedermaier  
Dean Strzelecki

**MINUTES**  
**BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PLAN ADVISORY GROUP**  
**Remote Participation**  
**June 29, 2022 – 3:00 p.m.**

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Advisory Group meeting was held remotely on Wednesday, June 29, 2022. The meeting was called to order at 3:03 p.m. by Chairman Craig Niedermaier.

**Members Present:**

Chairman Craig Niedermaier  
Stephen Sanders  
Brian Lee  
Peggy Reins

**Staff Present:**

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

**Also Present**

George Alpagianis, Mayor  
Dan Schroeder, Christopher Burke Engineering  
Orion Galey, Christopher Burke Engineering

**Call to Order**

**Approval of Minutes**

Chairman Craig Niedermaier, seconded by Group Member Peggy Reins, moved to approve the minutes of the June 1, 2022, meeting; on voice vote all concurred.

**New Business**

**I. Police Accidents Report**

- Deputy Chief Nick Zakula of the Niles Police Department presented three pedestrian and bicyclist involved traffic accidents that have occurred since the previous meeting:
- On June 2 at 9:20 AM, at 8800 Golf Rd (Highland Towers Condominiums) a vehicle backing out of a parking spot hit a pedestrian walking through the parking lot. The pedestrian was transported to a local hospital for shoulder pain.

- On June 4 at 11:26 PM, at 7900 Milwaukee a vehicle in the Jewel parking lot was backing out of a spot and hit a pedestrian. There were no injuries.
- On June 22 at 6:00 PM, at 8575 Dempster St, a bicyclist was traveling northbound on the sidewalk on the east side of Greenwood encountered a vehicle. The bicyclist struck the passenger side of the vehicle but there were no injuries.

Chairman Niedermaier noted it was somewhat positive that none of the accidents happened in the public right-of-way. He also noted that Group Member Ticia Doughty-Ashcroft, who is absent at the meeting, had raised some concerns about the stop sign in Civic Center Plaza in front of the post office. She says she saw multiple drivers blow through the stop sign while she was electioneering, and also saw some sort of accident. Chairman Niedermaier just wanted to bring that to the Police Department's attention. Deputy Chief Zakula said he would bring that to PD's attention.

## **II. Sidewalk Infill Survey Results**

Village Engineer Tom Powers presented on the results of a community survey that was sent out to area residents regarding proposed sidewalk infill on Fargo and Jarvis Avenues. Mr. Powers explained the content of the survey, and said it was sent out to over 500 residents. Surveys were sent to both property owners and the properties themselves. There were 94 responses to the survey, for about a 25% response rate. Mr. Powers said that is a representative sample. Mr. Powers then walked through the responses for each question. 74% of respondents currently have a sidewalk in front of their house. 70% of the respondents said they currently use the sidewalk. 58% of respondents said they would walk more often if there was a more complete network. 71% of respondents said they use the North Branch Trail/Forest Preserve facilities. 55% said they would be more likely to use the North Branch Trail/Forest Preserve facilities if there was a safer way to bike/walk there, and finally 65% of respondents said they were in favor of sidewalk being placed where there are existing gaps on Fargo and Jarvis.

The surveys were sent to residents of the O'Shanter Estates and Dutchman's Point neighborhoods, at the request of the BPAG. 78% of the respondents without a sidewalk in front of their house were opposed to sidewalk infill. 62% of O'Shanter Estates respondents were pro-sidewalk infill. 56% of O'Shanter Estates residents east of Waukegan Rd were in favor of the infill. There were only 10 responses from the Dutchman's Point neighborhood, so Mr. Powers did not feel that was skewing the data. The findings were discussed at the Public Works Committee, as the Village's Complete Streets policy requires a documented neighborhood majority-based opposition for the Public Works Director to issue an exemption to the sidewalk infill. Looking at these results, there was not a clear, overwhelming majority opposition.

Mayor George Alpogianis asked Mr. Powers how many residents who live on Fargo and Jarvis are for and against the infill. Mr. Powers said that east of Waukegan there were 35 respondents for and 28 against. Mayor Alpogianis asked if they were dead end streets. Mr. Powers said yes, but Fargo has a connection to the North Branch Trail and connects to Nordica. Mayor Alpogianis said they wanted to put sidewalks in front of his house, and he said Public Works should save the money as nobody walks in front of his house. Mayor Alpogianis asked again how people directly on those streets feel. Mr. Powers noted the petition of opposition that had been filed and sent to the Mayor's office. Mayor Alpogianis asked what the BPAG members thought.

Chairman Niedermaier said good points have been brought up on both sides. After the May meeting, BPAG members stayed late and talked with engineers about possible solutions. We heard stories from the residents themselves that there are elderly people and physically challenged people who end up walking on the street due to the lack of sidewalks. The residents also said there was cut-through traffic on those two streets. Mayor Alpogianis said he bought his home because of the country feel and lack of sidewalk. Chairman Niedermaier said the presence of some sidewalks on the two streets complicates the issue. He also said when sidewalks are put in, regardless of how people feel initially, property values go up. The Mayor asked if there would be damage from the sidewalk installation. Chairman Niedermaier said a few driveways would be impacted, but he didn't believe any trees were affected. Group Member Steve Sanders said as someone whose main form of transportation is walking and public transit, having no sidewalks really does inhibit his ability to get around, and makes it much more dangerous and difficult to walk around the Village. After a few more logistical questions, the Mayor thanked everyone for their time.

Group Member Peggy Reins voiced her appreciation to Public Works for completing this survey, and stated that she trusts the results that she sees which show that a majority would favor the sidewalk infill project. Group Member Brian Lee stated that the BPAG's mission is "to advise the Board of Trustees on implementation of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, and programs and policies within the Village" on that, and that we need to keep focus on what the purpose of the BPAG is. Group Member Reins added that she is a frequent walker in the area, and that she is with Steve in that it is a safety issue. Chairman Niedermaier said he is not a stranger to this area, and has always found it odd and challenging to navigate the on the street/off the street nature of the sidewalks. The edict for complete streets is exactly what the phrase means, so the fewer barriers to walking the better. He reiterated that the BPAG looked at alternatives, and there is no real compromise option due to the nature of the existing sidewalks. He asked if Tom Powers had anything else to add, to which Mr. Powers said that one survey response noted that their grandson has special needs, and would use the sidewalk if available. This gets into an ADA issue.

The Webinar was opened for public comment:

**Voula Vaux, 6941 Jarvis:** Ms. Vaux noted that there are other streets east of Waukegan other than Fargo and Jarvis, so she doesn't feel Mr. Powers' response to the Mayor's question was accurate.

Mr. Powers responded that the data they have is for east of Waukegan. The Complete Streets Ordinance refers to neighborhood, not to block by block opposition. Ms. Vaux reiterated that she didn't feel that answer was accurate to the Mayor's question. Mr. Powers said they could parse it by block if the BPAG would like that data, but again it isn't in the spirit of the ordinance. Chairman Niedermaier said we have a neighborhood that is 68% sidewalk, and we have a skewed concerned party, almost entirely composed of those who don't have a sidewalk (the 32%). The Chairman felt that at the May meeting the 32% was very represented, so he felt the survey gave a more representative response for the area. Ms. Vaux said that she's on Jarvis, and half of the homeowners do have sidewalks, so the results from Fargo and Jarvis still represent those that have sidewalks. Group Member Lee asked what the specific language was from the Complete Streets ordinance. Mr. Powers pulled up the section on exemptions, reading "the areas not served by transit, is low ADT, and the

immediate neighborhood opposes the improvement,” so it comes down to the definition of “immediate neighborhood.”

**Mike Siena, 6907 Jarvis:** Mr. Siena asked why it’s so necessary to put these walkways in. He also noted that the egress onto the bike path on Jarvis and Niles Terrace are for Water Reclamation and sewer access. He said at the top of Jarvis and Niles Terrace there is a piece of blighted property, the sidewalks are unkempt, and people have a hard time walking on them. Looking from a safety perspective, he feels this is not a good thing. To enter the bike path from Jarvis and Niles Terrace, you need to OK that with the Forest Preserve. He asked what the Village is doing along Caldwell Avenue, there’s no access along Caldwell Avenue to get to the various businesses there.

**Christine Booth, 6949 Jarvis:** Ms. Booth stated that she does not want sidewalks on Fargo and Jarvis, and everyone at the May meeting stated their opposition to the sidewalks. She questioned why the survey was sent to people who aren’t immediately impacted by the sidewalk infill. She said she is very disappointed in the Village for not consulting the residents before planning the project. She said adding more concrete to the area doesn’t make any sense.

**Cheryl Peterson, 6911 Fargo:** Ms. Peterson said she twisted her ankle at the former Ideal Uniform site and that money should be used to restore that area as a park. She gave some information from the University of Florida about how trenching near roots can damage trees. She is worried that the trees in the area, especially the old mature trees, will be damaged if the sidewalk infill goes through. She wants to keep her community green, is seeing the tree canopy develop with some of the new trees, and doesn’t want the taxpayer money spent on the new trees to go to waste.

**Hillarie Siena, 6907 Jarvis:** Ms. Siena noted her opposition to the project. She made a point to committee members who said they walk on Jarvis to go to the bike trail. When it snows the plows push the snow towards the end of the street, so the snow berms block the unauthorized access to the bike path. She asked how that will be addressed. She asked a clarifying question about whether these sidewalks are required under the ADA act, or if they’re just required from a recommendation from the ADA.

Chairman Niedermaier said we all lose some accessibility with the sidewalks when there’s heavy snowfall in the winter, so that is besides the point of what is being discussed as it affects the whole Village. He addressed the empty lot at the former Ideal Uniform site, saying there is a semi-stubborn property owner there and are looking at their options to get the property developed. He noted it is private land so we can’t force them to do things. Sidewalks on the other hand are something we can control. Mr. Powers responded to the question about ADA requirements, saying that if the Village makes an improvement it has to be ADA accessible. The Village is required to have an ADA transition plan, if you are a disabled person and are traversing the right of way and find an area that’s not conducive to that, you have a right to contact the ADA coordinator, and the ADA coordinator is required to make reasonable accommodation. Ultimately, he would need a lawyer to speak to what is the Village’s responsibility.

**Tom Norris, 6900 Fargo:** Mr. Norris said there are a number of gaps in sidewalks on the block. He noted that some houses are built closer to the street than what would be

permitted, and if the sidewalks are installed those houses will have virtually no front yard. He asked if in those cases the sidewalks could be angled towards the street in more of a carriage walk design.

Orion Galey of Christopher Burke spoke about whether we could veer sidewalks towards the street on the south side of Fargo. He noted there are some mature trees in front of 6901-6921 Fargo, but otherwise the sidewalk could be put there. When you're excavating for the sidewalk you're generally only going down 8 inches, and most of the structural root system of a tree is lower than that. He doesn't see any big issues with the proposed work impacting the health of trees.

**Deena Gibson, 6912 Fargo:** Ms. Gibson asked a question about what the red line on the screen meant, and also if the County approved the sidewalk connecting to the North Branch Trail. She also said we shouldn't cater to the people who haven't made their voices heard. She also said in relation to the grandson with disabilities – is that a resident?

Mr. Powers explained that the sidewalks would all be in the public Right of Way, so no Forest Preserve approval is needed. Chairman Niedermaier expressed his amenability to coming to a compromise with regards to flexibility in design and carriage walks.

Christine Booth gave a second comment, saying if the sidewalk infill had to go through, a carriage walk would be much more agreeable, as it would preserve her landscaping in the right of way. However she is still against the sidewalks. She did not hear one pro-sidewalk opinion from any of her neighbors she talked to. She said three gentlemen marking up the street told her this was a done deal, which contradicts what has been said at this meeting.

Tom Powers said from his perspective if a carriage walk works, and a bunch of people agree they'd rather have a carriage walk, he doesn't see a problem with that except it might result in trees being removed. Bob Rado, Civil Engineer II, said he was one of the people referenced out in the field and he definitely said it was not a done deal. He said from the survey it seems like there is support for the sidewalks. Chairman Niedermaier discussed possible configurations of the sidewalk. Mr. Powers said there would be a residential information bulletin going out to residents that will have field staff's contact info if anyone wants to request an adjustment or talk through their concerns.

**Chairman Niedermaier moved that the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Group make a recommendation that supports the proposed sidewalk infill as presented, with the caveat that residents can contact Public Works to request modifications in design in areas where possible. On a voice vote, all present concurred.**

**There being four (4) affirmative votes, the motion carried.**

### **III. Caldwell/Cleveland Plans**

Tom Powers walked the group through the latest version of the Cleveland/Caldwell intersection plans. Caldwell will be widened, with 0 to 12' being taken from the Forest Preserve side, and 0 to 6' being taken on the residential side. Chairman Niedermaier clarified that "0 to 6'" meant taking up to, but no more than, 6' on

certain portions of the street. There will be overhead flashers to assist people crossing Caldwell. There will be a pedestrian refuge island on the north side of the intersection as well.

Mr. Powers also shared that IDOT did not go for the Village's proposal for a road diet on Waukegan. Their main issue was queueing at Shermer and Waukegan, and the fact that Waukegan is a Strategic Regional Arterial. Chairman Niedermaier questioned how much queueing there is on Shermer. Nathan Bruemmer, Planner, asked what the implication of removing Waukegan from the SRA list would be. Mr. Powers said if it stays in IDOT's jurisdiction, there really isn't that much implication – not much would change. The nuclear route would be to petition them for a jurisdictional transfer and take the road. There might be more traffic on Oakton from Waukegan to Caldwell in that case. Chairman Niedermaier asked what are our options. Mr. Powers said the shortest path to an improvement is to fall back to what we had proposed before, with the flashing beacon, refuge island and widening. However, the widening had a big impact on residential properties. Group Member Sanders said he is wholeheartedly against widening the street. Chairman Niedermaier said he didn't want to go with the Nuclear option.

Group Member Reins wondered if there was an opportunity to do something to make Shermer not the obstacle. There was extensive discussion about how to possibly reconfigure Shermer at Waukegan, including making it a T intersection. Group Member Reins said she would favor having the engineers look at this closer. Group Member Sanders asked if there would be a way to check with IDOT to see if this is something they would consider, so we don't waste our efforts on it beforehand. Chairman Niedermaier wondered what the current volume of traffic going through Shermer would be, and was concerned about back ups. He also supported getting more information from IDOT about what exactly they're concerned about with a road diet. Group Member Reins underscored that this is a residential area, where a road diet would be appropriate. Discussion returned to getting Waukegan off the SRA list. Mr. Powers said he feels it doesn't make sense for that stretch of Waukegan to be a SRA.

### **Other Discussion**

There was discussion about painting intersections and using public art on streets as a traffic-calming device. Chairman Niedermaier said he's been working on arts and culture in the Village and while touring the Village realized the Johns Byrne building along the bike path would be a fantastic place for a mural. Mr. Bruemmer announced to the group that the Village Board had formally adopted the Bike and Pedestrian Plan update at their June 28<sup>th</sup> meeting. Group Member Sanders announced he has a bike ride planned for July 17<sup>th</sup>.

### **Comments from the Public**

None.

### **Next Meeting**

August 31st, 2022

### **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn was made by Group Member Reins, seconded by Group Member Sanders; all concurred and the meeting adjourned at 5:17 PM.

Nathan Bruemmer  
Staff Liaison