

No Need For Another Willow Road Study, But Who's Listening?

John
Crawford



The Village Board has voted to abolish the Village's Senior Citizen Commission, whose seven positions have been vacant since 2001 or 2002. After serving as village trustee and then chairman of the Zoning Board of Appeals, I was appointed as chairman of the Senior Citizen Commission in 1987. Some very capable people were appointed to the Commission, such as Joyce Pottinger, Ollie Goodman, Gerry Scheufler, Mary Scoulas, and Bob ("Cardinal") Spellman. We prepared several reports to the board, but they were never acted upon. In fact, we were completely ignored. When the Village took over the Depot Square buildings for senior housing (in the early nineties as I recall), the Village Board appointed a group of private citizens to advise them on the amenities for seniors which the board should require of the builders, instead of asking the Senior Citizen Commission. The members of the Commission were not too happy about that, and I resigned from the Commission soon thereafter.

However, the interests and welfare of senior citizens in the Village have not been ignored by the board. Village presidents Ed Patten and Paul Thomas were strong leaders in the development of Patten House, at Harlem and Glenview road, and Thomas Place on Patriot Boulevard. The establishment of Patten House led to the organization of Helping Hands, a volunteer organization which was originally formed to buy window air conditioners for residents of Patten House who could not afford to buy one. Helping Hands continues to provide transportation to medical appointments and other services for seniors and disabled persons. Village Hall provides space for North Shore Senior

Center and Kim Hand, who provides outstanding advice and assistance for seniors. And the Village's annual budget provides a limited amount of funds for a housing subsidy and other assistance for needy seniors.

The establishment of the Senior Citizen Commission was apparently a public relations gesture, and the Commission was never consulted by the board or the Village staff to provide advice or a viewpoint on Village actions. A commission, which just exists on paper, serves no useful purpose.

Another committee or commission, which is not needed, is a commission to decide on how to eliminate the bottleneck for traffic on Willow Road east of Waukegan Road. Everyone west of Waukegan Road, and the Illinois Department of Transportation, knows that the solution is to widen Willow to four lanes east of Waukegan Road to the Edens Expressway. After opposing the widening of Willow Road for over a decade, during which Glenview Village President Jim Smirles and the village president of Northfield exchanged some verbal unpleasanties, Northfield finally read the handwriting on the wall and presented a plan in 1999 for adding a third lane in Northfield. IDOT plainly told Northfield in 2005 that a third lane was not an adequate solution, and Northfield was later reminded that Lincolnshire spent \$1 million on fruitless opposition to the widening of State Route 22 in Lincolnshire. When the State earmarked \$25 million of its federal stimulus funds for the Willow Road project in May, it looked as if we were going to get started. Then in August IDOT announced that it would have to start its study all over again, to document all the alternatives. The Village of Northfield is still arguing that it is different from the other villages on Willow Road because it has churches and schools on Willow Road. Yet when the Kraft headquarters was developed on Willow Road, the Village accepted the widening of Willow to four lanes

(Continued on page 5B)

Crawford

(Continued from page 3B)
from Waukegan east to Sunset Ridge Road, where one of its churches and one of its schools are located, without any harmful effects on safety. The use of pedestrian overpasses such as we have on Lake Avenue in Glenview is a complete answer to Northfield's professed but insincere concern for safety. While IDOT is being required for some bureaucratic reason to conduct another study, State Senator Jeff Schoenberg is right in saying that they will come up with the right conclusion, that four lanes are needed. It is unfortunate that the Glenview Village Board cannot tell IDOT that, like the Senior Citizen Commission, this study is not needed.