

DRAFT SUMMARY NOTES

Traffic & Transportation Committee Meeting Village of Northfield

**Wednesday, June 24, 2009 – 7:00 p.m.
Multi-Purpose Room - 2nd Floor**

Present: Robert Hayward, Chair
Margaret Parcels, Member
Brian Kozminski, Member
J. Patrick Doherty, Member
Barbara Moore, Member
Donald Klein, Member

Absent: Ted Greene, Member
Linda Garard, Member
Peter Fischer, Member
Sean O'Grady

Others Present: Stacy Sigman, Village Manager (Liaison)

Approve Summary Notes of the May 27, 2009 Meeting

A motion was made by Member Parcels and seconded by Member Kozminski to approve the May 27, 2009 meeting minutes. By voice vote all approved.

Update on Willow Road

Chair Hayward reported on the meeting with IDOT that took place at the Village Hall on June 5. IDOT stated it would be at least a two year project and that they would try to make the project eligible for State and Federal funding and expect it would be subject to Context Sensitive Solution. They noted they would incorporate as much of the Lakota Study process as possible. It was pointed out to them that the Lakota Study was not a complete Context Sensitive Solution process and that they would have to start from ground zero.

The IDOT representatives were pushed on the stakeholders issue and identified the three steps they would take 1) identify the surrounding area(s) to contact, 2) identify the problem and 3) develop a solution. They stated, "We are here to solve a problem not sell a solution and we are not coming to this project with any preconceived ideas." Chair Hayward noted, however, that Diane O'Keefe told President Gougler, Manager Sigman and Attorney Ed Gower that Willow Road would be no less than four lanes which, of course, means six lanes. However, the IDOT representatives did go on the record during the meeting to say they are here to identify the problem. Chair Hayward responded back to IDOT that if it is concluded that there is no problem, we can conclude the project. He noted that IDOT provided a map that identified the study limits which highlights Willow Road with small portions in Northbrook, Glenview and Winnetka. It was noted by the Village that if IDOT is really looking to solve the problem they should look at this as a regional picture, and consider why 294 is not open at Dundee and Lake. If those streets had ramps maybe that would alleviate the regional problems. The Village reminded the IDOT representatives that Context Sensitive Solutions calls for regional studies and not just small corridor projects.

Chair Hayward noted that at this point Peter of IDOT got frustrated and said "Promises made are promises kept." He was asked to repeat his statement which he did.

Attorney Ed Gower noted that his statement is not legally binding.

Chair Hayward responded to the Public Relations consultant that IDOT was not going to spin their way out of that. He noted that it is the Traffic and Transportation Committee's intent to make IDOT realize that every word will be scrutinized and challenged. He noted that it was a cordial meeting but made sure IDOT understood that the Village means business. Chair Hayward added that the key is the Village has good advisors.

IDOT admitted that this is probably the most important project they have ever done under Context Sensitive Solutions. They mentioned that one of the projects they worked on that will be a good comparable of their innovative design is Third Street in Geneva, Illinois.

Chair Hayward also noted that IDOT is working on Sheridan Road in Wilmette where they are using "road dieting" by changing from four lanes to three lanes. He noted that IDOT then discussed the process. They stated that there would be a series of public meetings, but would not publicly announcing them. The Village informed them absolutely not that they have to follow the open process.

Member Moore informed the group on some of the tactics IDOT uses to defuse meetings they hold.

Chair Hayward continued noting that IDOT wants to form a community activist group of about 30 people with 1/4 from Glenview, 1/4 from Winnetka, 1/4 from Northbrook and 1/4 from Northfield. Therefore, the overwhelming majority of the stakeholders would be from outside the Village of Northfield while the project is all in our town. IDOT stated they would never take a hand count vote. Chair Hayward responded that it is just not going to work.

IDOT noted that they want to get started in July 2009. They were told that they need a new proposal – 30 people does not work (it is too many); at most it should be 10 and of those at least 7 should be Northfield residents with 1 from Winnetka, 1 from Glenview, and 1 from Northbrook. It was noted that IDOT's plan to have 12 to 14 meetings with 30 people that will show up at meetings over the next two years will not work.

It was discussed that President Gougler sent a letter to IDOT memorializing Northfield's comments with regard to the process noting that it will not work and needs revising. Chair Hayward noted that President Gougler had spoken to the Winnetka Village President who confirmed what she told IDOT which is that this is not Winnetka's problem – it is Northfield's and that they do not want any part of it. Chair Hayward noted that he believes Northbrook made a similar statement. We have not talked to Glenview. He advised that IDOT start out with a workable solution that Northfield agrees with and possibly start in fall of 2009.

Chair Hayward reported that he understands Mayor Daley has confirmed that he will sign the IOC agreement which basically solidifies the Olympics for the City of Chicago and noted that October 2 is a key date. The Village needs to determine what type of legislative effort it needs to have ready to go to give a full court press to get our three lane 2005 "shovel ready" project done. He reasoned that IDOT will have so many other roadway projects and IDOT has admitted they don't have the staff and will have to go out to hire them, that perhaps they will be more inclined to use the three lane plan. Also,

if the Village makes it look like the Willow Road project is going to be a dog fight, IDOT won't have the resources financially or personnel wise to fight the Willow Road project.

Member Doherty noted that it is a great idea but that he is not certain Chicago will get the Olympics nor that we want them. He did feel that that would be the right time to press IDOT.

Chair Hayward emphasized that we can pitch IDOT on the concept that they can put together a road that is wider, better, safer but not have to go through the two year process and build it for \$20 million less so it could move on to other projects. Hopefully, the Governor or someone who can make that decision will do so.

Member Doherty asked if there has been any response to President Gougler's letter to Governor Quinn.

Manager Sigman noted that we outreached to him but were told by his schedulers that he would not be taking any meetings until the budget was passed. When he comes back to Chicago, they have developed a list of people who have requested meetings and based on the order would contact them to set up meetings but that it would be mid to late summer at the earliest.

Member Moore noted that Strategic Arterial Roads are different than any other roads and are built to higher specs. IDOT was able to pull the rug from under the Village's three lane plan because the previous three lane plan didn't have curbs and gutters. The worst thing to IDOT on an arterial road that has as much traffic as Willow Road is soft shoulders. If we could figure out a way to put curbs and gutters into the 2005 plan, we could comply with their requirements. However, the plan we presented 8 years ago is so obsolete that we are defeating our efforts before we begin. We can keep pushing the "shovel ready plan" to IDOT but what if the Village compromises on the current plan and does some "tweaking".

Manager Sigman responded that changing the plan can't be done legally without going back through the Phase I and Phase II process. She said it a good idea to tweak it and noted that perhaps that is what the Village has to do as part of this new Phase I and Phase II process is to agree to "tweak" the prior three lane plan. Legally, however, they cannot tweak the old plan without going back through Phase I and Phase II. Adding curbs is not a tweak. The road is basically four lanes to Wagner Road. From Wagner to Sunset Ridge it is just two lanes with no curb and gutter and soft shoulders. You need the soft shoulders for emergency vehicles unless you put a real third lane in the center. You can't just add curbs and gutters; additional pavement would be needed so that there are large shoulders for emergency vehicles.

Member Moore noted that the problem is that other people use the soft shoulders to cut around turning vehicles which is a hazard and it is in the "S" curve where many accidents happen and it is considered dangerous.

Manager Sigman added that there are things that can be changed in a plan without kicking in a new Phase I and Phase II process but not when there are considerable changes to the pavement sections.

The members talked about what the solution is since the old three lane plan needs compromises of some kind.

Chair Hayward noted the solution is not determined but it is important the Village remain pro-active in the process so it does not get a six lane highway.

Member Moore asked if the Village has any engineers that are helping the Village.

Manager Sigman responded that we have identified engineers to help the Village but not retained anyone specific. We are waiting to get through the funding meetings to see what resources we might have to work with before engaging anyone and we are also waiting to see when IDOT plans to start Phase I work.

Chair Hayward noted that once the Committee has a plan or schedule then it can be determined when an engineer should be present.

Campaign Funding Update

Chair Hayward reported that he appeared before the Village Board at their June 16 meeting and they approved \$100,000 for use by the Traffic and Transportation Committee. All the Board members voted for it except Trustee Chapin. He also noted that last evening he and President Gougler gave a presentation to the Park District Board seeking their cooperation and help with costs on the Willow Road project. The meeting went well.

Member Klein who is the Park Board representative on the Traffic and Transportation Committee reported that the Board will support the Willow Road project but do not have a dollar figure in mind as yet. They plan to wait and see what the School Board offers.

Chair Hayward noted that the Boards were not asked for any specific dollar amount. He added that he and President Gougler would be addressing the School Board on July 14 and the NSAG group on July 13. The School Board representative recently appointed to the Traffic and Transportation Committee is Sean O'Grady, however he was absent tonight.

Chair Hayward noted that the group does not know what the plan will look like but along the way they hope to get things that we don't have today. It is important to note that if the road is widened, more concrete will exacerbate the flooding in the Village. He felt there will be some positives that come out of any change in the roadway including school zones.

Chair Hayward asked Manager Sigman to discuss a problem that had occurred regarding the timing of traffic lights along Willow Road.

Manager Sigman noted that recently all of a sudden it seemed like traffic changed on Willow Road. It was very dramatic and very sudden. There were backups at very odd times of the day which started about a week before IDOT was counting traffic on Willow Road for Phase I. A freedom of information request was filed with IDOT to find out if they had changed the timing of the lights. The response received from IDOT was strange and they said that the Village would have that information. Manager Sigman reached out to the company that maintains IDOT's traffic signals in Northfield and had them evaluate the signals. They found the signals were functioning properly but could not tell if they were timed properly because they don't handle the timing of the lights. Every control cabinet for a signal usually includes a diagram of how the lights function to determine the timing. For whatever reason, the box at the corner of Sunset Ridge and Willow did not have the diagram. The Village had its traffic engineer get into the box to look and see if the lights were timed properly and found no diagram. He contacted IDOT and they found the drawings and transferred them over and asked if our traffic engineer would go out and look at it. IDOT gave him the authority over the phone to fix any problems if it wasn't programmed correctly. Our engineer found some programming issues with the lights. He fixed those and made some minor adjustments with the authority of IDOT to make the intersection work more effectively. Stacy

reported that she wanted to notify IDOT to put on record that there were problems and that we would not support any traffic counts taken during that period. IDOT reported that they will have the counts redone at Sunset Ridge and Willow Road. They would not give a specific date on when the counts will be redone.

A member asked if we have any idea when the pavement east of the Willow Road bridge will be fixed because it is in bad condition.

Stacy noted it is not IDOT's issue, it is the Village's. There was a watermain break in the winter and the Village had to go in and fix it. We did a temporary paving repair. We have had some problem getting a contractor in to repave the road. The paving contractors working in the area have refused to do the work because it is a State road and there are some very specific requirements by the State. However, the bids are due for the Village's roadway work on July 10 and the worst case scenario is that we will combine the two projects to get the bridge repair done.

Adjournment

At 7:45 p.m., there being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned.

*The next Traffic and Transportation Committee meeting was moved up from the scheduled date and will be held **July 22, 2009** at 7:00 p.m.*