

Chairman Maloney called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 17, 2010.

Present were Commissioners Didier, Dorband, Johnson, Maloney and Ruffatto. Commissioner Steilen was absent and had given prior notice. Also present were Andrew Jennings, Village Planner and Samantha Robinson, Associate Planner.

Wheeling Park District

Jan Buchs, Executive Director
Sue Stein, Park District Commissioner
Cheri Klumpp, Park District Commissioner
Rich Rosen, Park District Commissioner
Brian Lichtenberger, Park District Commissioner

Wheeling Wheelmen

Bob Dominiski
Joe Beemster

Residents

Steve Powers
Mary B. of Whippлетree
Roland Cooper
Betty Winter

Staff

Tony Stavros, Director of Public Works
Tim Merrihew, Capital Projects & Design Manager

Chairman Maloney requested introductions from the attendees.

Mr. Jennings explained Staff was uncertain if these meetings needed to be considered Plan Commission Meetings since there was a quorum of Plan Commissioners. He is working out the official details.

Mr. Jennings gave a brief update from the last meeting. The bulk of the last meeting was a discussion of the challenges and issues and the current status of bike routes.

Brief update from last meeting

Mr. Jennings explained the new approach was connecting bike route arteries into regional networks. Mr. Jennings and Ms. Robinson have been working with the Northwest Municipal Conference and trying to get input from Park District, Police Department and other agencies. They are trying to create a network of bike route arterials that then connect to the neighborhood streets and into the local destinations. They are trying to connect every school and park back out to the regional network so you can get through Wheeling but also bike to all the local destinations.

Mr. Jennings mentioned at the last meeting they tried to identify a short-term and long-term strategy. Part of the complication was the physical layout of Wheeling. The village was planned with neighborhoods that do not connect with one another. There are major physical barriers: railroad tracks, the river, major streets. There are very few streets that have potential to cross one

or all of the barriers.

Mr. Jennings explained at the last meeting the group broke into smaller groups after the initial introduction and reviewed the latest draft of the bike route map. Suggestions were made to further the goal of connecting neighborhoods to the routes. The groups came up with ideas for each corner of the town to the idea is to suggest a token project - some sort of visible improvement - that was relatively easy. The projects could help gain support over the next year for the broader effort of advancing bike route planning.

Mr. Jennings mentioned that he and Ms. Robinson had taken the general framework of the four quadrants and tried to connect them to make it a more manageable project.

Mr. Jennings explained he wanted to go through some of the progress updates since the last meeting. They have been looking at the relatively inexpensive projects in each quadrant that can be planned one or two years out to try and show visible improvement. These projects would serve the dual purpose of solving some of the obvious issues while also getting support for a broader bike plan update.

Northeast Quadrant

Mr. Jennings referred to the ongoing effort to complete the gap in the sidewalk along Dundee Road from the Des Plaines River bridge to the sidewalk in Northbrook at I-294. Staff is trying to get support from various agencies. Public Works is working on the in-house design of the path and Community Development has been trying to coordinate some of the effort and support from neighboring communities and Forest Preserve. Mr. Jennings mentioned that Northbrook was very supportive of the project. There was agreement that completing the multi-use path is a good priority project for the Northeast Quadrant.

Mr. Jennings explained since the last meeting there had been the ribbon cutting for the bridge near Hawthorn School which gave Staff the idea of continuing the connections along Dundee Road and using signage to direct people south to the bridge and into Heritage Park.

Mr. Jennings referred to the Lake County Forest Preserve Trail that had been discussed at the last meeting. He felt there was an obvious difference in quality, i.e. signage, trail quality, etc. He mentioned there were some beautiful places that were very close to Wheeling. He explained the easiest way to get there was by taking the bridge next to the Westin. The trail quality was OK for a mountain or hybrid bike but not a road bike. He mentioned some of the areas had back waters and prairie coming off from the river. The signage is good and - with the exception of one parcel - it connects 30 miles up the Des Plaines River to Wisconsin. Some parts of the trail (10 miles north) were fantastic recreational trails.

The Lake County side trails has trail markers, mile markers and other useful information.

Mr. Jennings felt signage would not be a big undertaking but improving the trail quality would be a greater project/expense.

The connection of Dundee / Northgate along the Diversion Channel up to the recently acquired Park District property was also discussed as a long-term goal for the Northeast Quadrant.

The priority projects for the Northeast Quadrant were the multi-use path on Dundee Road from the Des Plaines River east to I-294, directing cyclists to the bridge next to Hawthorn school using

signage, improving signage on the Des Plaines River Trail, and researching the configuration for a connection along the Diversion Channel from Dundee to Lake Cook.

Northwest Quadrant

Mr. Jennings referred to the Lexington Drive reconstruction incorporating some type of bicycle accommodations into it. Signage and/or pavement markings could be used.

Mr. Jennings referred to a suggestion from the last meeting to connect Hollywood Ridge to Arlington Club. Mr. Jennings and Ms. Robinson went out and looked at the area and felt there was some potential for a connection. Staff would need to work on some type of easement with two property owners. He felt it would be a great idea to connect the two neighborhoods.

The priority projects for the Northwest Quadrant were creating bike lanes on Lexington Drive and pursuing the connection between Hollywood Ridge and Arlington Club.

Southeast Quadrant

There was no particular suggestion made at the last meeting. Mr. Jennings and Ms. Robinson went down and looked at potential inexpensive improvements in the area. They came up with Wolf Road where the sidewalk ends abruptly at the detention pond across from the airport. Mr. Jennings discovered there was no legal crossing of the railroad tracks for over a mile and a half in that section.

Mr. Jennings mentioned the Palatine Frontage Road connects to the sidewalk eventually around Capital Commerce using South and Capital Drive. There was enough space for striping to keep people separated from traffic. The intersection had no pedestrian or bike accommodations.

Mr. Jennings referred to the ComEd Service Drive that was pretty well improved at that point.

Mr. Jennings referred to the Prospect Heights bike path. If you took Willow east from the Prospect Heights bike path to Wolf Road, you would pick up some great biking streets in Mt. Prospect that were signed.

The priority projects for the Southeast Quadrant were the Wolf Road side path from Marquardt to East Drive, improving the bike environment on Palatine Frontage Road, adding signage along Willow directing cyclists to Burning Bush in Mount Prospect, and exploring the potential for a path in the ComEd right-of-way.

Southwest Quadrant

Mr. Jennings mentioned opening Vera to bike traffic. Mr. Merrihew mentioned there was a physical barrier on Vera. Staff would prefer opening Edward to bike traffic. Staff will continue to pursue and figure out the best way to open the street to at least bike and pedestrian traffic.

Mr. Jennings referred to other items that were brought up at the last discussion.

- Signage on Sherwood, south of the high school; and
- Signage on Anthony (connects to the bike routes in Arlington Heights near Lake Arlington)
- Wheeling/Schoenbeck, both have situations where there are not many residential driveways one side of the street.

The priority projects for the Southwest Quadrant were signage for routes on Sherwood and Anthony and pursuing sidepath improvements on one side of Wheeling and Schoenbeck.

Contacts with Outside Agencies

Mr. Jennings referred to the identification of outside agencies that the Village Staff could approach. Mr. Jennings mentioned they have had discussions with IDOT and the FHWA in the past but they have had new discussions with the Park District, Park Security, Police and ICC.

Mr. Jennings mentioned the Hintz Road crossing was being rebuilt as part of a package with other at-grade crossings. Mr. Jennings called to discuss the idea of pedestrian improvements but it was too late to change the project. Even if the timing had been right, the railroad was opposed to the idea and extremely opposed to at-grade bicycle crossings. The conversation led to discussions on how to approach bike/pedestrian improvements in general. Mr. Jennings explained the ICC pushed toward grade separated crossings no matter what. They do not want bikes, pedestrians and trains anywhere near each other. It is a liability that the ICC has no interest in taking on. They want pedestrians and bikes to use bridges and tunnels.

Mr. Jennings reported that he and the Village Engineer had met with two representatives from ComEd to discuss the parallel path concept (paths on each side of the tracks from Hintz Road south to Willow Road). The representatives from ComEd seemed fairly open to the idea, but the lease restrictions for ComEd are not conducive to "fishing" for grants. The lease must be signed to get authorization to pursue a grant. Mr. Jennings asked about the possibility of a letter of intent so the Village could pursue grant opportunities without actually leasing the property for twenty years and ComEd was not in agreement.

Mr. Jennings referred to the area next to the Westin. Staff has worked with the Forest Preserve for the last 3 years on a trail head for the bike path, walking loop, prairie restoration, canoe launch and the parking area. The project has finally been approved conceptually through an inter-governmental agreement but the next effort is getting some of the grants that were needed to actually do the work.

Mr. Jennings referred to "Bike to Work Week". At the last meeting, Staff was not aware of the dates for "Bike to Work Week". It started last Saturday and runs through Saturday, June 19. The Village was registered as a team competing against other municipalities. The Village Staff has been very responsive. The general consensus was to start it earlier next year. Mr. Jennings suggested advertising with volunteers next year at the Metra station on the first Monday of that week

Mr. Jennings reported that he had been working with the NWMC along with Ms. Robinson. The new ATA map was recently released. It is for sale on their website. It is the ultimate guide to bike routes in the Chicagoland area. The map does not include sidewalks. Mr. Jennings reported the efforts of the NWMC meetings were focused on east/west connectivity. There is general agreement that there are a good number of north/south connections so the 2007 plan focuses on east/west routes. Mr. Jennings mentioned that Dundee Road had been identified as the major east/west route in the area. Dundee Road, from west of Route 53 all the way east to Greenbay Road is intended to eventually be a bike-friendly street.

Mr. Jennings suggested thinking about routes and connections. The overall goal is to have all four quadrants connect and to have local streets and local destinations connect into the network.

Commissioner Ruffatto referred to the bridge near Childrey Park from Valley Stream. He suggested connecting to Arlington Club. Mr. Jennings mentioned there was easement on the north side of the creek from the Childrey bridge west which stops right before Horcher farm. There have been

studies on how to handle the grade. Mr. Jennings mentioned there had been discussion on putting up signage in the neighborhood pointing people toward the bridge. The bridge is more of a pedestrian bridge and not a bridge for high speeds.

Mr. Stavros mentioned in the past Arlington Club was not interested in connecting to Sarasota. They did not want the foot traffic through their sub-division. Mr. Jennings indicated that he may contact them again to inquire as to whether anything had changed.

Reference was made going from the Prospect Heights bike bath up to the substation and connecting something between the substation and Hintz, across Hintz to get to the southwest side of Heritage, across Heritage, go up Northgate to the diversionary channel to go up to the Westin to the Lake County path. Mr. Jennings felt the challenge was trying to figure out whose property to use.

Mr. Jennings referred to the bridge over the diversionary channel by the Swaminarayan temple. The temple was open to the idea of letting people use their bridge to cross but the question was where the path would go after that point.

Sue Stein of the Park District indicated that she was riding on Northgate and it was very dangerous with all of the truck traffic.

Mr. Jennings questioned if pedestrians could trip the signal at Northgate and Lake Cook Roads to get across. Mr. Stavros indicated there was no pedestrian signal at that crossing.

Steve Powers referred to the Forest Preserve behind the Westin property. He questioned if a park was part of the original plan when the Westin came in with the TIF. Mr. Jennings explained the land itself is owned by the Forest Preserve and as a policy they cannot give the appearance that they have somehow assisted a commercial development. The Westin was never obligated to put in a park - only required to put in a gravel path to connect to the path that connects to the bridge over the river.

A question from the audience was asked about the difficulty in getting an area in the northeast corner of the Westin parking lot for cars to use to get their bicycles onto the path to Lake County. Mr. Jennings indicated they could revisit the idea with the new ownership group Westin.

Mr. Jennings indicated they would put all of the ideas from tonight's meeting and the last meeting on to the draft map and have the working map be something people could review. The next meeting will be on September 16, 2010.

Mr. Jennings learned that similar bike and pedestrian task forces that are set up elsewhere sometimes includes a member from a neighboring community.

Mr. Jennings referred to grant applications. He mentioned they were currently working on the Dundee side path grant application.

Mr. Jennings mentioned some of the task forces were officially established advisory committees which gave them some ability to make recommendations to the public bodies that had funding ability. Some communities have small budgets that the advisory committees had the ability to make recommendations on. Mr. Jennings had not discussed it with the Village Attorney or Village Manager but believes it is worth looking into.

Chairman Maloney requested information on the plans for the property off Lake Cook Road. Ms. Buchs indicated at this time there was no plan for improvements other than pathways and walking trails. They have identified it as a priority on that parcel. The layout has not yet been determined. She felt connecting the diversionary channel and the forest preserve was something that should be looked at.

Chairman Maloney questioned if there was an opportunity to have a bike path through the Meadowbrook area. Mr. Stavros thought there were two ponds in that area but was unsure if the association would require the Village to maintain the ponds.

From the audience, Betty Winter mentioned there was nothing between Dundee and Hintz Roads to get to Wheeling Road. She uses the railroad crossing off of Wheeling Road to get across to Holmes or Heritage Park. She mentioned there were a lot of businesses there west of Wheeling Road and homes to the east but there was nothing to bring them together. She questioned if there was anything there to allow bikes/pedestrians through. Chairman Maloney suggested going around the school where there was a well worn path that goes into one of the industrial areas. Mr. Jennings agreed to look into it.

Joe Beemster of the Wheeling Wheelmen mentioned he took a ride from Pleasant Run Park to Lake Arlington which ended up as a 10-mile loop. Mr. Jennings had looked at it and felt that it would be relatively easy to add signage. Mr. Jennings mentioned the old draft had some of the connections (east of Lake Arlington) but none made the loop. He will try to figure out how to graphically incorporate it, but it is challenging because the west half of the loop is outside of the Village.

Bob Dominski of the Wheeling Wheelmen mentioned that Buffalo Grove was doing a kid's rodeo on bike safety. The Police Department runs the program and they also offer a program on helmet safety.

Mr. Jennings reported the Mayor of Des Plaines suggested that the Northwest Municipal Conference put together a calendar of different community events related to biking. Des Plaines hosts a professional race through town and also has a closed street community ride (approximately 6-7 miles) along with a festival. Mr. Jennings thought that was a good idea and suggested figuring something for next spring/summer for bike safety, access to biking, or "share the roads".

Commissioner Johnson mentioned that Wheeling's Police Department had done some smaller bike rodeos targeted for kids. They tried a big bike rodeo behind Wickes two years ago but it had rained and didn't have a big turnout because of the weather.

Mr. Jennings thought working toward an event like those discussed or completing a visible improvement in the next year would keep the momentum going.

Commissioner Dorband referred to the permanent children's bike safety town on Arlington Heights Road. She mentioned that Trustee Brady had wanted to do something similar several years ago. Someone from the Park District mentioned in the past they had an in-house safety-town.

The suggestion was made to use the open land on the west side of Wolf Road and south of Dundee Road to connect to Heritage Park for a bike path. Mr. Jennings explained the Heritage Park path had some type of connection heading in that direction on the recent master plan. Ms. Buchs indicated the entrance to the park was going to be parallel with Highland.

Mr. Jennings announced the format of the next meeting will include the ideas on paper and a handout would be distributed for smaller group discussions. Chairman Maloney suggested distributing a map with the current and proposed routes. Mr. Jennings confirmed he could provide a PDF file.

Mr. Jennings announced the next meeting would be September 16, 2010.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Ruffatto moved, seconded by Commissioner Didier to adjourn the meeting at 7:56 p.m. All were in favor on a unanimous voice vote and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Ruffatto, Secretary
Wheeling Plan Commission

**EMAILED TO THE PC 8.2.2010
FOR APPROVAL ON 8.12.2010**