

PROCEEDINGS OF VILLAGE OF FRANKLIN
VILLAGE COUNCIL and PLANNING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING
VILLAGE PATHWAYS
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2009, 7:00 PM
FRANKLIN COMMUNITY CHURCH
26425 WELLINGTON, FRANKLIN, MICHIGAN 48025

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by President Gallasch at 7:05 p.m. at the Franklin Community Church.

Present: Fred Gallasch, Alan Harnisch, Mark Jahnke, Bill Lamott, Amie Saltzman, Dominick Schiano

Present: Connie Ettinger, Pam Hansen, Mary Hepler, Brian Hughes, Dean Moenck

Also Present: Jon Stoppels, Administrator

Eileen Pulker, Clerk

Thomas Morrow, Treasurer

John Staran, Hafeli Staran Hallahan & Christ, P.C., Village Attorney

Tom Biehl, Hubbell, Roth and Clark ("HRC"), Village Engineer

Gallasch thanked the Planning Commission for all its hard work relative to the Pathways initiative ("Pathways"), provided a brief meeting overview, and advised as to what options and limitations Council would have if the initiative passes.

Hansen provided a historical perspective relative to Pathways, advised that the role of the Commission is to deal with land use and zoning issues, reviewed Master Plan process, purpose, updating requirements, community input opportunities, and implementation goals. Continuing, she advised that one of the Village goals identified from the Master Plan prioritization/implementation process was to provide safe pedestrian and bike access to the Village Center and noted the current difficulties Villagers face regarding pedestrian/bike access to the Village Center. Other top priorities were downtown area revitalization and open space. Hansen noted that once Council had approved the updated Master Plan in 2007, the Commission assigned a Team which included Commission Members Moenck and Hughes, which after considerable research and collaboration with other entities, shaped a proposal to implement safer pedestrian/bike access to the Village Center and which would also provide increased opportunities for exercise and potential slowing of traffic. Hansen thanked the Commission for diligently pursuing this initiative and encouraged Villagers to vote.

II. PRESENTATION

Commissioners Hughes and Moenck presented a power point presentation which provided specific information relative to the ballot language and Pathways and advised that the Commission serves in an advisory capacity to the Village Council in this regard and has a responsibility to implement the Master Plan. Some of the items included in the presentation were:

- Ballot Language (read, explained language, Council's role, vote of approval authorizes issuance of bond);
- Pathways scope (potential options/phases, locations, landscaping, pedestrian signalized crossing at Franklin/13Mile Road, Bloomfield Twp. Path and impact to Village's Pathway considerations, width considerations, maintenance and contingency considerations);
- Pathways material (options, selection considerations, Commission's recommendation to Council of non-tinted concrete); and
- Financial considerations (cost breakdown by section with it noted that an affirmative vote authorizes Council to install Pathways if they so choose).

Tom Biehl, Village Engineer, provided an engineering overview which included:

- HRC's experience in these matters; and

- Pathways (width considerations, material considerations, Bloomfield Twp's method of communicating with residents regarding its pathways project, financial/cost considerations, pros and cons of phases approach, ROW considerations).

III. PUBLIC REQUESTS AND COMMENTS

Harnisch explained the rules for public comments (state name and address for the record, 2 minute limit, Clerk is timekeeper, meeting will end at 9:00 p.m., if time permits and everyone who wishes to has spoken, an individual can request a second comment be heard), and opened the meeting to receive public comments.

Dr. Sheldon Stern, 26125 Woodlore

- Not convinced the Village needs Pathways or that people want to walk along 13 and/or 14 Mile Roads;
- Will not vote in favor of anything that authorizes the installation of pathways along 14 Mile where there is an existing path;
- Noted he was on Council when the original Master Plan was completed and opined that the Master Plan was not about pathways, it was about controlling commercial development; and
- Requested further consideration of material selection and suggested woodchips as a viable alternative.

Joel Silver, 27000 Wellington

- Suggested percolating materials be considered (Biehl advised that porous materials are more expensive and have not been used on any safety path project in Michigan);
- Requested information relative to location on Franklin and 13 Mile Roads (Biehl noted locations); and
- Requested additional information on ballot language referencing cost/bonds (Staran explained that the ballot language is asking voter approval to authorize the Village to borrow up to 2.2 mils for the purpose of the pathways project which the Village would do by issuing municipal bonds backed by the full faith and credit of the Village with the voter approved tax revenue used to pay off those bonds as they come due) (Morrow explained millage and bond costs).

Dr. George Hambaigo, 26800 Thirteen Mile Rd.

- Suggested that what matters is whether the Village needs pathways, not how much they cost; and
- Inquired regarding plan for winter maintenance and noted potential liability (Moenck explained pathways are seasonal (spring/summer/fall) with no winter maintenance) (Staran advised as to liability concerns, noted that Michigan law does not require removal of natural accumulations of snow and ice and that it is fairly common for municipalities to not provide winter maintenance) (Biehl advised that residents are not responsible for snow removal).

Dayle Hoffecker, 26057 Romany Way

- Communicated potential liability concerns and noted that Bloomfield Twp. has had liability cases which they have paid to settle.

Adam Gut, 25525 W. 14 Mile Rd.

- Requested information regarding ROW for his property(Biehl offered to assist); and
- Requested clarification as to locations of the proposed pathways, particularly along 14 Mile Rd. (Moenck reviewed locations).

Jane Polan, 27340 Willowgreen Ct.

- Noted that walking paths are wonderful, another pathway on 14 Mile Road is not needed as the Twp. walking path is well-used, and suggested Inkster Road, south from 14 Mile, to Scenic.

Rick Jacobs, 32501 Haverford

- Inquired as to what happens to tax revenue until project is completed, is one or multiple bond issuances being considered, and how is the tax levy impacted if the expenses are less than bond issuance costs (Morrow advised that funds are kept in an insured bank account, explained options the Village could pursue if project expenses are less than bond issuance costs, and noted that the project has been contemplated as one bond though it could be broken into multiple bonds) (Schiano noted that the Village is authorized to borrow up to the stated amount, though it could borrow less) (Moenck noted that funds could only be utilized for the intended purpose).

Jim Kochensparger, 30670 Kirk Lane

- Suggested resin pavement be considered and noted this has been successfully used in Vancouver (Biehl noted that it is not widely used in large pathways programs, is unfamiliar with exact costs but the cost is high).

Walter Denison, 30910 Franklin Rd.

- Inquired as to tree impact and replacement/compensation to impacted property owners (Biehl advised that the goal is to relocate and for those large trees that have to be replaced, they would be replaced with smaller trees and funds for relocation and replacement are included in the plan)
- Inquired as to whether a property owner could be responsible for maintenance (Harnisch/Moenck/Jahnke all noted that maintenance is the responsibility of the Village);
- Inquired as to wetland concerns (Biehl advised that wetland permits would be needed in a few places, normal DEQ process would be followed, areas are identified, and costs are included in plan); and
- Inquired as to how bond interest rate was computed (Morrow explained that at the time the ballot proposal was written a 4.5% interest rate was used and added that the market has improved somewhat, to approximately 4%, and there are indications this would be well-received in the market).

Marcy Fisher, 25660 Dennison

- Requested material selection be thoughtfully considered and that she is hoping Pathways does pass.

Pat Burke, 32965 Franklin Ct.

- Stated she is in favor of Pathways, noted the potential increase in property values due to the increased walkability of the Village, and commented that Franklin can't be the town that time passed by.

Steve Rosenthal, 26091 Romany Way

- Requested if retaining walls are included in the bid (Biehl noted they are); and
- Noted the challenge Council faces is to determine if phases are called for and that he is not comfortable with a pathway on 14 Mile Rd as it is too costly for these times.

Karen Couf-Cohen, 32510 Romsey Rd.

- Stated that the Village needs safe access to its downtown which includes installing pathway on south side of 14 Mile Road; and
- Noted the best communities are those where there is a sense of coming together and connectedness which is important to the health of a community.

Randy McElroy, 30575 Woodside

- Expressed concern over people crossing at 13 Mile and Franklin Roads as most seem to be expressing concerns for those crossing at 14 Mile Road and added that it doesn't make sense from a safety perspective to have 2 pathways on 14 Mile Road.

Enid Brown, 30666 Oakleaf Lane

- Inquired if there will be pedestrian signalized crossing at Franklin and 13 Mile Roads (Biehl noted that this is in the plan); and
- Noted she had transmitted to Council material on percolating, sustainable materials and added that she believes the Village can distinguish itself as a leader by utilizing such reasonably tested sustainable materials.

John Hoffecker, 26057 Romany Way

- Commented that he will not support duplication of paths as in these economic times it does not seem the right thing to do (Hughes explained the reasoning behind Bloomfield Twp's pathway on 14 Mile Road);
- Suggested if the proposal does not pass the Village consider bringing it forward one path at a time; and
- Presented his opinion on the subject that some of the candidates for the upcoming election had voiced their preferences for the pathways project at the meeting held the night before.

Dr. Sheldon Stern, 26125 Woodlore

- Stated that one cannot compare 14 and 13 Mile Roads and suggested seeking input from the various types of users (runners, bikers, walkers).

Judy Moenck, 26148 Meadow Dr.

- Commented that she likes to walk, walking on 13 Mile Road is not safe, 13 Mile Road has associated liability as it currently exists, and pathways would allow walkers safety (Biehl noted that traffic volumes on 13 Mile Road are high); and
- Noted the many opportunities Villagers have had to provide input, this is the final meeting in the process, encouraged Villagers to participate in the democratic process and communicate their thoughts to their representatives, and requested supporting Pathways.

Pam Hansen, 32820 Wing Lake

- Commented that she is in favor of Pathways, though because of her Village position on the Planning Commission, she has refrained from expressing her personal opinion.

Connie Ettinger, 256000 River Drive

- Noted that people do not abide by walkway markers painted on roads and that something more is needed at 14 Mile Road such as a flashing light, at the minimum (Hughes clarified Bloomfield Twp's 14 Mile Road arrangement, noted he has discussed speed limit with RCOC and it his opinion that it would be difficult to get speed limit reduced).

Jessie Stern, 26125 Woodlore

- Reminded everyone that the proposal does not authorize pathways it only gives Council the permission to raise taxes to support the approved pathways if they choose to do so.

Dr. George Hambalgo, 26800 Thirteen Mile Rd.

- Noted that traffic is increasing all the time and suggested the Village will have to contemplate widening 13 Mile Road at some point (Biehl advised that the RCOC is not in the position to handle road widening projects and that if roads were widened at some point in the future, the RCOC would include relocation of any existing pathway as part of the project which is their standard procedure).

Michael Jacob, 30490 Stonegate

- Noted that RCOC attempted to put a bike path along Long Lake Road which would eliminate the school bus back in the '80s which was challenged and that the path came quite close to Long Lake Road and inquired as to proximity to roads for Pathways (Biehl advised that the Village would have to abide by regulations and explained the minimums and noted the Village would like to have the paths as far off the road as possible).

Walter Denison, 30910 Franklin Road

- Inquired as to the road width on Franklin Road (Biehl explained).

Russel Thayer, 30735 Adair Ct.

- Noted that he is a walker and does not go anywhere near 13 Mile Road and he would not like to see anyone encouraged to do so (Harnisch noted speed limit is governed by RCOC);
- Noted his concern is that this decision is basically being handed over to Council if the proposal is approved and he does not want to vote yes and see things he does not want such as the path on 13 Mile Road; and
- Suggested Council revise the proposal and bring it back if it does not pass (Harnisch opined that if it does not pass it is likely it won't be brought back for a while as Council does listen which is the purpose of seeking voter approval).

Jahnke thanked Planning Commission for doing a terrific job, noted that part of this is to develop a sense of community and to bring people into the downtown, suggested looking at what other communities do to make connecting paths safe, noted the proposal needs some work, and disagreed that if it gets turned down it won't be brought back for a while.

Schiano thanked Planning Commission for putting the plan together, reviewed the process, noted that the 14 Mile Road situation wasn't clear so it was included in the proposal, opined that it would be great if this had been done 2 years ago when the economic challenges weren't as great, noted that the results of the vote will give the Village a number of options and that a vote in favor means that Council will have future considerations as to route, costs, etc., and requested Villagers to continue to provide input as future decisions will be made after considering that input.

Harnisch echoed the praise directed to the Commission and opined that Village representatives (Commission members, officials, staff, and consultants) have addressed concerns expressed this evening. **Lamott** likewise praised the Commission especially Moenck and Hughes, opined that no one cares more about historic preservation, aesthetics, safety and sense of community than he does, noted that data suggests that walkability is a proven property value enhancer, and commented that all roads, including south side of 14 Mile Road, deserve the same treatment.

Saltzman explained that as a long-term resident of Franklin she is of the philosophy that Villagers are walkers because the Village is beautiful, noted the difficulties she has in accessing the downtown, commented that those running for Council are separate individuals with distinct views, and noted that she has made it clear that she does not support Pathways as it currently exists due to aesthetic and traffic/safety concerns. She added that she is very aware of the care and due diligence put forth by the Planning Commission and feels that it is her responsibility as a Council Member to present Pathways to the Village so residents can vote on the proposal.

Gallasch thanked attendees for coming out and encouraged residents to vote on September 15th.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori D. Rich, Recording Secretary



Eileen H. Pulker, Clerk

H. Frederick Gallasch, President