

**VILLAGE OF FRANKLIN
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2020, 6:00 PM
FRANKLIN COMMUNITY CHURCH
26425 WELLINGTON ROAD, FRANKLIN, MICHIGAN 48025**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by President Pamela Hansen, at 6:03 PM at the Franklin Community Church, Franklin, Michigan.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Fred Gallasch, Ed Saenz, Pam Hansen, Bill Lamott, Mira Stakhiv

Absent: Brian Gordon, Mike Seltzer

Also Present: Roger Fraser, Interim Village Administrator

Eileen Pulker, Village Clerk

Tad Krear, Land Design Studio

Jeff Huhta, Nowak & Fraus Engineers

Randy Brakeman, Bill Couger – Zoning/Sign Board of Appeals

David Goldberg, Nena Downing, Raj Abbass – Planning Commission

Gary Roberts, Eileen Harryvan, Alek Kokoszka – Historic District Commission

III. DISCUSS FRANKLIN ROAD STREETScape PLAN.

Hansen welcomed the residents to the meeting about the Franklin Road Streetscape for the Village.

Before beginning the meeting, on behalf of the entire Village, Hansen expressed sincere condolences to the Polan Family who lost their son, Jason, this week. Many Villagers know the family as they have lived here for many years and have been very active volunteers in the Village.

Hansen introduced the purpose of this meeting and invited residents to express their thoughts and opinions about the plans, to have an opportunity to talk with Council members and the engineering team and landscape architects, and to ask questions. This was the second (2nd) community-wide meeting; the first (1st) was several months ago. Progress has been made and it was now time for another “look”. She provided a brief history of this project which began with the repaving of most of the Village roads and was now concentrating on Franklin Road between Scenic Drive and 14 Mile Road (the downtown area). In conjunction with the repaving, Council felt this was a good opportunity for improvements of the downtown and address some issues that were related to the roadway itself. To answer the question of “why a streetscape?”, Council wanted to improve the appearance of the downtown and among other things, to improve the walkability and mobility of the pedestrians downtown, both of which have been topics of many Master Plans starting in 1996. To this end, in the fall of 2018, Council invited a design team of residents and business owners to work with Tad Krear. In a period of a few months a “concept” plan had been drawn up which was the document residents looked at a few months ago. There have been meetings with home owners and business owners in the downtown.

Hansen introduced Jeff Huhta, manager partner of Nowak & Fraus Engineers, and Tad Krear, principal and owner of Land Design Studio, who would be conducting this meeting. Krear asked

that residents sign in with email addresses and contact information as any direct communication with residents would be beneficial in moving this project forward.

Krear provided a brief presentation, using slides to show images of “before and after” the project. Then there would be questions and answers from the public. After that the engineers and he would be around the room at different stations; he would be at one with a colored Master Plan and Jeff and his engineers would be at ones with detailed construction drawings to answer specific questions about properties within the streetscape boundaries, such as drainage improvements or where new sidewalks would be going.

The slide presentation began with the downtown sidewalks on both sides of the street from the Village Office to 14 Mile Road. A 5 ft. sidewalk on the east side of Franklin Rd. was also looked at from Scenic to 13 Mile Road. In the future, there would be a connection to 12 ½ Mile Rd. and 13 Mile Road. Input on this would be important. Other slides and Village pictures included: Streetscape Improvement Goals & Objectives: Functional & Aesthetic; Opportunity to Improve Walkability Score; Opportunity to Improve Accessibility For People of All Ages & Needs (Young Children, strollers, walkers, wheelchairs, etc.); Improve Pedestrian Connectivity & Safety Throughout Downtown (Fill-in missing sidewalks/Improve driveway & road crossings); Smart Growth America – National Complete Street Coalition; Green Up Gravel & Asphalt Road Shoulders; Opportunity To Improve Drainage Conditions; Restore Historic Street Tree Canopy; Benefit of Street Trees; Provide Seasonal Landscape Plantings (Select Locations); Addition of Subtle Lighting to Improve Safety & Security (Intersections & Crosswalks); Downtown Lighting Guidelines & Future Ordinance; Select Building Materials That Compliment Historic District (Downtown Sidewalks – 4 ft. Wide Walks, Grey Concrete, Light Broom Finish); Construct Dry Stacked Stone Retaining Walls; Crosswalk Material (Thermal striping/Most Visible and Cost Effective); Addition of Detectable Warning Pavers; Existing Curbs & Integral Sidewalks Throughout Downtown; Proposed Granite Curb Wellington Road to Vincennes Ave., West side of Road only; Improvements With Lightest Footprint Possible In Front of Four Existing Residential Homes (5 ft. Wide Sidewalk, 4 in. Granite Curb) before and after; Existing Conditions and Proposed Improvements – 3 sets of before and after photos; Existing Conditions – Wellington Road; Existing Streetscape and Proposed Streetscape; Keep Maintenance Requirements As Low As Possible; Questions & Answers.

Randy McElroy, Woodside, complimented Krear and his team on a job well-done. As a longtime resident, former member of every Village commission (except Planning Commission), including Mobile Watch, and a former Council member, he congratulated Hansen and some members of the Council, for their constant work on trying to change the downtown. He did not have any problems with the majority of the improvements; however, the purpose of the Historic District was to preserve the Village’s heritage and unique character which must be respected, protected, and maintained. He reminded residents of the 2016 vote concerning sidewalks, which had been turned down. He was not concerned about sidewalks from Scenic Drive to 14 Mile Road because a lot were already there. However, he would not like them on both sides of the street as they were not part of the character of the Village of Franklin. He suggested having another vote if there was an interest in putting in sidewalks.

A time limit of 2 minutes for comments was requested.

Linda Schwartz, Tudor Lane, acknowledged the large number of kids and adults who live here and ride bikes. She inquired about the provision for a bike path or a bike lane, or widening the sidewalks to 5 ft. not 4 ft. to accommodate bicycles. Jeff Huhta stated that, unfortunately, with the available right of way, there was not enough room to put in a standard dedicated bike lane which should be 8 ft. wide.

Susan Abentrod, Wing Lake Road, commented that she had never seen a place enhanced by concrete and opined that the charm and character of the village would be lost. Because accidents had not happened, she wondered why sidewalks were needed on both sides of the road. She inquired if there had been a survey to determine how many trees would have to come down in order to put in the sidewalk. Huhta stated that what they have developed so far was a conceptual plan within the downtown itself. The only tree which had been mentioned was the one Krear referred to at the corner of Franklin Road and Wellington as being a safety hazard. No other tree would be coming down with what they were proposing. There would be some limited tree removal between 13 Mile and Scenic to provide room for the sidewalk. However, they did not have a final count. Regarding the large/historic tree at Wellington and Franklin, she suggested moving the sidewalk around it. Had there ever been an accident due to the tree? Why parallel parking along the main street? There was plenty of parking in other parking areas. Referring to the slide showing parallel parking, Krear stated the area where that was proposed was gravel and wide enough to accommodate parallel parking to displace a couple of parking places in front of the "Just Guys" store. Krear noted that the current manner of parking should never be done. It's very unorthodox and if in the future the Village wanted to address parking in the rear of the buildings, he had some plans.

Carrie LeZotte, Suzanne Drive, stated it was too bad that the tree had to be removed; however, she was glad to hear there was a plan in place to plant more trees. She has a 13 year old daughter who goes downtown by herself so she was happy to hear there was a plan to make it more accessible for young kids, families, strollers, and bikes to travel safely downtown. She compared Greenfield Village thirty (30) years ago and today as it has added more things for it to be more accessible for the general population.

Richard Cherkasky, Hawthorne, 35+ year resident and his children who also live in Franklin. His comment was that the Village should look forward and not dwell on the past. The investment will be in the future adding let's look forward, do it.

Carol Walker, Carol Ave., resident for over 30 years, grew up in Franklin. She remembered all the trees on Franklin Road. She did not like the curbs and the added cement but did like the stamped concrete crosswalks as they added to the character of the Village. She originally thought there should be some type of marking on each side to delineate them more. However, after seeing the photos of a proposed crosswalk at the corner of Wellington and Franklin Road, she changed her mind; it looked too urban. Besides being historic with its Historic District, Franklin was also rural in character. Although quaint looking, this rural character of the Village has been lost. She walks through Franklin every day and had not encountered any problems. Yes, some of the sidewalks were a little askew. There was no need to park on Franklin Road as there was plenty of

parking behind the businesses. She was not opposed to sidewalks on Franklin Road to 13 Mile Road. Maintenance of the historic character and rural character was very important.

Karen Cohen, Romsey Rd., stated that thousands of cars drive through downtown Franklin every day. That's not rural in character; that's a city. We live in a beautiful, historic village, but we don't have horses going down our street any more. We have cars and because of that we need a safe way to walk down our beautiful historic town. We want to enjoy our historic town with beautiful shops. It was her opinion that people don't frequent them because they can't get there safely. Parents have to worry every time they send their children downtown to places like the Post Office. Half of the downtown has sidewalks because someone thought it was a good idea, but they just didn't finish the job; let's finish the job. She agreed with some of the points made by residents: over use of concrete, over-stamping, the taking down of trees, and having sidewalks on both sides of the street. Perhaps there might be a compromise. Bottom line, in the downtown there needs to have walkability which increases the values of the homes. We can walk downtown and have a sense of community with each other and that's how you get "community". You don't get that in a car driving by stores you'll never go into.

Gerry Cohen, Romsey Road, thinks Franklin desperately needs revitalization. It's great to have sidewalks but bicycle paths are a major deficiency. With all the traffic the village has, riding bicycles on sidewalks is not a good situation. Because of the limited available real estate, he thinks there should be more thought in how to accommodate bicycles.

Karen Johnson, Woodlore and Franklin Road, is a new resident and is confused as to how snow removal works now in the sidewalk area. Do residents take care of sidewalks? She came from Huntington Woods where residents were billed to repair the sidewalks. Krear explained how Franklin handled road snow removal of the roads. Once the final plan was approved snow removal service for the sidewalks in the downtown might be included in the contract. Currently, residents were responsible for snow removal in front of their houses.

David Goldberg, Willowgreen Court, requested that Krear explain how and why the conversation moved from using brick pavers for the crosswalks to striping. Krear said it had to do with cost, functionality, and visibility. Huhta added more technical information to the explanation.

Bill Finnicum, German Mill, was one who worked on getting the crosswalks installed. He felt concrete stripes could be put around each side of the brick pavers. The striping could be a lighter color than the asphalt to delineate the crosswalk and distinguish the brick from the asphalt. For many years he had been involved with the concept of beautifying the downtown so he was encouraged that the residents were now taking this subject seriously and talking about details. Change cannot be ignored; it was going to happen. He applauded this comprehensive effort as everything was being considered at the one time: lighting, landscaping, vehicular and pedestrian circulation. He was in favor of having a sidewalk from the "city hall" to the public library and it made more sense to have a continuous sidewalk on both sides of the street for safety. With all due respect to the four houses on Franklin Road, who want to be "by passed", there are a thousand households in the Village of Franklin who have to be respected and safe, along with the many visitors to the Cider Mill in the fall. Having a sidewalk on one side stop, forcing the

pedestrian to cross the street to go down the other side and then cross back over again does not make sense. Staying on one side makes more sense.

Shadia Martini, Inkster Road, has been living in the Village since 1992. She had three (3) observations: has there been any thought to putting the electricity underground in the downtown? Krear answered it was not feasible, far too expensive. She mentioned that in Europe there was a type of material which when added to concrete will light up at night. It's very subdued and might help avoid any type of lighting downtown. Has there been any thought about adding sidewalks to Inkster Road? Krear answered that the present focus was on Franklin Road.

Gail Dishell, has lived in Franklin for close to 50 years and loved living here. She complemented the presentation; however, if the whole project was approved it would change the whole character of Franklin. She felt retaining walls and white curbs were very unattractive and she likes the rural look of the Village with some improvements. She stated that this plan was dramatic and asked for compromise.

John Simon, Kincardine, a resident for 50 years, felt that Franklin was very special. It was truly a unique place to live and raise a family. He compared the preserved authenticity of the Village to other historic districts which are simulations. We should be very proud that Franklin is "The Town that Time Forgot" and the fact that its historic district was the very first in Michigan to be placed on the National Registry of Historic Sites. While walking on the Village Green or in the downtown area, residents should remember the history of the Franklin founders and settlers. It is the responsibility of the present residents to be the guardians of Franklin's past so future generations will be able to enjoy the pleasure of living in a unique environment. Tonight, residents should consider where they want to live: in a true authentic preserved historic district or merely an assimilation? In the 50 years of living in Franklin he has never heard anyone complain about the lack of sidewalks. Personally, he enjoys walking on grass as opposed to cement. For those who like cement, they can choose to walk on the east side of Franklin Road. Those who are concerned about safety aspects can walk on a narrow gravel shoulder on the west side of Franklin Road and be re-assured that in the 150 year history there have been no injuries. The Historic District must remain authentic and a sidewalk on the west side, curbs, and retaining walls do not fit that description and only detract from its beauty.

Cassius Drake, Forest Drive, has lived in the Village for 10 years and is also a property owner in the Historic District. He and his wife have two (2) boys. He stated that time has not forgotten Franklin but the Historic District was not preserved. The historic jewel was decaying and by ignoring this condition could lead to losing the entire ambiance. He is committed to this village. He had a concern for a resident or children to safely get downtown if he/she lived south of 13 Mile Road. He didn't mind his tax dollars paying for that safety. The absence of a gathering place in town is greatly missed and he and his wife are committed to bringing such a place back to the downtown. They want to live in a Franklin that was alive.

Angie Hanke, Wing Lake Road, former owner of the Farmhouse, supports this program 100%. Some compromises could be introduced to please more people and get people behind it. She pointed out that sidewalks don't merely connect building to building; they connect "us" as a community and as a neighborhood and a business district. Accessibility to the downtown shops

and restaurants was very important for everyone. Sidewalks have numerous benefits. We cannot lose by improving the downtown. Referring to one of the slides showing the downtown, she opined that the Village looked “dumpy”, it looked neglected, and it looked forgotten. It looked like the residents didn’t care.

Alex Stchekine, Evelyn Court, lives in an historic home at the corner of Franklin Road and Evelyn Court. He stated that he would like to see improvement along the main business district of the Village. However, he was not in favor of a sidewalk on the west side of Franklin Road which would be on the side of his property, especially during the season when the Cider Mill was opened. As a cyclist, he would like to see a bike lane on Franklin Road.

Stephanie Zack, Wellington, walks her dogs daily and her main concern is safety. Where are the signs which say pedestrians have the Right of Way? No one adheres to that. She also expressed safety concerns about the lack of snow removal on the existing Franklin Road sidewalks. Signs are needed for safety.

Gary Roberts, Wellington, thanked Krear for the work on the plans which would enhance and make the town better. He opined that he wasn’t in favor of the crosswalk striping. He informed the public of the goals of the Historic District Commission and was charged with the enviable change that makes things better. Having sidewalks on both sides of the street and pedestrian vs. vehicle safety measures was part of this evolution and he bet the Historic Commission would support the changes.

 ?, Hersheyvale, the Village has a lot of wild animals and was afraid they would be lost if the Village did not start taking care of them with food, water, and safety. Please be cautious and drive safely, especially on Franklin Road.

Mike Liut, German Mill, whose wife is a business owner in the Village, addressed the elimination of several parking spots in front of some businesses on the west side of Franklin Road to accommodate a sidewalk which, he pointed out, dead ends at a pole. He also brought up the point that in front of the gas station and fire hall the plans showed that the sidewalk would jog back out within a few feet of Franklin Road. It was his opinion that was dangerous. He thought the project had merit but thought there was no reason to walk in front of the gas station or fire hall. He added that he, too, walks his dogs and is able to find a way to do it safely.

Huhta encouraged business owners and property owners which have frontage on Franklin Road to talk with him and Krear after the meeting.

Alek Kokoszka, Franklin Road, one of the four (4) property owners, suggested that there be a bike lane on one side of the road and a sidewalk on the other.

Kathy Erlich, Crestwood, grew up in the Village, and sees a great value to having sidewalks on Franklin Road that go all the way to 13 Mile Road or at least to the street before. She was unsure as to where the crosswalk should be on 13 Mile Road but had some ideas. She really liked Kokoszka’s idea of having a bike lane on one side and a sidewalk on the other. Her other concern about safety was for walkers or bikers in front of the gas and fire stations.

Jim Kochensparger, Kirk Lane, grew up in the town, stated that with Roberts, Historic District Commission Chair, speaking in favor of this plan as being good for the Village, was extremely important. Speaking from personal experience, he agreed that the tree on the corner of Franklin Road and Wellington was a hazard.

Richard Cherkasky, said respect the past but we look to the future; in doing so we improve the future adding let's do that. He had heard that this project was already funded with money left over from the repaving of the roads.

Huhta stated that at the last Council meeting there was some budgetary discussion as part of the design process. There were suggestions to make changes and he would come back to Council with the new numbers for the concept plan. The original budget was \$1.2 million and the estimated cost was within a couple of percentage points of that.

David Goldberg, Willowgreen Court, the Chairman of the Planning Commission. In conjunction with this concept plan, the Planning Commission would revisit sidewalks on some of the major thoroughfares and in selective places consider placing one on one side of the road. There was a general plan in place and the Commission would be doing further work on it. He welcomed people to attend the Planning Commission meetings to express their thoughts.

Elina Costello, a dentist and owner of Smile Builders and is a property owner. She has been involved with Main Street Franklin. The details of the plans are negotiable and under consideration and should please the majority of the residents. She spoke on behalf of some of her patients who did not feel safe at night due to the lack of lighting and parking. This was a long time coming. It was positive and beneficial and going in the right direction.

Mike Flevaris, Franklin Road is one of the four (4) homeowners on Franklin Road and was on the Design Committee. He liked what had been proposed for the Village; however, this was a very difficult subject matter because the Village was the first Historic District in Michigan which needed to be considered. Walkability, livability and other things have been discussed tonight but additional time was needed to do what's best for the new homeowners and also take into consideration those who have lived here for many years. Safety should be a main objective and concern, but it needed to be done with compromises. He likes the idea with the bike lane and thus not lose the parking spaces north of the fire hall and gas station and yet could also be used to walk dogs. Having the gravel in front of the four (4) houses is part of the village character but the drawback is that it has been neglected since he has lived there, which was 29 years. It's time that Council starts looking at what's best for the community. If compromise is needed let's do it and do it right. We have new businesses here which are a great start but we must work together and do what's best for everyone, not just ourselves.

Eileen Harryvan, Vincennes, agreed with Flevaris. Another big topic is lighting. She was glad to see this issue was being addressed. Safety at night was a great concern to her, among other things. Regarding the tree at Franklin Road and Wellington, it's a matter of time before someone gets hurt. She also has a big concern about the Historic District. She does not want to see it deteriorate any more. The Village has to give the property owners the support they need to keep

those businesses viable so that they can maintain those buildings. She has been a volunteer for the Historic Society and Main Street Franklin and is a member of the Historic District Commission. She agreed with what Roberts said.

One letter was received from Rebecca Gale, Kirk Lane that spoke in support of sidewalks on only the east side of Franklin Road. She added that she thought that the Village center looked cluttered, with too many signs, and she added that she did not care for the planters.

Huhta concluded this portion of the meeting so those wishing to view the plans and talk with the engineers could do so.

The meeting adjourned at 7:38 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Beke, Recording Secretary

Eileen H. Pulker, Clerk

Pamela Hansen, President