

Present: Chairperson Fox; Vice-Chairperson Domzal; Members: Belaustegui, Borowski, Bliven, Jensen, Smith and Tillman.

Absent: Robiner

Also Present: Building official, Byrwa
Planning consultant, Wyrosdick
Council Liaison, Walsh
Council members, Craig, Downey and Stearn
Village Manager, Hanlin
Assistant to the Manager, Pasieka

Chairperson Fox called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. in the Village municipal building at 18500 W. Thirteen Mile Road.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved as published.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ITEMS NOT ON THE PUBLISHED AGENDA

Sue Ann Schredder of 22723 King Richard Court announced that Sheriff Michael Bouchard will be speaking at Bingham Farms Elementary School tomorrow night from 7:00-8:30 p.m. on the important issue of keeping our children safe on the Internet. She encouraged everyone to come and listen to this serious issue that deals with protecting children.

APPROVE MINUTES

MOTION by Bliven, supported by Domzal, that the minutes of a regular Planning Board meeting held on Wednesday, October 11, 2000 be approved as submitted.

Motion passes unanimously.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF PATHWAYS PLAN

Chairperson Fox introduced the board members to the audience and talked about the function of the Planning Board. The Planning Board is an advisory body to the Village Council. Its duties and responsibilities include future planning, site plan review, review and updating of zoning ordinances, and review and approval of signs. Council often refers matters to the Planning Board for its review and recommendation.

Fox stated that the Planning Board has been reviewing pathways for pedestrians and bicyclists. The concept was to look at the Village as a whole and determine where there is a need for pathways. The Planning Board understands that there are strong feelings in the Village about sidewalks. There are some people in the community who would like to see sidewalks on all major roads and others who do not want any sidewalks in the Village. Fox stressed that we are not here to discuss either one of those philosophies. The Planning Board has been analyzing the existing conditions in the Village and considering the needs of the community in order to arrive at a reasonable plan for future pathways to recommend to the Council. Implementation of the whole plan or parts of the plan is a decision of Council.

The planning process began with a public forum to discuss the needs of the community with respect to unsafe crossings and lack of pathways. Now that the board has arrived at a preliminary plan, it has invited the public for their comments on ways that the plan can be improved. The Planning Board has not completed the pathway plan. Fox emphasized that this is not a forum about sidewalks or an opportunity for people to speak for or against sidewalks in general. What will be helpful to the Planning Board is constructive and specific suggestions about the pathway plan as it relates to safety, aesthetics, and the connectiveness of this community.

Fox introduced Kathryn Wyrosdick, planning consultant from Birchler Arroyo, who has guided the Planning Board through the process of preparing a pathway plan. Wyrosdick began her presentation by reviewing the general planning process and how it was applied to the pathway study. The first step was to look at historical data and existing conditions in the Village. That included reviewing existing sidewalks and community facilities and assessing the current pedestrian environment in the

Village. The board looked at areas where there were safety issues or ineffective pedestrian flow to determine the needs of the community.

The Planning Board then established goals and objectives that would be followed throughout the plan. The goals are: 1) to provide pathway system improvements that are designed with pedestrian safety as their basis; 2) to provide a pathway system that is an attractive addition to the community; and 3) to design a pathway system to encourage its use as an alternative to driving and that is a benefit to the community. The plan should balance the rights of individuals with the needs of the community and provide a sound basis for the location of pathways.

The board then considered the recommendations that need to be formulated in order to reach those goals and objectives. They also looked at various strategies for achieving the goals. There are a multitude of factors that create a pedestrian environment in the Village. Once the plan is adopted it is then Council's decision on how to implement the plan. Wyrosdick mentioned that the pathway plan is not a static document. As times change, the plan should be reviewed to determine if all the recommendations still make sense.

Wyrosdick presented an overview of the pathway plan. The Planning Board has been reviewing adequate accessibility alternatives for all of its residents in an effort to provide a more walkable and accessible community. The pathway plan covers multiple modes of non-motorized transportation and pedestrian safety. It recommends a system that makes sense and strategies that will provide a more pedestrian friendly environment for the Village. The plan does not only propose pathways but perhaps suggestions for slowing traffic where there is high volumes of pedestrian traffic near parks and schools. It addresses providing better crosswalks to schools. The safety of children and pedestrians is foremost throughout the entire plan.

During the planning process the Planning Board considered and reviewed a number of previous sidewalk and engineering studies that were done in the Village. The history of the sidewalk issue in Beverly Hills was taken into consideration. It is apparent that close consideration must be given to public concerns regarding pedestrian pathway systems balancing those concerns with the needs of other residents who favor pedestrian facilities along with the constraints of Village finances.

Wyrosdick related that one of the first things that the Planning Board did was to identify all of the community facilities that people might want to access including schools, churches, recreational facilities, and commercial areas.

Before offering specific recommendations, the board divided the Village into four focus areas that were designed to provide a close-up view of Beverly Hills by segments. The Planning Board reviewed each focus area separately to determine what the area needs. Once all the recommendations were examined, they were brought together as a village-wide plan with consideration given to what makes sense.

Wyrosdick talked about alternative strategies that would create an aesthetic, pedestrian safe environment. Alternative strategies included pathways, alternative material trails, crosswalks, and traffic calming methods. She provided examples of traffic calming techniques such as adding bike lanes to roadways, installing mid-block bulb outs to slow traffic, horizontal deflection, traffic circles and mid-block islands.

Wyrosdick referred to a map to indicate the preferred recommendations of the pathway plan. She noted that the recommendations are divided into principle and additional recommendations. The recommendations include new sidewalk, adding sections of sidewalk to link gaps in existing sidewalks, improving existing crosswalks, and providing connections that could join residential areas if a pedestrian easement could be obtained between lots.

Wyrosdick stated that the pathway plan is not final. Other elements that will be added include conceptual design recommendations for crosswalks and pathways and strategies to implement plan recommendations. The Planning Board will consider the comments and recommendations from the public in making any revisions to the current plan. The board will then recommend adoption of the pathway plan to the Village Council. The Council will consider and act on the proposed plan, either adopting it in whole or in part or revising it. The Village Council is the body that will determine the appropriate time to implement plan recommendations. The Council will have to consider funding

and community support. Wyrosdick stated that this is a plan for the future. It outlines what can be done to improve the pedestrian environment in the Village.

Fox opened the floor for public comments on the pathway plan. Carol Rito of 30649 Banbury asked if the recommended sidewalk on 13 Mile Road extends from Lahser Road to Groves High School. Wyrosdick stated that the priority recommendation extends from Vernon to the GHS crossing. The sidewalk identified as an additional recommendation would extend from Lahser to Vernon.

Rito stated that the principal recommendation for sidewalk on 13 Mile Road leaves out a large part of the population with students at GHS who are from the subdivisions on the west side of Lahser. Students from this area have no safe access to that facility. Because of block scheduling in effect at the high school, busses come at 7:00 am and school does not start until 8:40 am on certain days. Rito thinks that it is critical to have sidewalk along the entire length of 13 Mile Road from Lahser to Evergreen.

Michelle Prentice of 30101 Lincolnshire agreed with Rito about the need for sidewalk on 13 Mile Road from Lahser to Evergreen. She asked if the board was aware that a child was struck by a car on Greenfield Road north of Beverly Road near Arlington coming home from Our Lady Queen of Martyrs school. Prentice suggested a crosswalk in that area for children from OLQM crossing Greenfield Road to Royal Oak.

Todd Stearn of 15690 Kirkshire thinks that the Planning Board did a great job on the pathway plan. He suggested connecting all the sidewalks on Riverside Drive either on the north or the south side of the street. He thinks that sidewalk is also needed on the south side of Beverly Road due to the heavy use of Beverly Park. Stearn asked why sidewalk on Evergreen from Riverside Drive to 14 Mile Road is not included as a recommendation of this plan.

Wyrosdick answered that signage could be used to direct pedestrians or bicyclists traveling up Evergreen to use Old Post Road, which would connect to an additional recommended sidewalk that leads to Bellvine Trail and to 14 Mile Road.

Borowski commented on why the plan does not recommend connecting gaps in the sidewalks on Riverside Drive. Riverside Drive is an interior street with a 25 MPH speed limit that is actively enforced by the Public Safety Department. It was the sense of the Planning Board that the interior streets of most subdivisions could make their own determination as to whether or not to connect sidewalks. Borowski added that there are alternative sidewalks in the area.

Jan Bennesch of 22830 Shagbark stated that it is good to see any progress towards connecting the community. She is concerned about the entire length of 13 Mile Road From Lahser to Evergreen not being a principle sidewalk recommendation. Bennesch asserted that a resident cannot access any facilities in Beverly Hills from the entire west side without that connection.

Martin Kotch referred to the planning consultant's explanation of the different types of materials that can be used to construct a pathway. He affirms that a pathway is still a sidewalk. Hatch asked if the usage of the proposed sidewalks has been ascertained. He wondered where someone would be going if they walked on 14 Mile up to Evergreen. He asked if students will walk to Groves High School. Hatch questioned the need for sidewalks that are proposed.

Fox described an existing route through a right-of-way between two lots that is used by students walking to Groves from Eastlady, Westlady, Smallwood and Breezewood Court area. They do not need to walk to the intersection of 14 Mile and Evergreen Roads, which is why sidewalk in that area has not been included in the recommendation. The students who live near 14 Mile and Evergreen can take the interior route to a proposed pathway on Evergreen Road.

Frank Worrell of 32123 Bellvine Trail asked if the Planning Board will recommend to Council that the Village maintain the sidewalks in summer and winter.

Fox stated that the board has not reached the point of making a recommendation to Council on the maintenance of sidewalks.

Worrell suggested that Beverly Hills cooperate with Bloomfield Township in constructing sidewalk on 14 Mile Road from Lahser to Evergreen.

Fox responded that the kids walk on the west side of Lahser. They would have to cross 14 Mile Road to the Bloomfield Township side of the road to access sidewalk on the north side of 14 Mile and then cross again at Berkshire School. The Planning Board determined that this was not safe for school age children. It is recommended to have one crossing at the major intersection that would direct kids walking on the west side of Lahser to sidewalk on the south side of 14 Mile to Berkshire School.

Worrell suggested that the Planning Board might want to think about working with the Public Safety Department on a safety plan for the crossing at 14 Mile and Lahser.

Jerry Suggs on 31015 Rivers Edge Court commented that the question of maintenance should not be ignored.

John Bennish of 22830 Shagbark commented that he had children who attended Seaholm. He recommended that 14 Mile Road walkways extend to Evergreen Road and Evergreen Road sidewalks extend to Fourteen Mile Road. He noted that Groves and Seaholm high schools participate in many combined sports activities.

Fox does not think that there is sidewalk on either side of Cranbrook up to Seaholm High School. There is nothing to connect with, which was part of the board's consideration. Beverly Hills cannot compel Birmingham to construct sidewalks.

George Meyer of 22542 Fiddlers Cove in Metamora Green stated that he has been attending occasional Council and board meetings for two and one-half years to advocate the completion of Lahser Road sidewalks. He thanked the Planning Board for the extensive work it has done on this pathway plan. Meyer has gathered 100 signatures from residents in Metamora Green who are requesting that the gaps in the sidewalk be completed so that people could walk or bicycle from 13 Mile on Lahser all the way up to Quarton Road. About 70% of the sidewalk exists. Meyer is looking forward to seeing that portion of the pathway plan completed with the greatest dispatch.

Domzal commented that Bloomfield Township was able to construct sidewalk due to the passage of a five-year dedicated millage for sidewalks.

Jim McCook of 19370 Riverside Drive stated that he thinks that there are some facts that should be clarified if this study is to be sold to the Council. Sidewalks on Lahser connecting to Detroit Country Day School have been recommended for the wrong reason. There are 972 students at DCDS with only 24 from Beverly Hills. He submits that students ride to school on a bus or in their own cars.

McCook referred to the small piece of sidewalk that would connect Dunblaine to the crossing at Southfield Road. He recalled that children used to walk across Southfield Road at this signalized crossing going to Our Lady Queen of Martyrs School. The students from OLQM are now bussed to school. McCook does not think there is a reason to maintain that crossing.

McCook expressed the view that the Planning Board should include recommendations in the pathway plan with respect to the cost of installation, maintenance, shoveling snow, and liability concerns.

Alda Marie McCook of 19370 Riverside asked for examples of traffic calming techniques, which were provided by Wyrosdick.

Joan Brackenbury of 31411 Sleepy Hollow stated that she has lived in her subdivision for 30 years and has been waiting for a way for people to bike or walk anywhere in Beverly Hills. She questioned the time frame of the pathway plan.

Fox responded that the Planning Board has not yet discussed implementation recommendations. The implementation of the plan, if adopted, will be a decision of the Village Council.

Sue Ann Schredder of 22723 King Richard Court stated that there is no way for her children to ride their bikes from Nottingham Subdivision to Bingham Farms School. When she moved into the community she thought that there would be more accessibility through the neighborhoods. Schredder questioned the plan's reference to pedestrian easements. Fox used the map to give

examples of areas where people in a neighborhood could get together and formalize an easement between two properties to connect a subdivision to an adjacent subdivision. She emphasized that this is not something that the Village can mandate.

Fritz Heuser of 31119 Sleepy Hollow in Metamora Green commented that there are a lot of bits and pieces of sidewalk along Lahser. Many of those sidewalks were built 30 years ago. He asked if the Village code allows new sidewalk to be connected to old sidewalk.

Building official Byrwa responded that there is no problem with connecting old sidewalk with new sidewalk. The Village has engineering guidelines but nothing that mandates sidewalk width.

Gina Greer of 22543 Fiddlers Cove suggests that any major arteries such as 13 Mile Road and 14 Mile Road should have sidewalks on their entire length. She thinks that the board did a tremendous job on the pathway plan. Greer commended the board for making judgment calls such as the decision not to recommend sidewalk on Riverside, which is not a major artery.

Beata Lamparski of 31326 Downing Place commented that the crossing on Beverly Road to the swim club is a very important entranceway for pedestrians and bicyclists, and that facility should be improved. Also, the crossing at Norchester and Beverly at the park entrance is unsafe. Lamparski suggested that the Planning Board look at where curb cuts may be necessary as part of this plan.

Lamparski would like the Planning Board to look at the different types of crossings and what kind of emphasis they can be given. She hopes that the board will look at pedestrian crossing signs and advanced warning signs. She is particularly concerned with the crossing at Beverly and Evergreen because of the site distance problems.

Lamparski suggests that the pathway plan map include a designation for informal networking connections. She hopes that a future Village calendar will contain a map that would tell residents how the pathways are connected to access all areas of Beverly Hills.

Jensen affirmed that the preliminary schematic plan for the pedestrian entrance to Beverly Park includes improvements to the Beverly Road and Norchester crosswalk.

Mike Freedman of 32460 Evergreen asked if there were demographic studies and surveys done in conjunction with this pathway plan. There has been reference to the Hidden Rivers nature preserve near Riverside Drive. Freedman commented that he has never seen residents in that park. He questioned how many people would walk to church if some of the proposed walkways were constructed. Freedman is not sure how some of these traffic calming techniques would be implemented.

Fox stated that she and other residents walk or ride their bikes to Hidden Rivers nature preserve and walk in the park. She asked Freedman if he had any suggestions for traffic calming in his area that would be helpful for pedestrians.

Freedman responded that public safety patrols the area regularly, but Evergreen is now a fast road. He feels that there are some areas of the community that have a charm that may be lost in the name of progress.

Doyle Downey of 30865 Lincolnshire stated that he thinks that the Planning Board has done an excellent job on the pathway plan. He stressed the importance of signage and visual aids to make pedestrian crossings stand out. Downey mentioned that Lincolnshire does not have sidewalks, and people walk in the street. He pointed out a dangerous intersection where cars turn onto Lincolnshire from 13 Mile Road and swing onto Lincolnshire West. Motorists have come close to hitting pedestrians while making this turn. It is an area where traffic calming should be considered.

Nanci Freedman of 32460 Evergreen stated that she has a large lot line that extends from Evergreen Road to Riverside Park. She thinks that there is a safety issue due to the change in elevation from her property down to the park. Freedman expressed concern with the maintenance of the proposed sidewalk and liability to property owners. She is also concerned that people walking on the sidewalk will litter her property. Freedman stated that people including herself ride their bikes on Riverside with no problems. People walk in the road.

Ingrid Haddock of 32780 White Oaks Trail lives near the 14 Mile and Lahser Road intersection where there have been some sidewalks constructed. She stated that people in her area have been connected to the outside world since Bloomfield Township has constructed sidewalks recently. She and her husband have been able to bike into Birmingham. The sidewalks are an improvement to the quality of life. Haddock applauds the board's efforts and urged the Village to continue with the pathway plan.

Lori Hix of 30337 Lincolnshire wanted to thank the Planning Board for pushing this pathway plan forward. There are many people in the audience from Georgetown North and South, Metamora, and Nottingham. Residents in this area are organizing around this issue. Hix has a petition signed by area residents who feel strongly about sidewalks on Lahser Road, 13 Mile Road, and 14 Mile Road. Currently these residents can get to Bingham Farms easier than they can get to anywhere in Beverly Hills. Hix suggested that Brother Rice and Marion High School be included with the other facilities noted in the pathway plan as destinations for Beverly Hills residents.

Carol Woodard of 32750 Bellvine Trail applauds the Planning Board for this plan, stating that she will be happy if any part of this plan takes place in her lifetime. She urges the Planning Board to recommend connecting all the major roads. Woodard remarked that her quality of life has improved since Bloomfield Township installed its sidewalks. She would like to be able to bike all over Beverly Hills.

Nancy Best of 32826 White Oaks Trail stated that it is difficult to bike to Beverly Park from her area without sidewalk along 14 Mile Road and along Evergreen Road.

Jim Schaefer of 30099 Fox Run was present representing Northbrook Presbyterian Church at 22055 W. 14 Mile Road. He expressed concern about who is going to pay for engineering and construction of the sidewalk adjacent to church property. The parishioners want to know who will pay for maintenance and repair of the sidewalks as well as snow removal if the current ordinance remains in effect. There is also a concern about liability.

Fox asked Schaefer if there are members of his congregation who live in Beverly Hills and would walk to church if there were sidewalks. Schaefer did not know this but suggested that most people drive to church.

Nancy Best on White Oaks Trail stated that she and others walk to Northbrook Presbyterian Church.

Mary Raquepau of 30619 Pebblestone Court commented that her son would like the opportunity to be able to walk or ride his bike to Groves High School. He would also like to see sidewalks along Lahser Road.

Sylvia Rector of 30511 Georgetown Drive thinks it is imperative that everyone in the community be able to get to Groves on safe sidewalks. She would like to be able to reach Maple and Lahser on sidewalks.

Mr. Meyer stated that there have been several comments questioning who is going to maintain the sidewalk and shovel the snow. He asked who shovels the existing sidewalks on the east side of Beverly Hills when it snows. He also asked how sidewalk repairs are accomplished today. He thinks that the people who have sidewalks have to shovel them.

Fox thinks that there may be a distinction between sidewalks on interior streets and those on the major thoroughfares. This is something that needs to be addressed. Fox has asked Village administration to look into how Bloomfield Township handles maintenance of sidewalks on major thoroughfares.

Byrwa stated that the Village currently has an ordinance that addresses maintenance of sidewalks. Ordinance 5.05 regarding ice, snow and other obstructions states that the owner of property abutting or adjacent to sidewalks shall keep such sidewalk free and clear of ice, snow, or other obstructions. If the owner of the property fails to do so, the Village can take care of the problem and pass the cost onto the abutting property owner.

Byrwa has contacted Bloomfield Township and asked how that community handles the maintenance responsibility of removing snow from sidewalks. He was informed by the maintenance supervisor

that Bloomfield Township refers to its sidewalks as “seasonal pathways”, and there is no responsibility for the abutting property owner or Bloomfield Township to remove the snow or ice from the walkways. Bloomfield Township does not legislate responsibility for removing snow or ice from sidewalks. Byrwa was told that the Township Supervisor at his discretion could purchase snow removal equipment and remove some of the snow from the walks on major roads. The schools also have snow removal equipment and remove snow on and around school properties.

Fox read letters addressed to the Planning Board from residents who have an opinion on the pathway plan. Robert Fitzgerald of 32990 Lahser Road expressed opposition to the installation of sidewalks in his area. Mary Sue and John Everly of 30332 E. Lincolnshire Drive wrote to voice their strong support for the construction of sidewalks on Lahser connecting their neighborhood to 14 Mile Road. Bobby Watson of 31680 Lahser wants to retain the rural look of Beverly Hills and is in opposition to sidewalks on Lahser Road.

Fox thanked everyone for coming to this meeting. Their comments were helpful and will be considered in the completion of the pathway plan.

PLANNING BOARD COMMENTS

Board members commended Wyrosdick on her presentation and Fox for a fine job as chair. The Planning Board was encouraged by tonight’s participation and appreciated the comments from the citizens.

Several board members suggested that the distinction between principle and additional recommendations should be eliminated from the pathway plan. This was supported by the fact that many of the residents who spoke asked that pathways designated as “additional” recommended sidewalk be included as a priority recommendation.

The board discussed the estimated cost of proposed sidewalk and the possible cost per household in some sections of the Village. Discussion included whether the cost of sidewalks in certain areas should be covered through special assessments, a Village budget issue, or a millage issue. Board members alluded to political ramifications. The question was raised as to whether property owners would support sidewalks in their neighborhoods if they had to pay for sidewalk that abuts their property. There are many large lots and not many households on the west side of the Village. The question of what constitutes a community-wide issue was debated. Fox requested direction from Council at the joint meeting on whether the Planning Board should look at cost and potential means of funding as a way of directing the pathway plan.

PLANNING CONSULTANT S COMMENT

Wyrosdick remarked that it was nice to hear positive feedback on the plan from residents who attended the meeting tonight.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Andy Craig of 31239 Sunset offered comments and suggestions on traffic calming techniques at the intersection of Beverly Road where it crosses Southfield and at the intersection of Evergreen Road at 13 Mile Road. He maintains that intersections are often overbuilt for the width of the road. Craig also proposed methods for distinguishing crosswalks to make them noticed by vehicular traffic.

Norman Rubin of 31020 Rivers Edge Court agrees that the design of the 13 Mile and Evergreen Road intersection could be improved.

Doyle Downey of 30865 W. Lincolnshire emphasized the concept of creating visual aids to make it easier to identify all aspects of the pathway system.

MOTION by Borowski, supported by Smith, to adjourn the meeting at 10:12 p.m.
Motion passes unanimously.

Carry over items:

- 1 - Entranceway signs (10-27-99)
- 2 - Bikeways, walkways and pedestrian safety study (11-11-99).

Sharon Mullin Fox, chairperson
Planning Board

Ellen E. Marshall
Village Clerk