

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

Absent: None

Also Present: Building Official, Byrwa
Council Liaison, Kennedy
Planning Consultants, Birchler and Wyrosdick
Assistant to the Manager, Pasieka

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

An item was added to the agenda: "4A - Discussion of comments made at the February 9, 2000 public discussion of sidewalks".

MOTION by Robiner, supported by Domzal, to approve the agenda as amended.

Motion passes unanimously.

APPROVE MINUTES

On page 11, fourth paragraph from the bottom of page, correct last sentence to read: "Pictures of each home in Oakland County will be available *from the County*".

MOTION by Bliven, supported by Smith, that the minutes of a regular Planning Board meeting held on Wednesday, February 9, 2000 be approved as amended.

Motion passes unanimously.

DISCUSS COMMENTS MADE AT THE FEBRUARY 9, 2000 PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF SIDEWALKS

Belaustegui recapped comments and concerns voiced at the February 9 public forum on sidewalks. Input was received from a few people living on Thirteen Mile Road and from quite a few residents on Riverside Drive and Rivers Edge Court. There were comments by people from Georgetown North and one comment from a Vernon resident. The general comments were mixed in context with some opinions expressed either for or against sidewalks, which was not the purpose of the discussion.

All of the comments from people on Rivers Edge and 13 Mile Road were in opposition to sidewalks. The number of people who spoke was relatively small. People from Riverside were negatively disposed towards sidewalks and concerned about many of the factors associated with sidewalks. It was not clear whether they oppose sidewalks on Riverside Drive or sidewalks in general. There were generally positive comments made by Georgetown North residents with some concerns expressed.

Belaustegui listed areas of concern that he thinks should be considered by the board. People were unclear about the mandate for the Planning Board study. There were quite a few questions about funding of sidewalks with assumptions made by residents on this topic.

It was suggested that the board investigate findings from prior studies. Dorothy Pfeifer informed the board about a bike path study done for the Village in 1985. Belaustegui proposed that the board compile all prior sidewalk studies in a structured format, including engineering studies.

Safety and security issues were a concern of residents. It was questioned whether there is more data available from the public safety department and the Village's Traffic Committee concerning incidents that are related to sidewalk safety issues. Residents suggested that the public safety department increase enforcement of the speed limit.

Belaustegui stated that the point was made that constructing sidewalks on busy roads will put more people on those roads, and safety will decrease. No matter how safe the sidewalks are, people will be in a dangerous position and things will happen. This may be a topic of discussion for the board.

There were comments about sidewalk usage enforcement. Belaustegui remarked that the Village cannot require people to walk on sidewalks. This is a communication issue.

Some of the public felt threatened that sidewalks will bring people into the community who will burglarize homes adjacent to the sidewalk. Belaustegui learned from the Oakland County Sheriff's office that sidewalks are too obvious and not the preferred method of robbery. Belaustegui believes that privacy is an issue for people who object to sidewalks being installed in front of their homes.

There was a concern about preserving the rural appearance of the community as well as comments about sidewalks improving the quality of life. Residents benefit from walking and bicycling in the community. People do feel strongly about retaining trees and shrubbery on their property. Belaustegui indicated that the 1985 study suggests that the existing greenery in the right-of-way is not vital, and there should not be a problem with removing it.

There was an issue relative to whether the existing sidewalks are used. Residents were concerned about maintenance and repair of sidewalks, homeowners' liability, disruption to their front yards, litter and dog droppings. Belaustegui concluded that he thinks that the issues raised at the public meeting need to be addressed by the board.

Board members imparted their impressions of comments made at the public forum. Borowski was surprised that there were no people present from areas where there are extensive sidewalks or varying degrees of sidewalks. The reason might be that people do not make an effort to attend a meeting to discuss something they are satisfied with. He emphasized that those people who may be in favor of sidewalks had an equal opportunity to present their comments.

Jensen concurred that the cost to property owners for sidewalks, maintenance, safety and liability issues seemed to be popular discussion issues. The February 9 meeting launched a debate on what is the public realm and what is the private realm. There are people who believe they have some ownership right to the public realm, which are the rights-of-way and the streets, and they do not want to provide any access to this private realm. This results in a series of islands in sections of town that cannot be accessed without crossing a main road. Jensen added that children and young adults are the majority of people who use sidewalks and need to get around this community.

Fox was disappointed that the public discussion concentrated so much on sidewalks without creative thinking about possible ways to link neighborhoods without installing sidewalks on entire sections of main roads, particularly where it would be difficult to construct walkways near the river. She gave some examples of possible routes. Fox would like people to conceptualize and find solutions for linking neighborhoods with foot traffic instead of putting sidewalks through the whole Village.

Domzal remarked that sidewalks seem to be a personal issue. People tend to think of their situation rather than the public good. Although the views expressed at the public forum were clear, he does not think those present provided a representative sample of the Village. It does not appear that there is any will on the part of the citizenry to construct residential sidewalks. Domzal suggested that a discussion of sidewalks without discussing funding is meaningless.

Bliven commented that he was hoping that the Planning Board could study the focus areas and come up with a recommendation on each area as well as other problem areas brought to their attention. He does not believe it is a Planning Board function to deal with funding. While funding recommendations are an obligation of a planning commission, this is a planning board.

Tillman recalls a strong opposition to sidewalks from residents on Riverside Drive and Rivers Edge Court. With the exception of those two areas, she thinks the overall comments were somewhat positive. She agrees that there are ways to be creative with respect to connecting neighborhoods, which is something that should be explored.

Tillman thinks that people need to focus on what they would like the Village to be like in the years to come. She hears comments from people in favor of sidewalks on a regular basis, with the exception of the people on Riverside and River's Edge. Tillman suggests that the Planning Board should strive for better representation of the community at its next public discussion. She maintains that it is a desirable and important task of this board to come up with a sidewalk plan for recommendation to Council.

Belaustegui proposes that the board initiate an activity to collect prior studies. Planning consultant Wyrosdick stated that she spoke with Public Services Director Spallasso at the onset of this planning process. He related the history of sidewalks dating from 1960. There were engineering studies prepared for certain sidewalks at the time the Village was in the process of pursuing federal funding for sidewalks. The Village came close to funding sidewalks, and funding was actually available from the federal government for one sidewalk but was not pursued because of public opposition.

The 1985 bicycle path study was labeled as a "First Preliminary Draft for Village Review and Comment". It was questioned whether there were subsequent drafts of this study. Council and Planning Board minutes could be researched to learn more about council and public discussion of sidewalks in past years.

Belaustegui thinks that there is benefit in reviewing prior engineering studies. The board will find some important things that have been uncovered as it goes through these focus areas. There are more recent studies focusing on a "fill in the gap" sidewalk plan for the Village. Belaustegui would like to get these prior studies in front of the Planning Board in an organized way as it proceeds with analysis of the focus areas.

Birchler thought that board's comments and reactions to the public discussion are an accurate reflection of what occurred that evening. He maintains that there is a silent group of people out there who did not attend because they read the notice of public hearing and viewed it as a positive thing that the Planning Board was doing on their behalf.

There was a consensus of the Planning Board that an effort should be made to compile prior studies on sidewalks in the Village. The Planning Board indicated an interest in hearing from the public safety department on its experience with respect to the safety of sidewalks and any incidents that have occurred related to pedestrian safety. This type of information from the public safety department will help eliminate opinion and focus on facts.

Wyrosdick spoke with Director Woodard about accidents that may have occurred because of no sidewalks. He is checking accident histories and any past studies on this topic.

Belaustegui proposed that the planning consultants compile a list of the advantages and disadvantages of sidewalks. This will assist the board in an honest appraisal of sidewalks. The 1985 study addressed some of these issues and drew conclusions. The Planning Board asked Belaustegui to work with administration to obtain any information that the Village may have on prior sidewalk studies.

Birchler Arroyo will contact Pollack Design Associates and ask them on behalf of the Planning Board whether there are subsequent drafts of their 1985 sidewalk study for Beverly Hills.

DISCUSS THE MAY 6, 1985 STUDY ON POTENTIAL BICYCLE PATH PROJECTS IN THE VILLAGE OF BEVERLY HILLS

Planning consultant Birchler presented a few observations from reading the 1985 bike path study prepared by Pollack Design Associates for Beverly Hills.

At the time the study was done, I-696 was under construction. The study notes that traffic volumes had increased noticeably on the east-west mile roads, especially on 13 Mile Road. There was an expectation that there might be a reduction of traffic when the freeway opened. Birchler stated that there was a significant reduction of traffic on 13 Mile Road after the opening of I-696. The study anticipated that the opening of I-696 would increase the traffic on Lahser Road, which may be correct.

Birchler pointed out an interesting statistic on page 7 which states: "A recent report on urban commuting patterns from 1980 U.S. Census Data shows that 11.3 percent of the 1489 people employed in the Village of Beverly Hills walk or bicycle to work." There is no documentation given for this statistic. Birchler was not able to verify the statistic. Smith indicated that it was not an accurate statement.

Birchler stated that he and Wyrosdick have been reviewing a number of national studies that address standards for lanes that are part of the roadway to be shared by bicyclists. They found a variety of

designs and widths. The on-the-road option outlined in this 1985 study tends to be in the narrower range of what is seen in national studies, which range from 4 feet to 8-10 feet. Birchler thinks that there may be some evidence in the transportation literature suggesting that a narrower bike lane is safer because it does not encourage the automobiles to pull into that lane and think that they can use it.

Birchler pointed out an important recommendation incorporated into the study. The study took a good look at the natural characteristics and features of the Village and addressed the ability to work new pathways into the vegetation without doing a wholesale clearing. The study states that there is not enough vegetation in some areas and recommends enhancements that would improve abutting properties.

The Board agreed to defer further discussion on this study until a determination is made on whether there is a subsequent draft of the 1985 study and to correlate the study with additional information that is expected.

Smith stated that SEMCOG has research information available on the pros and cons of bike paths. This data can be accessed through a data base called Logan. All SEMCOG material on sidewalks is available without charge to the Village.

It was mentioned that a report due from SEMCOG on the Walkable Communities audit that occurred in September in Beverly Hills is not yet available. The board would like this as part of their sidewalk study. Council liaison Kennedy will follow up on this report.

Kennedy stated that SEMCOG is sponsoring an Oakland County Spring Workshop on Thursday, March 9 at the Community House in Birmingham from 5-7 p.m. Board members Fox, Smith, Jensen, Belaustegui and Bliven were interested in attending this workshop.

A recess was called at 8:45 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 8:54 p.m.

PRESENTATION BY OAKLAND COUNTY PRINCIPAL PLANNER, ROBERT DONOHUE, ON DOWNTOWN AND COMMERCIAL REDEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Byrwa introduced Robert Donohue from the Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services. Donohue talked about the County's new emphasis on creating a program to deal with traditional and non-traditional downtowns, major corridors, and small corridor situations like the Beverly Hills business district.

The County has been working with the National Trust's Main Street Program which is the country's foremost non-profit technical assistance program for downtown revitalization. Oakland County signed a contract with the National Main Street Program effective February 15. County Executive L. Brooks Patterson announced this contract as the first ever county in the country to have a contract as a county with the National Main Street Program for downtown revitalization technical assistance.

The County is in the process of creating a networking based program to help communities within Oakland County discuss problems in the traditional downtowns and the corridors, to provide technical assistance, and to consider all the legislative tools that will assist the communities in reaching their maximum potential. The program anticipates working, when invited, in an advisory capacity with a community and its planning consultants. This downtown commercial redevelopment program will meet quarterly with its next meeting scheduled for May.

The whole idea of the County's commercial redevelopment program for traditional downtowns and corridors is to bring in technical assistance and to persuade the communities to start talking to each other. Although Beverly Hills has a more contemporary commercial area, most of the lessons of the historic-based National Main Street Program will apply to the Village's commercial segment.

Beverly Hills is one of the 30 commercial areas within Oakland County that has potential to be something more than it is. The Main Street Program can work with the Village and its planners by providing new tools to strengthen the identity of its commercial area, which will make that property more valuable as well as the adjacent property. Because it is a historic preservation based program, the Village is not going to qualify in the strictest sense for all the program offers. The county will select three to five communities a year that it will work with intensely. However, the Main Street

program will offer the training to all planning commissions and downtown development authorities. The Village can use about 90% of what the program offers to organize, promote, design, and economically restructure its downtown district. The county will invite the 30 commercial core areas in Oakland County to a meeting this summer and explain this Main Street program.

Beverly Hills representatives will be invited to all of the training sessions for as long as the program exists. There will be quarterly meetings held featuring a topical speaker who will talk about a new initiative that will affect an issue in your commercial area such as design, signage or pedestrian lighting issues.

Donohue stated that a basic step towards downtown revitalization is to have a Downtown Development Authority (DDA), Principle Shopping District (PSD), or some other group of people take the lead in an effort to meet the community's maximum potential for the development of its commercial area. The Village will need an organization whose sole focus is the downtown or commercial area.

There was some question as to whether the Village's Downtown Development Authority established in 1985 is active. Donohue believes that the ordinance or resolution creating the DDA could be reenacted if it is something that the Village wants to bring back.

Donohue talked about training that will be available through the National Main Street Program. There will be sessions on what a Downtown Development Authority can do, design issues, promotional issues for the community and the businesses. There will be discussions on retail mix and business recruitment as well as redesign and growth potential of a business district. Donohue commented that the county will work with the Village at whatever pace it chooses.

Smith informed Donohue of the priority projects agreed upon by the Planning Board for next year's work program. One of the board's priorities is Southfield Road. The Planning Board is interested in the business district parking and traffic flow and a sub-area development plan. Issues involved are: driveway spacing and design standards; physical connection between businesses; parking needs analysis; adaptive redevelopment potential of individual sites throughout the corridor and improved access and safety; residential area traffic calming studies. Smith asked if the county program can help with these issues.

Donohue stated that the county through the Main Street program would be glad to work with Beverly Hills at the Village's invitation. He suggested establishing some representatives among the interested parties.

Smith asked who are the likely people from Beverly Hills to attend these quarterly team meetings. Donohue responded that the individuals are sometimes a planning commission representative, DDA chair, or Council representative. They could be planning consultants or business owners.

Donohue addressed questions and comments from Planning Board members. The National Main Street Program is a non-profit organization which is part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which was chartered by Congress in 1949 to promote the historic preservation of cultural resources. The scope has been broadened to preserve a community's sense of place.

Donohue was asked how much money the organization has to work with. He indicated that there are different levels of financial commitment that communities receive at no charge. If a community is selected to be one of the Main Street communities, it would receive about \$50,000 in services the first three years. The County will urge all of the 30 major commercial areas to join the National Main Street network at a cost of \$195/year.

It was questioned whether the county helps a community develop a program. Donohue talked about how the county program would benefit Beverly Hills. The Main Street program provides exposure to advice free of charge. Community representatives are urged to attend quarterly meetings. Donohue gave an example of how the information available through the program could assist Beverly Hills on issues such as providing incentives for conformance to design guidelines.

Donohue gave some background on downtown development authorities. He explained that a DDA is a form of management that can be created without Tax Increment Financing or millage. It can be established and function without financing. A DDA can meet and advise.

Birchler concurred that the Village does not need to have a DDA to utilize much of the recommended techniques of the National Main Street program. It is important to involve the merchants in an organization that will implement programs for the downtown district. An organization is needed whether is it a DDA, a PSD, or an association of interested individuals.

Donohue remarked that it would be relatively simple to bring back the Village's DDA. It is up to the Village Council to decide if it should be created with or without financing. Donohue thinks it would probably be wise to start with discussions and attempts to organize the merchants.

Jensen suggested engaging the private owners in a discussion of what the business district should look like and how it can be improved. The board's study of the business district will benefit the business owners by considering issues like parking problems in the area and potential redevelopment of sites. Jensen thinks the program Donohue is offering is a great resource for Beverly Hills. It enables the Village to become involved in a movement that is attempting to preserve a sense of small town.

Domzal asked if it makes sense to devote part of a Planning Board meeting to inviting the business community to join in an open forum to plant a seed for a downtown merchant's group.

Donohue thinks it is appropriate for the Planning Board to start a dialog with the business owners. The board needs to tell them that it understands their needs and wants to work with them. They are a major part of the community's image. The Planning Board can start by discussing its list of priorities with the business owners. It can follow up with considering options, obtaining cost estimates, and discussion of how the parties can reasonably expect to accomplish projects.

Birchler remarked that this is a preliminary discussion, and it is premature to attempt to determine what it is we want to do tonight. Downtown development is about a number of things. A community can have a development plan for the physical improvement of the downtown where things are done with respect to image enhancement, redevelopment, and filling vacant space. There are programs to improve facades and replace outdated signs. A lot of communities use a DDA as a business organizational tool to get businesses to agree to do certain things together. These are the things that downtown development authorities are used for more routinely: development planning, business organization, marketing and advertising, and business recruitment.

From the Planning Board's perspective, Birchler thinks the principle focus is on development planning, which is trying to physically improve the character of the business district. If the Planning Board were to develop a plan to accomplish that, it would create a basis for discussion with the business owners. The Village could then engage the merchants in a dialog on some of the other issues of organizing, advertising and marketing, and looking at business recruitment.

Donohue stated that he will keep the Planning Board informed on the County's National Main Street program. The Planning Board thanked Donohue for his presentation.

Kennedy stated that the Michigan Municipal League is sponsoring a workshop called "Downtown Development Authority - the Basics" in Lansing on Tuesday, March 28 from 1:30-4:30 p.m.

Due to the lateness of the hour, agenda items 6 and 7 will be deferred to another meeting. Item 6 is "Review goals and objectives for possible sidewalks, bikeways and pedestrian safety walks." Item 7 is "Review mailing list for second public discussion on sidewalks and set discussion date."

It was the consensus of the board to spend more time on researching the study areas and gathering information on past sidewalk studies before discussing goals and objectives. The board agreed that it will consider a second public forum on sidewalks in April or May.

Birchler stated that he will assist in pulling together information on prior studies and public safety statistics. He is interested in the concept study for a Lahser Road sidewalk. It was indicated that there is an engineering study on sidewalks for 14 Mile and Greenfield Roads.

Belaustegui understands that some of the Village's neighborhood homeowner associations meet in April. He thinks the Planning Board should have material to present to them for discussion purposes.

If homeowner groups discuss sidewalk issues among themselves and voice their views, that information will be useful to the Planning Board.

Birchler stated that the Planning Board needs to build public support for the idea of having a sidewalk plan. If the board wants to talk to people about sidewalks, it should invite them to a public forum. He suggested sending a letter to every association president with a follow up phone call. The same can be done for school and community leaders. Invite people to the next public forum that will provide a broad cross section of the community.

There will be a public hearing on Zoning Ordinance Text Amendments at the March 8 Planning Board meeting.

PLANNING BOARD COMMENTS

Bliven has items to discuss with the planning consultant with regard to the text amendments that will be the subject of a public hearing. He will discuss this with Birchler after the meeting.

In answer to an inquiry, Wyrosdick stated that Birchler Arroyo is preparing a work program and cost estimate on the priority items agreed upon by the board at the last meeting. It will be available for the next meeting.

Jensen distributed copies of a chapter of a book on how America evolved. The chapter is entitled "What is a Neighborhood". It contains discussion on the issues of public and private realm and sidewalks.

Robiner stated that two of the three Vic's Markets have been sold. Byrwa indicated that the Vic's establishment in Beverly Hills has not been sold. Robiner questioned the status of the Halo building. Byrwa stated that the front wall is built. Construction is progressing and it is expected that Bed Bath & Beyond will open the second week in May.

Domzal commented that the Planning Board is taking on a lot with a sidewalk study and downtown development issues. He made the observation that the board's focus is getting broad and suggests that the Planning Board do what it can do well and hold off on what it cannot do.

MOTION by Smith, supported by Domzal, that the meeting be adjourned at 10:37 p.m.

Motion passes unanimously.

Carry over items:

- 1- Entranceway signs (10-27-99)
- 2 - Bikeways, walkways and pedestrian safety study (11-11-99).
- 3- Planning Board public hearing on Zoning Ordinance text amendments scheduled for March 8, 2000.

**Vincent Borowski, Chairperson
Planning Board**

**Ellen E. Marshall
Village Clerk**