

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  
Council member, Walsh  
Planning consultants, Birchler and Wyrosdick

Chairperson Borowski called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m. in the Village municipal building at 18500 W. Thirteen Mile Road.

#### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The agenda was accepted as printed.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

MOTION by Bliven, supported by Domzal, that the minutes of a regular Planning Board meeting held on Wednesday, March 8, 2000 be approved as submitted.

Motion passes unanimously.

#### **REVIEW GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR POSSIBLE SIDEWALKS, BIKEWAYS AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY WALKS**

Borowski related that he attended a Parks and Recreation Board public hearing last week on an application for a state grant that, if received, will match every local dollar allocated by the Village for park projects with up to three dollars. One of the first steps in making this grant application was to prepare a park master plan and have that plan approved by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Borowski commented that this should inspire the Planning Board to move forward with a plan for sidewalks, bikeways and pedestrian safety walks for the Village.

Wyrosdick updated the board on material that has been requested relative to the pathway study. Information has been received from the SEMCOG data base that includes articles written regarding sidewalks and transportation funding. Wyrosdick contacted SEMCOG relative to the status of the walkable communities audit that took place in the Village last September. SEMCOG will send a draft copy of the report to Birchler Arroyo with a final draft available in mid-April.

Wyrosdick reviewed that the Planning Board has spent the last couple of months talking about existing conditions and problems in the Village and potential areas where it makes sense to have sidewalks connecting neighborhoods to community facilities. Belaustegui and Bliven have spent some time identifying problem areas such as right-of-way and topography issues, which will be considered in the study.

The Planning Board is at a point where it can begin to set clear goals for what the Village is trying to achieve in a non-motorized transportation system for the future. The planning consultants have drafted a list of broad goals. The goals are translated into objectives that can be attained and further defined into specific policies that can be implemented. The draft goals include some of the challenges and opportunities that were identified in the first few months of the study.

Jensen questioned a school district policy that requires children who live within one mile of a school to walk to school rather than ride the bus. Domzal and Fox did not think this was a rigid rule. It is their experience that the school district recognizes that there are impediments to walking even if someone lives within a geographic mile of the school. Jensen suggested that the Planning Board find out more about this policy. If children are walking in places where it is unsafe, that could be a goal of the sidewalk study.

Belaustegui referred to the handout from the consultants stating that goals are typically very general statements about the quality and character of the subject of study and not easily quantified or measured. He has difficulty with the generalized nature of some of the goals. One of the objectives

proposed by the planners is to create a village-wide plan that evaluates different forms of non-motorized transportation. Belaustegui thinks that this is expanding the scope of the study. He believes that Council asked the Planning Board to look at the needs for sidewalks on major roads.

Belaustegui thinks that some of the goals can be defined as being safety related. We clearly want to make existing sections of sidewalk and crosswalks safe if they are not safe. Another factor to address is whether the sidewalks are useful. They should have an identified need or purpose that is recognized by the community. Sidewalks should be attractive. Belaustegui also suggests that the desires or needs of an individual should be balanced against the community needs and desires.

If the ability to walk to schools is an issue that the board wants to address, and if the one mile rule is used as the walkable guideline, Belaustegui has looked at the roads and the destinations and identified sections of major roads. The board could come to some conclusions on the desirability and the practicality of sidewalks in those areas.

Sidewalks sometimes contribute to the ambiance and image of the community. There are places where they do not. The attractiveness of a sidewalk depends on how it is designed and how it fits in with the topography. The topography in some areas of the Village would make it difficult, disruptive, and costly to install a sidewalk. He has mentioned that there are right-of-way issues.

Belaustegui believes that the difference between sidewalks and bikeways is width. He is not sure of the definition of pedestrian safety walks. The Oakland County Road Commission and Public Services Director Spallasso do not recommend a bikeway that is less than eight feet wide. This would be a major undertaking whereas a sidewalk can be five feet wide. Belaustegui thinks the Planning Board should be realistic as to what can or cannot be achieved. He would like to be a lot tighter about the goals with the understanding that this is the first step to a master plan.

Bliven concurs with Belaustegui's comments with the exception that he does not believe that the charge of the sidewalk study is to consider only sidewalks on major roads. The Planning Board was asked to draft a master plan for sidewalks, and it is up to the board to determine what that plan includes. There could be some interior sidewalk gaps that should be connected.

Smith asked the consultants if they would provide the board with recommended design techniques from the Institute for Transportation Engineers (ITE). Problems may arise if sidewalks are terribly expensive or resource intensive. Wyrosdick stated that the ITE material provides alternatives, which may be an important component of this plan. A sidewalk plan can present alternatives that would address challenges to provide a complete connection. The ITE material provides guidelines on alternative bike lanes, bike routes, pathways and sidewalks, where they are placed and construction materials.

Smith was interested in two goals: 1) Enhance neighborhood access and connections between homes and community facility destinations; and 2) Plan pedestrian routes that connect neighborhoods with community facilities and recreational areas. The subdivisions on the west side of the Village are not connected with each other. Whether they could be linked would be an interesting topic. Another important issue that should be addressed as part of this study is the speed at which people drive on interior streets.

Robiner suggests prioritizing the goals that the board feels are important and narrowing the focus. If safety is a primary goal, the board would concentrate on the areas where people walk either to schools or other destinations.

Fox agrees that there should be several well stated goals. She takes issue with the concept that sidewalks along all the major roads will provide walk-ability in this community. She mentioned the potential difficulty with installing sidewalks along roads like 13 Mile Road and Lahser due to the topography. Fox questions whether placing kids and people on sidewalks along major highways is the best idea. She wonders who will maintain the sidewalks on major roads and remove the snow in the winter. These are real issues brought up by people.

Fox recently attended a walkable communities seminar sponsored by SEMCOG where there was discussion of what makes communities walkable. It has been mentioned that subdivisions and major points of destination are not linked together in the west side of the Village. People must go out to a major thoroughfare in order to get anywhere. It was pointed out at the seminar that, instead of bringing people to major arteries, maybe it is better to bring them inside the neighborhoods. The west side of the Village needs connections between neighborhoods and sidewalks leading to schools. She questions whether interior connections will be any more of an issue than putting in sidewalks along major thoroughfares where there are problems with private property and rights-of-way. Fox thinks that a major goal of this study should be to think about linking our neighborhoods.

Fox commented that there were suggestions regarding traffic calming made at the conference such as putting in landscape islands and other things that could be done to encourage people to slow down. If there are designated bikeway/walkways connecting the interiors of the neighborhoods, traffic calming would be focused on those routes.

Fox agrees that the Planning Board should focus on four major goals. A major goal should be connecting neighborhoods to major community facilities, which are the schools. Consideration should be given to aesthetics and being sensitive to private individual needs balanced by what the community needs. Fox thinks that the community should be connected and have attractive, safe walkways in its interior and not necessarily on the major thoroughfares.

Tillman thinks that safe connections and accessibility to schools, churches and recreational centers are important goals. Another important goal is preservation of beauty. The board has to take into consideration the people who own the property and balance their concerns. She added that sidewalks will not happen without funding. Tillman listed the following goals: accessibility, safety, beauty, and funding.

Domzal concurs that the board has to limit its goals. He thinks that the Planning Board should take advantage of the work the planners are doing for other municipal clients. It appears that the scope of the study will be to look at connections between neighborhoods and facilities and identify connections on major arteries. He questions whether the board is going to limit the study to the focus areas that have been suggested or whether it plans to address sidewalks on a village-wide basis.

Kennedy questioned whether there is a need to incorporate additional cost for this project into the budget for the next fiscal year. She agrees that the only way to move forward is to have a master plan for sidewalks. She emphasized, however, that there is no funding available for sidewalks at this time.

Dave Birchler stated that Birchler Arroyo is well within its budget and does not have any intention of exceeding the budget for this study.

Borowski summarized that the discussion indicates that the goals of the sidewalk study should be structured around connectivity, safety, and attractiveness. The list of goals drafted by the consultants will be revised to focus on these items.

Belaustegui commented that there are members who want to proceed with a plan that can be accomplished by the Village in small sections. There is also discussion of expanding the study. Birchler Arroyo proposed priority areas along main thoroughfares. Internal connectivity is a major expansion of the scope of the study. It involves private property and purchasing easements which will be a major undertaking. Belaustegui is not in favor of expanding the work program to a village-wide study. He brought up the issue of whether the neighborhoods want sidewalks in front of their property. Belaustegui does not think it is up to the Planning Board to dictate internal sidewalks.

If a subdivision wants a sidewalk in place, Belaustegui thinks that the property owners should be funding 50% of it, which has been the policy of the Village. He stated that the Village does not have its 50% share right now. Due to the infrastructure issues in the community, it may be a long time before major money is available to contribute to the cost of sidewalks. The Village could seek county, state and federal grants to match community funds.

Belaustegui expressed the opinion that the Village should not construct sidewalks in the neighborhoods unless the property owners want it. There is the question of whether the neighborhood perceives sidewalks to be useful or a safety issue on interior streets.

Fox understands from administration that there are safety statistics available for intersections. The intersection with the highest number of accidents is 13 Mile and Evergreen Road, which is in the focus area of the study. She asked that this information be made available to the Planning Board

Birchler thinks that the Village should look at planning as an investment in the community's future. He asked the board to keep in mind that not everything that a sidewalk plan identifies as good things to do are things that the Village has to do. He thinks it is important to recognize that there are certain long range goals that the community ought to be striving for. It does not mean that these objectives have to be achieved within the confines of the current planning period.

Belaustegui added that the issues of liability and maintenance should be considered as they pertain to residents who will abut a sidewalk on a major road. He would like to include those things as part of the discussion when balancing community needs against individual property owner's concerns and needs.

Borowski thinks that the planning consultants will be able to draft revised goals with the direction received from the board this evening. They need to be revised to outline a manageable work program that could result in some success. There were three or four strong themes stated this evening which should be considered in the goals, objectives and policies. Borowski concluded that the Planning Board will move forward with the next item on the sidewalk work program. Goals will be addressed further at an upcoming meeting.

#### **REPORT ON SEMCOG MEETING**

Smith attended a Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) meeting last week that focused on a series of reports from its various divisions. Others from Beverly Hills in attendance were Council member Kennedy and residents Norman and Cynthia Rubin. Smith brought a few points to the attention of the board.

Smith reported that one percent of all the money going into transport in the next SEMCOG budget is going towards non-traditional sources meaning paths. The significance of this item should be investigated.

There was a discussion of the Southfield Road corridor plan from the perspective of all of the communities along Southfield Road. SEMCOG offered to come out and talk to the Village about this topic. Smith and Kennedy feel that Beverly Hills should become involved at this time. Kennedy suggested that SEMCOG representatives be asked to make a presentation to the Planning Board with Council members invited to attend.

Borowski remarked that the Planning Board has discussed asking someone from the Road Commission for Oakland County to attend a board meeting in the near future to talk about Southfield Road improvements.

Smith stated that SEMCOG prepares a Regional Transportation Improvement Projects document, which suggests road improvement priorities from a seven county perspective. The document is used in connection with the federal grant process. The SEMCOG Transportation Improvement Project for Oakland County 2000-2002 includes a new and widened 13 Mile Road between Southfield and Greenfield and 14 Mile Road between Southfield and Greenfield. A copy of this report will be copied and distributed to board members.

Smith commented on the amount of mapping and demographic data available through SEMCOG. He thinks it would be wise for the Village to acquire this data from both SEMCOG and Oakland County in order to receive all the information available. The agencies have different responsibilities and different information.

### **PLANNING BOARD COMMENTS**

Fox suggested that a representative of the Oakland County Road Commission attend a Planning Board meeting to talk about plans for 14 Mile Road and for Southfield Road reconstruction. County representatives could answer questions and discuss the feasibility of sidewalk safety and accessibility issues that the Planning Board is dealing with. Fox asked that someone from the Public Safety Department provide the board with statistics that relate to pedestrian safety in the village.

Fox attended a seminar on walkable communities last week sponsored by Oakland County Planning Division. An issue raised was that traffic engineers are finding that making roads more narrow and less fast does not impede traffic and actually improves communities. There are times when keeping a road at two or three lanes with a 35 MPH speed limit instead of constructing multiple lanes makes a community more attractive and safe without decreasing traffic flow.

Borowski stated that the Educating Michigan Municipal Officials organization is sponsoring a walkable communities seminar on Friday, May 19 in Lansing if any members are interested in attending.

Borowski informed the board that a future agenda item will be discussion of the next public forum on sidewalks and the manner of notification.

Borowski commended the Parks and Recreation Board for doing a great job of pursuing a Clean Michigan Grant for park improvements. He commended David Jensen for his work on designing a new park entranceway and providing resources for preparing plans for that project.

Smith remarked that Domzal mentioned at the last meeting that he read a court case concerning the issue of requiring sidewalk construction of a developer as part of a zoning approval. It was suggested that the board inquire into the legal limits of the Village's authority with respect to requiring public improvements. Borowski asked Byrwa to pursue this with the Village Manager.

Smith asked if the planning consultant has contacted Pollack Design in an attempt to locate a copy of an updated report from a May 1985 bike path study prepared for Beverly Hills. Birchler responded that he spoke with Eleanor Pollack who remembered the study and thinks there was a subsequent draft to the May report. She will look for the material and make it available if she is successful.

Smith asked if the planners have read planning literature on NIMBYs (Not In My Backyard) and NIMFYs (Not In My Front Yard) incidents. Smith remarked that topics such as cost and liability are summarized in this literature. He is interested in learning the standard issues related to NIMBYs and NIMFYs. Birchler stated that his firm is aware of this material.

Bliven stated that it was reported at a walkable communities seminar sponsored by Oakland County that 20-30 MPH seems to be an optimum speed to convey traffic volume. The cars are further apart at higher speeds, and volume decreases. He mentioned that there were some engineers present who believed that the solution to moving traffic is to pave and add more lanes.

Belaustegui referred to studies done in Paris and London on how to handle high volumes of traffic and high speed. Their conclusion was not to widen the roads. It is found that higher densities and speeds are obtained by making safety improvements and not by increasing service capacity. Studies indicate that it is the connections to the roads that cause problems, not the road itself.

Belaustegui reported that the Village worked on a sidewalk plan in 1969. He is compiling maps and meeting minutes that address those earlier studies. It appears that there is a sizable group of people who have worked on sidewalks in the past. There are a group of proponents, but action was never taken because the studies never dealt with all of the questions and the issue died.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Kennedy informed the Planning Board that the Village received a performance bond in order to assure the completion of site plan items on the Bed Bath & Beyond property including underground utility work, concrete curbs, walks, asphalt paving, lighting, landscaping and screening.

Kennedy informed the board that two new members were elected to the Council at last week's election - Randy Munguia and Dorothy Pfeifer. New council liaisons to boards and committees will be assigned by the Council president.

Council will hold a public hearing and first reading of the minor Zoning Ordinance Text Amendments on April 17, 2000. A Council study session to review the 2000-2001 budget will be held on Monday, April 10.

In answer to an inquiry from Walsh, Byrwa stated that Buckles & Buckles intend to proceed with their renovation project this spring.

MOTION by Tillman, supported by Domzal, to adjourn the meeting at 9:24 p.m.

Motion passes unanimously.

**Carry over items:**

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

**Motions made by Planning Board to be acted upon by Council:**

3-8-00: Recommend approval of Minor Zoning Ordinance Text Amendments.

3-8-00: Submit cost estimates for year 2000 Planning Board priorities to Council for approval.

**Vince Borowski, chairperson  
Planning Board**

**Ellen E. Marshall  
Village Clerk**