

ODWNA Association Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, February 15, 2023

Place: Third Christian Reformed Church – Sanctuary

Board Members:

Present: Peter Kushner, President; Chris Shook, Vice President; Christopher Bovid, Secretary;

Excused: Kathy Shook, Treasurer; Eric Boersma; Paul Scott, Diana Morton-Thompson

In Attendance: Approximately 50 people (includes Board members)



I. Call to Order: Pete Kushner, President, 7:02 pm

- A. Welcome, introduction
- B. ODWNA website is WinchellNeighborhood.org with links to Neighborhood Plan and reach Board of Directors via email
- C. City of Battle Creek is having a rain barrel sale
- D. City of Kalamazoo Parks "Flurry of Fun" has been cancelled due to weather but still holding Family Scavenger Hunt starting February 22 through March 8. On Friday Feb 24 Parks is hosting a karaoke game night – details are on our website, and on the City Parks website.
- E. Kalamazoo Parks summer programs registrations are also available on the website now.
- F. Next month's speaker is Dr. Gale Walter, DVM, speaking regarding the peregrine falcons downtown and the Urban Bird Treaty Initiative being worked on in Kalamazoo.
- G. ODWNA Treasurer's Report (presented by P. Kushner in K. Shook's absence) – copies available for taking. Balance in ODWNA checking account is \$7,694.61.
- H. Introduction of Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety officers assigned to our neighborhood who have asked for a few moments with the association:
 1. CPO Hunter Bagley and CPO Casey Crooks
 - a. Both officers handle multiple neighborhoods.
 - b. Officer Bagley provided his email address to Pete Kushner so if anyone needs it, reach out to Pete for it.
 - c. KDPS puts together crime statistics for the neighborhoods and nothing is groundbreaking in this area. Biggest issue presently in this area is package thieves.
 - d. KDPS has an "Citizens Academy" program where people can be an "officer for a day". The KDPS website has more information about the program.
 2. James Voight asked about bad experience he had with a dog on the loose. Officer Crooks offered to talk about it separately.
 3. A meeting attendee who lives on Broadway raised a concern about speeding vehicles on Broadway. Officer Crooks indicated that 'directed patrols' can be done on streets identified with problems. Officer Bagley also mentioned that KDPS has partnered with the Ring Neighbors App so that posts of people speeding down your road can be shared with KDPS and it gets added to KDPS' "zone folder" and then officers can periodically do directed patrols there. Brief descriptions of officer activity are typically posted as well so that citizens can find out what was going on that brought about a police presence.
 4. A meeting attendee expressed appreciation for having KDPS doing patrols in the neighborhood.

II. New Business

- A. February 1, 2023 Letter from Neighborhood Residents Asking for Information of the ODWNA Board of Directors:
 1. A Treasurer's report for current assets, receipts and expenses of the association with a report on the current number of dues-paying households eligible to vote.
 2. Confirmation of the date the last Board election was held and who on the current Board was elected on that date; date that any Board member was appointed to fill a vacancy after that election; current number of vacant Board seats.
 3. What date has been set for the upcoming election? How has it or when will it be announced to the membership?
 4. How and when will open meeting time be set and announced for Board and Officer candidate introductions, statements and/or Q&A from membership?
 5. How will ballots be made available? Will options to vote by US mail, email or in-person be available to ensure equal access for all voting members?

In response to Request Number 1, Pete Kushner notes that the Treasurer's Report was presented at the start of this meeting. ODWNA Secretary, Christopher Bovid, presented information responsive to the remaining requests for information in the letter as follows:

In response to Request Number 2:

The last official Board of Directors election was held as of the ODWNA Annual Meeting on Wednesday, May 15, 2019. Current Board of Directors members elected on that date are Pete Kushner, Chris Shook, Chris Bovid, Kathy Shook, Paul Scott, and Diana Morton-Thompson. Effective June 5, 2019, Eric Boersma was appointed to fill a vacant Director position. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related government orders, the ODWNA did not meet during the remainder of the 2019-2020 year and did not hold in-person meetings during the 2021-2022 year. There

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were no new applicants for the ODWNA Board of Directors (in fact, none in the last seven years). As a result, Pete Kushner, Chris Shook, Chris Bovid, and Kathy Shook were reappointed for two-year Officer terms effective May 19, 2021 and Paul Scott, Diana Morton-Thompson, and Eric Boersma were reappointed for at-large Director were reappointed for three-year terms effective May 18, 2022. The current number of vacant Board seats is three (one vacant seat reserved for past president per ODWNA Constitution Art VI, Sec. 1, and two vacant at-large seats).

In answer to Request Number 3:

The date set for the tallying of the votes for the upcoming election is the ODWNA Annual Meeting date, which per the ODWNA's past practice has been the regular May meeting (typically when the Neighborhood Car Show is held), and which like other regular meetings is the third Wednesday of the month. In 2023 that date falls on Wednesday, May 17, 2023. That date information is being stated at this meeting, will be contained in this month's meeting minutes published on the ODWNA website, and will be contained in the correspondence containing the ballots sent to Voting Members. This information will also likely be stated in the ODWNA eNews and on the ODWNA website.

In answer to Request Number 4:

There is no "open meeting time" set and announced solely for Board and Officer candidate introductions, statements, and or questions and answers from membership. Voting members will receive nominated Board of Directors candidate information, including email addresses and board member criteria applicability information, voluntarily submitted to the ODWNA via the application available on the ODWNA website. Voting members are welcome to reach out to nominated Board of Directors candidates via email or in person to get to know them better.

In answer to Question 5:

As has been the policy of the ODWNA in practice for the last several elections, ballots will be made available by email to Voting Members at least two weeks prior to the Annual Meeting date (ie, on or before May 3, 2023). For those Voting Members who did not provide email addresses with their dues submissions, ballots will be mailed to their home address. Completed ballots must be received by the ODWNA no later than the date of the Annual Meeting (May 17, 2023) to be counted.

- B. Questions and discussion ensued regarding:
 - 1. The ODWNA's existence as a Michigan non-profit corporation but not as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization;
 - 2. How non-profit corporations are not units of government and can and do vary in corporate governance structures and procedures based on their respective governing documents;
 - 3. ODWNA Board of Directors applications;
 - 4. ODWNA's primarily-electronic voting and tallying processes.
- C. Katie Bloom presented to the ODWNA Board of Directors a written statement noting her objections to the ODWNA "Board / Officer / Committee Member Applicant Evaluation Criteria" listed on the ODWNA website.

III. **Introduction of Guest Speaker: Christina Anderson, City of Kalamazoo City Planner; Dennis Randolph, City of Kalamazoo Traffic Engineer (Dept. of Public Services)**

- A. The City does have a power point presentation but as we have no way to display it here tonight it will be sent to the ODWNA Board of Directors and they can post it on the ODWNA website.
- B. Three topics to discuss tonight:
 - 1. Streets For All program
 - a. Focused on downtown streets connecting the City from Western Michigan University, downtown, Kalamazoo College
 - b. From Harrison to Douglas to M-43 (West Main) and MichiKal (design will be released in the Spring for public comment).
 - c. Kalamazoo Avenue will be a two year project (storm sewer is 100 years old and fiber optic cable will be installed)
 - d. Michigan Avenue this year will receive a new top coat this year due to higher volume of traffic it will receive.
 - i. Knowing Michigan Avenue will ultimately go two-way, the City will begin implementing certain traffic control measures now to help transition motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians.
 - ii. Five lanes will be reduced to three lanes.
 - iii. On-street parking is not going away on Michigan Avenue but the City is adding a two-way bike lane.
 - e. When Michigan Avenue gets its reconstruction in about three years, it will have a bike lane to help get the public used to aspects that will be constructed then.
 - f. The City's "Imagine Kalamazoo" website has a "streets for all" tab with Kalamazoo Avenue project info.

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- g. City of Kalamazoo obtained a \$6,000,000 federal grant to redo a lot of the streets (out of the big infrastructure bill Congress passed last year).
 - h. City of Kalamazoo also obtained a \$1,000,000 federal grant for safety items.
 - i. City of Kalamazoo also has an application for grant for construction money. Another grant application for more construction money is being prepared as well.
 - j. City of Kalamazoo works primarily off of "Act 51" funding from the State of Michigan, which is why the City has to be aggressive in going after other infrastructure funds.
 - k. Regular federal aid also comes from Congress every year from the federal gas tax that is allocated from the State Highway Department and the City of Kalamazoo competes with other municipalities for those funds.
2. Construction projects happening in and around the Winchell Neighborhood
- a. The Howard Street project seeks to control traffic speeds through changes to the way streets are designed and built. Some pedestrian islands will be put there (should reduce average speeds by 2-3 miles per hour). Some traffic control devices (rapid flash) will be installed.
 - b. Some other resurfacing will be done on Stadium Drive where the City left off last summer.
 - c. The State gave the City some of the streets that were previously under State control but they were not in good shape.
 - d. The City is trying to combine water/sewer pipe replacement projects with road projects but supply chain / long lead times are making it difficult.
 - e. On Whites Road the City is going to focus on traffic calming measures. If there are 10 or 11 foot wide lanes, it drops the average speed of cars by 10-12 miles per hour. Narrowing the lanes leaves extra space on the sides which are appropriate for bike lanes. When you see bike lanes on Park and on Westnedge, it is because of efforts to slow down traffic. The data the City has this year shows that at worst, traffic crash data is the same but there is a reduction in the types of crashes and there is a 3-5 mile per hour reduction in speed. There are also fewer rear-end crashes. 3-5 miles per hour reduction in speed can make a difference in whether a crash is fatal. That is also true on Winchell Avenue.
 - f. Whites Road will largely match Parkview Avenue.
3. Updates on Traffic Calming in the Oakland Drive-Winchell Neighborhood
- a. Curb extensions ("bump outs") were installed in the fall of 2022 on Winchell Avenue at Broadway, Aberdeen, and Rambling.
 - i. They did not hold up well.
 - ii. They will be removed and then reinstalled in April but with additional backing on them to help prevent leaves, etc., from getting behind them and settling.
 - iii. The City found that curb extensions shorten the distance for pedestrians to cross the street so that families taking students to school who are parking in adjacent lots and crossing streets with their kids have pathways that are less dangerous.
 - iv. Before coming to Kalamazoo, Dennis Randolph ran snow plow crews for decades and is well aware of what road space is needed for them to be able to do their work safely and effectively.
 - v. The bump-outs coming in April will still be bituminous curbs (ie, not concrete) but will have a different shape. Dennis Randolph says to keep in mind that implementation of those items are still on a trial basis to gather data.
 - vi. A meeting attendee stated that in some places where there are no sidewalks near the bumpouts, there are no sidewalks through them so if you are out walking, you are now in the traffic lane and the snow doesn't get removed from those areas. Dennis notes that the new design for the next set will allow a space to walk through the bump-outs.
 - b. There will be a 4-way stop at Aberdeen as the traffic on Winchell needs to be slowed. The City's data shows 60% of vehicles on Winchell Avenue are traveling in excess of the posted speed limit.
 - c. Dick Wheeler says he is speaking as a representative of a group of people in the neighborhood that do not agree with having the bump outs. He states that the time he spent participating in developing the Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 Plan did not include discussions about bump outs and roundabouts. He states when these traffic calming plans are being reviewed by the City that consideration needs to be given to those in the neighborhood who do not like them, believe they are ugly, and who do not see the benefits that the City says they are having. Dick lives on Broadway Avenue and says he sees a great deal of confusion and difficulty to the school crossing guard there from the bump outs. He says his group sees the additional traffic calming signage in the neighborhood and finds it confusing. Dick also says that while the City has money from the state or federal governments to implement these infrastructure changes, he does not know how we as taxpayers keep them maintained going forward.

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- i. Dennis Randolph says sustainability is a big part of what the City is telling the federal government we are going to do when putting in new roads, etc. Paying for new roads is one thing, but paying for maintenance is another. On Michigan Avenue the State neglected to do maintenance for 50 years and now that the City has control of that street again it will need to do major repairs. Fortunately the City of Kalamazoo has instituted an asset management system to keep track of those infrastructure items. It will track them and help the City know when to repair and when to replace them. That asset management will help the City keep infrastructure sustainable.
 - ii. Dennis Randolph also says there is a safety basis for implementing items that some might consider unattractive to see, and that the safety improvements associated with those items are proven and as a consequence are being used all around the country. Additionally, bollards and bump-outs and every device the City is trying out are already in use in places like in front of the White House, in front of the Capitol, etc., so if those devices can be plainly visible in front of those most important sites for our country, then they should at least be considered for use in in and around Kalamazoo, including in our neighborhoods.
 - iii. Dennis Randolph notes that unfortunately the City of Kalamazoo didn't get into this kind of work until 2017 but the City is doing its best to try a lot of measures now. Some of those will work and some of them won't. As the City Traffic Engineer Dennis relies on safety data to see if something is working but unfortunately it will typically take two to three years of data to be able to draw meaningful conclusions about a particular device's effectiveness.
- d. Regarding the Chevy Chase roundabouts:
- i. Christina Anderson states that one of the things City staff is tasked with is to gather subjective opinions on traffic control measures from residents.
 - ii. The City balances those subjective opinions with best practices and safety data.
 - iii. In this circumstance, for every comment of "I don't like it" submitted to the City there are also just as many positive comments submitted to the City.
 - iv. The traffic control tools used for these roundabouts were absolutely temporary in order to experiment with the shape, size, etc.
 - v. This summer the City has the opportunity to make some additional adjustments to the roundabouts.
 - vi. What the City is seeing however is that the roundabouts are doing what was intended, which is to slow down vehicular traffic.
 - vii. Christina Anderson states that neighborhood plans, including the ODW Neighborhood Plan, are supposed to have general goals and that the City determines whether and how and when to specifically implement those goals. The ODW Neighborhood Plan does appropriately identify traffic calming as a goal but does not (nor should it) identify specific traffic control devices or their locations, which are determined and implemented by the appropriate, qualified City staff (overseen by the City Manager).
 - viii. Christina Anderson states that with the roundabouts, the City looked at what tools are available and started trying some and is using the opportunity to see what is working and also what can be done to make things more user friendly, appear more attractive, etc.
 - ix. Dick Wheeler asked whether the City Planner is aware of "The Fifteen Minute City" and asked if that is an end goal of City staff. Christina Anderson said that she is aware of it and says the concept of "The Fifteen Minutes city" is that a person can choose from multiple transportation methods and be able to get where the person wants to go in the City within fifteen minutes. She says that while City staff is looking at what land uses are missing in order to improve mobility in the City, the City's goals are really more about giving transportation choices to people who don't or can't drive. She states that it is not a 'no car' concept – it is trying to think of transportation on a 'people scale' as opposed to a 'car scale.'
 - x. Chris Chadderdon mentions that as a pedestrian living near the Chevy Chase roundabout, she feels less safe walking in the street there (as there are no sidewalks). She asks the City Planner to pay attention to that safety aspect with respect to pedestrians there.
 - xi. Chris Chadderdon also asks if there is funding allocated for bike lane maintenance as there is a lot of debris that ends up there. Dennis Randolph states that is a primary objective of the City's asset management initiative and that the new bump out structures that will be installed later this year on a further trial basis should also help prevent leaves, etc., from settling in spaces where pedestrians are intended to travel.
 - xii. Chris Chadderdon asks if speed bumps could be trial options in our neighborhood. Dennis Randolph says there is a City master list of requests for speed bumps and every year when

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City staff looks at which streets need to be resurfaced, they cross-check it with the speed bump list. He notes that right now there are a number of things in the Oakland Drive-Winchell Neighborhood that are being tried out and while speed bumps are not off the table, he can't say if one will be put here or there as part of traffic calming trials. It depends on where else they are being tried around the City. Dennis Randolph notes that he had speed bumps in front of his own house and that they are difficult to deal with.

- xiii. A meeting attendee asked whether the central argument against the roundabouts is purely an aesthetic thing. Discussion ensued.
- e. Traffic Calming Project on Maple Street between Oakland Drive and Maple Middle School.
 - i. Mini roundabouts will be installed.
 - ii. The City will keep the ODWNA updated as the City goes through the contract process.
- f. Sidewalks
 - i. A grant has been received by the City from the State of Michigan in connection with the Safe Routes To School Program for a sidewalk on the South side of Winchell Avenue from Rambling Road to Oakland Drive.
 - ii. The City has talked with property owners about curbing, going around existing trees, etc.
 - iii. The sidewalk on the south side of Winchell will allow for crosswalks in key places.
 - iv. Those visual cues not only provide a designated place for people to cross but also send signals that studies show slow vehicles down.
 - v. The City of Portage on both Romence Roads and also Westnedge Avenue by the schools have multiple places with crossings, islands, and signage where drivers can feel traffic slow down.
 - vi. Another Safe Routes To School program project is a crossing on Howard Street by Maple Street Middle School that will be paired with a rapid flash sign. That will also be timed with the Howard Street resurfacing.
- C. New - City Street Projects Informational Webinars
 - 1. In order to keep residents more informed about street projects in Kalamazoo, the City will be hosting informational webinars. The plan is to hold them regularly during construction season. The City is also working on a comprehensive map around the City and try to keep a public record of all those things.
 - 2. The first webinar is being held next week. The link will be provided to the ODWNA and is also on the City's website.
- D. Additional Q&A:
 - 1. A meeting attendee inquired about installing a sidewalk on Winchell Avenue from Rambling Road to the west end of Winchell Avenue. Christina Anderson said the City currently only has funding for a sidewalk to be installed on Winchell Avenue to the east of Rambling Road but that the City is happy to have that conversation and because of the grade that portion west of Winchell Avenue will be expensive and will likely need to be done in sections and budgeted. The City has been fortunate in the last few years to get a million dollars a year from the Foundation For Excellence for new sidewalk installation. The City is not sure if it will continue to get that funding.
 - 2. A meeting attendee asked if, with respect to the parking access to the Asylum Lake Preserve on Winchell Avenue, whether there is an engineering design standard that would preclude parking there. Dennis Randolph says that the access to the Asylum Lake Preserve from the curb does not meet engineering design standards for ADA accessibility and that is a tremendous liability on the property owner and could be for the City if on-street parking were encouraged by the City at that location. Dennis Randolph also notes that there are two other Asylum Lake Preserve entrances with parking and ADA accessible entrances.
 - i. Katie Bloom suggested that the City's position is inconsistent as she believes there are City parks around Kalamazoo where access is not ADA-compliant. Dennis Randolph stated that for the City to actively go backward on safety with respect to promoting parking on a City street in order to use a non-ADA accessible entrance to WMU's property at this point could open up the City to liability. He stated that the projects the City is doing and will continue to do going forward are those that focus on improving City infrastructure safety rather than returning to how it used to be. He states that as a traffic engineer for 52 years he has never waited for a crash to happen to try to make traffic safety improvements and if he sees a problem, as a registered professional engineer, he has to address it. He said that when the City goes through technical cost-benefit analyses, the benefit-cost ratios are high (over 1, sometimes 2) because anything that the City can do that reduces a crash is a win. He also stated that he has a young granddaughter here and he feels an obligation to make things safe so that she can happily live 80 years here along with all of our kids and grandkids. He said that is what the City is working to do with its changes to the City streets, including in the Oakland Drive-Winchell Neighborhood.

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- ii. Tom Small states that about 40 years ago he was on an ad hoc citizens committee to advocate for bicycle lanes and an overall City pedestrian plan and at that time the City had a total of one quarter mile of bicycle lane within the city limits. He states that changes started to happen regarding bicycle infrastructure and they have been happening ever since. Tom expresses his gratitude for how open the City is to the development of bicycle-pedestrian safety, provision, and community connectivity. He wants to commend the City on the flexibility that is exhibited in the planning, experimenting, the temporary measures taken to see how they work out, and willingness to change when they don't and when citizens point out things that might not have been fully taken into account. So he thanks the City for the last 40 years of progress and accountability and real concern for the total community. Tom said he also served on an ad hoc committee many years ago when the community / University ("CommUniversity") collaboration idea got underway to make things work for all parties concerned. He is grateful for how that has progressed as well. He says he can go away and observe and that good things keep going. He is also grateful for the neighborhood involvement. He is concerned about access to, and restoration of, green space and is not sure that all of the City's considerations are holistic in taking that dimension into account. He would be happy to talk with Christina and/or Dennis if they think his years of experience might be helpful. He concludes again with his gratitude.
 - i. Christina Anderson states that she recently saw in the notes to the City's ordinance for streets and trees that Tom Small had been involved in the work on that ordinance many years ago.
- iii. Wendy Denning asked Dennis Randolph about a meeting he had last Spring with Pete Kushner and a representative of ALPA where the ALPA representative expressed dismay over loss of parking on Winchell Avenue by the Asylum Lake Preserve and Dennis Randolph had a proposal with up to 12 parking spaces on Winchell Avenue by the Asylum Lake Preserve and with a bike lane only on the north side of Winchell Avenue. Dennis Randolph stated that it was a mistake sharing such an idea. He stated that what he had said at the meeting that day was that regardless of the concept, he would not explore the idea any further unless all parties agreed on it and it complied with the Neighborhood Plan. Christina Anderson stated that the decision regarding City street traffic control measures mainly rests with the City and that the recommendation was, and is, for conversations between the interested groups about what else might be done to address resident needs going forward.
- iv. Donna Keller asks whether there is ever an opportunity to improve on the Neighborhood Plan or whether once it is in place, we are stuck with it, or if there are aspects of a plan that conflict whether one has to be selected over the other. She states that the interested groups have tried to engage in reasonable discussions and have been met with the opposite. She also states that there are grandparents who are now having to park on Sycamore and walk in the street to the Asylum Lake Preserve entrance on Winchell Avenue. Christina Anderson says the City has suggested that the Asylum Lake Policy and Management Council and the ODWNA and ALPA come up with other options and the City will facilitate those options.

Pete Kushner thanked Christina Anderson and Dennis Randolph and adjourned the meeting.

IV. **Adjournment:** 9:05 pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Christopher Bovid, ODWNA Secretary