

ODWNA Association Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, October 19, 2022

Place: Third Christian Reformed Church – Small Conference Room

Board Members:

Present: Peter Kushner, President; Chris Shook, Vice President; Christopher Bovid, Secretary; Eric Boersma; Paul Scott

Excused: Paul Scott, Diana Morton-Thompson

In Attendance: Approximately 50 people (includes Board members and City staff)



- I. **Call to Order:** Peter Kushner, President, 7:00 pm
 - Welcome, introduction
 - If not already receiving our free monthly eNewsletter, please sign up to receive it (mostly neighborhood and City-based news)
 - We have a website (winchellneighborhood.org) updated with timely neighborhood and City information including Neighborhood Plan and City documents
 - There are also links to reach the ODWNA Board via email (ODWNAnews@winchellneighborhood.org)
 - Monthly association meetings are from September to May (with car show in May) with the exception of December and in the summer.
 - Post cards were mailed to every address in the neighborhood with the schedule
 - Next month's speaker will be Peter van der Westhuizen regarding the Gilmore Piano Festival
 - Schedule for City leaf pickup (2x this fall) and holiday events are also identified
 - The Wellhead Protection ordinances are not being deleted from City Code but rather moved to another section of the ordinances. The City's document explaining the change is posted on our homepage website.
 - The ODWNA board is volunteers and everyone in the neighborhood are automatically members.
- II. **Treasurer's Report**
 - Voluntary dues of \$20 go toward cost of the annual post cards, website/email hosting fees, other initiatives
- III.
 - The ODWNA is not run by social media, it is run pursuant to the ODWNA Bylaws and the Neighborhood Plan. We advocate for the neighborhood through the goals of the neighborhood plan. The neighborhood plan is part of the City's 10 Year "Master Plan." The Neighborhood Plan was put together over 3 years with input and committee participation from hundreds of neighbors. The ODWNA Board of Directors does not have decision making authority and works with the City, which is the decision maker on how to implement Neighborhood Plan goals.
 - Everyone here has the option and right to call the City and ask questions and seek answers from the City.
- IV. **Member Concerns/Questions:**
 - There is concern that the City's deer committee report is not making progress.
 - There is concern is that with the Master Plan, what we are seeing in the neighborhood with the roundabouts and the bump outs was never discussed in detail in the committees and is not acceptable.
 - Reducing of the lane width and putting in the bike lanes, changing signage, etc., seemed like a good approach but there appear to be unintended negative consequences of it.
 - Asking people at school pickup today the opinions were split about 50/50.
 - Pete Kushner noted that concerning the deer, the issue was raised by neighborhood people, Pete took it to the City and was told to build a coalition of neighborhoods, do the homework on the issue, and present the findings to the City. There were two members of the Environmental Concerns Committee were on the committee, a report was prepared and presented to the City Commission in February 2022. All neighborhoods were contacted to be on the committee and roughly 14 of the neighborhoods responded. All of the members were either members of neighborhood association boards of directors or appointed by boards of directors. The report broke down possible options into Phase 1 and Phase 2. Supposedly Phase 1 is complete but we have not seen any press releases to that extent despite our requests. Phase 2, which the City Commission asked for, was a short, medium, and long term plan with budgets for what to do about the deer. Our last conversation with City staff on Phase 2 was about two weeks ago and we requested that a public forum component be included in any Phase 2.
 - Regarding the traffic calming measures: Pete Kushner asked written questions of the City Traffic Engineer and he responded in writing and all of those were posted on the ODWNA website. The major neighborhood goals in the Neighborhood Plan were (i) traffic calming and (ii) creating non-motorized transportation pathways. The ODWNA does not determine specifics. The City has a full staff that do that work under Public Services and work under the Kalamazoo Street Design Manual. Questions asked of the City Traffic Engineer today:
 - Are the curbs temporary measures?
 - i. The curbs are temporary "trial and pilot" measures and are being tested. A long enough trial period is required to understand how they work.
 - Are the bollards temporary or permanent?
 - i. They are temporary but some (fewer) permanent ones may be installed eventually.
 - Can snow plows, garage trucks, and fire trucks get around the curbs?
 - i. KDPS chief notes that the lanes need to be wider to accommodate fire trucks but at this point the temporary ones are small enough where fire trucks can drive over them without any damage occurring.
 - Can there or will there be an opportunity to color the curbs themselves?

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- I. Not on the exterior of the curbs as they are retroreflective and cannot be lawfully painted.
 - Can the look of these be softened?
- I. Yes, landscaping can be installed and The City Traffic Engineer says more time is needed to test and get information regarding these traffic calming measures.
- The OWNA Board is going to support the City in trying new things to implement goals of the Neighborhood Plan.
- Another member is not anti-traffic calming measures but is trying to determine whether the curb extensions are temporary or permanent.
 - Pete Kushner believes that based on the City's observations, data, etc., suggests, the City might adjust those. We did not get an answer from the City on whether the bump outs will be permanent as-is or will be changed to permanent
- Safety concern about the roundabout on Lorraine/Chevy Chase/Bruce: the first few days were dangerous and now there are people running the wrong way through the roundabout on purpose.
 - Pete Kushner noted that hopefully as the roundabouts are actually painted
- Another member has several young children and lives on Winchell Avenue and applauds the efforts at traffic calming.
 - Pete Kushner notes that much of the funding for these projects was from a State of Michigan "Safe Routes To School" grant in connection with Michigan State University.
- Another member what is a non-motorized transportation network?
 - Protected pathways for transportation methods that do not use motors, like bicycling, running, walking, etc., not only within the Winchell Neighborhood (like our sidewalks and bike paths and but all neighborhoods in the City.

V. **Guest Speaker for this evening is Chief David Boysen of the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety, with KDPS for 27 years as a public safety officer**

- Chief Boysen says it is awesome to see so many neighbors at this meeting and involved
 - This is why the Oakland Drive-Winchell Neighborhood has the lowest crime rate of all City neighborhoods
- Chief Boysen is not a traffic engineer but does know that drivers need to learn to adjust to these new traffic patterns. KDPS has limited staff to handle traffic enforcement and speeding is a major issue all over the City so if there are traffic calming measures that can help slow traffic even a little bit, it is worth it.
- Introduction of Detective David Judea, oversees operations on Law Enforcement side of KDPS, has been at several of these ODWNA meetings for the last several years
- Introduction of Officer Andrew Groeneveld, Community Policing Unit (covers Vine, Arcadia, Winchell, and South Westnedge neighborhoods)
- City is broken up into seven different patrol zones. ODWNA is Zone 6 or 7. Sometimes all zone officers are busy going to calls in their zones, but the Community Policing officers are supposed to get to know the neighbors and help address non-emergency issues.
- Introduction of the City's 311 Representatives:
 - Mimi Lee, 311 Manager, lives on Howard Street in the Winchell Neighborhood
 - Ava, resident of Winchell, lives on Lorraine Avenue in the Winchell Neighborhood
 - Patrick Hershberger, lives in Edison neighborhood
- Mimi Lee says 311 is a new City Department (part of the City Manager's Office), operates Mon-Fri, 8am-4:30pm
 - Started because people's concerns were falling into black holes, not getting to the right places, no accountability was in place. It has now been in place for four years and the department is being service-oriented. They are a direct extension to every department in the City except for KDPS. If there is an issue outside of their purview then service requests, which are tracked, are sent to the departments.
 - Encouragement to go through 311 rather than going directly to a department and leaving a message for someone that is never returned.
 - Occasionally cell phone companies don't have their phones set up to go to the local 311. (269) 337-8000
 - Different departments have allotted inquiry response times. The longest is Public Services, which has a 7-day response time.
 - Pete Kushner notes that if you go online and use Report It, you get an automated response email that allows us to close the loop.
 - 311 has suggested to Public Services that responses to reported issues should be posted or sent directly to citizens. That has not yet been put into place.
 - How many officers are dedicated to traffic enforcement at any given time in the City?
 - There is ONE dedicated traffic officer that works 42 hours per week.
 - Staffing is an issue in every industry. We have radar signs collecting data 24/7. Does KDPS look at that data regularly to determine where KDPS traffic enforcement is going to do?
 - The street trailer data comes out in reports every three weeks and then
 - Is there any talk of doing drones to do traffic work?

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- No. The City has a drone team but uses it for fire scenes, etc., but not for traffic / radar.
- For people running red lights on Stadium Drive, etc., are there cameras recording those incidents?
 - No. That was ruled illegal in the State of Michigan by the Michigan appellate court some years ago.
- Inquiry regarding “Mobile Nuisance Parties”
 - The City created an ordinance to address them
 - KDPS has now implemented a plan to track cars involved in the Mobile Nuisance Parties that are then given notices saying if seen in Mobile Nuisance Parties again, the vehicles will be towed and impounded. It has been very effective in the summer of 2022 as people who don't mind getting tickets, getting arrested, etc., really do not like having their vehicles taken.
- Regarding the downtown bus/train station, what is happening?
 - KDPS is focusing on downtown. There is a problem with the homeless population growing and panhandling, etc. There is now a community service team including an embedded social worker that are going out and working with individuals and trying to get them services and also addressing those who are not compliant. At City Commission meeting on November 7 hoping to get a substation by Final Gravity and have Community Service Team housed there and have a good presence on the mall by the Transportation Center.
 - Incident a few weeks ago in Winchell where a gentleman passed out in a yard across the street. He was woken up and explained he had no place to sleep. Who should be called about that? 911. When in doubt, call 911. Dispatch will prioritize that for officers.
 - 14 officers work the day shift, 13 officers work the night shift.
- Where does the Police Department stand with the City Commission doing away with the City ordinances on urinating/defecating on City streets?
 - That was a tool KDPS had but there are still other ways to address the problems.
 - When looking at problems with nuisance crimes in general (e.g., panhandling), it is tough not just because City ordinance changed, but Supreme Court and Michigan Court rulings have limited law enforcement's ability to do anything about it (it is considered 'freedom of speech') but there are strict parameters on when and where it can be done. The parameters were fine enough that law enforcement officers tended to shy away from enforcement on it but Chief Boysen has had the City Attorney train officers on it now.
- What does KDPS do when somebody blows through a stop sign other than lay on the horn and yell some bad words?
 - Chief Boysen discourages honking or saying things because people are crazy and have attacked
 - If the license plate is reported to KDPS, KDPS can issue a “Violation of Reckless Driving Law” complaint and can also direct patrols.
- Nobody stops for the pedestrian crossings on Oakland Drive.
 - KDPS has done educational stops where a plain clothes officer just walks back and forth and if cars did not stop, they were getting pulled over and instructed about City ordinance.
- Inquiry regarding service vehicles stopping in the bike lanes, still seeing cars parked for extended periods of time on Winchell Avenue. Are service vehicles going to be cited for parking in the bike lanes?
 - Service vehicles are a little different in that they get a permit from the City and should be properly marked with cones, lights, etc. when they temporarily park.
 - Det. Judea receives complaints weekly about parking in front of the school. He has been there in plain clothes in an unmarked car and watched the process of loading/unloading and has spoken with the Principal, Vice Principal, and City Planner to address issues. There is one parking enforcement officer for all areas of the City outside of downtown. That officer has been out to Winchell Elementary during loading/unloading to speak with the parents that are parking in the bike lanes. Right now the bike lane on the opposite side of the school is a solid line with no parking. The bike lane along the school side is dotted and loading/unloading is allowed there, but not to park car.
- What are residents to do if they have a graduation, etc.? Can they get a permit for parking there?
 - Yes, there is a permit process. Contact 311 and they will route to the right department for permit application.
- Is there a policy regarding lights and sirens late at night or early in the morning?
 - For licensures, emergency vehicles are required by law to have lights and sirens activated.
 - KDPS's policy for the type of vehicle that is dispatched to particular types of calls has been changed to reduce the amount of apparatus responding to certain types of calls.
- Back in the 1960's bicycles were supposed to have license plates. Now there are a small number of bicyclists that are oblivious to traffic laws. Are there any plans for going back to that regimen?
 - Every year KDPS does a “bike rodeo” with Parks & Rec in an attempt to encourage safe bike riding and teaching bicycle traffic laws.
 - KDPS also has a “Bike With A Hero” program and invites whoever can come to join KDPS on a ride through the neighborhood.

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- ODWNA should schedule a Bike With A Hero Event in this neighborhood.
- Do bicyclists get tickets?
 - Yes. Pedestrians can also get tickets as well.
 - KDPS sometimes gets “bike-pedestrian” grants where officers get paid overtime to focus on pedestrian and bicyclist violations.
- Staffing is a huge problem. KDPS is hiring. It is down 27 officers just to keep up with anticipated attrition (retirements, etc.). It is getting more difficult to find people to do law enforcement work. Minimum age requirement for KDPS is 21 years old. Some police departments are hiring at the age of 18.
- CONTACT OFFICER ANDREW GROENEVELD: groenevelda@kalamazoo.org / 269-762-0379
- KDPS officers go through over a year of training before going out on duty.
- Member asks about mail theft in the neighborhood – has anyone been caught?
 - Chief Boysen says mail theft happens literally every day in Kalamazoo County.
 - Thieves are taking everything, sorting through it and throwing useless material in the street, doing check washing
 - People are reporting it using Ring doorbells
 - There were a couple cases the week before where a mail-in ballot was found in a neighbor's mailbox torn open.
 - Every day officers are stopping vehicles that have people identified as stealing or obtaining mail. A lot of those folks are being arrested.
 - Neighbors app by Ring – basically a virtual neighborhood watch. The app is free and uses whatever security camera system you have to be able to upload and share video with neighbors and the police that look at the posts on Neighbors. Neighbors users can mostly only post crime or safety related things.
 - Text to “555888” the message “staysafe” to download the Neighbors app on Android or iPhone devices
 - KDPS officers have special accounts identifying them as officers so if they reach out to someone within the app it is clear that they are officers.
- As far as KDPS recruiting goes, what can the citizens do?
 - Chief Boysen reports that KDPS has enough funding allocation for 268 officers but only has 234 or so and can't get bodies in the door so it would be helpful if citizens advocate for people to join KDPS. There is still a defined benefit pension and retirement starts after 25 years. There are different units (hazmat, bomb squad, technical rescue, community policing, etc.). KDPS officers all must go through law enforcement, fire, and first responder training and continuing education every day, which is not appealing to some people who only want to do one of those. The good news is that we have some of the best trained people on our streets and response time is better than if there are separate police, fire, and medical first responders. This is the largest public safety department in the nation.
- Inquiry regarding whether KDPS has a policy concerning use of both lights and sirens late at night / very early in the morning.
 - Chief Boysen says that certain emergency vehicles are licensed in a way that requires them to use lights and sirens if responding to a call and there is no volume control, just on or off. That said, KDPS has changed its policy with respect to which vehicles are automatically sent to particular types of calls, which helps reduce the number of sirens making noise except in high priority calls.
- Member has lived in the Winchell neighborhood and has ridden bicycles here for the last 27 years. He does appreciate the bike lanes. He says he has had friends hit by cars while riding their bicycles and sees the bicycle lanes in our neighborhood as improving bicycle safety in this area.

VI. **Adjournment:** 8:56 pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Christopher Bovid, ODWNA Secretary