



SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday October 22, 2007 at 7:30 a.m.
City Hall Conference Room A

The Safe Routes to School Committee met on Wednesday, October 22, 2007 at 7:30 a.m. at City Hall Conference Room A.

- I. Call to Order:** Christina Westfall Chair brought the meeting to order at approximately 7:40 a.m.
- II. Roll Call:** Present were City Council Representatives Ken Smith, Chairman of the Traffic & Safety Committee, Councilor Ned Reynolds and Councilor Chris Dwyer, Debbie Finnigan, Traffic Engineer, Robert Lister, Superintendent of Schools and Clay Hayward, School Board representative, Christina Westfall, Traffic & Safety Representative. Also present was Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director and Timothy Brownell of the Police Department.
Absent: Jonathan Bailey, vacation.
- III. Acceptance of the Minutes:**
It Was Voted on a Motion made by Councilor Smith to accept the minutes of the September 10, 2007 and October 1, 2007 meetings. Seconded by Councilor Dwyer. Motion passed.
- IV. NEW BUSINESS**

The Chair thanked Debbie Finnigan and Superintendent Lister for their help with the Surveys.

Debbie Finnigan stated that a memo should be placed in the front explaining why we are doing this and the initials of the school on top of the Survey as there were a lot of comments of who we are and who is getting this information.

Debbie Finnigan contacted John Corrigan stating that the Survey doesn't have what school you are going to as most cities have more than one school and Mr. Corrigan will suggest having this put on the surveys.

- A. Survey Results** –Debbie Finnigan presented the members with copies of a spreadsheet of the surveys and the members reviewed them.

Councilor Smith referred to question #9 - At what grade would you allow your child to walk or bike without an adult to/from school. Councilor Smith expected this to be high at St. Patrick's as some students travel a great distance, but surprised at how high it is at other schools, New Franklin is almost 48%, Dondero at 49%, Middle School is 32%, and Little Harbor is 23%.

Councilor Dwyer stated this is a good area to target, age and responsibility.

The Chair stated having older siblings made a difference.

Councilor Dwyer found questions 10 and 11, Speed of Traffic, Amount of Traffic, Sidewalk/Path, Intersection & Crossing Safety are all high in terms of influence.

Councilor Reynolds felt the numbers were very encouraging especially the all schools #6 Arrive at School, walk or bike adds up to 28% over a quarter of the kids.

Councilor Smith referred to what are the effective things we can do to make changes and Traffic & Safety constantly looks at these issues and continue to focus. Question 9 focusing effort at the elementary level what are the issues parents are not allowing them to walk. Understands the high numbers at St. Patrick's and at the Middle School where students are being bused in. Surprised at 48% at New Franklin as it is a relatively safe area.

Dr. Lister stated there are issues with people in the Cutts, Diamond Dr. area that they want their kids to take the bus because they don't feel safe walking on Woodbury, and the school being between two highways. He has had many conversations with the parents. The amount of money spent on buses, we try to have parents walk with them. Another big issue is the New Franklin School is the only one with no crossing guard. There is some sense of safety when parents know there is someone out there. With pawn shops in that area, hotels puts a crimp on people wanting to send their kids walking to school.

Councilor Dwyer stated we need to make sure that we are communicating that we are not treating all schools the same as there are unique issues.

The Chair asked why there wasn't a crossing guard there.

Dr. Lister stated they have spoken with the Police Department regarding this. First, it is a dangerous place for a crossing guard, there is a custodian there, but that's not a crossing guard.

Crossing guards are trained by the Police Dept.

Councilor Raynolds stated that of all the five locations clearly this is the most commercial, the highest traffic area and different types of traffic right off the highway. We have accelerated work on Woodbury Ave. into this upcoming CIP.

Councilor Dwyer mentioned that Public Works will be holding a Woodbury Avenue Corridor meeting on November 14th.

MOTION made by Councilor Raynolds that over the course of the next few weeks including the 29th meeting and any other opportunities we have at PTA meetings, neighborhood meetings, that we make a real effort to elevate the visibility and advertise the opportunity for people to attend this November 14th meeting as a first step.

Debbie Finnigan responded that flyers are going out to the neighbors this week, an ad in the paper, the City's newsletter regarding the November 14th meeting.

Councilor Raynolds suggested a walking school bus in this area.

Councilor Dwyer asked what should be discussed at the meeting and what do we want to pull out from the surveys?

Debbie Finnigan responded discussing how the kids are arriving and school, what are the reasons kids are not walking/biking to school, the percentages, distance kids live from school and have a slide format.

Councilor Dwyer suggested after the slide presentation, and bullet one or two issues for each school.

Debbie Finnigan stated the top two issues for each school and then the top five for overall.

Debbie Finnigan stated we received a 20% survey return.

Councilor Dwyer suggested having blank surveys available for those who did not complete them and would like to and have them write the school name on it.

The Chair asked the Committee if they felt we had met the criteria as we predicted for the school and feel what we found would be effective?

The chair stated Dondero has an issue with a number of students on the other side of Rte.1 that have to be bused over. However, there are also good neighborhoods around that area that would facilitate walking. New Franklin given the safety factor.

Councilor Dwyer stated that crossing guard issue comes up in a number of surveys and suggested asking the appropriate Police personnel to come in and talk about this.

Councilor Smith asked if we could use grant money for training of crossing guards?

Debbie Finnigan will discuss this with John Corrigan.

The Chair stated another big piece of this is education, parents don't feel the kids know the rules of the road, they may not make good choices and feels the education is important and Detective Cummings would be able to help with this.

Councilor Smith asked that at the next meeting Detective Cummings give us an overview of the SRO program and how that effects the education to kids of rules of the road.

Tim Brownell of the Police Department sitting in for Chris asked what they needed.

Debbie Finnigan explained the informational meeting for this program next Monday night October 29th for the public. At a recent meeting Detective Cummings did a good few minute discussion about what they do at the schools.

Tim Brownell will have a representative from the Police Department present.

Councilor Dwyer referred to the fear around the New Franklin and asked if the Police Department address something like this. Letting people know personal safety is part of this.

Debbie Finnigan stated this is a good thing to address at the meeting.

The Chair feels getting the parents involved, getting them educated. It is a good program and won't work without them, every parent at some level has fear if the safety of their child and is important that parents be part of this and the way to address this is to have the parents get out there with them. The key to our success is to have parental involvement, whether it's walking school buses, sitting on their porch watching the children go by and watching what is happening.

Councilor Raynolds stated that is well said. The antidote to people's generalized fear of safety of people being out in public, is for more people

to get out in public, having a vibrant community of people out and about creates a climate of safety in a community.

Councilor Dwyer suggested a sign up sheet at the meeting for people who are interested in participating, whether they take a day or a week watching from the porch or whatever. Another thing would start an e-mail list for people who want to know more about this, it would be great to send them a flyer for the press release on the 29th and e-mail it to them. Debbie Finnigan will e-mail the flyer to her and Councilor Dwyer will forward them on. Councilor Dwyer is pleased that so many people gave their addresses and said they were interested.

The chair thought it a good solution to have this information sent to the schools and PTA and have the PTA, PTO come to our meeting and be able to report to us.

Councilor Dwyer stated we don't have time before this meeting and be able to let the people who said they want to be active, make sure they come to the first meeting.

There may be 40 more surveys that did not designate the school and Debbie Finnigan will include them for the next survey.

The Chair stated she has most of this data in a spreadsheet.

The chair stated that many people commented that the surveys did not state where they came from, only that the school wants to know more and did not state exactly who it was. It should have stated "National Safe Routes to School".

Clay Hayward feels there should have been a cover letter to go along with the survey.

Councilor Reynolds stated that he felt the results were encouraging, there was a lot of substance, a lot of good numbers and looks like at least 25% of the kids already either walk or bike and people have a lot of thoughts of how it could be better.

The Chair thought it great that people who do walk or bike had suggestions for improvement for safety concerns in some areas.

Councilor Dwyer went through the percentages and how they were calculated for Nos. 10 and 11 to make sure we're interpreting the intent:
Question 10 - Distance, 64% of the whole group said distance is an issue.
Question 11 - Would you probably let your child walk or bike? This is calculated on those who answered might be effected.

The chair stated question 10 didn't state if you answered 10 which one of these, and some people answered 11 and not 10 or would answer 10 and not 11 and this is another place that needs to be improved.

Councilor Dwyer stated that one-third of the people said they would probably let their child walk or bike, it's not really one-third of our whole sample, it's a third of the people who thought they might.

Debbie Finnigan thought question 10 was self-explanatory, but question 11 was hard to interpret, needs better wording and will suggest this to John Corrigan.

Councilor Smith asked when the next survey will be done and suggested the educational process through SRO's from fall into the winter to give us time in the spring to actually start the initiative and then again at the end of the school year.

Councilor Dwyer stated this might be a state question in terms of the frequency they suggest.

Councilor Smith asked what the time frame is?

Councilor Dwyer felt the map is helpful to the parents when talking about streets and locations.

Debbie Finnigan stated what is in the grant will be put into a power point presentation and she will include the CIP projects for discussion.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Next meeting is scheduled for October 29, 2007 to be held in the Levenson Room at the Public Library at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted

Elaine Boucas
Recording Secretary