

VILLAGE OF PITTSFORD
PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
Regular Meeting August 17, 2020 at 6:30 PM

PRESENT:

Chairperson: Justin Vlietstra
Members: Justin Leitgeb
Jo Anne Shannon
Susan Lhota
David Marshall

Mayor: Robert Corby
Trustee: Renee Stetzer
Recording Sec: Linda Habeeb

Chairperson Vlietstra stated that the Planning Board is meeting virtually via videoconference due to recent orders from the Governor regarding the coronavirus pandemic, and the links to this meeting are on the Village website, and the public is welcome to join and view the discussion.

Motion: Chairperson Vlietstra made a motion, seconded by Member Shannon, to open the workshop meeting at 6:00 pm

Vote: Shannon – yes; Vlietstra – yes; Lhota – yes; Leitgeb – yes; Marshall - yes. *Motion carried.*

Motion: Chairperson Vlietstra made a motion, seconded by Member Shannon, to close the workshop meeting and call the regular meeting to order at 6:30 pm, noting that all five members of the Planning Board are present.

Vote: Shannon – yes; Vlietstra – yes; Lhota – yes; Leitgeb – yes; Marshall - yes. *Motion carried.*

Conflict of interest disclosure: None of the Board Members had a conflict of interest to disclose.

Motion: Chairperson Vlietstra made a motion, seconded by Member Lhota, to open the public hearing for the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program LWRP review of the Active Transportation Plan.

Vote: Shannon – yes; Vlietstra – yes; Lhota – yes; Leitgeb – yes; Marshall - yes. *Motion carried.*

Member Vlietstra asked if anyone from the public wished to make a comment regarding the LWRP review of the Active Transportation Plan.

Mayor Corby stated that on behalf of the Board of Trustees, he wanted to thank the Planning Board for the effort they made in so thoroughly reviewing the ATP. The Village Board appreciates the work that they do.

Alysa Plummer also thanked the Board for all the diligent work that they've done on this review. She suggested that the review continue in terms of updating the plan. She further commented that the LWRP is an extremely important document that has standing, and that it's important to have a narrative component about how it relates to the Active Transportation Plan. She also stated that in the process of amending and editing the document, the amendments should be actual components that should be incorporated into the main body of the ATP document rather than an addendum.

Member Vlietstra stated that he wanted to provide an overview of some of the key concerns that the Planning Board has been discussing regarding the Active Transportation Plan (ATP). In reviewing the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP), one of the things that was clear was that improving access to the canal was a prime directive in the document. And that was essentially omitted from being a directive in the ATP, which the Board considers a major concern. The Board also expressed concern with the fact that the bridges over the canal are a particular problem because sidewalks aren't wide enough and they're not usable by bicyclists.

Mayor Corby stated that the Village has worked over the last 20 years to improve access to the canal. Securing the land that the Town has set aside as the Erie Canal Preserve was a big movement forward to making more of the waterfront accessible to the public. This is well captured in the ATP. The difference between the LWRP and the ATP is the LWRP addresses the canal as a recreational resource and all the other aspects of what the canal is in the community. The ATP is more directed toward basic transportation needs versus recreational needs, and that's why it wasn't highlighted. It's always been the Village's mission to improve access to the canal.

Member Vlietstra stated that on the Monroe Avenue Bridge, there is dead space in the middle that's striped off. There are no bike lanes that anyone can use without likely getting hit by a car. There are 3- to 4-foot wide shoulders along the road, and on the other side of the bridge, on the Town side near Wegmans, there's no direct access to the canal from the north side. On the south side of Monroe Avenue, there's no sidewalk, and there's also no bike lane on that side, nor any shoulder right before the canal. So there's literally no way for someone to get from Wegmans to the canal. In the Town's section of the ATP, they talked about putting a bidirectional wide sidewalk, or multi-use path on the north side of Monroe Avenue. But again, there's no connection to the Canal there. If the plan is being revised, it would be beneficial to include improving access to the canal and the whole linkage to the Village.

Mayor Corby stated that he and Trustee Stetzer have talked to the Department of Transportation (DOT) about the condition of the sidewalk on all three state highway bridges over the canal. Unfortunately, the DOT seems to be intractable. Their argument for keeping

the middle lane on the Monroe Avenue Bridge is that they would use it as a detour when the bridge is being repaired. It's a safety issue, and the speeds are high. The DOT's drawings show that they agreed to consistently stripe 10-foot traffic lanes.

Member Lhota stated that the ATP should be a strong document with all of the strength of the public opinion incorporated into the recommendations. Member Marshall concurred, and stated that he wanted to highlight that the DOT's views, as explained by the Mayor, appear to be inconsistent with the ATP and LWRP. He referenced a map in the LWRP where they have a turning middle lane for the North Main Street Bridge, which effectively does nothing because you're not turning left or right going over that bridge. But it's embedded in the document. Ms. Plummer pointed out that when you go over the Monroe Avenue Bridge traveling out of the Village, the guardrail along the edge of the bridge ends up going right through the middle of the sidewalk.

Mayor Corby stated that when he and Trustee Stetzer brought up the ATP to DOT, they always ask whether the plan has been adopted. If it hasn't been adopted, the DOT will not consider it. Also, there has been an effort to remove the turning lane because it's useless, and if it were narrowed and the two traffic lanes brought together over the North Main Street Bridge, there could be a bike lane and wider sidewalks. The DOT isn't willing to do that because they're aiming for a design speed that is much higher than we want traffic to travel.

Trustee Stetzer stated that we need a strong document, and we need to make sure that we have as much as possible information for the Department of Transportation (DOT). They have a pedestrian safety plan which is where all those yellow signs came from statewide. They are recognizing that pedestrian safety is a priority. She stated that she had not heard any specific requirement that the ATP be adopted before the DOT will consider its recommendations. The DOT has been willing to have discussions regarding the draft document.

Member Vlietstra stated that step one is having a plan that would work for residents. He referenced a section from the DOT's Highway Design Guidelines Documents. In section 17.4: "Bicyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as operators of motor vehicles except as provided by New York State laws section 12.30 to 12.36. When designing highway projects, it is essential to consider physical improvements for bicycles, just as for vehicles in the traffic mix, therefore, all State Highways should be designed and constructed to safely accommodate known and anticipated bicycle traffic consistent with the needs identified by the capital projects complete streets checklist during project scoping. If a need for bicycle facilities is identified, but cannot be provided, an explanation should be provided in the design approvals documents."

Mayor Corby said that he has had a conversation with DOT about bicycle lanes. Most recently, the Village Board's focus has been on State Street because we've been working with the residents to address the speed problem on that section of the street. DOT always wants to widen the street, remove the tree median where the streetlights and the trees are, and push

the street out further to accommodate the five-foot standard bike lanes. And then they would continue to have a shoulder in the traffic lane. Obviously, that would make things worse. He further stated that over the last six months, he's had three major conversations with DOT about these projects that are going forward. At the next meeting with DOT they're going to have preliminary drawings for some of the things that they're proposing to change in the Village.

Member Lhota questioned Mayor Corby as to when the next meeting will be and whether there is time to gather petitions. Mayor Corby said the meeting will probably be in a couple of months; he doesn't have the exact date yet.

Member Vlietstra stated that Trustee Lanphear asked about the timeline for the Planning Board's decision. He stated that the Board initially wanted to list their concerns and then have a joint meeting with the Trustees to review it. The Planning Board would like to see the document updated in some manner, either as an addendum or the document updated, so it addresses the LWRP concerns. This document can't conflict with the LWRP, and where it does conflict, updates need to be made to it.

Member Leitgeb commented that some of the concerns raised should be corrected before the Board votes on it. He further stated that we all want the strongest document that we can possibly have with as much input and refinement as possible. And we don't want to unnecessarily hold this up either, and we fully understand that it's taken too long to get to this point. The goal is to get a document together that helps us to communicate effectively and provide leverage to agencies like the DOT. One way to do this is by clearly delineating the responsibilities of the ATP. Active transportation is really transportation. On the first page in the ATP, they define it as saying that it's human-powered mobility, primarily walking and biking. And then it goes on in the second page to talk about recreation. And there appears to be some confusion in the basic definitions. Some definitional changes can go a long way. He further stated that there are errors in the ATP that need to be corrected and places where the plans conflict, and it serves everyone's interest to get those conflicts clarified.

Member Marshall commented that when this Plan was referred to the Planning Board, it was referred in the form it comes now. The Planning Board is asked to, within a period of time, provide an LWRP consistency review of the document that has been presented to us, whether or not there are changes that should be in the document. That would suggest either we have those references be put forward in our review, and then the Trustees do with it as they may, or that the Planning Board will get a revised document to do another LWRP consistency review on, in part, because of the work that would go in with the Town. Member Lhota stated that the Planning Board could require conditions on the approval, as another option. Member Marshall stated that, to follow that up, the Planning Board can review the existing document and approve it on certain conditions.

Member Lhota commented that she is disappointed in the lack of teeth that the ATP has, and even some other recommendations call for further study. Ms. Plummer added that the Plan does need stronger language. The public should be engaged, organize petitions, etc.

Member Lhota stated that she felt the ATP document body should be updated rather than creating a lengthy addendum document that lists the changes to the ATP document body. The document should be clear and easy to read; splitting the document into a body and addendum is not practical for readers.

Member Vlietstra stated that in coming up with a transportation plan, one of the aspects of it is coming up with goals and a way to evaluate it. What are the objectives? How do we measure if it's working? This is lacking in the ATP. So if the goal is to have the average car traveling less than 30 miles per hour on State Street, that would be a great goal to have. A big component that's missing is a metric to evaluate how we're doing. He stated that he would encourage considering adding a section of goals and metrics to the plan so that we can actually evaluate whether it's doing what we want it to do. It would make it a stronger document if criteria are established.

Member Leitgeb commented that the language should be direct. There has been a more passive approach with the DOT, which does not work. If there's a less invasive, less expensive option for the DOT, we should consider asking for what we want and have them respond.

Mayor Corby stated that what is important is justifying the reasons why we're doing things and capturing the real goal. But there should be a direct statement about the goals and then acknowledge that there's a vetting process because the engineering for all these improvements cannot be included in any planning document. That's something that will happen in rollout incrementally over time as the document is implemented. A complete reformatting of the document as an update, even if it doesn't change the content, makes the document clear, usable, and something that can be used moving forward.

Member Vlietstra said that the Board has received good feedback from the Trustees. The idea is to come up with a plan and ATP document that works for residents and communicate to DOT what we want. Whether the DOT implements it or not is another matter. If they are unwilling to implement aspects now they may reconsider in the future. He further stated that the Planning Board should approach this as they would any ordinary application that the Board has had, review what is before the Board and make comments, recommendations, and then compile those and present them to the applicant. In this case, the applicant is the Trustees, and they can address the Planning Board with any response they may have to the comments and recommendations. The first phase is for the Planning Board to compile our comments.

Member Vlietstra reviewed some of the recommendations from past board meetings. Regarding LWRP Policy 1.1, the Board recommended amending the ATP as appropriate to implement crosswalks that are visually and texturally different from the roadway. Member

Leitgeb commented that this is something that's mentioned in the LWRP; it's not present in the ATP. He questioned whether it should be included in the ATP. Member Vlietstra stated that the ATP called for some crosswalks with some advanced signaling. Member Leitgeb said that maybe it's not an outright conflict, but where does one look if one document is more specific than the other? Trustee Stetzer said you are supposed to look at all of these together, and where we have problem areas, textured sidewalks would definitely alert drivers to something different happening and they would behave differently. Mayor Corby stated that the reason it wasn't included in the ATP is because the Committee tried to keep the proposals realistic. The Village has one textured crosswalk that was done as an experiment at no expense to the Village. They're very expensive and the Committee tried to put in the things with the least amount of dollars that would do the most good, and that's why it isn't specifically cited in the ATP. Member Vlietstra commented that this could be rectified by adding one sentence to the ATP to consider adding the crosswalks that are visually and texturally different from the roadway, where feasible. Ms. Plummer stated that it really goes back to a much more general topic. It's under the umbrella of visual cues to be provided to increase pedestrian and bike safety.

Member Vlietstra stated that the next citation from the LWRP discusses incorporating bike lanes along the streets and linking them to residential areas of the Village and Town activity centers. In several meetings, the Board discussed connecting the bicycle boulevards together. Bicycle boulevards not being a connected network was a real concern that the Board had. It doesn't connect people to the canal or to the schools. For example, having a bicycle boulevard on Sutherland Street, but then not going over the Canal bridge and Monroe Avenue, is a problem. The Board discussed that improving access to the canal needs to be a core tenet of the ATP. It needs to go farther than it does now.

Member Marshall said, with regard to the Board's ability to have the ATP document amended during the approval process, to the extent that we can incorporate connectivity specific within the Village, so that a Village amendment could be easily adopted, it would be worth pursuing just to embed in the supplement that the boulevards will connect from street to street. Our comments on a board level were specific to the Town and Village and how these inter-connected bikeways really don't get you anywhere. Member Leitgeb commented that going back to changing the definition, when the ATP discusses connectivity with the canal, they talk about the canal as a source of traffic. The scope of the ATP document doesn't talk about encouraging connections to the canal trail, and that's required by the LWRP and intended to be defined in more detail in a further supplement. Member Vlietstra stated that if they make an amendment to the ATP document that says that access to the canal needs to be improved, and if they don't have time to do all the details, they can flesh out the process for it and maybe it will come at a later date. Trustee Stetzer commented that it does need some study, and the Village put together some concepts of how to get through the middle of the heart of the Village, which is the problem. What we really need is protected infrastructure through the middle section of the village.

Member Vlietstra stated that in the Board's discussions, two things were identified that would help a lot, which was connecting the bicycle boulevards on Lincoln Avenue and Locust Street, which are just a couple of hundred feet apart. Four parking spots could be removed to make it safe for people to bike between these two streets. The second connectivity improvement is to connect South Street to the canal with a good bike path, which is one block. He suggested adding these as action items.

Member Vlietstra stated that while all the bridges in the Village could be improved, the Main Street Bridge needs wider sidewalks, as the Board discussed. This should be identified as a top priority for the ATP to get the bridges to function for pedestrians and bicyclists. Member Marshall stated that he wants to assure that they address that unnecessary middle turning lane inside the North Main Street Bridge.

Member Vlietstra explained that if the DOT changes the striping of lanes, it's not maintenance, it's design. If they're changing the width of the sidewalk on the bridge, they're changing the striping of the middle lanes. It's no longer maintenance. There's a key quote in the LWRP, which is, if a vehicle and pedestrian interaction occur, where they conflict, you've got to yield to pedestrians. The LWRP specifically tells DOT that they can't favor cars over pedestrians, particularly in areas around the canal. Various FHWA citations recommend 8-foot sidewalks be installed in heavily trafficked areas, and the LWRP says there needs to be access to the canal. The Board thought that 8-foot wide sidewalks on the bridges would be a desirable improvement. Trustee Stetzer stated that protected bike lanes are one idea, but that runs into the emergency services not having enough by what's required by fire code to get through those bridges. We know that these are high-volume areas, and we need to prioritize pedestrians and cyclists, without prescribing the exact width that they need to be.

Ms. Plummer asked about the public hearing. Member Vlietstra stated that the public hearing will be continued until the Board is prepared to vote on the application.

Motion: Chairperson Lhota made a motion, seconded by Member Marshall, to adopt the recommendations that were forwarded to the Trustees.

Vote: Shannon – yes; Vlietstra – yes; Lhota – yes; Leitgeb – yes; Marshall - yes. **Motion carried.**

Motion: Chairperson Vlietstra made a motion, seconded by Member Shannon, to adjourn the meeting and continue the public hearing on Monday August 24, 2020 at 6pm.

Vote: Shannon – yes; Vlietstra – yes; Lhota – yes; Leitgeb – yes; Marshall - yes. **Motion carried.**

Linda Habeeb, PZBA Secretary