

SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

November 9, 2021

The Safety Committee of Chardon City Council met on Tuesday, November 9, 2021 at 4:00 PM in Conference Room A of the Chardon Municipal Center.

Christopher Grau, Chairman of Safety Committee presiding.

Members of Safety Committee present: Christopher Grau, Heather Means.

Others present: City Manager Randy Sharpe, Clerk of Council Amy Day, Police Chief Scott Niehus, City Engineer Doug Courtney, Marci Mondello-King, Stephanie Talty, Steven Kofol, Doug Murray, Kevin Westbrook.

Mr. Grau called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Means moved and Mr. Grau seconded to approve the minutes of the Safety Committee from June 22, 2021. Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

Regarding crosswalk safety, Mr. Grau stated that some Main Street business owners have expressed concern about the safety of crosswalks around the Square. In addition, the school had an incident involving a student in a crosswalk that they would like to discuss.

Marci Mondello-King, stated that as a Square business owner, she has seen crosswalk issues for 20 years on the Square, with vehicles that are trying to make it through the green traffic light, and in their rush, do not see pedestrians in the crosswalks.

Stephanie Talty, Square business owner, spoke about situations and scenarios that have happened with pedestrians in the crosswalks on Main Street.

Doug Murray, Chardon H.S. Principal, spoke to explain the improvements the school has made in the area between the student parking lot and the High School including installing aprons, sidewalks, adding a parking lot attendant and upgrading some lighting. He added that each day they are outside at the

crosswalk that goes to the student lot in the morning and afternoon.

Mr. Murray explained that recently, a student was hit by a vehicle while in the crosswalk and there was a separate 2 vehicle accident at the same location the following day. There is a lot of traffic in the area, and the vehicles that drive the area, are driving too fast. They are concerned about the safety of pedestrians and drivers and would like to collaborate with the City to make the area safer.

Steve Kofol stated that the school is already working with CEI to add additional lighting in the parking lot itself. They would like to add additional heads or poles on the north side of the lot.

Mr. Sharpe reviewed a plan that had been proposed many years ago that funnel pedestrians between the driveways of the student lot.

Chief Niehus reviewed pedestrian accident data he gathered from 2015 to the present. He stated that there were 16 pedestrian accidents since 2015. Of the 16 pedestrian accidents since 2015, the majority have been in parking lots. Relative to the Square, there has been 1 documented pedestrian accident on E. Park Street where a child walked into a vehicle, 1 at Washington and Center Streets, and 1 fatal accident on Park Avenue.

Mr. Grau asked what would be involved in the evaluation of crosswalks.

City Engineer, Doug Courtney, stated that vehicle and pedestrian counts could be done.

Traffic Consultant, Kevin Westbrook, stated that he does not think that vehicle and pedestrian counts are necessary since it is known that improvement to the safety of these areas is desired. He suggested bringing attention to the driver and pedestrians, and making the crosswalks more visible.

Mr. Sharpe asked how a decision as to which type of crosswalk improvement is best.

Mr. Westbrook suggested that a matrix of ideas be developed and evaluated as to what makes sense and what the budget allows.

Mrs. Mondello-King asked if an additional crosswalk marker can be added temporarily until a more permanent fix is made.

Mr. Grau stated that it is something that can be considered.

Mr. Grau asked if the east side of the Square should also be considered.

Mr. Sharpe stated that the east side should also be considered.

Discussion continued regarding ways to make the school crosswalk safer.

Mr. Murray stated that the existing crosswalk location from the student parking lot is in the best location. However, the existing static signs are not doing an adequate job. Flashing school zone signs as well as school lights further out to indicate a crosswalk is ahead would be helpful.

Ms. Means asked what crosswalk changes can be done.

Mr. Courtney stated that there are ways to modify the pavement of crosswalks to make it more visible.

Mr. Westbrook suggested that pavement marking and signs should be tried first rather than changing the crosswalk pavement texture.

Mr. Westbrook suggested short and long term plans should be developed.

Mr. Westbrook noted that ODOT has a new funding program that will accept project applications that focus on preventing injuries resulting from pedestrian and roadway departure crashes through systemic infrastructure improvements. It is a new program that begins January 2022 and he suggested that larger items being considered by the City be included for funding.

Committee members concurred that the grant could be used for long-term plans that include larger project costs.

Discussion occurred about implementing a short-term plan for improving safety around the school including: painting the crosswalks, increasing signage and adding school zone lights.

The short-term and long-term ideas for the Square were also generally discussed.

Ms. Means moved and Mr. Grau seconded for staff to meet with Mr. Westbrook and come up with short-term and long-term plans and related budget issues for the high school and the Square crosswalk safety. Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Kofol noted that the school can take care of ordering the flashing school zone signs, but will need help with the proper locations to install them.

Mr. Westbrooks stated that assisting with locating the signs can be looked into.

Regarding 5G Concerns by Nick Rogers, Mr. Rogers addressed the Committee and explained that he is asking for the immediate banning of 5G small cell deployment in Chardon as it has not been proven safe to humans or the environment. He asked that the City's wireless ordinance be overhauled to include provisions which actually protect the public including everything within the endnote-referenced checklist provided by Americans for Responsible Technology. If this is not done, he stated that he would submit a legally-binding notice of non-consent/notice of liability regarding any and all harm done by potential small cell sites on Moffet Avenue and in Chardon in general.

Law Director Ben Chojnacki noted that if the City wanted to discuss recommendations for changes to the City's wireless ordinance, the topic can be referred to the Legislative Committee for their review and consideration. He stated that generally, there are certain strategic considerations to be discussed if there were any contemplated changes in response to Mr. Roger's ask which could be discussed in Executive Session. However, from a legal perspective, the cost to enforce and litigate Mr. Roger's ask would be a significant drain on public resources.

Ms. Means asked how much authority the City has over small cell antennas.

Mr. Chojnacki stated that the City's code is as aggressive as it can get without encroaching on federal and state law. If the City wants to take more aggressive action related to legislating small cell or 5G and enforce this legislation, the City will be likely encroaching federal and state law and will find itself in a lawsuit where it is unlikely to prevail.

Mr. Rogers stated that 5G is an imminent public health threat and if Verizon or another cell phone company installs a tower, he has not other choice but to file a suit against the City.

Mr. Grau stated that the Committee can speak to Council at the next Regular Session and see if they want to enter into a Legislative Committee review.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Grau asked about a tabletop exercise for the Emergency Operations Plan.

Chief Niehus stated that a tabletop exercise is being considered the first part of 2022.

ADJOURN

Ms. Means moved and Mr. Grau seconded to adjourn. Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 PM.

Attest:

AMY DAY
Clerk of Council