

SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

January 16, 2025

The Safety Committee of Chardon City Council met on Thursday, January 16, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. in Conference Room A of the Chardon Municipal Center.

Andrew Blackley, Chairman of Safety Committee presiding.

Members of Safety Committee present: Andrew Blackley, Deborah Chuha.

Others present: Police Chief Scott Niehus, Lt. Matt Delisa, City Manager Randy Sharpe, Clerk of Council Amy Day, Fire Chief Justin Geiss, Law Director Benjamin Chojnacki, City Engineer Doug Courtney, Finance Director Mark Iacofano, Mayor Christopher Grau, Jill Maker, Michael Hanlon.

Mr. Blackley called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Those in attendance introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mrs. Chuha moved and Mr. Blackley seconded to approve the minutes of the Safety Committee from December 3, 2024. Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

Regarding crosswalk safety, Mr. Blackley reported that a Park Elementary School parent approached Council with a request for flags at crosswalks to improve crosswalk safety. He added that Council was concerned about what they heard and wanted to explore crosswalk safety and wanted to hear from the school about what they are doing about crosswalk safety.

Park Elementary Principal Jill Maker, reviewed data she compiled after observing crosswalks near Park Elementary for a week that included crosswalks in front of Park Elementary, library, Fire Department and South Street.

She noted that a few a few observations:

- Some parents cross outside of crosswalks.
- There are very few students that cross without their parent.
- There are only 17 true walkers that live in the walk zone.

Mr. Blackley stated that 5th grade crossing guards used to be used when Park Elementary had 5th grade students.

Dr. Hanlon stated that since Park Elementary School only goes to 3rd grade instead of 5th grade, a safety patrol is not a very likely

option, but he would not rule it out completely.

Mr. Blackley asked the Law Director to report on the City's responsibilities for crosswalks and its liability with volunteers used as crossing guards.

Law Director Benjamin Chojnacki, stated that the City has a legal responsibility to make sure the roads are safe, and has immunity from liability for any injury except if the City is grossly negligent or an employee is acting in bad faith. Additionally, if the City uses volunteers, there could be workers compensation issues or the volunteer could be held personally responsible. Allowing flags at crosswalks could pose as many risks as potential benefits. They could make safer travel for pedestrians or could be a distraction for drivers or be used by someone as a weapon.

Dr. Hanlon stated that the walk boundary is 1 mile, but the school district goes above and beyond and busses students in a smaller boundary than that for the students' safety.

Ms. Maker added that the school provides education to the students about crosswalk safety through walking field trips. She added that the PTO was approached but was not interested in heading up a crosswalk safety program.

Dr. Hanlon stated that he has concerns about using volunteers for crosswalk crossing from a reliability as well as liability standpoint. He would be more inclined to investigating the possibility of bussing the walkers instead.

Chief Niehus reported on the traffic crash data from East Park Street, noting that there were 8 crashes in the last 4 years, none of which were pedestrian-related. He added that complaints are generally most at the start of the school year, and when complaints are received, staff is directed to sit in schools zones at their discretion when they are not on calls.

School representatives discussed future school grade changes at Park Elementary School.

Discussion occurred regarding future crosswalk changes for the County Courthouse.

Mrs. Maker noted that the proposer of the crosswalk flags has a 3rd grade student that does not walk with a parent.

Mr. Blackley noted that the library's relocation to East Park Street may provide a potential opportunity for the school.

Mrs. Chuha commended the school for the improvements made to the dropoff lane.

Mayor Grau stated that it sounds like the Committee will not be taking any action on this issue and stated that the requester,

Kevin Smith, should be made aware that the City does not plan to take any action on this issue.

Mr. Blackley suggested a letter be sent to Mr. Smith that the Safety Committee will not be recommending to Council that crosswalk flags be permitted and requested that a letter be drafted with input from the Police Chief, Law Director and City Engineer. He also requested that the Park elementary data be provided to City Council.

Mrs. Chuha had no objection to the letter.

Mr. Hornyak suggested that the letter also state that the flags are not recognized by the Ohio Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

Mr. Courtney stated that the Manual also emphasizes that uniformity in crosswalk signage is essential for pedestrian safety. Flags would not provide a consistent method and do not align with the recommendations and requirements outlined in the Ohio manual.

Committee members commended the school district on their educational efforts to students on crosswalk safety.

EXECUTIVE SESSION - none.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Discussion occurred regarding a future meeting to update the Emergency Operations Plan.

Chief Geiss reported on 2024 calls for service and on a grant submission for the ladder truck.

ADJOURN

Mrs. Chuha moved and Mr. Blackley seconded to adjourn. Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:54 a.m.

Attest:

Amy Day
Clerk of Council