

STREETS, BUILDINGS & GROUNDS COMMITTEE MINUTES
OF JULY 16, 2018

Municipal Council of the City of Vermilion
Municipal Complex, 685 Decatur Street, Vermilion, Ohio 44089

In Attendance: **Vermilion City Council:**
Steve Herron, President of Council; Monica Stark, Council at Large; John Gabriel, Ward One; Frank Loucka, Ward Two; Steve Holovacs, Ward Three; Barb Brady, Ward Four. Absent: Brian Holmes, Ward Five

Administration:
Jim Forthofer, Mayor; Tony Valerius, Service Director; Amy Hendricks, Finance Director; Captain Graham

Call to Order: Frank Loucka, Chairman, RESOLVED THAT this Streets, Buildings, & Grounds Committee comprised of the committee of the whole does now come to order.

TOPIC ONE: Pedestrian Accessibility Program

F. Loucka presented to council a Pedestrian Accessibility Program concept for them to think over. He would like to improve the safety and welfare of the community by completing the sidewalks on Liberty Avenue from Vermilion Road to Berkley Road. He distributed a map showing 25 properties east of Vermilion Road up to just beyond Berkley. There are eight that has sidewalks and 17 are without sidewalks. However, this is a major thoroughfare of the community and he believes it will go along to support Main Street Vermilion's Bridge to Bridge Project. It will also clearly define the tree lawn. The new traffic light system has provided safe crosswalks at major driveways and intersections; in fact there is no sidewalk there; only concrete at the corner in some places. In the area near South Shore Plaza there is actually a path worn in the grass where a sidewalk should be. He has seen pedestrians walking with baby carriages from South Shore Court to the South Shore Plaza and there is disconnect from the sidewalks to grass. For Vermilion to be a progressive pedestrian friendly community the main corridor is definitely not pedestrian friendly. He said to support the project he suggested the City waive permit fees and allow one complete building season for property owners to install a sidewalk. Sometimes in these kinds of projects the contractor will contact the property owners for a lower price based on installing a number of sidewalks rather than one or two. He said after a one year deadline the City would bid out the remaining jobs and add the costs to their taxes for the legally required period. To avoid location issues, the city engineer at the request of the property owner would stake out where the sidewalks should be and since this would be a retrofit program with existing sidewalks in the area, he suggested they keep the existing width which he believes is 36 inches or so to match the properties with the existing lots. He said this would be entirely up to council and if they want to be a progressive community then they should look at Avon, Avon Lake, Bay Village, and Lorain. The costs would be around \$6.00 - \$7.00 a square foot; maybe less depending if there are a number of sidewalks to be involved.

S. Holovacs said the project has merit because they need to think about the people walking to the businesses; there's nowhere to walk in certain areas. They have residential and commercial, but at this point he agrees he has seen people pushing strollers in grass. He doesn't think this is the right way to show their community.

S. Herron like the idea of possibly waiving the permit fees in exchange for a well-done conforming sidewalk. He likes the idea of working with the property owners. F. Loucka said this is their major thoroughfare and they are promoting a Bridge to Bridge project and as it stands now it's not consistent.

B. Brady asked if asphalt is close in price because she is aware Avon is using a lot of asphalt along Detroit Road for a bike/pedestrian path as opposed to using concrete. F. Loucka said right now they have existing concrete sidewalks and in Avon they are consistent with having a very wide pathway. S. Holovacs said there is a big difference between a bike path and a sidewalk.

B. Brady asked if they can force a specific and isolated area of the city to do the sidewalks without doing it everywhere. F. Loucka said yes because it's the health, safety, and welfare of the community.

M. Stark asked if Liberty Avenue falls under the Safe Routes to School Program and it was stated no.

S. Holovacs said residential homes apply for variances to waive sidewalks through the Zoning Board of Appeals, and with it the Zoning Board usually says they will waive it, but if the city ever enforces it they will be obligated to put sidewalks in. This is the same situation and if city council enforces something then this area would be directed to get sidewalks.

F. Loucka said Liberty Ford when they used to be the Chrysler dealer were required to put in a sidewalk, but the other Liberty Ford apparently got a pass on it. The Post Office, Kitchen's Auto, and the Movie Gallery put sidewalks in, and South Shore Plaza is completely sidewalks along with McDonald's, and the empty lot which used to be Larry's Marathon on the corner has sidewalks, so to him the time has come for this.

B. Brady asked what council would need to do to make this happen and F. Loucka said they would have legislation prepared to spell everything out. S. Herron asked him to work on an ordinance, which includes waiving the permit fees and then council can review this again next month. F. Loucka said he would work on an ordinance with the Clerk of Council and the City Engineer. S. Holovacs said this probably won't get done in 2018 because by the time they get this issue through council they will be at the end of the season, but it might be something they can look at for the spring of 2019.

TOPIC TWO: Railroad Etiquette

F. Loucka addressed railroad etiquette at the Vermilion Road railroad crossing. As he sees it, Norfolk Southern has reached a new low relating to the recent re-do of the crossing on Vermilion Road. He pointed out four issues he has observed as follows:

1) Rather than a sign saying "Road Closed at Railroad Tracks", 3 signs from Jerusalem Rd north to merely say "Road Closed"; leaving literally hundreds of motorists (including service vehicles & visitors) in the dark as to where the road was actually closed. In previous years, a sign at Jerusalem indicated that the road was closed at the tracks, so motorists knew that access was open to all roadways up to and including the Bulan Marina.

2) Repeating last year's performance, the railroad crew thoughtfully left their empty pop/water bottles in the gravel, as well as a dirty Lowe's plastic bucket.

3) For a new feature this year, the crew left piles of railroad debris along the road.

4) As usual, the railroad equipment marked up the roadway, and further destroyed the pavement. However, most of the damage to the pavement markings was accomplished during last year's crossing replacement. Next year we will have a new roadway & new pavement markings.

In conclusion/question, he asked if there is someone in authority at Norfolk Southern the city can appeal to and to discuss these concerns to come up with a solution toward the goal of encouraging Norfolk Southern to become better neighbors? He is sure if the Norfolk Southern executives lived on Vermilion Road they wouldn't allow this negligent behavior. He asked the Mayor if there was anything he could do and suggested that maybe he contact Norfolk Southern. He said he would be glad to work with him on this because this is taxpayer's money right down the drain because they are leaving their junk and they are tearing up the pavement. He suggested they even put some plywood over the street markings. Mayor Forthofer said they can appeal to Norfolk Southern but they are the agency of the government and they will do what they will do, but they will repeal to them on the basis of being a good neighbor.

B. Brady noted the railroad did the same thing on Berkley when they took out the railroad ties. They left all their junk and it's a mess.

Chairman Frank Loucka adjourned the meeting after no further discussion came before the committee.

Next meeting: August 13, 2018 @ 7:00 p.m.

Gwen Fisher, Certified Municipal Clerk
