

**MEETING MINUTES**

Cascade Charter Township  
Joint Meeting of the  
Downtown Development Authority Board of Directors  
and the Planning Commission Board  
Tuesday, February 18, 2014  
5:30 P.M.  
Cascade Library - Wisner Center  
2870 Jacksmith Ave SE

**ARTICLE 1. Call the Meeting to Order**

Chairman Huhn called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.  
Members Present: Rob Beahan, David Huhn, Kirt Ojala, Jennifer Pupilava,  
Paula Rowland, Rick Siegle  
Members Absent: Diana Kingsland, Joann Noto  
Planning Commission Members Present: Hammond, Lewis, Mead, McCarthy,  
Pennington, Robinson, Sperla, Williams  
Planning Members Absent: Waalkes  
Others Present: Township Manager Ben Swayze, Assistant to the Manager Sandra  
Korhorn, Planning Director Steve Peterson

**ARTICLE 2. Approve the Agenda**

**Motion was made by Member Lewis to approve the Agenda. Support by Member  
Robinson. Motion carried, 14-0.**

**ARTICLE 3. Approve the Minutes of the January 21, 2014 Meeting**

**ARTICLE 4. Update of Complete Streets Plan**

Assistant Korhorn presented the DDA's Complete Streets Plan which is a collaboration between the DDA and the Planning Commission. Complete Streets are streets that are designed and operated for all users: pedestrians, vehicles, bicycles, and everything in between. The reason the DDA is interested in pursuing the Complete Streets Plan is to reach some of our DDA Village area goals. In 2011 we adopted a DDA TIF Plan. In the Village area some of the goals were to help improve traffic flow and safety in the area. We have been looking for ways to slow traffic and make it a more pedestrian friendly environment while maintaining accessibility for all users. Our goal is to enhance the Village area to make it welcoming for all users and to improve recognition of the Village area. Complete Streets Legislation has been around for a while but there have been some new rules enacted. It now states that state and local agencies not only must consult with each other but must also consult with local communities to see what their input is.

The DDA's current role is looking at projects to complete for 2014. Some of these projects we have pulled from the Complete Streets Plan. Anything included in the Complete Streets Plan must receive approval from the Township Board and the Kent County Road Commission. The Plan is somewhat fluid meaning that medians and crosswalks can be shifted and adjusted. There has been some discussion on the mid-block crossing regarding concern about placement. It is a key element for this area and it does provide a safe crossing for pedestrians. The DDA has instructed staff to talk to the property owner so that they may provide input on the mid-block crossing.

What we are looking for is a recommendation from the DDA and the Planning Commission on both the Plan and the Resolution to the Township Board. This will then be presented to the Township Board and hopefully adopted.

Planner Peterson presented the Planning Commissions Goals. Our last Master Plan was completed in 2009. Some of the comments from that Plan were the ability to control the design of the roads. At that time Complete Streets Legislation was not an option so we had looked at becoming a city in order to have some control over the roads and dictate the designs of the road. Complete Streets does not give us complete control but it does give us more of a voice. In the Master Plan we talk about the Village area as a Gateway area and we want to make it feel different and unique. We have talked of changing some of the zoning but if the road does not change there will not be a great impact. The Master Plan talks about some issues such as access management, reducing curb cuts, and designing the roads for other modes of transportation such as bicycle's and pedestrians. I think that there is a lot of crossover between the DDA and the Planning Commission agenda's.

We are looking for a positive recommendation from both Boards to the Township Board so that we may move forward on the Complete Streets Plan.

Pete LaMourie presented. This has been a very helpful process working with staff, both Boards, along with feedback we have gotten from the public, and the Road Commission. Some of the changes to sidewalks can be done without the Road Commission's approval but some of the key elements need their approval. During the process some of our original ideas such as bike lanes fell out due to sheer volume on the roadways and physical constraints. They were looked at; they were not viable and were removed.

The first project listed is a mid-block crossing at Old 28<sup>th</sup> and Cascade. The connectivity is really needed in this area not only for crossing but to help reduce speeds in the area. The project calls for a slight widening of Cascade Road for a wider island for pedestrians. Also part of this is a vertical element at the center and edge of the island. The vertical elements are needed for vehicles to see from a distance that the island is ahead, to reinforce that something is changing and they need to reduce speed. We are also suggesting a pavement color change and stamping that will add further recognition for drivers and pedestrians. Signage for pedestrians and drivers and wider crosswalk markings that are more permanent will be used in the area to further designate the crossing. The location has been a bit of a rubbing point with the gas station but this site will still allow for ample access to the gas station.

Member Beahan stated he feels that this location does not allow the gas station good egress if you are heading toward Grand Rapids. We had the pumps aligned at the time the station was built. I think we have a real issue with ingress and egress out of that site. There is not room on the site to turn around if there is a vehicle at the end pump.

Member Meade stated there will be sight issues with the plantings as well. Pete stated that there will not be any sight restrictions as the Road Commission will not allow it.

Member Meade asked if there would be room to stack cars in the left turn from the North for International Beverage. Pete stated there would not be room for four cars.

Member Meade stated that it appears we have created a rear end issue. Pete stated that while possible, we were evaluating the site during peak hours and did not see four cars in the turn lane at any time. This would not be an issue.

Member Meade stated that this is a key entrance to International Beverage and also the Cascade Roadhouse and at today's use it may not be an issue. But traffic patterns change and this could be creating a future issue. Pete stated that these are valid concerns but if we move the crosswalk too far it loses its impact and people will not use the cross walk as it's too far away. I think the gas station issues can be worked out by making the northern egress and ingress wider.

Member Siegle asked if it was possible to make the ingress and egress wider. Pete responded that it was possible but we were trying to leave enough room for stacking. I think there are many options that can be used to make the gas station more accessible.

Member Beahan stated that psychologically if you go past the island you have to turn around and come in and there is a gas station a block down that would have easier access. I am concerned the gas station will see this as a loss to his accessibility and business. Pete stated that it is currently easier to go to the gas station further down as it is a right turn so there must be a reason they pick the other gas station. I understand the concern but do not think it will be an issue.

Member Siegle stated that on Old 28<sup>th</sup> you can take a left and head North. Pete stated that it is not possible to turn North at this time. It is a right turn only off of Old 28<sup>th</sup>.

Member Lewis asked what are the rules for the Planning Commission on this discussion? It sounds as if there are some good points being brought up but it doesn't seem to make a difference. Has the decision already been made to move forward on this? Pete stated that the decision has not been made and this is a very fluid Plan. If the current location does not work we can move the mid-block crossing. I am here to present to you the best fit for the location but based on discussion it can be adjusted. My goal is to make Cascade more pedestrian friendly and it is my opinion that this is the best location for the mid-block crossing. Assistant to the Manager Korhorn stated that the DDA has instructed me to have a conversation with the property owner and to run this plan by them as well. Pete stated that there are very few locations that will support a mid-block crossing.

Member Sperla stated there is a very long stretch along 28<sup>th</sup> Street and we need to have something in place and there will need to be compromises. I would be interested in knowing how the gas station owner, who will be impacted by the no turn left, feels.

Member Sperla stated that it is important to have the mid-block crossing to make Cascade more walk-able and to check speed coming down the hill. Look at how you have redesigned Old 28<sup>th</sup> Street. You have a lot of room to redesign that and to change that entrance going into the gas station where the current berm is located. You have room to put your left turn area in and can reconfigure the whole corner. You won't need the left turn. Pete stated that this might work and we would have to check with the Road Commission to see if the turn would be too tight.

Pete stated that we have heard complaints from some business owners and staff that people do not really stop at Old 28<sup>th</sup> and use it more as a merge. The right lane will be more T'd to encourage more of a stop.

Member Rowland stated that there is no buffer zone in this location for pedestrians and we need to beef that up for safety sake. Pete stated that he agreed and a buffer zone will be included.

Pete stated that we are trying to make something different at 28<sup>th</sup> Street and Thornapple River Drive intersections as well to draw attention to the area. We looked at a table top crossing which raises the pavement six inches but the Road Commission would not agree to the change. We are now looking at replacing the existing concrete with stamped, colored concrete. We are looking at differentiating the area so that it causes drivers to slow down and recognize the area as a pedestrian zone.

Pete stated that the next project is a sidewalk along Thornapple River Drive, east of Cascade Road. The Road Commission is very supportive of the idea. On the North side the sidewalk is very short and it forces you to go to several side streets. We believe this should be a near term goal.

The next recommendation is to create median islands near the Bridge and by Cascade Hospitals for Animals. They would not be cross walks but islands with stamped, colored concrete. They will have landscaping and flag poles to designate the Gateway area. Studies show that side friction elements close to the road often reduce speed by up to 5 MPH.

Member Lewis asked if this reduction in speed was proven when we put the island in by Meijer's. Pete stated that he is unaware of that project.

Member Pennington asked if the shoulder would be widened. Right now we have a lot of snow and other issues to deal with. We need be able to deal with snow. This sounds like a nice idea but when we have snow and it's dark and rainy are we going to have people running into them? Pete stated these are where the current left turn lanes are and it should not be a problem. Member Meade stated that currently with the left turn lane unobstructed in inclement weather you are able to move your vehicle over to

bypass the obstructions. This would eliminate that ability. I have observed vehicles bumping up on the median in front of Meijer's not realizing it is there with the snow covering it. Pete responded that these types of median islands are in use everywhere. These are issues that we should not let undermine what we are trying to accomplish.

Member Meade stated that once we spend the money to do this what is the next solution to solving our problems? Are we going to see more and more signage until we have three rows of signs before we even see the Village? Pete stated that there will be a single sign at the location.

Member Meade asked if the median island was going to impede traffic at Thorncrest. Pete stated that the median island at Thorncrest has been shortened and moved up the hill to allow for the left turn into and out of the location. The Road Commission will not allow us to impede traffic.

The last near term goal is extending the sidewalk on Cascade Road on the west side of the road north of 28<sup>th</sup> Street to Burton. While Burton is outside the DDA it will improve the pedestrian flow if the sidewalk is continued to this location.

There are other long term goals: the lack of width on the bridge and the height of the walkways on the bridge. In the future a grant might be possible to extend the pathway along the bridge to allow safer pedestrian and cyclist traffic. Sidewalks on the North side of Old 28<sup>th</sup> could be a future consideration. Working with the Road Commission on road capacity in the Village area in peak hours is an option and they will make sure that the progression in the area is smooth and quick. We can have the lights set to purposely slow traffic down. We can look at better connectivity along Cascade Road near the commercial development with some additional sidewalks. From a Complete Streets Plan you need to add bike racks to encourage bicyclists. This is just a general idea of things that can be accomplished through the Complete Streets Plan to encourage more of a Village feel.

Member Pennington said he is struggling with this being more of a concept rather than a plan. It's difficult to bring this forward to the residents when it isn't something that's not going to occur all at once, but evolve over time. I struggle with that. Pete stated that he sees it in two different ways. The sidewalks and improvements at the intersections are a concept but the Road Commission has been supportive of the Complete Streets Plan so I think we are fairly set.

Member Pennington stated it is a strong recommendation on my part that you stress that this is a fluid plan and that changes may occur.

Member Hammond asked if there was a flashing beacon planned for the crossing island. Pete stated that he can see that as part of the solution; it just has not been proposed yet.

Member Hammond asked Assistant Korhorn and Planner Peterson to define the purpose of the Planning Commission. If the purpose of the Planning Commission is to recommend this concept to the Township Board, then we should look at this as a Plan

and not a concept. Planner Peterson stated that this plan would be no different than the Master Plan.

Member Williams asked if there was a legal reason to provide the plan to the Road Commission? Does the Road Commission have to follow our Plan? Planner Peterson said this won't guarantee what we want but the Road Commission has to at least take our Plan into consideration.

Member Huhn stated we did not want to go forward as a group and go to the Road Commission. If we do not have their support of the Plan it would be a wasted effort. Planner Peterson stated that these are things that tie into all our other plans and the Master Plan. It also ties into some of the Zoning changes we would like to make as well as changes within the DDA.

Member Rowland asked how these crossings are going to make the Village more pedestrian friendly. Is the next step to have the traffic signals changed to make a more horizontal clear zone? Assistant Korhorn stated the DDA is looking into mast arm signals and changing the museum garden. This would change the visuals for vehicular traffic to slow them down.

Member Mead responded that the mast arm signals can be very decorative and further define the area and encourage traffic to slow down. Things like this go a lot further than stamped concrete because it is far more visual 24/7 and creates the feeling of a pedestrian friendly area. If we only do one thing it's only going to work part of the time. Planner Peterson stated that not only has the DDA studied that, but it is part of the Township Board's strategic plan as well. This is an effort to coordinate all the plans together to work for a common goal.

Member Rowland asked if and when it is approved by the Township Board will all of these projects occur at once or is there a time line? Assistant Korhorn stated the projects will be staged. Pete stated the first six projects could be accomplished in the next year or two.

Member Huhn stated that in terms of the DDA we have talked in terms of a million dollars this year dedicated to the Complete Streets Plan.

Member Sperla stated presumably this is getting us closer to the ideas that we have been working towards for years. Presentation to the Board is the next step to get funds to move forward. There can be refinements, but I think we need to look at this as more permanent rather than conceptual.

Member Rowland asked if the median shifts can be worked out in a timely manner. Pete stated that could all be worked out in the next few months if the funding is available.

Member Huhn stated the reason this hasn't gone forward is because the original idea was to do it out of cash. The Township's debt for 28<sup>th</sup> Street is \$800,000. The Township wishes to keep about \$1,000,000 in order to run the Township through the year.

Sandra Korhorn stated presently the Township has about \$2,000,000. The Township doesn't want to get into cash flow difficulty. They want to tackle these improvements by highest priority, then the next, etc. Pete stated this would probably go pretty fast because once it starts the enthusiasm keeps it going.

Member Huhn stated the DDA wants to make sure this is done in the right order and with the right steps.

Member Siegle wanted to know if anyone had talked to Mr. Henley to see if he has anything in mind with his property so that the Township spends its money wisely. Pete sees this as the next step to take to make sure he is o.k. with the improvement of that intersection as well because it is by his development. Sandra Korhorn stated she wasn't sure if he was involved with that development or not. He has sat at the table previously when the Township has had discussions regarding improvements at that intersection.

Member Lewis stated that he understands they're working toward all the goals but he hasn't heard the roundabout mentioned. Planner Peterson stated that the roundabout is in the plan. Pete stated that the roundabout had already been studied. At the speed of the roundabout it would be very difficult for pedestrian safety. We looked at the next alternative and we may not get as much bang for our buck. Safety and road restrictions were of first concern. In the next ten years when more roundabouts are being used and drivers are comfortable with the process, then we can revisit putting in a roundabout. It is not considered a short term project.

Member Lewis stated Member McCarthy asked about the safety of the crossing where the roundabout would be. Ada is putting in two roundabouts and I am wondering why we are not utilizing this option.

Member Rowland stated after Detroit put in several roundabouts there were law suits from pedestrians that were injured crossing the road. It was decided from a DDA standpoint the topic of roundabouts needed to come from the Township Board, not the DDA. It became more of a political issue.

Member Siegle asked if the Township had any control over the speed on Cascade Road. Will the Complete Streets plan provide us with any authority over road speeds? Pete stated it would be indirect only.

Member McCarthy stated on the speed limit signs leading into the Village of Ada, a small green sign with the word "Ada" was added. It catches your eye and lets you know that you are entering the Village. Is this something we could look into doing? Assistant Korhorn stated she would look into the signs.

**Member Sperla made a motion to forward a positive recommendation to the Township Board to approve this plan and adopt the Complete Streets Resolution. Support by Member Rowland. Motion carried 14-0.**

**ARTICLE 5. Any other Business**

There was no new business

**ARTICLE 9. Adjournment**

**Member Hammond made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Supported by Member Mead. Motion carried 14-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Kingsland, Secretary

Ann Seykora, Planning Administrative Assistant

Deb Groendyk, Planning Administrative Assistant