

Minutes for September 7, 2021 Safety Committee meeting

Meeting was called into session at 6 pm in Council chambers in City Hall

In attendance:

David Phares - Chairman
Councilman Malta - Committee member
Councilwoman Bisbee - Committee member
Mayor Regovich - Safety Director
Councilwoman Antosh
Councilwoman Koudela
Police Chief Turner
Fire Chief Tennyson
Chief Building Inspector Sean Brennan

The first item on the agenda was a presentation by Todd Vogler regarding deer culling. We have had numerous complaints about the large number of deer in the City and Todd is going to explain deer culling as a solution. Todd is from Eastlake and runs their deer culling program.

Here are some of the main points from Todd's presentation:

- The reason Willowick has so many deer is because Ohio has eliminated their main predators like wolves and black bears. These animals would normally keep the deer population in check but since they have been eradicated from the state, deer numbers can flourish.
- When the natural predators are gone, nature will allow two things to take place: Starvation and disease. When you see deer roaming around during the day and you can see their ribs, that means they are looking for food and starvation is setting in. Deer are heavy tick carriers also which can spread diseases. They can also eat 6 pounds of vegetation per day.
- If you rely on the state to fix the problem, they are interested in protecting the wildlife because they can make money off of hunters but not too concerned with the plight of local municipalities like Willowick.
- At the County level, on rare occasions the Lake Metroparks will do a deer culling but these types of programs need to be maintained every two years and the last one here was done five years ago in Eastlake, so the results of that eradication are gone.
- The solution for this problem is a multi-faceted approach. A permanent control/hunt within city limits, prohibiting feeding of the deer and using deer resistant botany.
- With a controlled hunt, you would see results in about three years beginning with auto accidents decreasing and less deer carcasses to be picked up by the Service Department.
- Mentor and Eastlake have seen significant decreases in deer population since implementing controlled hunts.

- ODNR has a program all set up and it has been approved by the State of Ohio. It can be implemented by any municipality.

Chairman Phares asked if Eastlake passed an ordinance first before the program started and Todd confirmed that they did. He helped create the ordinance.

Mentor spent \$100,000 to put their program into effect Eastlake used local hunters so the only cost was on them.

#2 The second item on the agenda is Fire Chief Tennyson talking about staffing issues. He submitted a report to the Committee. Here is a summary:

- 2021 has exposed the problems of having an all part-time staff like Willowick does. The main problem is that you cannot make part-time employees come in. We are running short staffed on a daily basis. Departments like Wickliffe that use a combination of full time/part time employees do not have this problem because the full time employees always come in.
- Willowick currently has 69 employees and 47 of them are full-time at other departments. This is a benefit to Willowick because those 47 full-time workers are fully trained and experienced and we get them at a discount. But because they are working full-time elsewhere, if they need time off, it comes at the expense of Willowick.
- Many people do not have the time to take the classes needed to become a fireman, EMT or paramedic.
- Civic pride has taken a hit recently where people do not want to become firefighters at all.
- Full-time employees are working overtime at their full-time positions which means they have to call off from Willowick.
- Willowick is answering the calls that come in and using mutual aid to cover gaps.
- Chief Tennyson wants to see a couple things happen: Current part-time employees need to be more responsible in getting their shifts covered if they have to call off and Willowick needs to offer more competitive wages

Chairman Phares asked if the Chief preferred to have a totally full-time department or a combination of full-time and part-time. Chief Tennyson responded with the fact that we need to make wages more competitive and acknowledged that a staff that is partly full-time would be the most beneficial. The department most similar to ours is Kirtland whose budget is about the same as ours but they have nine full-time employees. When their part-timers call off, they can fill the gap with full-time overtime hours. The biggest difference is that Kirtland pays their part-timers \$5 less per hour so it would take a big increase in our budget to match that model.

Councilwoman Koudela asked why one of the part-time employees left and Chief Tennyson explained that he wanted benefits that the full-time position offers at the other department.

Councilwoman Antosh asked how many part-timers want to be full-time? Chief answered that probably 22 would want to be full-time. We would have to have a plan in place though before

we did that. Chairman Phares commented that a lot more discussion is needed on the financing/budget aspect of this issue and this discussion is just the start.

#3 The third agenda item was traffic problems at Lake Shore Blvd. and Gilchrist Drive. Chairman Phares retrieved the call data for that intersection and found that there were five incidents this year and three last year and one in 2019. Chairman Phares mentioned maybe putting 'no turn on red' signs at E. 288th and Gilchrist and Councilman Malta stated that the problem seems to be cars running the light on Lake Shore Blvd. and wondered if the Police could patrol closer than E. 293rd. Police Chief Turner verified that nothing at that intersection has changed in signage or lane markings and there is nothing unusual about it that would cause more accidents. The consensus is that there is not much that can be done at this point.

#4 Item four was the access lanes behind the new retail buildings at Shoregate Plaza. Councilman Malta felt that there might not be enough room for two cars to get through there and Chairman Phares commented that he drove through there and it seems to be wide enough but acknowledged that traffic will be a bit crazy when those businesses start opening and drivers get used to the traffic patterns.

Chief Building Inspector Sean Brennan stated that he and Mayor Regovich met with a Shoregate representative because Starbucks, which is moving into the east end of the west building, had some concerns about traffic. He confirmed that the Chipotle drive-thru will be pick up only so that traffic should flow without problem but perhaps a plan 'B' needs to be made for the Starbucks drive-thru.

Councilwoman Koudela asked Mr. Brennan if the lane behind the buildings will be striped to show two equal lanes and he stated that he thought it already had been striped but will check. Her other concern was the sewer drains in the lanes behind the buildings look overly deep and wanted to know if they can be repaved. Sean will look at these also.

Councilwoman Koudela asked if the patching can be fixed on Lake Shore Blvd. because it doesn't seem very smooth.

#5 Item five on the agenda deals with shrubs at the corner of Lake Shore Blvd. and E291st Street. There were concerns from Councilwoman Koudela about them obstructing the view to drivers coming around the corner. Sean Brennan stated that they had been trimmed back by the owners. Councilwoman Koudela asked if there had been other complaints and Chairman Phares stated that he had gotten a complaint and Councilwoman Koudela acknowledged that at the Police meeting on Cresthaven previously, a resident had commented on the shrubs being too big. These were the only complaints received.

Councilwoman Antosh brought up shrubs at Fairway and Oakdale and Councilman Malta confirmed that it was 517 Fairway. She stated that they had been trimmed. She also brought up the house at Vineyard and E 305th Street that has a pine tree that hinders the view at the stop sign looking south down E 305th street. Sean will take a look at it.

#6 Item 6 is cars turning left out of the middle entrance of Shoregate Plaza. This happens frequently and there have been complaints from residents. Chief Turner stated that his officers patrol that area when they can but he seems to think it is a bit hypocritical to allow cars to turn left out of Cresthaven, E 291st, E 293rd and other streets on Lake Shore Blvd. but prohibit it coming out of Shoregate Plaza. Councilwoman Koudela stated that the proximity of that exit to Cresthaven and Seaborn prompted the sign. The exit out of North Shore Mall further down Lake Shore Blvd. was also brought up because a left-hand turn is also prohibited there.

#7 The last agenda item deals with complaints about the two turn lanes from E 305th Street to Lake Shore Blvd. and cars not staying in their lanes while turning. A solution might be to paint dotted lines showing the whole lane to assist drivers when turning. This might be an ODOT issue since Lake Shore is a State Route.

Meeting adjourned at 7:20pm.

David Pharo