

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS  
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2024 – 7:00 P.M.  
MAYOR WILLIAM G. KOONS PRESIDING**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Bell, Canton, Galicki, Porter

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Berger, Cavanagh

**OFFICIALS PRESENT:** Fiscal Officer Romanowski, Police Chief Rizzo, Street Commissioner Alder

**VISITORS:** Brian Morrison, Woodside Dr.; Shannon Geiger, Reserve Tr.; Bill Stone, Fairview Rd.; Danielle Sabo, Waverly Ln.; Adam Henry, Forest Dr.; Ken Fogle, Louise Dr.; Tanner Payne, Fairview Rd.

The Mayor called the Special Council meeting to order. The Fiscal Officer read the roll. Berger and Cavanagh were absent.

The Mayor advised that being a Special Council meeting, only three things could be discussed, crosswalks, sidewalks, and paths. He advised that a survey went out in the Village newsletter to 1,400 homes. Eight (8) responses were received, which he found disappointing. Requests had come in for a crosswalk from Sugar Bush to Gurney School; a crosswalk from Alderwood to the park; and a crosswalk to the restaurants on East Washington St. There had also been a request for sidewalks in the Rolling Ridge neighborhood which includes Daisy, Forest, Woodside, and Deerfield. The other request was for a path of some sort along Bell to and from the park. The Mayor explained that neither the Engineer nor Solicitor were present because first he wanted to see the interest of the community before spending any money on the issue. The Engineer preliminarily provided some general ideas of what it would take.

Brian Morrison, 20 Woodside Rd. grew up in the Rolling Ridge neighborhood. On the front page of the Village website, it states that the Village is a home to 4,000 residents, is located on the western edge of Geauga County, is four miles long and a mile wide. It has a unique character and “rural” at home charm. He was not sure rural charm and sidewalks coincide. In 2004-2005, the Village bought the Muggleton property so there would be less hard surfaces to help with stormwater. Council had worked hard on stormwater. Adding sidewalks and more hard surfaces would take away from water drainage. Part of the notice was to consider sidewalks in the Rolling Ridge community. Morrison’s father bought that property and set some deed restrictions. One was to maintain ditches in the community, and he was not sure how sidewalks would coincide with that. The ditches relate to stormwater abatement, and he suggested checking deed restrictions before starting work. He also thought there was a stipulation in the deed to maintain a path along the back property line of that community. Morrison added that he thought crosswalks were a good idea.

Adam Henry, 12 Forest Dr., was excited for the opportunity for sidewalks. He has kids and they play with the other kids in the neighborhood. Having the opportunity for those kids to get from house to house safely on sidewalks would be great. He also liked the idea of connecting the neighborhood to the school system with sidewalks. Right now, he is afraid to have his children ride their bikes, even with adults, on Daisy Ln. It does not have much of a berm and there is a lot of traffic so it is dangerous. The opportunity for his children in the future to get from their home to Gurney, the Intermediate School and High School would be a special thing. He did not know what the cost would

be or how it would be paid for and appreciated the efforts to investigate it. He also noted that the Bell Rd. and Chillicothe Rd. intersection was a thriving area with the Sleepy Rooster and even the gas station where he goes for dinner on a regular basis as it has great pizza and burgers. He would be willing to help foot the bill for the cost for the interconnectedness.

Bill Stone, 137 Fairview Rd., apologized for not being aware of the survey. He lives at the eastern end of the Chagrin Heights neighborhood. He did not see the need for sidewalks within the neighborhood, it would be nice to have a sidewalk that would connect the neighborhood to the Chagrin Falls sidewalks. About 1,000 feet of sidewalk could do this. There are 350 households total in the Chagrin Heights and Country Estates area that would have safer access to get into Chagrin Falls. The current options present a variety of dangers.

Shannon Geiger, 404 Reserve Trail, is a teacher at the Intermediate School and also has a parent's perspective. She would love to connect the South Russell part of the school district to the Chagrin part. The Intermediate School has a walk and bike to town event, which is quite dangerous for the South Russell children. Drop off zones are designated, but entail driving the kids to drop them off to walk to school, which seems backwards. She has a 6<sup>th</sup> grader who would love to ride a bike or scooter to school, but she is terrified to allow him to go on Bell Rd. Geiger lives across from the park and supports a crosswalk as well. She was not sure about sidewalks in the Rolling Ridge neighborhood since she does not live there but felt that any sidewalk is fantastic. There are a lot of new families who have moved into the area, and she sees younger people who want to walk, bike, walk dogs, etc. Any access is good.

Danielle Sabo, 113 Waverly Ln. and was present as a community member. She lives next to Gurney and drives the one minute every morning to get her child to school because it is unsafe to walk. Some of her favorite memories growing up were walking to and from school with her siblings. She would love her son to have the same experience. Her neighborhood is filled with kids who go to Gurney and the Intermediate School and she recognized what an opportunity it would be for them to be able to walk to school. When she moved to her neighborhood, she was excited to walk to the park but the first time trying to do so, she almost got hit so now she drives to it. In the morning, she sees three to four parents riding their bikes to school with their kids and she knows how much safer it would be for them if they had access in this way.

Ken Fogle, Louise Dr., did not like the idea of doing sidewalks primarily because of the rural nature of the community. He has been in South Russell for 40 years and his kids are grown, but they biked and walked in the community without too much trouble. He also did not want South Russell to be the heights with a network of streetlights and sidewalks. If a crosswalk would help at the school, he could see value in that.

Tanner Payne, 128 Fairview Rd., moved here a year and a half ago from out of state. He said he accidentally moved into the best area. Regarding sidewalks, he thought it would be easiest to connect Cuyahoga County to the Chagrin Heights neighborhood. It is not very far. He walks to the shopping area around Hunan, and getting from his neighborhood to Ridgewood is a little difficult crossing the street. Just having access to get from the neighborhoods on the north side across Bell to the park would be helpful. He acknowledged that sidewalks on Bell Rd. would be a huge project and would take a lot of research, but the small section could be done pretty easily.

Bell stated that in the last day and a half he has received 13 messages about this topic. 12 were pro sidewalks along Bell and one was against. The common themes were about kids and safety for bicycles and for traveling to Gurney, the Intermediate School, and into Chagrin Falls. Drivers are more distracted today than 30 years ago and he understood the concerns. He would share these messages with Council so they can see those residents' points of view.

Porter asked the parents present if there were sidewalks from their homes to the Chagrin Schools, would they walk with their children or allow them to walk by themselves. Geiger responded that Gurney does not allow the children to walk unaccompanied. Maybe if there were something in place, this would be different. The children at the other schools are allowed to walk without supervision. She cuts through the woods in her neighborhood to get to Gurney. Sabo explained that there is a path maintained by her neighborhood that cuts through the Gurney softball fields. If there were other kids walking together or there was one parent, she could see her son walking to school by first or second grade.

Adam Henry explained that he lives in the Rolling Ridge neighborhood and is able to pop out onto East Washington where there is a big berm. He and his family ride bikes to the Chagrin Falls sidewalks and into town. If there were sidewalks, he would put the kids on bikes and ride them up to school.

Canton said that prior to remodeling the Intermediate School, there was talk of an extension to Gurney. People wanted their children to walk to school. He understood the desire for sidewalks. He was once told by a wise person that there is no such thing as a problem, only solutions. The idea is to find solutions. What will it take for the sidewalks? Who is responsible for the maintenance? Can they get the ok from the owners of the property to install sidewalks? There are quite a few solutions that need to be determined before they can see this happen. Council is listening.

Morrison said maybe sidewalks are a good idea. He recalled getting in trouble as a child for crossing the street.

Canton advised that it would be necessary to educate the children and adults of South Russell about crosswalks. With flashing lights, it does not necessarily mean the cars will stop. They have to listen and look both ways before crossing. However, this is a possibility.

Adam Henry asked if there was an estimate of the financial benefit to the area by installing sidewalks. Specifically, with more accessibility to the Bell and Chillicothe Rd. intersection, people could walk to the Sleepy Rooster, Augies, etc. There has to be a financial impact. He noted the difficulty in finding parking with these businesses.

Bill Stone said it takes him 15 minutes to walk to the high school. He often drives his daughter to the high school, and it takes him 20 minutes round trip. She could walk quicker than he could drive her. Having the ability to walk to school would reduce traffic, which would be a good thing.

The Mayor said there were some good comments. He was thinking of getting to the Village campus for the Farmers' Market, to which people walk and bike. He suspected that everyone present had had one or two close calls in the Village with cars, traffic, and people. The Mayor stated that the Homeowners' Association (HOA) president for Rolling Ridge was contacted since this was where there was a big demand for sidewalks. Funding had been explored because the Village would love to have someone else pay for it. The Village has a good relationship with the Northeast Ohio Area

Coordinating Agency (NOACA), which is where the money is. They have given the Village \$1.2 million to redo Bell Rd. east in 2025. One of the participants asked if there would be a bike path created, or would it be the same width. The Mayor said he did not know and there was concern about the big hill and engineering. The Mayor relayed a report by the Police Chief that there had been an increase in crashes because of distracted drivers. Bike Ohio was contacted, and they will provide paint to paint the crosswalks. The Engineer looked at a path roughly, but the Village has not done anything specific yet. The Mayor explained that there are some balance issues with committees, but thought what should be considered is at the next Council meeting having the Safety Committee look into the crosswalks and the Streets Committee look into sidewalks and paths. He encouraged those in attendance to tell all their friends and neighbors not to expect a crosswalk or path this spring. It is something the Village can look into. It is necessary to know who pays for it, the right-of-way, and other issues. He instructed that residents look to the newsletter because it is the best way to communicate about when the next meeting will be.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Being that there was no further business before Council, Bell made a motion to adjourn at 7:31 p.m. seconded by Canton. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

  
William G. Koons, Mayor

  
Danielle Romanowski, Fiscal Officer

Prepared by Leslie Galicki