

DRAFT

**TOWN OF ALGOMA
WINNEBAGO COUNTY, WISCONSIN
MINUTES FOR PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**

Wednesday, March 13th, 2013 at 6:00 PM

Algoma Town Hall

15 N. Oakwood Road, Oshkosh, WI 54904

1. Call to order.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Savinski at 6:03 PM.

2. Roll call.

Jim Savinski	Dewey Nelson
Ron Aubrey - Excused	Sue Drexler
Mark Thompson	Colleen Merrill
Henry Sampson	Atty. Marone
Clerk Nelson	Road/Drainage Coordinator Tollard

3. Public Forum.

Chairman Savinski asked that if anyone wished to speak on the topics on the agenda until the material was gone through or if they had to leave to let him know, he would make sure their comments were heard.

4. Review the most recent draft of the Oakwood Elementary School Action Plan, dated March 2013, from the Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS) and the Town Board history regarding the same.

Savinski gave a brief history of Town Board action on the Safe Routes to School Program (STRS).

The SRTS Recommendations

- The Town Board approved the re-striping of Omro Road in October, 2012, in a 5-0 vote.
- Relocation of the 15 mph signs on Omro Road and Oakwood Road. The Town Board approved the relocation of the signs in October, 2012, in a 5-0 vote.
- Flashing school zone lights and fixing the original ones that either blink all the time or don't blink anymore. The Town Board approved the purchase of the additional light and software upgrade in October, 2012. Then in December 2012, they approved the expenditure of \$6,700 for the flashing signs and software upgrade.
- Paint "school zone" marking on Omro and Oakwood Roads. No Town Board action. This could be done with the re-striping.
- When street construction occurs, consider widening Oakwood Road and add a walk path. This would be a future action by the Town Board and/or School District.
- Consider traffic control adjustments on Omro Road and Oakwood Road intersection. Perhaps a four-way stop sign. This has been under consideration by the Town Board and the reason for item 5. The Planning Commission will consider the four-way stop at the intersection of Omro & Oakwood Roads and make a recommendation to the Town Board.
- As new development occurs consider connectivity – This would require future action by the Town Board.

DRAFT

- In the future, explore putting bicycle/walking paths on Omro Road, Oakwood Road, and other major biking & walking thoroughfares in the town. This would require future action by the Town Board.
- Future Town Board/School District/Sheldon Nature Area would be on the north side of the school coming out of the Sheldon Nature Area, there is a very heavy chain link fence. It would be nice to open that fence up by four feet.
- Explore using the Sheldon Nature Area as a drop off point to allow students to walk/bike into school via the nature area trails. Perhaps provide bike racks on the east side of the school.

5. Formulate a recommendation to the Town Board regarding the following:

A. Reduce the speed limit on Omro Road.

B. Changes to the intersection controls at Oakwood Road and Omro Road to include consideration of installation of a four-way stop sign.

Facts: Omro Road is about two miles long, 19 street intersection, 48 residential driveways, 19 businesses, fire department, and one access to Oakwood School.

Savinski contacted both Sheriff Matz and Winnebago County Highway Commissioner Mr. Winters for their input on these issues. Savinski asked for accident records and criteria capability in order to change traffic controls on Omro Road. Their documents and attachments are attached to the record copy of the meeting minutes. Both Sheriff Matz and Mr. Winters thought the speed limit of 35 mph was appropriate for Omro Road. A lower limit would be difficult to enforce because they don't have a lot of staff and the town doesn't have a police department. The town can adjust both Omro Road and Oakwood Road downward by as much as 10 mph, but the changes shall be based on traffic engineering analysis.

A report on the accident history from the past six years indicates there were twelve accidents but only nine were actually at the intersection; the remainder were near the intersection. Overall there were 11 injuries and 1 fatality. There was discussion on the fatality accident. It was a moped who lost control and overturned. There was no other vehicle involved in the accident and it occurred near Natures Trail. Of the 11 accidents, only 4 occurred during school hours; 2 occurred in 2007, 1 in 2010, and 1 in September, 2012. There isn't a lot of accident activity. The traffic engineering analysis has to be done in order to make the speed limit reduced of which there are three major criteria that have to be met, of which we don't meet any of those criteria. The same is true for the four-way stop. However, the town can still make those changes within the statutes.

The major public concerns are near Oakwood School during school hours. Merrill contacted Rosendale police, and spoke to a sergeant there about what they do with traffic during school hours near their schools. Everyone knows that law enforcement is present, especially during school hours. So perhaps more of a presence is needed on Omro Road during school hours to enforce the speed limit. Rosendale also uses rubber signage in the middle the of road which can stay in place during the dry months, but has to be removed during the winter months. This is an option as well. Crossing guards are employed by the City of Oshkosh, so it would have to be someone from Oakwood School that would have to monitor this rubber signage.

DRAFT

Deputy Foster of Winnebago County Sheriff's Department addressed the board. The sheriff's department has received several citizen complaints of people speeding, not so much on Omro Road, but on cross roads. The sheriff's department do have their Community Oriented Policing sheets which help the officers monitor speeding during school hours. From a logistics standpoint, there is one officer who works the area of the town which extends west of Hy. 41 to the county line up to Poygan. Therefore, it is a large area for one person to monitor, therefore the deputies can't monitor speeding during school hours as much as they would like to. Also, when the calls for service increase, they must respond to the calls. They try to get out here as much as possible, but sometimes they just can't. This is the more concentrated area of people, and the more people the more complaints, than in the rural areas.

The town doesn't meet the criteria to reduce the speed limit or to install a four way stop according to the County Highway Commissioner and the Sheriff. There also has to be more than 300 vehicles per hour on an eight hour timeframe. The town doesn't meet the criteria either. Audience doesn't agree with data because Oakwood School, for safety of the children, discourages families from walking or biking to school so that the accidents don't occur. Therefore the data may be skewed in a way. Winnebago County Coroner can live with the speed limit on Omro Road because it's not as big of a hazard except for at the stop sign. There may not be accidents, but there are a lot of near accidents. We know that widening Omro Road and Oakwood Road would be the ideal safety factor which will come at a later time. This would solve about 90% of the issues. This is a Town Board issue. Busby would like to have the recommendation from the Planning Commission to install a four way stop, even if temporary, to see how if or how much of an impact it would have. It would assist in the traffic congestion getting out of Oakwood School, and, it would hold traffic to the 15 mph when the students are present. Should this not work out and residents aren't happy with it, the four-way stop can be taken out. Discussion ensued, and it was determined if the four-way stop was put in, it would be done so with the intention of staying; meaning the installation would not be done on a temporary basis. School hours are only 2% of the time, what happens with the other 98% of the time when kids aren't in school. There was discussion of installation of signal lights that flash outside of the school hours. If vehicles would take a right, there won't be the congestion. Turn right and go up to Honey Creek to Hy. 21, it takes one minute.

There was discussion of the school district taking responsibility. They could have purchased the house next to the parking lot last year when it was up for sale. Unfortunately the Oshkosh Area School District is twenty years behind in creating a strategic plan that takes into consideration today's infrastructure. At what point is the school system responsible for cleaning up their act by opening up the parking lot to get vehicles in and out? An observation is every vehicle that drops off a student, there's only one child in the car. There's no question about widening Oakwood Road in the future, but once the speed limit is lowered and install a four-way stop sign, it's there for good. There was discussion of a four-way stop by Sandpit, a wide open space, doesn't make sense. Another point is all the way down Oakwood Road, there's a four-way stop at all the major intersections except for Oakwood/Omro Road.

Merrill reiterated that the town doesn't meet the criteria; this recommendation has to be made based on the facts, in a non-emotional way. What can be offered as a non-evasive safety measure right now to see how it works? Paint the road, have a crossing guard be there during school hours, or additional signage before we go beyond what is recommend by professionals and what is recommended by criteria.

DRAFT

The audience doesn't think that a four-way stop isn't enforceable and not too much to ask. The audience doesn't want the commission to focus so much on the 2% that they ignore the 98% that will also benefit from these safety measures. It affects everyone who walks, rides their bike, walks their dog, or drives down Omro Road; not just those who walk to school. How can they walk on Witzel, a four lane very wide road, with a speed limit of 30 mph, compared to Omro Road which is two lane, not a very wide shoulder, a very narrow road with nowhere to go, and a speed limit of 35 mph. It's not unreasonable to ask for a four-way stop sign.

Mark Kainz agreed that focusing just on school kids is missing the point. There are others who use Omro Road at all different times of the day, and he handed Clerk Nelson a petition with 106 signatures requesting a four-way stop and lowering the speed limit on Omro Road.

Discussion ensued as to whether or not a four-way stop sign is enforceable or not. It was determined that a the four-way stop is enforceable, however, taking an analytical point of view by looking at the criteria, the intersection doesn't meet the criteria for a four-way stop. Sampson would hate to have a child hit at the intersection before something is done. He agrees that the town should make a list of things that can be done right now, do them, and see what happens from there. There was discussion on signs that state "15 mph when children are present". Rasmussen stated that he has been watching the area, and he doesn't see any kids walking to school. There was discussion on how this is debatable because again the school doesn't encourage families to have their kids walk to school. Merrill doesn't believe a four-way stop is going to decrease the congestion in the parking lot at the intersection. The audience disagreed, because it will allow vehicles leaving the area time to turn right onto Omro Road. The positive of the four-way stop is that it would force vehicles to obey the 35/15 mph speed limit. The audience agreed that if the town did the re-striping, the painting of the school zones, relocated the 15 mph school signs when children are present, and did the four-way stop, they would be satisfied.

Art Basten Pine Ridge Road spoke. The only thing that sticks out for Mr. Basten is that this isn't a new intersection; there isn't a lane to turn left, there isn't a lane to turn right. Mr. Basten would like the school system to be given the chance to assist in solving this issue by perhaps changing the parking lot situation. They could extend their parking lot or make a right turn only onto Omro Road through their parking lot. Mr. Basten thinks that Oakwood Road is an accident waiting to happen, but Omro Road is a safe road. Mr. Basten's intention tonight was to get an update on if Oakwood Road from Hy. 21 to the lake was going to be repaved in the near future or not.

Discussion turned to the reconstruction of Oakwood Road. Road/Drainage Coordinator Tollard responded that his suggestion is to overlay Oakwood Road from Sheldon to the lake this year, and wait for the remainder of Oakwood Road until the culvert is replaced. If the town is going to spend a significant amount of money to resurface Oakwood Road, it should incorporate a walking trail. There were questions about the expansion of the culvert to accommodate a walking trail when it is replaced. Clerk Nelson advised that the Town Board decided not to expand the Oakwood Road culvert when it is replaced because it is unknown when Oakwood Road would be expanded. However, with the type of culvert that is being installed, the culvert could be added to when Oakwood Road is reconstructed. The only way to expand Oakwood Road is by installing storm sewer (curb & gutter). The school district would have to lose some of their parking lot in order to expand the intersection to accommodate turn lanes. Perhaps a meeting between the town and the

DRAFT

school district is needed to see if there is a collaborative agreement between the two for the expansion of the intersection. It's easy to blame the school, but the school does provide bussing for every child that goes to that school. So to approach the school and ask for them to give up their parking lot is going to be hard for them to swallow.

Merrill thinks that the Planning Commission should recommend the least invasive plans before going to the four-way stop sign. Busby agrees with the painting, but the town can't paint now, nor does paint stay for very long. The four-way stop is a real simple fix to a current problem. Busby also likes the idea of flashing traffic control lights at this intersection. It would make the intersection safer for everyone. The audience didn't appeal to debating the rubberized signs by stating that with the width of the Omro Road, they would get knocked down, and who's responsible to put them out on a daily basis. A cross guard, what would their main task, directing traffic or cross children? The four-way stop would be the easiest, most cost effective way to fix the problem, and it would provide safety for everyone, not just students. Savinski agreed that the four way stop sign would provide multiple benefits for everyone. Merrill just wanted this decision to be a non-emotional decision based on facts. She didn't want to just jump to the most evasive recommendation right away and wanted to see research and recommendations from professionals before making the decision.

There was discussion on the width of the both Oakwood and Omro Road. Tollard measured Oakwood Road, Omro Road, and Leonard Point Road today. All three roads are approximately 22 feet, 11 feet on each side, not including the walk lane. From stripe to stripe is 11 feet. There was discussion on the expansion of Omro Road and Oakwood Roads. Clerk Nelson advised the walking/biking trails are mapped on the Parks & Open Space Plan which was adopted by the Town Board in 2009. The Parks Committee decided to build a park instead of pursuing the trails. It's going to cost some money to put these trails in because there's going to have to be land acquisition, and possibly curb and gutter. This issue is a combination of the school and a community issue.

Motion by Savinski/Merrill for the Planning Commission to recommend to the Town Board no change to the speed limit on Omro Road per Winnebago County Sheriff's Department and Winnebago County Highway Commissioner Mr. Winters. No further discussion. Motion carried in a voice vote, 6-0.

There was discussion on what to recommend to the Town Board. The ultimate recommendation would be the flashing traffic control signals, but that's expensive and would require other steps to be taken. To recommend a four-way stop sign would be cheap and it's enforceable. Mr. Bussy stated should a vehicle run the stop sign and hit a pedestrian, the driver would be liable because they failed to obey the stop sign. The stop sign will also decrease the congestion coming out of the school parking lot because the vehicle will have the ability to turn left.

Motion by Savinski/Sampson for the Planning Commission to recommend to the Town Board to install a four-way stop at the intersection of Omro/Oakwood Road. Below are the reasons for the recommendation:

- ***Slow traffic on Omro Road***
- ***Community safety***
- ***Provide pedestrians/bicycles the opportunity to cross the intersection safely***

DRAFT

- *Alleviate traffic congestion during school hours*
- *Help maintain vehicle speed*

No further discussion. Motion carried in a voice vote, 6-0.

It was clarified that this is only a recommendation to the Town Board. The Town Board meeting scheduled for Wednesday, March 20th, 2013 at 6:00 PM.

6. Approve minutes of previous meeting dated February 13th, 2013.

These minutes would be approved at the next meeting.

7. Adjourn.

Motion to adjourn by Drexler/Nelson. No further discussion. Motion carried in a voice vote, 6-0. Meeting adjourned at 7:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Charlotte K. Nelson, WCMC
Town Clerk
Town of Algoma, Winnebago County, WI