

Minutes
Township of Falls
Neighborhood Traffic Advisory Committee

August 8, 2022

Members in Attendance:

Amy Gallagher
Ian James
Robert Leary
Ariane Presser

Members Absent:

Leon Thompson

Also in Attendance:

Lt. Henry Ward, Falls Township Police Department

Lt. Ward opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

The minutes from the April 11, 2022 meeting were approved with no changes.

Lt. Ward reported on Stanwood Road near Village Park School area we received complaints about no posted speed signs. Under the vehicle code, it is understood if it is a residential area, 25 mph is the speed limit. However, the sign should still be put up to assist people. He spoke to Jason Lawson, the Public Works Director, and Public Works posted signs for 25 mph in the proper areas. We also had the speed machine up for a few days to show the speed of the vehicles which reminds people to slow down. We also set up a stealth device which measures the speed of the people in the area without them knowing it.

Historically, when addressing speed complaints, we first try to educate people by using the speed machine and then look at the data from the stealth device to see if it warrants police enforcement. Statistics showed the average speed was 28 mph. To set up a speed check based on this information is not optimal. We did place sector cars at the time we saw the speeds were going up. We contacted the complainants, and they said it seemed to be helping.

We try to hold back on enforcement; we don't automatically go to enforcement because when we do and start writing tickets and finding violations, it usually is the people who live in the neighborhood. Our philosophy is to try to educate people; we don't want to hammer our own residents.

Lt. Ward continues with another problem area -- South Pennsylvania Avenue. We have had many complaints about speeding vehicles from the businesses. The complaints came out of nowhere. We narrowed it down to DriveTime (a business who takes in used cars, repairs them and sends them back to the lot). They are test driving the cars, so they are racing up and down South Pennsylvania Avenue.

We spoke to the manager about the complaints. Since then, the complaints have subsided. We have also noticed a big increase in traffic due to NorthPoint down at the Steel Mill. There is a massive amount of construction – a lot of construction workers going down there working. Once they start opening the warehouses, the truck traffic is going to go through the roof on South Pennsylvania Avenue and Tyburn Road, which is something we need to plan for now.

My suggestion to the Board of Supervisors is back when we had real big problems with the landfill, we had four specially trained officers that dealt with commercial vehicles. Presently, we are down to one officer who is trained, and he is out on injured leave. The Pennsylvania State Police are helping us out and sending their officers here as much as possible. However, for the future, I would suggest to the Township get at least six officers trained in this specialty due to the continued trash truck traffic and the increased freight traffic from NorthPoint. The roadways can be restricted to truck traffic so they can only go on Tyburn Road down to New Ford Mill Road, down to the landfill. However, the transport trucks transporting cargo from the warehouses can travel on any road if it is a state-maintained highway. They can travel on South Pennsylvania, Bordentown Road, New Ford Mill Road, etc. Until we see what it is going to look like once they start operating at NorthPoint, we are going to be covering multiple avenues of egress to the Steel Mill. Therefore, the more officers we have the better.

Lt. Ward reports as far as accidents, we are still on par with our normal statistics. Most of our serious accidents are still occurring on Rte. 13 and Rte. 1. We have had three accidents in the past two months involving scrap trucks coming down off Rte. 13 and hitting the bridge on Tyburn Road. Their loads are too high. We are working with the State Police and PennDOT. Every time the bridge gets hit, PennDOT has to come down to inspect it.

Member Leary asks about Old Bristol Pike and Penn Valley, by the Wawa – he is a school bus driver and the trucks were speeding when he was driving the bus. They were on Old Bristol Pike, not Penn Valley Road.

Lt. Ward responds the trucks could have come from Morrissey's quarry – he is doing all the construction at NorthPoint so when they have dirt or debris, they transport it down to his quarry which would explain a lot of the traffic in the area. We can have the speed machine down there and have sector cars monitor it.

Member Gallagher expresses concern about the possible traffic increase because of the Red Raven and Auto Lenders on Lincoln Highway.

Lt. Ward responds he has received several different scenarios for the Red Raven and does not know if it will be another bar. Regarding traffic in that area, it has decreased. However, with the new Wawa a little further up on Lincoln Highway, traffic will probably increase a bit. Historically, Lincoln Highway was a mess; now it's not such a problem. The speed limit is 40 mph.

Discussion occurs about the Red Raven parking lot and the boulders in the parking lot.

Member Leary asks if Harrisburg has approved the red light cameras for the school buses.

Lt. Ward responds no. Discussion occurs around this point.

Lt. Ward brings up Oxford Valley Elementary School and the traffic issues there when school is in session with parents dropping their children off at school. They have two crossing guards, but the sheer volume of traffic during opening and dismissal times is a lot. Discussion occurs on this subject.

Public Comment

Margaret Marino, Helen Irvine, and Dan Paschke appear to voice their concerns about Thornridge Drive. They are all residents of Thornridge.

Ms. Marino states we are looking for a stop sign on Thornridge Drive between Thinbark and Teaberry Lanes. She had emailed Nelson Whitney on December 21, 2020 who responded with a speed machine but it was placed in the wrong area. The problem is the curves of the drive. There are four consecutive curves on Thornridge Drive which change direction. The curves are only 35 feet wide as opposed to the rest of the drive which is 37 feet wide. The curves do not allow two vehicles traveling in different directions to pass each other without someone yielding because of the cars parked on the street. There is a sight issue as well with cars pulling out of the driveways.

Ms. Irvine states we have seen accidents at these curves, people hitting trees, numerous confrontations, near misses of children, near misses of other cars. We feel strongly that a tragedy is waiting to happen.

Ms. Marino continues and states Thornridge has one stop sign. She went to North Park which has seven stop signs on a straight road, and Pinewood which has three stop signs. Why does Thornridge have only one stop sign which was recently put there within the last 10 years?

Mr. Paschke states the blind spots around the curves are a real issue especially with the cars parked along the street.

Ms. Irvine says we are asking for a stop sign at the top of Twin Leaf. We don't know what the process is – do we need signatures?

Lt. Ward responds in years past, neighbors would complain about the need for a stop sign and stop signs would be put up (political stop signs they were sometimes called). However, there is a system called the Pa. Registry, where an employee of the State puts in every stop sign within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in a book which means it is a PennDOT approved stop sign. If there is something wrong with the stop sign or something happens with the stop sign, you go to PennDOT because it is their stop sign. PennDOT says if a municipality puts up the stop sign and PennDOT didn't approve it, the municipality is responsible for it and any incurring problems with that stop sign. In order to get a stop sign legally, you have to appeal to PennDOT. The one in Thornridge is a PennDOT approved stop sign. He suggests contacting Representative Galloway's office on New Falls Road.

Discussion occurs on what the Township can do (restrict parking to one side of the street, painting of the roadways, speed bumps).

Lt. Ward says he will get the speed machine and the stealth device a few days after on Thornridge Drive to collect some data. We will install the devices on the safest possible place. We will put some cars in the area as well.

The residents leave.

Lt. Ward addresses the email from a resident regarding additional traffic on Pennsylvania Avenue because of the new Wawa being built on Lincoln Highway. The resident sent an email to Chairman Dence of the Board of Supervisors expressing his concern traffic would use Pennsylvania Avenue as a cut through from Vermillion Drive to get to the Wawa.

Discussion occurs about this. Lt. Ward states he will talk to Matt Takita (Twp. Manager) and Chairman Dence about our discussion, but we would have to wait and see what happens to see if there really will be a problem before we can address it. Installation of speed bumps would make the Township liable for any damage to vehicles.

Lt. Ward states regarding the NorthPoint development – we touched on this earlier about the need for officers trained for commercial truck enforcement. We don't know what to expect. It will depend on how much is coming in by ships, going out by rail, or what is going out through the roads.

There was no other business.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.