



**Ravenna City Council**  
**Streets & Sidewalks Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**March 13, 2023**

**The public meeting was held in person in Council Chambers.**

Council present: Council President Andrew Kluge, Rob Kairis, Paul Moskun, Tim Calfee, Christina West, Amy Michael and Matt Harper.

Also attending the meeting: Mayor Frank Seman; Police Chief, Jeff Wallis; Finance Director, Brian Huff; Service Director, Kay Dubinsky; City Engineer, Bob Finney; Council Clerk, Chelsea Gregor; Sherri Kotouc, Ralph Morehead, William C. Turner Sr., Tammy Miracle, Angela Huth, Dawn Rinear, Rachel Leiendecker, Sean English, Shauna McCauley, Cliff Soudil, Larry Silenius, John MacFarland, Diane Smith

**The Streets & Sidewalks Committee Meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M. by Chairperson, Matt Harper.**

**The first item was Tom Persinger from Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO).**

Mr. Harper introduced Tom Persinger from PUCO to speak to Council and stated that he will be able to answer any questions.

Mr. Persinger explained to Council some railroad facts pertaining to the city and to Ohio. He stated that Ohio ranks number 3 in the number of railways it has which spans 5,000 miles, there are crossings in 84 out of the 88 counties, there are only 70% of crossings that have active warning devices and that Ohio ranks 9<sup>th</sup> among national leaders in grade crossing crashes and fatalities but that incidents have significantly reduced in the last 16 years. Mr. Persinger stated that there are three different railroad companies that go through Ravenna and that there are 9 railroad crossings in the city.

Mr. Persinger explained the difference between federal and state funded upgrade programs for crossings and explained examples of recent Ravenna crossing upgrades. He stated that there is a consolidation program to help close railroad crossings that have low traffic counts in an effort to improve railroad safety and to upgrade other crossings. Mr. Persinger explained data and traffic comparisons of Day St. and Chestnut St. He proposed Chestnut St. as a railroad crossing update candidate and suggested to close the Day St. crossing as a consolidation proposal, adding that it will be a 100% funded upgrade and \$8,000 will be provided to assist with the Day St. closure. Ms. Michael asked who Mr. Persinger worked for and about the responsibility of the railroad crossing upgrades.

Mr. Persinger stated that he works for the State of Ohio and not for any railroad company. He explained that the railroad is responsible for ongoing maintenance to existing railroad crossing equipment. Mr. Persinger said that the safest crossing is a closed crossing and stated that the goal is to close 25% of the current railroad crossings.

Sean English addressed Council to state his support for closing the road at the crossing and stated that he has a special needs child that gets picked up by a bus that would need to turn around.

Mr. Finney stated that there would be a cul-de-sac installed on his side of Day St. and it would be comprised of railroad property and private property.

Cliff Soudil stated that there have been zero accidents at the Day St. crossing and that it ranks mid to low on the scale of dangerous crossings, and asked why Day St. and Chestnut St. were being weigh together when Chestnut St. is a more utilized crossing.

Mr. Finney stated that the railroad is looking to upgrade crossings and explained that there will be increased train traffic due to new businesses that have rail spurs.

Angela Huth addressed Council to say that there are pros and cons to closing Day St. which included a special needs child, ensuring available busing, proper plowing and access to roads, and her concern of people currently speeding up to jump the railroad tracks.

There was discussed concern that there are approximately 20 students who use the walkway to cross the tracks and if they would have to re-route down other streets to walk to school or if they would still be able to use a pedestrian crossing.

Mr. Persinger suggested talking with the school to address the situation.

Sherri Kotouc addressed Council to state that she uses Day St. to avoid the traffic congestion and stated that it is difficult to turn north onto Chestnut St.

John McFarland addressed bike access to downtown from the hike and bike trail and it was stated that bikes would still be able to cross the railroad tracks if Day St. was closed.

Larry Silenius addressed his concern that pedestrians should still have a warning signal from trains if Day St. was closed.

Mr. Persinger stated he would look into a pedestrian crossing.

Shauna McCauley addressed Council to state her concern for increased accidents at Chestnut St. and Central Ave. due to the rerouting of traffic due to the proposed closing of Day St. She stated that there are lots of students who walk from school and that going down Central Ave. can be dangerous.

Mr. Harper thanked the residents and asked that Council or City Hall be reach with any questions or concerns.

Mr. Kluge stated that the goal is to listen to residents and to make an informed decision. He stated some points for clarification which included that the crossing upgrades are estimated at \$250,000 to \$300,000, PUCO would provide \$8,000 to close Day St. and that Day St. was not considered worthy of an upgrade due to the low frequency of traffic. He added that the north side of Day St. would be a cul-de-sac and the south side would be a dead end that would exit onto Central Ave.

Mr. Kluge asked if the light at Central Ave. and Chestnut St. would be turned on from the current blinking light.

Mr. Finney stated that the current light does not work as a traffic signal and that it would cost approximately \$150,000 to fix.

Mr. Calfee stated that Council will need to get more feedback from the people on Day St. and the area. He explained that there is currently debris on the side of the railroad for the entire length between Red Brush and Oakwood and estimated approximately 10 piles of railroad ties that have yet to have been cleaned up.

Mr. Persinger said that he would see if they can force them to clean it up.

Ms. Michael stated that she was reluctant to deal with the railroad and said that there needs to be a better way of reaching out to people.

Ms. West thanked everyone who attended.

Mr. Moskun stated that the railroad has lots of questions that still need to be answered.

Ms. Michael stated that if there is still an issue with people jumping the railroad tracks to contact the Ravenna police department and that they are happy to help.

Mr. Harper stated thanked Mr. Persinger and the audience for their feedback and stated that the discussion will continue.

- The item was for discussion only.

There was a five-minute recess as residents left the meeting.

#### **The second item was the city-wide clean-up.**

Mr. Harper stated that the city-wide clean-up will be held May 6<sup>th</sup> for Wards 1 and 2, May 13<sup>th</sup> for Ward 3 and May 20<sup>th</sup> for Ward 4.

- The item was moved forward.

#### **The third item was a striping contract with JD Striping and Services.**

Mr. Harper stated that the item is for the annual striping of crosswalks and turning lanes in the sum of \$83,367 from the Paving Fund.

- The item was moved forward.

#### **Management Update**

Mayor Seman stated that he does not think the railroad will be difficult to work with and that they spent a lot of time working with LG Chem, adding that the speed of the trains will not increase. He explained that the railroad tracks have been improved up to Freedom St. and that he can give a call to the railroad to have them come out and answer questions. Mayor Seman stated that he was glad that a number of residents came out to attend the meeting and speak on the subject. He explained that there will still need to be a pedestrian crossing if the railroad closes the crossing to protect pedestrians, adding that many kids listen to music with ear buds.

**There being no further business for discussion, the meeting adjourned at 7:32 P.M.**

**ATTEST:**

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**Clerk of Council**

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**Matt Harper, Chairperson  
Streets & Sidewalks Committee**