

**VILLAGE OF LAKE BLUFF
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE
REGULAR MEETING
NOVEMBER 25, 2019**

APPROVED MINUTES OF MEETING

The Village of Lake Bluff Board of Trustees met as a Committee-of-the-Whole (“COW”) in the Village Hall Board Room (40 East Center Avenue) on Monday, November 25, 2019. Village President O’Hara called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. In the absence of the Village Clerk, Village Administrator Drew Irvin called the roll.

The following were present:

Village President:	Kathleen O’Hara
Trustees:	Barbara Ankenman Joy Markee William Meyer
Absent:	Regis Charlot Aaron Towle Megan Michael, Village Clerk
Also Present:	Drew Irvin, Village Administrator Michael Hosking, Interim Chief of Police Erik Gehrke, Police Sergeant Glen Cole, Assistant to the Village Administrator

Non-Agenda Items and Visitors

President O’Hara stated the COW allocates 15 minutes for those individuals who would like the opportunity to address the COW on any matter not listed on the agenda.

There were no requests to address the COW.

Consideration of the Minutes from the October 28, 2019 Committee-of-the-Whole Meetings

Trustee Ankenman moved to approve the October 28, 2019 COW minutes. Trustee Markee seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

Continued Discussion Regarding Golf Cart Regulations on Public Streets

Village Administrator Irvin introduced this item, which is a continuation of the COW’s October 28, 2019 discussion regarding the operation of golf carts on Village streets. He stated that a draft set of golf cart regulations was included in the packet but have not yet been reviewed by the Village Attorney. He also provided an overview of the Staff comments transmitted in his cover memorandum as well as two items raised by Trustees Ankenman (storage) and Towle (electric incentives) that would need further review.

Staff Presentation

At the invitation of the Village President, Interim Chief of Police Michael Hosking and Police Sergeant Erik Gehrke came forward to present to the COW. Sergeant Gehrke led the presentation.

Sergeant Gehrke presented the proposed regulations for a golf cart pilot program based on the experience of Arthur, Illinois; applicable State statute; and unique conditions observed in Lake Bluff. He stated that operation would be limited to licensed and insured drivers ages 21 and older; that operation would only be permitted April 1 through October 31 annually; and described the restrictions on use applicable from State statute including a prohibition on operating these vehicles on State Roads. He continued to say that many rules applicable to motor vehicle drivers would apply to golf cart drivers, including required seatbelts and child seats; prohibitions on driving under the influence; parking regulations; and minimum safety equipment such as turn signals. He stated that the Village would issue permits for golf carts after an annual inspection, which could be suspended or revoked for violations. He presented maps illustrating the lawful and unlawful streets upon which a golf cart could be operated.

Sergeant Gehrke continued to present data on vehicular crashes in the Village. He stated that there are about 200 to 220 vehicular accidents annually, and that between 13 and 20 each year involve injuries. He stated that these accidents are not exclusive to Routes 41 and 43 and, further, that there are 20 to 40 accidents per year in the neighborhoods in east Lake Bluff. The highest frequency of crashes occurs at the intersection of Green Bay & Route 176 as well as in the Central Business District – both places where golf carts could legally operate. He presented maps illustrating the frequency of crashes, data on prevailing speeds along Green Bay Road, crash tests involving golf carts, and examples from the media of golf cart crashes.

Chief Hosking thanked Sergeant Gehrke for his presentation. He stated that he had carefully reviewed the crash videos, Lake Bluff statistical data, and the absence of other communities in Lake County authorizing golf carts on municipal streets. He would struggle to recommend a pilot program given the severity of the crashes. In response to a question, he stated that he had spoken to Lake Bluff School District 65 superintendent Jean Sophie who believed they would be dangerous additions to traffic in school loading and unloading zones.

Village President O’Hara thanked Chief Hosking and Sergeant Gehrke for their presentation and asked if there were questions from the COW.

Trustee Comments

Trustee Meyer stated there are federal standards regarding motor vehicle safety for a reason. He expressed his appreciation for Mr. McKendry’s advocacy but must remain opposed to a pilot program for public safety reasons. He also stated his belief that a pilot would be impractical as a user could not lawfully drive from the Village’s eastern neighborhoods to the Lake Bluff Golf Course under the administration’s proposed regulations.

Trustee Markee stated that she has continued to research this issue and safety is the largest concern weighing on her decision making. She stated that a typical SUV is roughly 3-4 times heavier than a golf cart and that people aren’t looking for golf carts on the streets. She also expressed her appreciation for Mr. McKendry’s efforts but said she must concur with Chief Hosking’s recommendation not to conduct a pilot.

Trustee Grenier asked if there was no lawful connection between the West Terrace and the east side of the Village under the administration’s proposed regulations. Sergeant Gehrke responded affirmatively and described the crossing restrictions under the regulations and state law.

Trustee Grenier asked if the towns who had allowed them had negative experiences. Chief Hosking

responded that he spoke with the Chiefs of Police of Arthur, Illinois and Manteno, Illinois. He said that both found it compatible and did not have any regrets, but that neither official was in office at the time the regulations were created. In response to questions from Trustee Grenier, Chief Hosking stated that there was no desire by either official to reverse the regulations and that there were no issues with state routes similar to Lake Bluff's situation. He also stated that participation had increased progressively among golf cart licenses.

Trustee Grenier said that, in his hometown in California, golf carts are legal and used to drop off children and go downtown. He believes that the east side would be the greatest user and described the various activities that a golf cart could be used to attend. He also described the benefits of golf cart use including energy savings and environmental benefits.

In response to a question from Trustee Grenier, Chief Hosking stated that the Police Department would inspect golf carts yearly for compliance and not only upon the initial application.

Trustee Grenier said that many of the Village's ordinances are built on personal responsibility, but that it is difficult for him to tell how that philosophy would inform this decision. He stated that this presents similar risks as motor scooters or bicycles. He continued to say that, when someone requests a program and obtains numerous petition signatures, he believes the Board should be open to the request and allow people to demonstrate personal responsibility. He stated that, on the other hand, that in his 12 years of experience as an elected official, he believes that consensus is necessary before something like this and he doesn't sense that a consensus exists to act on this issue.

Village Administrator Irvin discussed the Staff rationale in not recommending that golf carts be allowed on bicycle paths. Trustee Grenier stated that he did not believe these vehicles were good neighbors with bicyclists and walkers. Trustee Markee asked if that was Lake County's jurisdiction to determine; Village Administrator Irvin responded that it was the Village's decision. He also stated that Mr. McKendry started the conversation with Lake County regarding this subject.

Trustee Grenier continued his previous statement to say that he finds pilot programs attractive for these type of issues, but that it would be impractical to run a short pilot. If users buy a golf cart and the Village terminates the pilot after one or two years, that is a problem.

Trustee Ankenman echoed many of the previous comments. She stated she believed that the sum of regulations regarding where driving can occur would be unintuitive for a driver, especially without signage. If signage is added, that would detract from the beautification of the Village. She also expressed concern for additional noise, such as the backup alarms that are standard on golf carts, which would also detract from the ambiance of Lake Bluff. She understands that some people believe this is a sustainability issue but she believes it is less sustainable for residents to purchase a second vehicle in addition to a personal automobile. They are convenient but not unique, and no one is selling their automobile to purchase these vehicles. She is opposed to a pilot.

Public Comment

Village President O'Hara invited Jon McKendry, resident, to address the COW.

Mr. McKendry reiterated that he was passionate about this issue but had strived to handle it with data and not by rallying crowds to Board meetings. He offered factual data and assistance but this assistance was not used.

Mr. McKendry expressed his disagreement with a number of the concerns raised by the Trustees. He stated that non-highway vehicles not compliant with federal safety regulations are already used by the Village; that a training program could address concerns about noise and driver awareness; and that the video presented by Sergeant Gehrke of a vehicle vs. cart crash test is by a European body and is a different type of vehicle that could already be used lawfully in the Village unless the Village prohibits it.

Village Administrator Irvin replied that they would review amending the bicycle path signs that state “No Motorized Vehicles” as the Village operates these vehicles for maintenance purposes.

Mr. McKendry discussed the prevailing speeds and stopping distances on Green Bay Road, noting that a golf cart had a much shorter stopping distance (and thus ability to avoid an accident) than the 86 feet an automobile requires. Trustee Ankenman replied that a golf cart has a lesser ability to accelerate, which is also part of avoiding accidents.

Mr. McKendry asked what the source of Sergeant Gehrke’s crash data was, as he had obtained IDOT SR-10 crash data that disagrees with Sergeant Gehrke’s slide. He continued to say that the chart showed incorrect data, that the crash numbers listed represent the total number of vehicles and not the total number of incidents, and that the slide shows inflated and flawed statistics. He also expressed his belief that accidents on Sheridan Road should be excluded as Sheridan Road would not be part of the pilot. Sergeant Gehrke replied that golf carts may cross Sheridan Road. Mr. McKendry replied that they could do so at the flashing beacon; that these crashes should be included; but that other accidents along Sheridan Road should be excluded as no golf carts would be allowed there.

Mr. McKendry noted various inaccuracies and contradictions in the data presented, and stated that he would be willing to work with Staff on getting the right, accurate data. He does not believe the Board should rely on inaccurate data or basing its public safety decisions on flawed data.

Mr. McKendry turned to the news stories shared in Sergeant Gehrke’s presentation. He stated that these are sensational headlines from southern states that have long allowed these vehicles. He asked if the trustees had reviewed the circumstances or just the headlines. Trustee Markee responded that she read a few of the stories, including the Antioch crash and the crash involving a child death. Mr. McKendry responded that he would not allow anyone underage to operate these vehicles and provided additional examples. He reiterated Trustee Grenier’s point regarding personal responsibility.

Mr. McKendry expressed his thanks for Sergeant Gehrke for his efforts. Sergeant Gehrke responded that he had reviewed the slides during Mr. McKendry’s discussion. He believes Mr. McKendry is accurate that the slides showed the number of vehicles rather than the number of incidents on the quantity charts, but he believes that the maps – based on dispatch data – are accurate. He noted that the Police Department’s districts do not align clearly with the regions proposed for the pilot program.

Trustee Comments

Village President O’Hara asked for concluding remarks from the Trustees.

Trustee Meyer said that his most fundamental obligation as a trustee is the police power and the protection of public safety. He believes that cars and golf carts are fundamentally incompatible. He further believes that the nature of the community, the road layout, and the uses cases are all poorly matched to Lake Bluff. He expressed his opposition to a pilot program.

Trustee Markee concurred. She stated that alternatives to golf carts exist and that she is unsure they need to be added. She complimented Mr. McKendry's work but does not want to see people hit and injured.

Trustee Grenier said that he had less concerns about safety aspects and personal responsibility. He looked at a State of Michigan study and believes there needs to be a strong use case that doesn't exist in Lake Bluff. He would be more excited if there was a police partnership here and if the police felt like they could support it, but that's missing. He doesn't believe there's enough value to the community to be worth regulating and monitoring this activity.

Trustee Ankenman said she understood some of the data presented was challenged and that it could be refined; however, even if it was cut in half, it is too much for her to be comfortable with. Individuals have rights and responsibilities, but she as a Trustee is responsible for what the Village allows and if it allowed something that could lead people into harm. She is not in support of proceeding.

Village President O'Hara stated that, based on the consensus of the COW, Staff would not continue to study this issue.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Trustee Meyer, seconded by Trustee Grenier, and passed on a unanimous voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

R. Drew Irvin
Village Administrator