

# Village of Germantown Hills

## Special Village Board Meeting-Somerset Multi-Use Path Germantown Hills School District 103 Warrior Way, Germantown Hills, IL April 16, 2024, 6:00 p.m. Agenda

1. **Call to Order/Roll Call/Pledge of Allegiance-** Jeff DeGroot, Village President called the meeting to order at 6:00p.m.

Village President/Trustees	Roll Call	1	2	3
Jeff DeGroot – President	Present	Y		
Stephanie Chaon	Absent	-		
Heather Armistead	Absent	-		
Nathan Henricks	Present	Y		
Tom Eckstein	Present	Y		
Karl Figg	Present	Y		
Todd Rice	Present	Y		

Also, in attendance:

Bill Streeter, Village Attorney

Chuck Urban, Village Attorney

Scott DeSplinter, Village Engineer

Emily Munday, Village Engineer

Mark Wright, Woodford County Sheriff's Department

Dan Mair, Superintendent of Germantown Hills School District

Everyone stood and said the Pledge of Allegiance.

### 2. **Village President Statement**

Jeff DeGroot thanked everyone for coming to the special meeting on the Somerset Multi-Use project. Jeff explained the history of the project. The village has worked over ten years to come up with ways to keep the kids off the street and slow the traffic down. The village installed speed humps, utilized an electronic radar sign, and requested additional police coverage. Jeff stated tonight's meeting is to address the Somerset Multi-Use path only. Jeff noted that kids come from throughout the community, arriving at Somerset, and this is the area where there is the most need.

Over the years the village has collaborated with the Woodford County Sheriff's office and the School District to get the kids off the road and provide a safe route to school. The engineer had put together options for an offroad pedestrian walkway. The project scope for the Somerset path is to stop at Westminster with nothing planned past that point.

### **3. Germantown Hills School District Statement**

Dan Mair, Superintendent of the School District clarified he was stating this as the Superintendent and not as a representative of the Board of Education. When he started in 2012, he could see early on the bottleneck on Somerset and the initial concerns with all of the kids. The village has tried speed humps and radar signs and there is still a consistent issue of concern. The plan has always been to get the kids off the street, but it was always contingent on funding. The village finally secured a grant which would make it possible to get the kids off the road. The focus is on getting the kids off the street.

### **4. Woodford County Sheriff's Office Statement**

Captain Marc Wright from the Woodford County Sheriff's Office stated that his stance is public safety. IDOT, Germantown Hills Fire Department, the School District and the village have worked along with the Sheriff's Office with the belief that the kids' safety is the most important thing. He has deputies by the crossing and on Somerset all of the time. IDOT worked with everyone to get the lights to stop all traffic in all directions at the intersection. Marc noted anyone that has been in the area has seen the kids and knows the cars have to weave around kids. Marc has been out there for years and years at the crosswalk and on Somerset and whatever the solution, it's safety for everyone. Public safety is the issue. Marc has been attending the board meetings since 2011 to talk about what can be done and work towards a solution.

### **5. Somerset Multi-Use Path Project Presentation**

Emily Mundy and Scott DeSplinter from Crawford Murphy Tilly were in attendance to help answer any questions on the project. Emily thanked everyone for being here. Emily explained the project details including:

- project limits (Westminster to Arbor Vitae, connecting to a crosswalk)
- project funding (unusual to have construction and engineering fully funded)
- purpose & need (provide safer accommodations for pedestrians/bicyclists)
- anticipated start date of construction (Summer 2024)
- planning & environmental review
- showed limits of project (Westminster to Arbor Vitae)
- reviewed existing conditions (currently no pedestrian space)
- explained the need to provide a separation so pedestrian traffic is not sharing the road with vehicles
- explained the design with planning & design engineering standards (curb & gutter, vegetative barrier, 8' path within the right of way), without a vegetative buffer it would require a physical barrier.

Emily explained the proposed drainage which will follow existing flow lines. The driveway culverts will be removed and replaced. The water off the roadway will go into a storm drain. The houses are set back a minimum of 30 feet with some 40 feet from the public right of way.

### **6. Public Comments/Questions – Explanation of Rules**

Ray Lees from the Tri-County Planning Commission was in attendance and stated as a designated MPO they represent local authority but didn't oversee these plans as it is a local road. He noted what is proposed is consistent with the sidewalk plan, Comprehensive Plan, and the Safe Routes to School initiatives. In addition to public health, it is consistent with the long-range transportation plan.

Jeff DeGroot noted per village code the public comment would be a limit of 5 minutes to each person wishing to speak and each person may speak two times.

**The public comments in the minutes are a summary of comments and are not verbatim.**

Randy Perau, 213 Whispering Oaks was in attendance to oppose the path. He mentioned the need to close Somerset and have Hannah Drive go out to Route 116 and felt the speed humps weren't working.

Kitty Cullett, 705 Somerset Drive was in attendance to oppose the path. She stated she heard about the path in October and that it is going to be in the right of way. Through a FOIA request she received information on the path. Kitty asked when there was a meeting to approve the grant application. There was a map that was submitted with the grant application showing an extension going through Coventry Farm. She noted she wanted to be a part of the planning and discussion.

Ann Doubet stated the map that was included in the grant application was a concept map from the village's bike/walkway master plan list. The planning list shows three different options for a potential future sidewalk connection through Coventry Farm.

Julie Hodges, 715 Grandview Way stated she walks and bikes a lot and deals with the traffic and with more traffic coming in the future with the athletic complex she questioned if this is being discussed with other entities in terms of potential future issues.

Angie Agatucci, 322 Kingsbury Road who grew up in Whispering Oaks understands the need for the safety of the children but was concerned with the potential traffic with the new park, Somerset Path and MTCO Park.

Jeff DeGroot noted he would look to put an agenda item on a meeting to discuss potential traffic concerns with the new developments in the community.

Nicole Wilson, 514 Mayfair Court, commended the school to provide safety for the kids to get to school but asked if the kids have to walk or bike to school. The crossing guards and Woodford County officers do a wonderful job.

Dan Mair stated it would be virtually impossible to prohibit kids from walking and biking to school.

Teresa Haines, 608 Somerset Drive, stated she has lived here for years and loved when it was a dead-end street and questioned if there was consideration to close down Somerset.

Jeff Dale, 111 Michael Court noted he drives a bus and he used to drive down Somerset. He stated he understands why this is needed as the kids walk so close to the bus that at times, they hit the bus and all it would take is for one of them to fall under the bus. He's not sure of the solution so he doesn't support or oppose the project.

Damien Cruse, 201 Whispering Oaks, questioned why he didn't know about the path. He's concerned with the drainage, home values and losing some parking spots on his property.

Emily Munday, CMT Engineer stated in December that each property owner was given a map showing where the path was going in the right of way and the drainage.

Jeff DeGroot noted the project has been in the review phase, so since December the village hasn't been able to comment further on the project. The village met with 10 of the 11 property owners that were willing to meet and discuss the project and they were able to ask questions. Jeff DeGroot noted the path is in the right of way, not on personal property, and will be fully funded by the grant.

Jeff Ricketts, 701 Somerset Drive stated he was concerned with the home values, sidewalk maintenance and liability issues. He questioned if he would have to shovel the sidewalk.

Bill Streeter noted residents would not have to shovel the sidewalk or maintain it.

Chuck Urban stated the Illinois Snow & Ice Removal Act protects the property owner.

Angie Carlson, 300 Westminster stated the traffic is horrible and questioned why the subdivisions couldn't be separated.

Jason Heinekamp, 310 Hannah Drive, stated he has 3 kids and is an engineer but is not a part of this project. He has done similar projects in Washington and Dunlap. He noted if he had been involved, he would do it the same way as it makes sense with the need, drainage and funding. It's unusual to get a project fully funded. He applauded everyone for being here in the audience as it shows the community cares.

Ryan White, who lives along Somerset on the south side but is not affected by the project, asked if there was a traffic study or accident report. He stated he doesn't think the kids will use the path.

Lisa Gann, who lives along Somerset on the south side, is supportive of the safety of children but feels the only thing making the kids unsafe is the amount of traffic that goes down Somerset.

Michelle Ricketts, property owner at 701 Somerset stated she appreciates being here but wished it had been done before, so the options could have been looked at.

Adam Bowton was not supportive of the path and had questions about the grant.

Danny Cullett grew up on Somerset and was not supportive of the path. He asked about the grant application and drainage.

Scott DeSplinter, CMT engineer noted the drainage will function as their system functions and the goal is to improve it as much we can.

Kathy Scheirer, 324 Arbor Vitae asked if she could get a copy of the map that has been discussed. Ann stated she could get one at the village hall.

Jeff thanked everyone for coming. The project will be in the public right of way and the village is moving forward.

- 7. Adjournment-**A motion was made by Nathan Henricks to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 p.m. The motion was seconded by Tom Eckstein. **Motion passed #1.**

Ann Doubet, Village Clerk