

Safety Committee Minutes

Honorable Council
City of Newark, Ohio
March 20, 2018

The Safety Committee met in Council Chambers on Monday, March 19, 2018 following the Finance Committee meeting with these members present:

Mark Labutis, Chair	Mark Fraizer
Sean Fennell	Jeremy Blake
Jeff Rath	

We wish to report:

1. Discussion regarding the foot bridge at St. Francis.

There were comments received by:

Carol Floyd Mt. Vernon Rd- comments were not in support of closing the foot bridge. She stated that there are many people in the community especially those that live in or around her neighborhood that utilize the bridge as a necessity to get to places for various reasons. In addition to the things the city and the school has done to make it safer she suggested that a police officer periodically drive down Granville Road to Pearl Street and around.

Laisha Frias, Heath- representative of Newark's Think Tank on Poverty was not in favor of removing the footbridge and also stated that the footbridge is not the real issues the problem is addressing the real safety issues and crime issues in our community. She later commented that the safety of the children living in that neighborhood should be a concern not just the safety of the children that go to St. Francis.

Sheryl Hickman, Jacksontown Rd- was not in favor of closing the footbridge.

Mr. Blake- asked the Chair what was the reason the footbridge was on the agenda for discussion, is there a plan and are there people in favor of closing it.

Mr. Marmie- I asked for it to be back on the agenda because recently in the media everybody is saying the first thing you need to do is to protect your children and with everything going on I want to make sure our community doesn't become that situation. He stated that it is about safety issues, it isn't about the bridge itself. The issue he stated he had on it was where are we on this? We have a safety concern, we have to address it and we have to resolve it for the children who are exposed to that safety concern. Later

he stated that the fact that the school is a parochial school has nothing to do with the issue or the concern.

Irene Kennedy, Shelbourne Place- stated that at a meeting Father Sizemore stated that there are cameras in place others that will be installed and there will be a sign at eye level on the side of the campus where the footbridge is stated that the property is under surveillance. She stated that the issues have improved and that there is no more talk at St. Francis about having the bridge closed. She suggested a little neighborhood revitalization on the other side of the bridge similar to what has been done on the other side.

Tina Osbourne, S 30th Street- she stated that she is not in favor of closing the footbridge and that she uses the bridge frequently.

Helena Stevenson, S 2nd Street- stated that she used to live on Park Ave and utilized the bridge to go to PNC to get their social security and to Opportunity Links. She stated she now has clients that use that bridge and need it to get to their places of employment.

Mr. Rath- asked have we done enough to address the safety concerns of the students, faculty, parishioners and residents of that area. He stated that we have addressed the issue both the city and the school has taken action to improve the safety of that area. The only way he knows to answer that question is to let it go as it is and see if anything happens. Nobody is debating who and whether that bridge is being used the question is have we addressed the safety concerns surrounding the bridge and I don't know how to answer that.

Mr. Fraizer- stated we have put up lights, fencing, taken down a house and it sounds like the school is getting cameras, is the outlying safety concern people fleeing from the police using that bridge?

Mr. Marmie- stated that he wished Safety Director Baum was there to answer that question because the last he heard that was the concern of the Safety Director.

Mr. Blake- stated that the school reached out to him and he went in and talked to the school about these concerns and issues and they discussed hiring a Resource Officer. He suggested forming an outreach group, like a neighborhood watch group. We tell other citizens from other neighborhoods to form such groups so I don't see why that couldn't be a similar remedy. He stated that continued discussion is good but that this forum isn't really necessary because we could continue the discussion about safety concerns in several neighborhoods in the city.

Mr. Cost- stated that the safety concerns that we were discussing tonight about St. Francis church and the neighborhood are no different than the safety concerns that we have over the entire city. There are problems between 5th Street and Pearl but those problems exist around every other church and school. He feels that the biggest improvement made was the removal of the house. He agrees the problem is not the bridge it is the crime and the drug activities.

Mr. Fennell- stated that he has been contacted by a lot of constituents about this as well and what he has heard from them is that the bridge is the issue; people use that bridge. I think that a study proved that. The point is we have to make this bridge safer. We have to make our community safer. I think this brings up that question as to how we do that. We have been working together to make these changes. I think that this

discussion should be center more around how can we improve the overall safety and crime in our community not just taking down infrastructure. Taking down infrastructure in one area is not going to eliminate the crime it is going to move it. I can't rest easy knowing that is a solution because I don't think that it is.

Elizabeth Cooper, Poplar Ave. – stated the footbridge was not the only concern but the safety of our community.

Mr. Rath- thanked her for coming up and speaking and challenged her to start a block watch or to at least get the neighbors involved that is the best way to clean up a neighborhood is to get people caring and involved.

Dave McElfresh, representative of the firefighters- several Council members have spoken about safety and have we done enough, I can't speak on behalf of the Police Department but I am aware both Police and Fire are at levels way below where they need to be. So when Council asks have we done enough and we have cut police and fire back to where they were 30 years ago I would say no. I would say that we have not done enough to properly protect the citizens of Newark.

Mark Labutis, Chair