

**CITY OF READING, OHIO
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – SPECIAL SESSION
NOVEMBER 14, 2023 – 7:30 PM**

For the full AUDIO detail of this evening's Council Meeting, please visit www.watchreadingohio.com.

CALL TO ORDER

President Mr. Daum called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Mr. Daum led those in attendance in a prayer and then the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Council Members Present: Mr. Powell, Mr. Bronner, Mr. Bishop, Mr. Boehner, Mr. Thamann, Mrs. Kroeger & Mrs. Eadicicco.

OTHER CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Mayor Bo Bemmes, Law Director Dave Stevenson & Clerk of Council Carla Kacher.

SPECIAL MEEETING DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- (1) The proposed stop sign at Dorian and Siebenthaler**
- (2) Traffic issues with the Classical Academy**
- (3) The future plans for the Classical Academy**

COMMUNICATIONS:

(1) It is very obvious to me that traffic backup each day on Siebenthaler is due to the school using a public road for staging vehicles for student pickup. The staging of vehicles should be on the school grounds. The school has a very large lot and it is not being used to its fullest capacity. Also, the school could go the two pickup times to reduce the volume.

Also, placing a stop sign at Dorian and Siebenthaler will only compound the issue and will not slow down the traffic. The backup each day is very dangerous and blocks the access of Firetrucks and Emergency vehicles.

I have worked 38 years in Logistic and and have spent 2 years helping the Cincinnati Public School with similar issues. This is a simple issue and can be solved.

Don Eling

(2) I am respectfully requesting that additional signage be part of the new 3 way stop on Siebenthaler @ Dorian be added that reads "no stop required when turning right" for traffic travelling north on Siebenthaler when wanting to turn onto Dorian Drive.

This signage will not impact the reason for the new stop signs being installed and will move traffic onto Dorian quicker when high volumes of traffic start to build up on Siebenthaler for school traffic. I have lived on Dorian since 2012 and turning right onto Dorian without a stop has never been a concern or safety hazard for vehicular or pedestrian traffic.

Thank you for expressing my opinion and concerns,

Chris and Sherry Fritsch

Christopher D. Fritsch
Zoning and Project Administrator

(3) While I am unable to attend today's meeting I would like to state I have no objection to the stop sign at Dorian and Siebenthaler. Living between Carol and Dorian, we witness numerous vehicles traveling at a high rate of speed. I believe the stop sign would deter daily commuters and visitors as well as delivery trucks from barreling up and down Siebenthaler (we have one frequent crazy FedEx driver!).

I would like to recommend signs be installed reminding drivers of the school zone speed. I believe there is only one right off Hunt Road on Siebenthaler.

Thank you, Deb Whitworth

(4) We are writing in regards to the proposal of stop sign installation on Siebenthaler Ave. We know that during CCA school hours traffic backs up onto Hunt Road, but how does installing a stop sign help this issue? A stop sign in our opinion, would prevent a constant flow of traffic even at a slow rate of speed. We believe that a stop sign would further create backup onto Hunt Road, causing more problems on a much more congested road way.

The school has been efficient in communication to the residents. In August we were notified by the school to expect increased activity during certain times of the day. They have always sent mail/apology to our home when an issue has occurred.

In our experience, the drivers dropping off and picking up their children have been courteous, allowing us to exit from Dorian Drive onto Siebenthaler Ave. We understand the frustration of the residents on Siebenthaler towards the school and hope that the school and the city can rectify this problem together.

Thank you, Jeff & Holly Norton

(5) My husband and I have been residents of Siebenthaler for 15 years and are very concerned with the proposed growth of the Classical Academy. Since the school has opened, traffic on the street has been extremely disruptive. For several hours every week day it is virtually impossible for us to access our driveway. Cars constantly block our driveway. We have to plan our schedule knowing that we will not be able to enter or exit our driveway during school drop off and pick up times. The posted speed of 25 mph is ignored daily for the drivers of students that are late for school.

If the school gets its wish and they are allowed to expand the campus at its current location the traffic situation will become unbearable. Siebenthaler was not built to withstand the increased amount of cars that a school expansion will bring. The lack of another access point to the campus is alarming in an emergency situation.

My husband and I would like to formally express our opposition to the proposed school expansion.

If you would like to discuss this further I can be contacted at 513-733-4433

Sincerely, Carol Vonderhaar & Robert Vonderhaar

Motion made by Mrs. Eadicicco, seconded by Mrs. Kroeger to receive and file the communications. Motion carried by voice vote.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:

(1) **Sister Jerry** –Lives on the school's property and has not witnessed discourteous drivers. Admits the traffic does become congested but that is expected. The only time that she has witnessed speeding is when a child is late for school. It is her opinion that there is no sense to add a stop sign at Dorian; it will make the traffic issues worse.

(2) **Mark Singer (141 Siebenthaler)** – Mr. Singer was the person who proposed the stop sign for speed control since there is no crosswalk on Siebenthaler. He believes a stop sign will break the speeders and open up Dorian residents to be able to exit the road safely. Likes the school now – not in favor of expansion.

(3) Ken Hinkin (165 Siebenthaler) – Has removed his pick-up truck from the bottom of the hill and ever since removing the truck the speeding has increased. Not sure if the stop sign will work or not work, but it should help a little. Proposed that Police officers sit there during the school hours as a way to keep people to a reasonable speed for the school zone.

Mr. Boehner's response: Has asked the school to look into hiring an off-duty Hamilton County Sheriff for traffic detail. One at Siebenthaler & Hunt, and one at the other end of Siebenthaler. The traffic study analysis determined that the issue wasn't so much about speeding, but rather that the motorists coming up Dorian can't see other motorist coming up Siebenthaler due to all the cars being backed up. It is due to the "lack of sight clearance" as to why a stop sign was recommended.

(4) Sue Renderly – Would like to have speed limit signs installed (like the ones on Bolser Ave) coming both up and down the Siebenthaler hill.

(5) Dennis Eling – Stop Sign will be right outside of his driveway. He would like to see rubber speed bumps installed like the ones down by the Cincinnati Zoo.

Response from Mayor Bo Bemmes – We have looked into those types of speed bumps before and unfortunately, they are considered horrible for Public Works for snow removal. The rubber speed bumps would have to be removed for snow removal, the bolts replaced each time since they get destroyed with their removal and new holes drilled when reinstalling them back after the snow season. The Public Works Department and the City Engineers prefer the type of speed humps that have been recently installed onto Thurnridge. Additionally, speed bumps/humps on any hills are a safety issue.

(6) Angie Lattire (157 Siebenthaler) – Suggested looking into a right turn only onto Hunt Road during school hours. She believes this would allow traffic to move more freely. Also would like to see installing speed bumps (like the ones on Thurnridge) only at the top of the Siebenthaler hill.

(7) Jed Harting (President of Cincinnati Classical Academy School Board) – The school couldn't be happier to be in City and community of Reading. Currently, the Cincinnati Classical Academy is at maximum capacity. The goal is to add another grade level each year. So next year, with the addition of seventh grade, they are seeking a lease agreement with Our Lady of the Valley to utilize the old St.s Peter and Paul School building. The idea being that they would split the school between the two campuses. If they are able to secure the lease with Our Lady of the Valley, this would allow them to revert back to having 450 students at the Siebenthaler campus (right now there are 600 students at the Cincinnati Classica Academy) and the remaining students would attend the St.s Peter and Paul school building. If this lease option fails, not sure where they'll go. They've been looking all over the Cincinnati area for 3 years (from Miami Township up to Hamilton, Blue Ash, Springdale and ever locale in between) and it proving to be a tremendously difficult task. There are dozens of criteria to meet & zoning issues. They appreciate the City's and the Siebenthaler neighbor's patience throughout this process. They recognize the traffic issues and the concerns of the single entranceway into the subdivision and school. It is recognized that it is improbable that the Siebenthaler location could serve the long-term vision of 1,200 students. The school makes decisions based on data, not based on presumptions, and so they have commissioned their own traffic studies. Their focus for the past nine months has been on a property in Miami Township, near Wards Corner. This property is currently zoned for Industrial, which doesn't allow for the existence of schools. Just last week the Miami Township Trustees met and voted in favor of denying the Classica Academy's request for rezoning. They are still interested in persuing every avenue available to them to secure that location for thei K-12 campus. They are still not ruling out Siebenthaler as a permanent campus location, until they have the data to tell them that the sacrifices that would be required to be there wouldn't be worth it. The Classical Academy doesn't know if 600 students would be the maximum enrollment at the Siebenthaler location, or if it would be 800/1,000/1,200. Right now, since the solution hasn't been found, they are staying in communication with the Siebenthaler residents, but they don't know anything yet. They are continuing to look at other sites. Until then, the focus is on splitting the campus between Siebenthaler and the St.s Peter & Paul building, but Mr. Harting still hasn't seen a draft of of the lease. That's where they are and this is the challenge of trying to meet the needs of the school. They consider it their charge to meet challenge of demand of the families around Greater Cincinnati.

COUNCIL QUESTIONS TO CINCINNATI CLASSICAL ACADEMY:

Mr. Powell asked what additional can be done to encourage additional carpooling?

Mr. Harting response: Not sure what more can be done. They already have a carpool coordinator who extensively reaches out to the school parents.

Mr. Thamann: Do you know where you are with Our Lady of the Valley? Is there a timeframe of when this is going to come to a head? Also, do you know when you'll have the results of the traffic study you're conducting?

Mr. Harting response: He writes to the Parish every week or two looking for updates. It is his belief that it has gone through the Parish Council, the Pastor, the Parish business office, the family of Parish's Council and a few lease committees. He believes it is now downtown with the Archdiocese. As for the traffic study results, he suspects they'll have those results within the next month or so since it has been ongoing for quite some time.

Mr. Boehner asked about the idea of hiring the Off Duty Traffic Detail.

Mr. Mike Muse (Director of School Operations) response - Have not reached out to bring on a Police officer yet. They want to wait until they receive the traffic study.

Mr. Boehner asked about the idea of staggering class start times.

Mr. Muse's response: The challenge is the high number of siblings that are enrolled. Different drop off times can become unmanageable for those families.

Unnamed Resident of Dorian Drive Question – What is the occupancy of the Classical Academy building? What did the Fire Marshall set the occupancy of the building to be? The school has already gone from 450 students to 600 this year and now the plan is to increase to over 1,000. You can't pack that many people into one building. **Mr. Boehner responded** that the plans would be to build additional buildings on the site. The unnamed resident continued that overcrowding that area is a Public Health problem. If there is a medical emergency, emergency vehicles cannot get through. It is his belief that the stop sign will help with the speeding and allow for Emergency vehicles to get through. He would also like to see a police officer during school drop-off and pick-up hours.

Mr. Muse's response: In 1961, when Our Lady of the Sacred Heart first opened, 860 children attended the school. As far as fire code, we have certain fire code regulations for certain spaces. For example, what was the sanctuary and is now the auditorium, we can no longer use the auditorium because per fire code, this space can only hold 485 kids. We now do two separate assemblies to safely fit the kids in there. Another example, the cafeteria, we have three lunches due to the quantity of kids the fire code dictates. So, as far as the overall building, there's not a code for the overall building, it's certain individual spaces. Current day, each classroom has only 25-26 children, maximum. This easily has no problem as far as fire code.

Ken Hinkle (165 Siebenthaler) – Considering the "data" that the school performs before making a commitment on anything, last year 450 kids at the Classical Academy didn't work. So why bring in more kids (now 600) this year when you knew the traffic issues were already a problem at 450 kids? We're here today because the traffic issues have only gotten worse.

Mrs. Eadicicco and Mrs. Kroeger comments on proposed solutions: Is a stop sign at Dorian the permanent solution? Not sure, but we have to start somewhere. This will alleviate some of the speeding and traffic issues.

Mr. Bronner – Spent some time observing the traffic today at Cincinnati Classical Academy. The worst thing he saw was the dropoff/pickup queue. He also wonders if the school can get the cars to line up into the large parking lot instead of them backing out onto the residential streets.

Mr. Powell read through the City paid traffic study.

Visibility and Unclear Traffic Control:

The line of parked/standing cars in the pickup/drop-off line creates extremely limited sight distance for vehicles turning left from Dorian Drive. Even after pulling out into Siebenthaler, it is still not enough sight distance to make an informed decision

to turn. This was displayed in the video capture in Figure 7 below.

The vehicle on Dorian Drive slowly crept out onto Siebenthaler to see past the pick-up line and was finally able to go when the southbound vehicle stopped. This is both a problem for the vehicle turning from Dorian and the vehicles on Siebenthaler due to the unexpected stop. "Waving on" traffic appears to be a regular occurrence at this intersection and is neither safe nor acceptable traffic control.

Recommendations:

Due to the issues noted in our observations, a change in traffic control at the intersection of Siebenthaler Avenue and Dorian Drive is recommended. Currently, Siebenthaler is free-flow and Dorian is stop controlled. Implementation of an All-Way stop is recommended for this intersection.

The recommendation wasn't about slowing down the speeding, it was about the line of sight issue.

Dave Stenger (105 Siebenthaler) – Asked if anyone has looked into installing another access road into/out of the school.

Mr. Boehner commented that Evendale will not allow a road into/out of the property. Evendale does not want the traffic. It would be a great solution but unfortunately, it's just not going to happen.

Mr. Harting commented that he has walked the perimeter of the whole 30 many times and they've looked up and down for ways and they just don't see one.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION:

READING OF RESOLUTIONS: NONE

READING OF ORDINANCES: NONE

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn came from Mr. Boehner, and was seconded by Mrs. Kroeger. Motion carried by voice vote. There being no further business, the meeting was declared adjourned at 8:34 pm.

X _____

Carla Kacher
Clerk of Council

X _____

Dwight Daum
President of Council