

Item 23-1128: Resolution #10-R-22, Alternate Lawe Street Truck Route

Common Council

Wed, Oct 4, 2023 7:00PM

Mayor Jake Woodford 34:40

We come now to time of public participation. At each meeting, the Common Council reserves 30 minutes for members of the public to express their views on items that appear on the agenda. We have one person who signed up to speak there was a sign-up sheet, but if you didn't sign up, that's okay. Well, we'll make sure that there's an opportunity for those who wishes beak to have a chance. We ask that folks limit your comments to five minutes or less, and only on items that appear on the agenda. So, with that, I—when I call your name, please approach the microphone, state your name and address for the record. And with that we will get underway. And [Janet S.] Welcome.

Janet S. (Resident) 35:28

I'm [Janet S.]. I live at [XXXXXX]. And my concern and that I want to bring up is about the possible changes in the Lawe street truck route. And I understand there's a lot of people in this town working for Appvion and that some changes could seriously affect them. And some folks have expressed a fear that the company might leave Appleton, and I'm interested in knowing if that's a possibility, and if there's any discussion going on between Appvion and Appleton about that possibility.

Mayor Jake Woodford 36:13

Thank you. All right, is there anyone else who wish to speak? Come on up. Your name and address for the record, please.

Kyle Jensen (Appvion - Supply Chain VP) 36:23

Good evening. My name is Kyle Jensen. I'm the Vice President of supply chain at Appvion. So here to talk about the Lawe Street designation. I'll keep it short and to a few different points. So, when we look at the broad scope of Lawe Street, there's about 9000 vehicles based on the data that's provided that head down that street on a daily basis. 279 of those are considered large trucks that would be affected by the new designation. So that's 3.1%. Appvion's volume is .3% of that 9,000. So, we've been the one company to step up and give a face to the trucks coming down that road. So, we're engaged in the conversation.

Kyle Jensen (Appvion - Supply Chain VP) 37:03

Re this—redesignating this accomplishes two things, in my opinion. One, it doesn't solve the problem that the residents are after. It's a volume issue. We're not the volume. These trucks aren't speeding down that road. There's no accidents that are on record that we've—that's in the documents that were provided. The safety concern is mitigated through that that stat alone. Two, more importantly, this opens up a precedent through the city that you can cherry pick truck routes. We start cherry picking truck routes, and we start overloading those truck routes left, you're gonna cause a real concern, and a real safety issue through the city. If this is a network conversation, Appvion and myself would come to the table for a network conversation. But the Lawe Street itself, designating that not a truck route isn't going to solve the problem on that street.

Mayor Jake Woodford 37:55

Anyone else who wishes to speak? Come on up.

Graeme Hodson (Appvion - COO) 38:04

So, my name is Graeme Hodson, I live at [XXXXXX] here in Appleton. I'm the Chief Operating Officer for Appvion, or M2S Group. I met Janet tonight. She expressed her concern about us leaving. We're not going anywhere. We've been here for 115 years. We have 350 employees. We have \$30 million worth of wages that go into this community. We have \$10 million worth of spend that we spend here in the local Appleton community area. And it gets even bigger when you go out to Outagamie County or to the state of Wisconsin in terms of the economic value that we bring.

Graeme Hodson (Appvion - COO) 38:47

Unfortunately, because we are on the Lawe, you know, the Lawe Street area, we were invited to the committee meeting and the listening sessions. And we've kind of become the face of business for this whole issue which is a little unfortunate for us because a lot of the letters and stuff that have come in to the to the municipal services committee and to the to the City Council have kind of singled out Appvion.

Graeme Hodson (Appvion - COO) 39:15

We've been asked about whether we would build a warehouse somewhere else. To build a building that we would need is \$23 million, just for an empty shell of a building, not including all the services. So, we really value our local neighbors and we really value their input, but you know, taking a ware—taking a warehouse somewhere else is just not going to work for us.

Graeme Hodson (Appvion - COO) 39:36

I think we sent a letter into to the Department of Public Works that kind of outlined the cost, but what I would remind everybody is, you know, there's a cost to Appvion for taking for taking the truck route designation and forcing us to go a different direction. One of which is going through the middle of downtown which I don't think is a great scenario either. The other one using 441 and having to enter an exit that highway on inclined ramps and with a semi-truck, which you're just not going to get up to speed 65 miles an hour. I drive 441 every morning. It's not 65 miles an hour. Just pointing that out.

Graeme Hodson (Appvion - COO) 40:17

But you know—so there's a cost to Appvion, but my colleague referenced the fact that we are we are .3% of the trucks or 10% of that 3.1%. So, we're negating the value of that other 90% of people that drive trucks down there. They're going somewhere, and most people that drive a truck is gonna take the most effective route, the most efficient route to get there. So, there was a gentleman that did a really nice job of trying to calculate what our costs were. I think his number was \$75,000. It's not \$75,000. It's higher than that—quite a bit higher than that, actually. But when you figure out we're 10%, you take that number and you start multiplying it up by the other 90%, because I'm sure their costs are going up too. You're not hearing from a large number of businesses that use that truck route on a daily basis.

Graeme Hodson (Appvion - COO) 41:07

I will go on record and say that one of the things we heard at the listening session was the noise of truck traffic at night, and Appvion has offered to re review all of our trucking, and between the hours of 10pm and 5am we will not run trucks down Lawe Street so residents can have a peaceful evening, during the what most people call their sleeping hours. So—but we're open to other things.

Graeme Hodson (Appvion - COO) 41:34

But the thing that I do want to go on record especially for one of our neighbors here is, look, changing the designation of a truck route is not going to force Appvion to leave Appleton. We are now part of a much larger organization. We're private equity owned, and we're owned by Wynnchurch Capital down in Chicago. But it's

not just Appvion anymore. M2S—if you've driven by our building, you'll see three signs—M2S, Appvion, and Nekoosa. So, we now own Nekoosa, which has facilities in New Jersey, Las Vegas, here in Wisconsin, and also in Europe. So, we're a much larger organization, and we are committed to staying here in Appleton and continuing to invest in this community.

Graeme Hodson (Appvion - COO) 42:17

And I will share with you that since we've been acquired by Wynncchurch this year, we have invested more money in this in this company here in Appleton than we ever have over the last at least the six years that I've been part of the company. So, we're here to stay. So please don't worry about that. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 42:38

Anyone else who wishes to speak? Welcome.

Kim D. (Resident) 42:48

I didn't sign up. Is it okay?

Mayor Jake Woodford 42:49

That's okay. Please your name and address for the record.

Kim D. (Resident) 42:51

So, my name is [Kim D.]. I live at [XXXXX], right near city park playground. And so, feet from was—from Lawe Street. And thank you, Appvion colleague—Hi, Graeme—for you know, helping me understand the truck context that is a much larger issue than just Appvion trucks, and I was unaware of that.

Kim D. (Resident) 43:18

My perspective here is as a neighborhood resident with a child who grew up in that neighborhood where Lawe street really was a wall. She had a friend on the other side of Lawe street that she could not walk to, to go visit because it just wasn't it—there is a traffic volume and truck kind of challenge to having young children in that neighborhood. Integrating a bike lane with a truck route are our two income—completely incompatible modes of movements in that neighborhood. There are lots of children who live in that neighborhood, lots of children trying to navigate those streets. My own child ended up in the emergency room as a two-year-old because she was pushing her little stroller down the sidewalk and started to run towards something in Lawe street and I grabbed her arm and it dislocated her elbow. Because the traffic volume is a big problem. There's very little speed control there. It definitely is a is a street that needs work is my point.

Kim D. (Resident) 44:23

But I think the other thing is as a neighborhood person who, you know, would love to have low volume of traffic would love to see that corridor between Drew streets and Lawe street more open so that our kids could get to Edison school without it being a big issue. And the Edison school kids on that side of Lawe Street could get to city park without it being an issue. Like, that would be would be fabulous.

Kim D. (Resident) 44:45

I think there's another issue here that Mayor Woodford's presentation actually connects with and that is recruiting a workforce to Appleton, to have neighborhoods that are appealing to young families for whom it's the downtown that is where starter homes are going to be. It's the downtown where people are finding apartments to live in right now. And we do have a housing crunch here. That's a place where families could want to live and young people could want to live, people new to Appleton. And developing the Lawe Street corridor

into something more industrial, something without the trees, something even more impenetrable within that neighborhood is going to cost Appleton in many other ways than just trucks. So that's my main point. Thanks.

Mayor Jake Woodford 45:32
Anyone else?

Andrew Dane (City Plan Commissioner) 45:42

Andrew Dane [at XXXXX]. I should have gone before Kim because she does a much better job of articulating these thoughts than I do. But I just want to say thanks. I appreciate the fact that Appvion is back here and kind of holding the mantle for the business community. And as they said, they're probably what 10% or less of the truck traffic. So, there's a bunch of other businesses, obviously, who aren't here, probably don't even know we're having this discussion. So, for good or for better, they're kind of holding the weight on that side. So, there's legitimate concerns.

Andrew Dane (City Plan Commissioner) 46:23

I guess my feeling as a resident of the neighborhood and somebody who owns a couple of properties on Lawe Street, I just see so much potential with this corridor if we could get the trucks off of there. I think there is a viable alternate route. I think if you study the city's truck route designation and look at the map, you'll see there's lots of other ways around here. I think if you look at Lawe Street, it's a legacy segment of the truck route network that's primarily maybe serving a business, and I'm guessing a lot of these other trucks that are using it are just using it out of habit because it doesn't really connect to anything. South Lawe Streets, not a truck route, and then North Meade is not a truck route. So, it's basically just this isolated little segment.

Andrew Dane (City Plan Commissioner) 47:16

We have a pretty viable alternate route on Wisconsin, Ballard, Northland, Richmond, Calumet. There's a bunch of streets. These streets also have one thing in common; they're all four lanes wide and are border more commercial industrial uses already. We've got a couple handful of historic neighborhoods downtown. We should do what we can to try to preserve and enhance them. We can add more housing down here. We can create really amazing, walkable neighborhoods. So, I guess that's kind of my two cents on it, which—and then finally, one idea that, you know, strikes me as kind of reasonable too, as we're kind of sorting through this issue is, the trucks are going to have to be off Lawe Street during the '25 and '26. During construction, when they do the utilities and the reconstruction, we're going to have the trucks off there anyways. Maybe we look at this as kind of a smarter streets initiative similar to the Lawe street road diet initiative, where we, you know, test something out, see if—see how it works for everybody and then, you know, make a decision long-term following that. Seems like a reasonable path forward. So, thanks for the opportunity, and I'll leave it at that.

Andrew Dane (City Plan Commissioner) 48:09

Anyone else for public participation? Hearing none, I declare public participation closed.

[Cut to the part where items were separated out for individual votes.]

Mayor Jake Woodford 51:18

Alright, last call. Anything else? Alder Siebers.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 51:26

Thank you, Your Honor. My understanding is the authors of the Lawe Street issue was going to make a recommendation or an amendment. If that is going to happen, I would rather refer that item back rather than discussing it.

Mayor Jake Woodford 51:50

Well, we're not debating it right now. There's noth—there's not a motion before us, so right now the item has been separated.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 51:58

Your Honor, may I request that it be referred back to committee?

Mayor Jake Woodford 52:02

We have a request to refer the item back to committee. This is the item for municipal services regarding Lawe Street truck route. Is there any objection? All right, hearing no objections that item has been referred back to committee. That'll be at the next municipal services committee.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 52:18

Thank you, Your Honor.