

PLAINSBORO: Residents, police lobbying for lower speed limits

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PLAINSBORO — Police and residents are preparing to make their strongest stand yet to convince the state Department of Transportation to make the roads surrounding the Wicoff School slower and safer. At the Township Committee meeting Wednesday, residents brought their concerns to Mayor Peter Cantu, who agreed that “we’d like to win this battle eventually.”

A half-dozen residents from Edgemere and Maple avenues and Amberly Road requested that police strictly enforce the 35 mph speed limit and the 25 mph limit during school hours or that the speed limits be reduced.

Arshiya Ahmad, of Edgemere, said she and her neighbors have seen cars going well above 35 mph as well as cars and school buses failing to stop at the stop signs around the school where here are pedestrian crosswalks. She said the committee should be concerned because of the influx of children in the neighborhood.

“It’s not just the school zone, but the demographics of the area are changing,” she said. “Older families are moving out as more young families move in.”

Police Chief Richard Furda said police have tried to enforce traffic safety in the area for years by stationing more patrol cars around the school. He said police have issued 59 tickets for traffic violations around the school in the past year. According to a police traffic survey from this summer, about 90 percent of cars were traveling at 40 mph, with the remainder traveling above 40 mph.

But according to the Department of Transportation’s regulations, these speeds do not constitute a major problem because at least 85 percent of cars are traveling within 5 mph of the speed limit. Chief Furda said the DOT may also be hesitant to reduce speed limits which have been in place for more than a quarter-century.

The DOT’s website defines the 85th percentile requirement as “the critical speed commonly used as a guide in establishing reasonable speed limits.” “But we recognize that there are more children and pedestrians in the area than there’ve been, so we’re going to work harder to get their compliance,” the chief said.

One resident argued that houses are much closer to the road than other neighborhoods with a 35 mph speed limit that are also near school zones, such as the Village School on New Village Road. According to DOT information, Maple Avenue sees an average of 4,875 cars daily whereas New Village Road sees 8,606 cars daily.

“We may be able to get a special arrangement based on the proximity of the houses to the road,” Chief Furda said.

Mayor Cantu has recommended that Chief Furda speak with DOT Commissioner James Simpson about speed reduction around Wicoff School as well as school district officials about school buses failing to stop at the area stop signs.

“This has been a frustration for us for years, but now it’s more important with the nature of the community changing,” Mayor Cantu said.

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