

ESSEX NEWS DAILY

Councilman to explore possible pedestrian safety committee

By: **Sean Quinn** - Staff Writer



Photo by Sean Quinn

At the recent meeting of the Pleasant Valley Way Traffic and Safety Commission are, from left, Pleasant Valley Way Civic Association President Roz Moskovitz Bielski, West Orange W.O Council President Jerry Guarino, Anthony Puglisi from the Office of the County Executive, and John Tully of the Sheriff's Department.

WEST ORANGE, NJ — There were a total of 178 reported accidents on Pleasant Valley Way last year, according to West Orange Police Department statistics presented during the Thursday, Jan. 15, meeting of the Pleasant Valley Way Traffic and Safety Commission at the Turtle Back Zoo Education Center.

WOPD Traffic Bureau Officer Scott Smarsh said those accident reports were taken from the whole length of Pleasant Valley Way, from Northfield to Cunningham. And while that number did not include Essex County accident reports, Sheriff's Officer John Tully said the county does not respond to many accidents along the road, so those statistics would not affect the total by much.

While having that information was helpful to the commission, it became apparent to its members that they will need specific facts, such as where the accidents took place and whether pedestrians were

involved, before planning solutions. As Essex County Community Traffic Safety Program coordinator Andy Anderson put it, they need to identify what their actual issues are because the data might prove them to be different from what they expected.

“The important first step is you have to know what your problem is,” Anderson said.

“Once you have that data, you have a working plan,” he said. “Then you can start talking about your solutions.”

West Orange-based traffic consultant Lee Klein volunteered to obtain the specific accident data breakdown using the New Jersey Department of Transportation’s Plan4Safety traffic statistics program.

But Cyndi Steiner, who worked with fellow Montclair resident Kathy Smith and Anderson to improve her town’s Bloomfield Avenue corridor, stressed that West Orange needs an official traffic and pedestrian safety commission to address concerns not found in data. Steiner said near-misses, for instance, are not commonly reported, so residents should be given a chance to share their experiences to help bring about focused solutions.

“You are tossing around a lot of ideas tonight,” Steiner said. “This committee will help organize that and prioritize that using public input and the data so it does not sound like it is a kitchen-sink conversation.”

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