

**PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE
CITY OF RAMSEY
ANOKA COUNTY
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

The Public Works Committee conducted a regular meeting on Tuesday, December 13, 2011 at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Chairperson Colin McGlone
 Councilmember Randy Backous
 Councilmember Jeff Wise (alternate)

Member Absent: Councilmember David Elvig

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis G. Ulrich
 Deputy City Administrator Heidi Nelson
 Public Works Director Brian Olson
 City Engineer Tim Himmer
 Fire Chief Dean Kapler
 Street Supervisor Grant Reimer
 Park Supervisor Mark Riverblood
 Environmental Coordinator Chris Anderson
 Human Resources Representative Colleen Lasher
 City Attorney William Goodrich
 Mayor Bob Ramsey
 Councilmember Sarah Strommen
 Councilmember Jason Tossey
 Development Manager Darren Lazan
 Tony Heppelmann, WSB

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson McGlone called the regular meeting of the Public Works Committee to order at 5:16 p.m.

CITIZEN INPUT

There was none.

APPROVE AGENDA

Motion by Councilmember Wise, seconded by Councilmember Backous, to approve the agenda, as presented.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson McGlone and Councilmembers Wise and Backous. Voting No: None. Absent: Councilmember Elvig.

APPROVE MINUTES

Motion by Councilmember Backous, seconded by Councilmember Wise, to approve the minutes from the November 15, 2011 Public Works Meeting.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson McGlone and Councilmembers Backous and Wise. Voting No: None. Absent: Councilmember Elvig.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Case #1: Discuss Septic System Repair Policy

City Engineer Himmer reviewed the staff report.

Chairperson McGlone stated he likes the idea of adding degree of failure into the consideration to rank the more important cases that involve a public safety issue where action is required. He wants the policy to assure the City's costs are covered and asked if consideration should be delayed if the property is near foreclosure to allow the bank to make the improvement.

Public Works Director Olson explained there are generally public safety issues generated from a City inspection and not much flexibility to wait if sewage is discharging to the surface. He noted there are only 45 days from inspection until steps are taken so there is not much time for prioritization.

Chairperson McGlone agreed the City needed to act if there is eminent threat with discharge to the surface. He supported an alternative that would keep this cost "off the public's back" and supported City involvement only if there is no other choice.

City Engineer Himmer explained that by the time it comes before the Council, the letter has been issued and time is running out.

Public Works Director Olson noted the City imposes a 25% surcharge on top of the costs as a deterrent to asking the City to become involved.

Councilmember Backous expressed concern with the timeframe and normal course of government requiring approvals. He raised the option of crafting a policy to circumvent some approvals so it does not have to come before the Council.

City Engineer Himmer stated the property owner could be required to sign an agreement to waive the public hearing and notifications. He asked whether the suggestion is to leave the decision to staff's discretion if established thresholds are met.

Councilmember Backous noted staff has more background in these issues to make the judgment and the Council can review, after the fact, to keep an eye on the process. He felt the policy should include a process for staff to handle emergency situations.

Chairperson McGlone asked if that is an option if there is a public health issue. He noted the process could be expedited if the property owner proves they have exhausted all other financing avenues, waives the public hearing, and agrees to a 25% surcharge.

City Engineer Himmer stated the policy can be drafted to circumvent the Council process should there be an imminent health concern, the property owner waives the public hearing and assessment, proves they have exhausted all other funding mechanisms, and agrees to the 25% surcharge. If the property owner will not waive the public hearing, then the full process would be required.

Public Works Director Olson explained if the property owner is not willing to make the correction or follow the process, the Building Official has the right to condemn the house.

The Committee discussed whether assessments are paid in full at the time of ownership transfer. City Attorney Goodrich advised that assessments can follow the property if the buyer is willing to assume those costs.

City Engineer Himmer raised the option of offering incentive such as reimbursing a percentage of the surcharge if the property owner finds alternative financing and pays the City back.

Councilmember Backous stated the City needs to insure the property covers all costs incurred and he did not support the City turning into a bank with a complicated process.

The Committee discussed different terms and percentage of discounts that would cover the City's costs while still offering an incentive for the property owner to find alternate financing.

Councilmember Wise supported a shorter payback term and higher discount.

The Public Works Committee reached consensus to recommend offering a 5% discount on the surcharge if a lump payment is received within the first 2-5 years.

City Engineer Himmer agreed because if waiving the assessment process, the City's costs will be minimal.

Chairman McGlone suggested some of the restoration items be offered to the property owner in an effort to keep down costs.

City Engineer Himmer recommended that be left to staff's discretion through negotiation instead of making it part of the policy. He asked whether the Committee supported a minimum or maximum requirement for proving financial ability.

Chairperson McGlone requested guidance on the level of income required by other agencies that offer assistance.

City Engineer Himmer indicated the County uses a maximum income of \$12,000 during the previous year. He asked if written documentation should be required that the property owner has investigated other options and been unsuccessful.

Councilmember Backous indicated that would be difficult to “police” and felt the surcharge could be used as a deterrent.

City Engineer Himmer stated with the last consideration, the property owner provided an e-mail response denying participation in other programs. He asked whether the property owner should be required to submit something in writing or staff should track it down to verify that is the case.

Public Works Director Olson noted the current policy is a good system because the surcharge is a deterrent but not high enough of be a penalty, it is flexibly written, and the property owner is required to provide written communication showing they have been turned down for financing.

Chairperson McGlone supported requiring proof from the applicant that they have done due diligence.

Councilmember Wise indicated it is difficult to think of every possible scenario and the policy can be tweaked in the future, if needed.

City Engineer Himmer stated staff will prepare a report for presentation to the City Council.

Case #2: Consider Requirements for Information that Must be Included on Certificates of Survey

City Engineer Himmer reviewed the staff report.

Chairperson McGlone asked if this is required by Code. He felt there was an expectation by owners that the City enforced the Code so their building/home must be up to Code. Chairperson McGlone stated he understands the issue but wonders if it is the City’s problem. He indicated he had spoken with someone who had to hire a surveyor to certify his home was correctly constructed because there was a requirement to get flood insurance. Chairperson McGlone asked if every builder is doing it wrong and if it is something the City should be doing to guarantee it is done correctly for the homeowner.

City Engineer Himmer stated it is not required in the Building Code but final grading inspection is required.

Environmental Coordinator Anderson advised that in today’s economic times, lenders are looking more closely at flood insurance so staff is getting a lot of telephone calls at the time of closing about flood zone designations. He explained that many times it appears the structure is outside of the flood zone but the zone crosses a portion of the property. If the City does not have

floor elevations, then staff can only provide information as it appears to be to limit the City's liability. If they need to apply for a letter of map amendment and the City does not have that information to provide, the property owner has to pay for a survey.

Chairperson McGlone stated he built a home in Ramsey in 1994 and moved a lot of dirt after he took ownership so maybe the City should not get in the middle of that.

City Engineer Himmer explained it would be helpful for the City and also for the builder if the builder can prove the conditions that existed when the homeowner took over. It also lets builders know the expectations.

Chairperson McGlone asked where in this process the extra inspection should take place, noting final grade is completed after the house is sided.

City Engineer Himmer noted if the inspection is done too late, nothing can be done to fix construction. He recommended the extra inspection be done earlier in the process, prior to the start of framing, because at that point an extra course of block can be added, if needed.

Chairperson McGlone asked if this issue only concerns the elevation of the block and basement floor or to also assure the proper grade.

City Engineer Himmer pointed out there is still a final grading inspection prior to placing sod to assure a 2% slope away from the home.

Councilmember Backous stated he does not like to add costs to the developers but this process would protect the City and builder in the long run. He felt the policy was well drafted but would like to delay to implementation until the building/development fees are reviewed and that discussion is held.

City Engineer Himmer recommended it be the responsibility of the builder to conduct the survey rather than having the City hire the surveyor. The Public Works Committee agreed with this recommendation.

The Public Works Committee reached consensus to recommend the City Council direct staff to establish requirements for information that must be included on Certificates of Survey and to delay implementation until the City Council has reached a decision on building/development fees.

Case #3: Update on the Feasibility Study to Realign Sunwood Drive NW at Armstrong Boulevard

City Engineer Himmer reviewed the staff report.

Development Manager Lazan presented the overall process, noting it was initiated to get Sunwood Drive realigned to a permanent location and create one entrance on Armstrong Boulevard. He displayed a map of the proposed project area and indicated the HRA would be

asked to approve initiation of the appraisal to start the acquisition discussion to facilitate the roadway. He described the roundabout design and realignment of Sunwood Drive.

Tony Heppelmann, WSB, addressed the Armstrong Boulevard portion of the project and noted it will fit the long-term interchange layout with left and right turn lanes to meet the 20-year forecast. He noted the grade at Sunwood Drive and Armstrong Boulevard would be raised to match the future profile that will be three feet higher. South of Sunwood Drive, it will be tied back in and elevated as much as ten feet higher than the existing alignment. There will also be permanent storm sewer improvements taking drainage from temporary/rural ditch sections along Armstrong Boulevard north into the existing pond. Mr. Heppelmann noted the extension of watermain from Sunwood Drive to the west to the terminus of improvements on 147th to service the area on the west side of Armstrong. There will be some adjustments to sanitary sewer and manholes due to the significant amount of fill that would be placed over it. He explained the time to consider that is when the interchange project is actually designed.

Development Manager Lazan noted the location of the existing storm drainage pond that overflows into the wetland to the east. Once the system is built, drainage will go to Lake Ramsey.

Mr. Heppelmann stated the cost is \$1.7 million including the signal, administrative, and a 10% contingency. The cost is \$1.3 million for the Sunwood Drive realignment.

Public Works Director Olson pointed out the location of right-of-way takings, noting if shifting 147th to the south, the property on the southwest corner would be a total taking. The other locations would be strip takings.

Development Manager Lazan stated the HRA will be asked to authorize appraisals and to start negotiations on strip takings.

Public Works Director Olson advised that the cost for the right-of-way provided east of Armstrong Boulevard has not been added to the overall cost of the project.

Development Manager Lazan advised that no acquisition costs are included in the cost estimates, only construction estimates.

Public Works Director Olson noted it is not a typical streetscape but would be narrower with trails, boulevard lights, and trees.

Informational; no action required.

COMMITTEE INPUT

City Engineer Himmer reported an open house will be held on December 14, 2011, 5-6 p.m. in the Alexander Ramsey Room for Garnet Street residents to talk about proposal offered by the City Council that residents pay 50% of the road costs.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilmember Backous, seconded by Councilmember Wise, to adjourn the Public Works meeting.

Motion carried.

The regular meeting of the Public Works Committee adjourned at 6:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Olson
Public Works Director

Drafted by Carla Wirth
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.