

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

The Public Works Committee conducted a regular meeting on Tuesday, June 18, 2013 at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Chairperson Randy Backous
 Councilmember Mark Kuzma
 Councilmember Chris Riley

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich
 Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer
 City Engineer Bruce Westby

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Backous called the regular meeting of the Public Works Committee to order at 6:04 p.m.

2. CITIZEN INPUT

There was none.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

Motion by Councilmember Riley, seconded by Councilmember Kuzma, to approve the agenda, as presented.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Backous, Councilmembers Riley and Kuzma. Voting No: None.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve May 21, 2013, Meeting Minutes

Motion by Councilmember Kuzma, seconded by Councilmember Riley, to approve the following minutes:

Regular Meeting Minutes dated May 21, 2013

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Backous, Councilmembers Kuzma and Riley. Voting No: None.

5. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

5.01: Consider Stop Sign Request for 3-Way Stop at Tiger Street and 171st Avenue

Public Works Superintendent Riemer reviewed the staff report and resident petition requesting a three-way stop sign at Tiger Street and 171st Avenue. He reviewed the guidelines followed for stop sign installation and existing conditions, noting the speed limit had been reduced to 30 mph based on resident request. Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated the speed trailer was used at this location today and tracked 319 vehicles with an average speed of 29.35 mph, one minimum speed of 11 mph, and one maximum speed of 46 mph. He presented staff's recommendation to not install the requested three-way stop sign at Tiger Street and 171st Avenue due to low traffic volumes and above average sight distances at the intersection.

Chairperson Backous invited the public to make comment.

Jim Iler, 17110 Tiger Street, stated their main objective is to control the traffic and not necessarily a stop sign. He felt that traffic slowed when a speed trailer was in use so it was not a good indicator of typical traffic speed. In addition, it was used for only a short period of time today. Mr. Iler stated most traffic follows the rules but sometimes it is like a drag strip with speeding vehicles so he is concerned about the safety of his two children. He stated the neighborhood would like the 30 mph speed limit on Tiger Street enforced.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer explained that a stop sign is not used to control speed and studies have shown that if the stop sign is not warranted, drivers will ignore that traffic control so it adds more danger.

Larry Murney, 17211 Tiger Street, stated traffic does not obey the existing stop sign now. He felt the traffic report information was not complete as there had been a rollover with fatality a few years ago. At that time, the speed limit had been 50 mph and 55 mph and then the neighbors got it down to 30 mph. He stated it is a drag strip used by kids at 70 mph so something needs to be done.

Jessie Iler, 17110 Tiger Street, agreed that cars fly by and drivers use no common sense. She felt a stop sign or speed bump would require the drivers to slow down. She is also concerned with children having to cross to a school bus stop.

Mr. Murney stated in the past a Police Officer stopped speeding motorcycles and let the cars go by.

Chairperson Backous stated the Police Department enforces the speed limit and the City Council can ask the Police Chief how often they are in that area.

Mr. Iler stated he has not seen them ticketing traffic and since speeders are not there all the time, it may be difficult to catch them. He stated if they had lived next to a freeway they would acknowledge that but this is to be a 30 mph roadway.

Ms. Iler stated she does not want something to happen and noted this is no longer a County road.

Councilmember Riley stated there are rules in place that are not being enforced so instead of a stop sign that does not meet criteria, the City needs to address how to enforce the current speed limit through a combination of a speed sign and Police enforcement.

Mr. Iler asked about speed bumps.

Chairperson Backous stated they often cause drivers to speed up rather than slow down.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer agreed and stated the City has used them in the past and found they are not effective.

Councilmember Kuzma supported asking the Police Department to increase enforcement and to study the situation to determine if anything else can be done.

Mr. Iler stated it is used as a shortcut road by the neighborhood to the north.

Chairman Backous stated it may then be the same people causing the concern. He suggested determining the options that can be used, noting it would be prudent and cost effective to take the first step of enforcing the speed limit. Chairman Backous stated if the offenders are tagged, it may resolve the issue and then it can be followed up with monitoring. If the problem remains, other options should be considered.

Councilmember Riley agreed and stated he would like to hear back from the neighborhood whether it is effective.

Chairperson Backous stated it is his personal preference that residential neighborhoods have 15-20 mph roadways but that is not an option so he would support asking the Police Department to focus enforcement in this neighborhood.

City Administrator Ulrich stated he will inform the Police Chief of this request and, hopefully, the offenders can be ticketed and deterred.

Jeff Geldert, 14044 Dysprosium Street, stated from Thurston to Dysprosium it goes from 40 mph to 30 mph but when a Police car is parked in that area, traffic slows and then speeds again once the Police car is gone. He suggested using an unmarked Police vehicle.

City Administrator Ulrich stated if the goal is used to slow traffic, the City Engineer can address traffic calming options such as a curb bump out, colored concrete/asphalt, narrowing the roadway, or mid-block roundabout. He stated there are other solutions that could be vetted to determine if any are viable.

Chairperson Backous stated in Coon Rapids they addressed speeding traffic by installing two stop signs at "T" intersections and in that case, it worked. But, in this case, he supported taking a

first step of having Police Officers enforce the speed limit. He thanked the residents for bringing forward this concern to the Council so it can be rectified.

Motion by Councilmember Kuzma, seconded by Councilmember Riley, to recommend that the City Council not install the requested three-way stop sign at Tiger Street and 171st Avenue due to low traffic volumes and above average sight distances at the intersection and direct the Police Department to increase enforcement for three months followed by three months of monitoring, such as the speed trailer.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Backous, Councilmembers Kuzma and Riley. Voting No: None.

5.02: Consider Improvements to Crosswalk at Armstrong Boulevard and 161st Avenue

Public Works Superintendent Riemer reviewed the staff report and recommendation to extend the crosswalk on the west side and connect it to 161st Avenue. He stated a resident in the area asked the City to install solar powered flashing lights to the crosswalk that could be activated by pedestrians to warn them that the crosswalk was being actively used. Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated these systems are effective but cost \$3,000 to \$5,000 per location. In addition, this is a County maintained crosswalk so it would be their decision whether or not to invest in the lighting system.

Councilmember Kuzma asked about the funding source.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated the funding for the additional paving and culvert extension would be from the General Fund Budget, Cost Center 0311, and possible signage improvements could be covered by Anoka County Highway or General Fund Budget, Cost Center 0260. It was noted that staff recommends working with Anoka County to extend the pavement and culvert on the west side of Armstrong Boulevard to provide a paved surface for pedestrians to use and to leave the current crosswalk signage in place based on the low volume usage of the crosswalk on an average day.

Councilmember Riley noted that again with this case, there are rules in place and the issue is one of enforcement. He suggested a *Ramsey Resident* article reminding drivers of the need to yield for pedestrians and to ask Anoka County if the trail can be extended into its right-of-way. Councilmember Riley noted a flashing light would draw the driver's attention.

Chairperson Backous stated a *Ramsey Resident* article will not educate drivers from outside Ramsey. He stated he visited the area and found traffic was driving very fast. He noted Alpine Park has the same situation of cutting off residents from access and residents on the west side of Armstrong Boulevard should also be concerned with crossing, especially with children. Chairperson Backous agreed that a flashing light will get driver's attention and asked about funding.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated the recommended fund is budgeted \$24,000 at the beginning of the year and used for all signage.

Chairperson Backous agreed the culvert needs to be extended because the crosswalk goes towards the ditch and pedestrians cannot get to the safety sign on the other side to access the light. He advocated for approaching Anoka County to fund the flashing lights.

Motion by Chairperson Backous, seconded by Councilmember Kuzma, to recommend that the City Council direct staff to work with Anoka County to extend the pavement and culvert on the west side of Armstrong Boulevard to provide a paved surface for pedestrians to use and pay for flashing lights, and to place an educational article in the *Ramsey Resident* reminding drivers of the need to yield for pedestrians.

Further discussion: Patrick Surma, 161st Avenue, thanked staff for placing additional pedestrian signs and Chairperson Backous for visiting the site to see the issue. He stated he thinks the traffic is traveling faster than 55 mph and that drivers have exhibited they do not care. Mr. Surma stated his fear that there will be a fatality if something is not done and described accidents that had already occurred. He presented pedestrian fatality statistics and stated he does not want to ever again see a child die.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Backous, Councilmembers Kuzma and Riley. Voting No: None.

5.03: Consider Request to Construct Retaining Wall in Drainage & Utility Easement

City Engineer Westby reviewed the staff report and presented the request of property owners at 15069 Helium Street NW to construct a modular block retaining wall along their east side lot line within the public drainage and utility easement. The residents believe their side yard has settled over time, resulting in a steeper side slope that is more difficult to maintain and provides less support for their home's foundation walls. City Engineer Westby described the current conditions that have resulted in soil erosion and ordinance prohibitions against constructing permanent structures (i.e., retaining walls) within such easements. He stated staff recommends the property owner's request be denied and to establish new turf on the site that will take root to prevent erosion. It was noted similar requests in the past have always been denied.

Councilmember Riley asked if it is the case that the resident thinks the retaining wall is on their property line; however, it is actually in a City easement where building a retaining wall is prohibited.

City Engineer Westby stated staff offered another option to relocate the retaining wall closer to the home, within five feet, and at the property line so it does not infringe on the City's right-of-way. However, in that location the retaining wall would need to be taller. He stated there are currently no utilities in this easement but the property to the east includes a stormwater holding basin and it could develop. If that occurred, private utilities could be installed through this easement

Chairperson Backous asked about the option of selling a five-foot easement strip to the property owner so the retaining wall would not have to be so high.

City Engineer Westby stated the existing wall would then have to be moved about five feet towards the house and would not have to be as tall as if located at the property line.

Chairperson Backous stated selling five feet of the easement may not impact the City, especially if the abutting property has a large stormwater pond.

City Engineer Westby agreed it should not cause an issue.

Councilmember Riley asked if the intent is to build a better retaining wall.

City Engineer Westby stated staff did explain how to construct a structural retaining wall.

Chairperson Backous suggested staff determine the cost for selling a five-foot easement strip so the property owner can determine if it is economically feasible. He noted that is an option that has not yet been explored and offers an option other than denying the request.

Councilmember Riley asked if staff had explained the need to establish sod to eliminate erosion.

City Engineer Westby answered in the affirmative. He stated staff will determine a cost and schedule this case for consideration at a future Public Works Committee meeting.

5.04: Review Condition of Dysprosium Street Boulevard and Future Maintenance Requirements

Public Works Superintendent Riemer reviewed the staff report and described the turf restoration that took place following the Dysprosium Street reconstruction. It was noted that while the sod was healthy in the spring of 2012, it started to decline over the summer months due to lack of rain and hot weather. The current price is \$1.35 per square yard plus delivery costs (approximately \$4,000); however, staff recommends replacement of sod between the curb and sidewalk only if an agreement can be reached with residents that they will maintain the sod once it is established.

Jeff Geldert, 14044 Dysprosium Street, stated he was unemployed when the sod was installed and does not think they used quality topsoil. He stated he had to unroll the sod and lay down two inches of black dirt over the sand and glass along with grass seed because the sod strips were not tightly laid. Mr. Geldert felt the problem was that good black top soil was not used.

Chairperson Backous stated the City had another project with this same problem because the black dirt was of poor quality containing rocks and glass. Because of that, the City changed its policy to address the quality of black dirt that is used on projects.

Darin Rorman, 14020 Dysprosium Street, stated the contractor did no prep work and laid the sod down over the sand, his flowerbed, and existing grass. Because of this, the sod had to be watered constantly. In addition, snow and salt is pushed onto the boulevard, making the sidewalk unpassable.

Chairperson Backous asked whether some of the sod damage from the sidewalk to the curb has been caused by road salt.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer agreed it caused some of the sod damage.

Mr. Rorman stated the V-Plow comes through after a couple days but it is after salt has been applied.

Councilmember Riley asked who owns the section between the sidewalk and street.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated it is City easement but the City does not mow that grass. He explained boulevards are maintained and mowed by the abutting resident. In addition, 26 trees are being replaced as they are dying and under warranty.

Mr. Rorman stated two of his trees were removed and replaced but both are very sickly with dead branches and not marked for replacement.

Chairperson Backous stated if two trees were removed, then the replacement trees should be under warranty and replaced at the same time. He stated concern that some residents indicated they have contacted staff numerous times but received no response. Chairperson Backous asked if the new tracking system would show whether that had occurred.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated the new tracking system was installed after this project.

Chairperson Backous stated he wants the City to always be responsive to resident's calls, questions, and concerns.

Mr. Rorman asked who will pay for the replacement of sod.

Chairperson Backous stated it will be paid by the residents of Ramsey.

Councilmember Riley noted the trees are covered under warranty so the contractor would pay for those costs.

Chairperson Backous stated there are waist-high boulevard weeds in this area and residents need to understand that the boulevard between the sidewalk and curb is the responsibility of the abutting resident. He noted that some resident's yards in this project area have plush and green grass and the contractor had used the same type of poor quality black dirt on those lots.

Mr. Rorman agreed that some yards have green grass and described the work he has done on his yard to kill the weeds.

Chairperson Backous stated the resident with the plush green grass may have been constantly watering and he agreed there is a problem with sod on other properties. He stated the sod may

not have taken the way it should have but he would not categorize this as a failed project. Chairperson Backous stated if the City pays to replace this sod, there has to be an agreement with residents to mow, weed, and water the sod and trees all the way to the curb. If not, this same problem will occur.

Mr. Rorman stated Anoka County has indicated their policy is to not place sod unless a sprinkling system is in place. Instead, Anoka County uses seed.

Chairperson Backous noted it takes more attention and watering to establish grass seed.

Mr. Rorman stated Century Link dug up the back area and that also needs to be sodded.

Chairperson Backous asked staff to also include that area.

Councilmember Riley stated there is consensus to put down black dirt and resod and he agreed with the need for residents to be responsible for watering it.

Chairperson Backous agreed and asked how the City can ensure that occurs.

Councilmember Riley suggested sending out a flyer to encourage residents to maintain the sod.

Chairperson Backous asked if the sod froze after being installed and could be under warranty.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer assured the Committee that the warranty on this sod has expired.

Mr. Geldert stated another issue that made it difficult was the watering ban.

Chairperson Backous noted a timer can be used to water during times that are not banned and new sod is exempt from that restriction. He asked if a letter could be sent to residents indicating the sod needs to be maintained or will be at their expense going forward.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated the recommendation was to replace sod between the sidewalk and curb.

Chairperson Backous felt there was a larger problem than that area, noting many yards have poor turf ten feet into their yard. He suggested replacement from the project line to the curb.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer noted it takes about 30 days to establish sod and asked if the City's watering truck should be used during that time to assure the sod is established, estimating it would cost \$3,000 if it did not rain. He stated this is expensive for the City and the reason that residents need to take ownership to maintain their yards.

Motion by Councilmember Kuzma, seconded by Councilmember Riley, to recommend that the City Council approve replacement of sod between the original project line and curb, to have the City water the sod for the first 30 days, to send a letter to residents asking for their help to

maintain the sod and advising residents that new sod is exempt from the watering ban, and to use funding from the Street Maintenance Fund.

Further discussion: Public Works Superintendent Riemer reviewed the process for tree replacement. Chairperson Backous thanked residents for bringing this issue forward, participating in the discussion, and encouraged them to not hesitate to call City staff or Councilmembers if a problem occurs so it is properly addressed.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Backous, Councilmembers Kuzma and Riley. Voting No: None.

In consideration of audience members, the Public Works Committee agreed to next consider Case 5.06.

5.06: Consider Request for Use of Veterans Drive Right-of-Way Adjacent to 7700 Sunwood Drive for Outdoor Dog Area: Case of Residence at The COR

Public Works Superintendent Riemer reviewed the staff report and request from Residence at The COR to use the right-of-way boulevard area on the south side of Veterans Drive as an outdoor dog area for tenant's pets. Pet owners would be required to immediately remove pet waste and Residence at The COR would be responsible for constructing and maintaining the area. He noted the applicant has submitted a sketch drawing of the proposed improvements to landscaping. Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated if approved, a maintenance agreement would be recorded on Residence at The COR parcel to document specific maintenance obligations and process for City removal as necessary for maintenance, repair, or other improvements in the event of non-maintenance on the part of Residence at The COR. He presented three alternatives: Alternate 1 – Recommend the City Council approve the request subject to a maintenance agreement; Alternate 2 – Recommend the City Council approve the request on the north side of Sunwood Drive (Municipal Plaza); or, Alternate 3 – Recommend the City Council deny the request. Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated staff does not recommend Alternate 2 as the design and future construction of this area is undetermined and would be impacted by future construction. It was noted if the request is denied, residents would need to utilize other public land pursuant to current law or the private areas on site such as the center courtyard.

Motion by Councilmember Kuzma, seconded by Councilmember Riley, to recommend that the City Council approve use of a pet area on the south side of Veterans Drive for Residence at The COR subject to the owner making improvements, executing a Use and Maintenance Agreement, and securing the necessary right-of-way permit.

Further discussion: Jessica Fimon, Residents of The COR Property Manager, provided a picture of the trashcan that has been purchased to be placed across the street. She stated it would be picked up every day and she would like this approved so utilities can be located and the trashcan installed.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Backous, Councilmembers Kuzma and Riley. Voting No: None.

5.05: Review of Updated Costs for Reconstructing Andrie Street

City Engineer Westby reviewed the staff report, past consideration that resulted in not furthering the Andrie Street reconstruction, and renewed interest on the part of numerous area residents to reconstruct Andrie Street and 165th Lane but not to construct sidewalks. He explained that since plans and specifications were completed for this project in 2008, it could be moved forward quickly should the City Council so desire, unless assessments are to be used to fund part of the improvement. If that is the City Council's desire, the corresponding public process per State Statute 429 would need to be followed. It was noted that since 2008, a petition has not been received requesting improvements. City Engineer Westby presented three alternatives: Alternate 1 – Recommend the City Council direct staff to update the 2008 feasibility report based on the original 2008 street reconstruction design (excluding sidewalks); Alternate 2 – Recommend the City Council direct staff to revise the 2008 feasibility report to reflect the inclusion of on-road bicycle lanes, in place of sidewalks; or, Alternate 3 – Motion for other recommendation or to do nothing. He advised that the City's MSA account has been depleted and other funds are earmarked for the Riverdale project. City Engineer Westby stated if the City Council supports Alternatives 1 or 2, no funding would be committed at this time and the funding analysis can then be completed prior to finalizing the feasibility report updates.

Chairperson Backous asked if MSA could be used to fund part of Andrie Street.

City Engineer Westby explained the MSA formula used to determine funding, usually about 50%, not including things like utilities. He stated staff is asking whether it should update the feasibility report, which would be needed whether or not assessments are considered. City Engineer Westby noted by the time the feasibility report is completed, staff will have funding options ready to present to the Council for consideration.

Chairperson Backous stated he wants it clear that these residents would not be responsible for the full cost because MSA funds have been used for other projects.

City Administrator Ulrich stated properties can only be assessed up to the benefit to the property so the City will have to contribute something and in addition, it is an MSA street. He noted this project is over one mile, a big project, and the City needs to be consistent.

Chairperson Backous noted there is also a substantial cost for waiting three to four years to complete this project.

Councilmember Kuzma stated from his discussion with Andrie residents, he does not think they would support sidewalks but would support a bike path as a good alternative.

Chairperson Backous agreed there is need for a bike path.

City Engineer Westby stated with assessments, the Statute 429 process requires the City to assess a minimum of 20%. He noted if the Council wants to consider an on-road bicycle lane, it could be bid as an alternate so the cost is determined.

Councilmember Riley stated all agree that sidewalks should not be included so it no longer needs to be discussed. He felt a good alternative has been determined and supported bidding the bike lane as an alternate bid. Councilmember Riley asked when MSA funds will again be available.

City Engineer Westby stated MSA funds are several years out for accruing a positive balance.

City Administrator Ulrich stated the City had put MSA funds towards the Riverdale Extension and Dysprosium Street projects. He suggested staff determine when a positive MSA balance will be realized.

Councilmember Riley agreed this road needs to be reconstructed so it only makes sense to get a feasibility report.

Chairperson Backous asked about the road standard.

City Engineer Westby stated a 9-ton design is required for an MSA roadway.

Motion by Chairperson Backous, seconded by Councilmember Kuzma, to recommend that the City Council direct staff to update the 2008 feasibility report to reflect the inclusion of on-road bicycle lanes in place of sidewalks.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Backous, Councilmembers Kuzma and Riley. Voting No: None.

5.06: Consider Request for Use of Veterans Drive Right-of-Way Adjacent to 7700 Sunwood Drive for Outdoor Dog Area: Case of Residence at The COR

This case was considered prior to Case 5.05.

6. COMMITTEE / STAFF INPUT

Public Works Superintendent Riemer provided an update on several projects the Public Works Department has completed to clear views of a pond and address drainage of a Highway 47 culvert.

Councilmember Kuzma asked about the impact of garbage trucks from multiple companies on City streets.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated a legally loaded garbage truck equals 10,000 passenger vehicles as far as wear on the road. He stated garbage truck traffic is very hard on the City's streets and especially along the road's edge where the layer of bituminous may be thinner.

Chairperson Backous stated this has been discussed in the past and involves a discussion of free market.

Councilmember Kuzma asked about seeking bids to assure a competitive rate.

Chairperson Backous asked if it can be considered by Council Wards so more companies can be involved and the free market still exists. He noted, however, that it then dictates to residents that they must buy from that one company.

Councilmember Riley stated he would not support dictating to residents the company they must purchase trash service from.

Chairperson Backous stated another issue on Dysprosium Street is that residents place garbage carts right in the area of traffic.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated you see more of that on the south end by the fourplex units and staff has addressed it with Waste Management. He stated it is also causes an issue with snow removal.

Chairperson Backous stated residents may not know that the carts can be placed on the curb instead of into the street.

City Administrator Ulrich suggested that be mentioned in the letter that will be sent to residents about maintenance of sod.

With regard to future road reconstruction estimates, City Engineer Westby stated staff has prepared 13 different roadway scenarios, Citywide, and assigned each to different street segments to narrow down reconstruction costs over a 30 year period. That presentation will be made to the City Council and include discussion of available funding vehicles.

Chairperson Backous asked if the Interim Engineer had mentioned there was a change in bonding requirement and assessing at least 20%.

City Administrator Ulrich advised there is a provision for a five-year capital bond if it is within a Five Year CIP to not require assessments but it does require a unanimous vote of the City Council and would result in increased taxes. However, it would be outside the City's levy limits. He noted there is a need for sustainable funding for road reconstruction.

Chairperson Backous felt the assessment process wasted the City's money and that roadways were the responsibility of the entire City.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilmember Kuzma, seconded by Councilmember Riley, to adjourn the Public Works Committee meeting.

Motion carried.

The regular meeting of the Public Works Committee adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Grant Riemer
Public Works Superintendent

Drafted by Carla Wirth
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.