

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

The Public Works Committee conducted a regular meeting on Tuesday, September 19, 2017, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present:     Acting Chairperson Mark Kuzma  
                            Councilmember Jill Johns  
                            Councilmember Melody Shryock

Absent:                 Chairperson Chris Riley

Also Present:         Public Works Superintendent Riemer  
                            City Engineer Bruce Westby  
                            Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood  
                            Community Development Director Tim Gladhill

**1.     CALL TO ORDER**

Acting Chairperson Kuzma called the regular meeting of the Public Works Committee to order at 5:30 p.m.

**2.     CITIZEN INPUT**

There was none.

**3.     APPROVE AGENDA**

Motion by Councilmember Johns, seconded by Councilmember Shryock, to approve the agenda, as presented.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Acting Chairperson Kuzma, Councilmembers Johns and Shryock.  
Voting No: None.

**4.     APPROVE MINUTES**

**4.01: Approve Public Works Committee Meeting Minutes**

Motion by Councilmember Johns seconded by Councilmember Shryock to approve the following minutes:

Regular Meeting Minutes dated June 20, 2017  
Regular Meeting Minutes dated July 18, 2017

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Acting Chairperson Kuzma, Councilmembers Johns and Shryock.  
Voting No: None.

## **5. COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

### **5.01: Consider Recommendation to City Council Regarding Connexus Energy's Special Assessment for Sunwood Drive Reconstruction**

City Engineer Westby reviewed the staff report and stated that up to 25% of costs of the Sunwood Drive Reconstruction project is proposed to come from special assessments to benefiting properties. Connexus Energy is one of nine properties that are proposed to be assessed for this project. Connexus uses Sunwood Drive as the primary access for their fleet of service vehicles.

Connexus Energy has not formally objected to their preliminary assessment, and City Staff's meetings with representatives of Connexus have been cordial and productive. When the Special Assessment policy was adopted, the City used the League of Minnesota Cities' model ordinance template that could be amended at any time during the process.

City Engineer Westby stated traffic volumes and/or vehicle types were not considered in calculating assessments for any of the benefiting properties. Based on vehicle impacts of all existing benefiting properties, Connexus Energy's service vehicle fleet likely has the greatest negative long-term impact on the service life of Sunwood Drive.

Each parcel in this corridor is being assessed based on its highest and best use. This is the first business corridor that the City has attempted to calculate assessments, and the City's consultant has advised that each parcel in the corridor should be assessed based on its highest and best use, rather than its current status.

City Engineer Westby stated the Committee is requested to review two alternatives. Alternative #1 is to recommend that the City Council adopt special assessments consistent with the calculations outlined within the Feasibility Report. Alternative #2 is to recommend that the City Council adopt adjusted special assessments based on Committee recommendations. He added staff does not recommend that assessments be adjusted, and if Connexus Energy's assessment is reduced, all other assessment amounts will need to be reviewed and adjusted which could delay the Assessment Hearing and increase the City's overall contribution to the project.

City Engineer Westby introduced Mike Bash, VP and CFO, Connexus Energy.

Mr. Bash gave a presentation regarding Connexus Energy's position on the special assessment issue. Mr. Bash stated he has served in City Government in Long Lake, Minnesota, in the past, and addressed similar issues. He added Connexus and the City of Ramsey are involved in a number of partnerships, including a proposed solar farm, and it is a good working relationship.

Mr. Bash stated, in his City Council experience, he has been on both sides of road assessments. He added the City's current policy is based on the League of Minnesota Cities' model, and it is a good policy.

Mr. Bash stated Sunwood Drive was constructed in 1996, and Connexus worked with the City of Ramsey when the development first opened. He added this is a unique situation in terms of road reconstruction, because typically everything is already developed. He noted, in this case, their parcel is undeveloped.

Mr. Bash stated the City of Ramsey has looked at all the options for assessing roads, including front footage, area or per lot. He added the City's current policy is that up to 25% of the project is paid for by the property owners. He added the remaining 75% should not have to be paid by taxpayers who may or may not use the road. He noted, in any assessment scenario, the City must show that the property increases in value by the amount of the assessment.

Mr. Bash stated assessed values of every property, as well as percent of assessed values, are available on the Anoka County website. He added there are significant differences. He noted Connexus' property is vacant, but it is assessed at 5% of its value, as opposed to the other properties which are assessed at 2%. He stressed the importance of equitable assessments, and consideration of whether the 5% assessment is fair and in keeping with the spirit of the Minnesota Statute.

Mr. Bash stated, from a real estate perspective, if a property were to be marketed with a pending \$40,000 assessment, a buyer would not pay the list price because the assessment is a detriment. He added Connexus will not contest the assessment, but he stressed that he would like the City to consider possible changes to its special assessment policy.

Councilmember Kuzma stated the City Council is in a difficult position, attempting to determine a fair policy for both commercial and residential property assessments. He added franchise fees and other scenarios were reviewed, and added that the City hires an appraisal consulting firm to prepare a valuation report for street reconstruction projects to verify benefits to properties.

Councilmember Kuzma stated the preliminary assessment is based on front footage, which the City Council has deemed a fair policy. He added the final assessment can be reviewed after the valuation is received.

Mr. Bash stated he disagrees with the assessment method that the City's consultant is using, which is highest and best use. He added it is unfair as the property should be valued at its current worth, and not what it might be worth someday, which makes a judgment about future potential values.

Councilmember Johns stated the assessment policy can be changed. She added the City's biggest consideration is the successful construction of roads with a 60-year service life, by which time there may be further development on the property, including expansions and improvements. She added that since the City is building roads for the future, the highest and best use decision comes into play.

Mr. Bash stressed the importance of determining whether the assessment policy complies with State statute, which does not care about highest and best use. He added the final test will be to comply with State statute by determining whether the property value increases by the assessed amount.

Councilmember Kuzma stated he agrees but for the sake of due diligence, the consultant will review the assessments and provide an opinion.

Mr. Bash stated the consultant will not provide a full real estate proposal on all the properties, because this is a commercial area.

City Engineer Westby stated it is difficult to be equitable because lots are different sizes and shapes, but there are many ways of applying assessments. He added he referred to truck traffic because it is generally accepted that one commercial truck damages a road as much as 4,000 passenger vehicles do.

Councilmember Shryock asked whether Connexus is being assessed on different tax levels for separate lots, or if it is one assessment.

Mr. Bash stated Connexus is the largest taxpayer in the City of Ramsey. He added property taxes are paid by Connexus on electric poles, wires and transformers, in addition to property.

Councilmember Kuzma stated the Committee is in agreement with Mr. Bash that the assessment policy be fair. He added the consultant will provide a valuation that will be considered by the City Council before adopting assessments.

City Engineer Westby stated the Connexus parcel is unique in that it also has access to Ramsey Boulevard and Bunker Lake Boulevard, for which Connexus will never be assessed for since Anoka County does not assess for road improvements. He added the assessed property could be split into several parcels and that if Connexus' assessment was split among the parcels it would generally be consistent with assessments on similar sized parcels along Sunwood Drive.

Councilmember Johns asked how commercial properties with multiple driveways are assessed. Westby stated several of the properties along this project have multiple driveways and that assessments were levied on all properties fronting Sunwood Drive, regardless of whether they have none or multiple driveways accessing Sunwood Drive. He added that residential properties are only assessed if their primary driveway accesses a street being improved.

Councilmember Johns thanked Mr. Bash for his input.

City Engineer Westby stated assessment rolls must be filed with Anoka County in mid-November to allow collections to start in 2018, otherwise assessments cannot be collected until 2019.

Mr. Bash thanked the Councilmembers for their time.

Councilmember Johns stated she appreciates the feedback on this unique project, and feedback and comments are greatly appreciated.

### **5.02: Improving Pedestrian Crosswalk Visibility in the COR**

Public Works Superintendent Riemer reviewed the staff report, and stated City Staff has received resident comments about safety of drivers coming into the City Hall area on Sunwood Drive. There are twelve crosswalks on Sunwood Drive that were constructed with colored concrete, which was considered desirable at the time as it is less obvious. With 3,600 cars a day, the colored concrete crosswalks do not stand out and should be better defined.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated in-street pedestrian crossing signs are 89% effective at 30 miles per hour, and they are portable and removable. However, holes would have to be drilled in the concrete, which is not preferable, so portable weighted bases would be used. Two pedestrian warning signs are proposed west of Center Street and near the Ramsey Office Building. There is a curve in the road, causing low visibility for pedestrians and motorists.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated the roadway is not striped yet, and the situation will improve when it is striped. He stressed the importance of creating increased pedestrian safety.

Councilmember Johns stated she does not like signs, but these would be temporary and removable. Public Works Superintendent Riemer confirmed this.

Councilmember Kuzma requested clarification regarding cost. Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated the signs are \$300 each, and the City has two and four on order.

Councilmember Johns stated a notice could be placed in the Ramsey newsletter, to increase awareness of pedestrian safety in the COR.

Motion by Councilmember Shryock, seconded by Councilmember Johns, to recommend that the City Council approve the purchase and installation of “in street pedestrian marking signs” as recommended by City Staff.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Acting Chairperson Kuzma, Councilmembers Johns and Shryock. Voting No: None.

### **5.03: Consider Recommendation for City Council to Order Feasibility Report for 2018 Overlay Improvements**

City Engineer Westby reviewed the staff report and the proposed 2018 Overlay Improvements, along with estimated project costs and estimated assessments for each project area. He added most of the overlay is proposed for areas located in the west part of Ramsey.

City Staff plans to request City Council approval to prepare a Feasibility Report for this project on September 26, 2017.

Councilmember Kuzma asked whether the slides were available for review. City Engineer Westby stated the slides were not attached to the case since very preliminary assessment amounts are shown on the slides so he did not want to push them out to the public yet.

Councilmember Johns asked where access to Woodland Green is located. City Engineer Westby stated Woodland Green access is east of Highway 47 and 156<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

City Engineer Westby stated City Staff hopes to move forward with the feasibility report and potential adoption by the City Council.

Motion by Councilmember Shryock, seconded by Councilmember Johns, to recommend that the City Council order a Feasibility Report for the 2018 Overlay Improvements, City Improvement Project #18-03.

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

#### **5.04: Review Feedback and Next Steps for Comprehensive Plan Update Transportation Chapter**

Community Development Director Tim Gladhill stated the City of Ramsey's Comprehensive Plan will be reviewed in October and again at the end of December 2017. He added a draft Comprehensive Plan is due for submission by June 2018. He noted City Staff have been collecting raw data through communication with residents, and transportation issues are a big priority.

Community Development Director Tim Gladhill stated the City's traditional transportation map incorporates the Highway 10 access planning study, and City Staff is focused on selecting preferred alternatives. He added there is currently a series of 22 different exhibits that comprise a staged plan for Highway 10. He added this will be laid out in one document, which will be the Ramsey Highway 10 plan.

Community Development Director Tim Gladhill stated the other priority issue for residents is the river crossing, which will not happen in this planning period. He stressed the importance of reserving the corridor and planning for a river crossing.

Community Development Director Tim Gladhill stated another issue of focus is a Rum River crossing, which would alleviate traffic congestion on Highway 47 and Bunker Lake Boulevard.

Councilmember Kuzma asked whether that would be a pedestrian trail crossing. Community Development Director Tim Gladhill stated a roadway crossing may not be well received by the City of Andover. He added a joint meeting should be scheduled with the cities of Andover and Dayton.

Councilmember Kuzma expressed concern that a planning for a pedestrian crossing does not contribute to the transportation plan.

Community Development Director Tim Gladhill stated there will be some overlap between the transportation plan and the trails plan. He added the trails system is part of the base plan for the non-motorized components of the transportation system. He noted other ideas can be explored if the direction is to study a Rum River vehicle crossing.

Community Development Director Tim Gladhill stated the 173<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and Green Valley Road corridor in the City's north end has three disconnected road segments. He added this is an opportunity to consider intersections and shoulders to create a cohesive corridor. He noted many roads that are rural in nature do not have a shoulder, and meetings with Anoka County Highway staff are aimed at addressing that issue.

Community Development Director Tim Gladhill stated the Bunker Lake Boulevard and Armstrong Boulevard corridors are high priorities that are often raised by residents.

Community Development Director Tim Gladhill stated the trails map identifies perceived gaps in the system and areas where improvements are needed, such as the Highway 10/railroad tracks pedestrian crossing, and in The COR. He added potential funding sources for these plans will be reviewed. He noted the Comprehensive Plan probably will not contain details related to funding sources, but individual plans will have more details.

Community Development Director Tim Gladhill stated the partnership with the University of Minnesota will add value to certain components of the Comprehensive Plan process. He added these components include the transit plan requirement, which is fulfilled by the Northstar Commuter Rail. He noted long-term monitoring is proposed of a pilot study for a shuttle bus service in Fridley, that provides transportation to major employers near the Northstar Rail Station.

Councilmember Kuzma stated Highway 10 is the City's main focus, to increase safety and get it as secure as possible. He added this is an important component of the transportation plan, and trails are secondary.

Councilmember Johns stated there would be a decrease in the number of vehicles on the roads if residents were using trails. She added the City must continue to expand the trails system.

Community Development Director Tim Gladhill agreed, and stressed the importance of addressing pedestrian and bike access within the community. He added, for instance, the Mississippi River Trail, which has become a great asset to the City of Ramsey, was at one time just a concept.

Councilmember Shryock asked whether a history or record of what has been considered will be included in the Comprehensive Plan. She stressed the importance of not losing track over time of desired aspects and concerns that have been expressed, which could be an additional outcome in addition to what we are trying to achieve.

Community Development Director Tim Gladhill stated the table document can be included in the Plan index.

Councilmember Shryock stated there is a large area of farmland with a trail to be developed, and as the area and trail location are identified and developed, the City should have a way of referring back to where the City has plans for trail connections.

Councilmember Johns stated residents on the north side of Ramsey use that road to get to Elk River and Andover and back, and a trail should be identified as there will be more and more construction traffic in that area.

Community Development Director Tim Gladhill stated the City is receiving inquiries regarding the undeveloped area just north of Brookfield, which will probably be developed within the next 5-10 years. He added there is a new elementary school going in nearby, and traffic will change and increase, and quickly become a high priority.

## **6. COMMITTEE / STAFF INPUT**

### **6.01: Staff Updates on Improvement Projects and Items of Interest**

#### **City Improvement Projects**

- **Riverdale Drive Extension - Traprock St. to Ramsey Blvd. (#16-20)**

City Engineer Westby stated work has begun on Riverdale Drive, beginning with stripping topsoil. The project will progress quickly and should be substantially completed by the end of October. He added the watermain will be extended there will be two services stubbed to serve the park property, for which the City will not be financially responsible.

- **Sunwood Drive Reconstruction (#17-00)**

City Engineer Westby stated Sunwood Drive and Alpine Drive reconstruction projects are both complete. He presented “before” and “after” photos of Sunwood Drive, and noted the condition of the pavement, which has been white-washed with a cement curing compound. He added spot curb replacement was completed, but City Staff was not satisfied with the appearance. He noted that Staff had the contractor apply one coat of white curing compound to all of the curb over the whole corridor.

City Engineer Westby stated curing compound substantially improved the appearance of the whole corridor. He added City Staff would like to do this on all future high visibility corridor projects.

Councilmember Kuzma agreed.

Councilmember Johns stated she had noticed the white compound, and wondered what it was. She added she likes the appearance.

City Engineer Westby stated the City of Shoreview applies two coats of this compound on all their projects, even their residential streets. He added two coats gives a more uniform finish. He requested the Committee's feedback and comments about doing curing compound on all the City's streets projects.

Councilmember Kuzma stated he likes the appearance of the roadway with the curing compound.

Councilmember Johns agreed, adding the compound gives the corridor a finished, updated appearance.

Councilmember Kuzma asked whether the City could purchase an applicator machine.

City Engineer Westby stated he is unsure exactly how much of its own curb the City generally pours, and whether such a purchase would be beneficial.

Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer stated the City does very little of its own curb work, less than 100 feet per year. He added catch basins are completed by City employees, as well as some damaged curb repairs.

Councilmember Shryock how long the treatment lasts.

City Engineer Westby stated the curing compound should last roughly seven years, and it will fade uniformly. He requested the Committee's feedback and comments on using the curing compound on residential streets.

Councilmember Kuzma stated he supports using the compound even on existing curbs, and the areas where the City is currently completing sealcoat projects. He added an applicator machine might not be that expensive, and doing it internally would be cheaper than contracting the work.

City Engineer Westby agreed to review costs and bring it back to the Committee for further discussion.

Councilmember Johns stated she would like to see the compound done as part of the City's street projects. She added she would prefer to see the white curing compound on all curb rather than only on patchwork repairs.

Councilmember Shryock stated it would be a good thing to consider as the City starts to look at issues related to its image. She added the City is attracting tournaments, sports groups, and events, and this type of improvement would be a good idea.

City Engineer Westby stated City Staff would look into the cost implications and provide further information to the Committee.

- **2017 Crackseal and Sealcoat Improvements (#17-03)**

City Engineer Westby stated the 2017 Crackseal and Sealcoat Improvements project is substantially completed, and striping should be completed this week or next week. He added striping will be completed on Sunwood Drive as well.

- **Bunker Lake Boulevard Utilities Extensions (#17-09)**

City Engineer Westby stated the Bunker Lake Boulevard utilities extension is complete, and Puma Street utilities are out for bid.

### **Anoka County Improvement Projects**

Mr. Westby stated he would not address Anoka County Improvement Projects.

### **MnDOT Improvement Projects**

City Engineer Westby stated City Staff received notification yesterday from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) that the City of Ramsey was not selected for the Municipal Metro Agreement Program funding for the north frontage road. He added the City applied for \$710,000 of MnDOT funding for the \$13 million project, with no other funding sources identified. He noted MnDOT indicated that the City should re-apply for funding for the north frontage road project when other funding has been secured.

City Engineer Westby added that traffic tubes will be going out on roads for the next eight weeks to get traffic counts at 73 locations for 2 days each. He added this data is required by MnDOT every two years.

### **6.02: Review Future Topics Calendar**

City Engineer Westby stated a calendar of future topics has been provided for review and discussion by the Public Works Committee. The list includes topics drawn from Committee requests received during meetings, and/or topics previously discussed by the Committee that are not yet resolved. All dates shown are estimated based on availability of information, staff workload, and competing objectives, and are therefore subject to change.

City Engineer Westby stated City Staff have been focusing lately on the Resilient Communities Program project, meeting with students at the University of Minnesota over the past few weeks. He added he has been there four times in the past 2 weeks, and plans to attend a meeting this week and another one next week. City Staff has spent a lot of time on this project to get timelines in place.

City Engineer Westby stated two items for future discussion are Sunfish Lake sedimentation basin improvements, and Gibbons Street drainage improvements. He added City Staff will try to bring these forward in October, but they might get pushed out to November.

Councilmember Kuzma stated he would be interested in a review of the City's Municipal State Aid.

City Engineer Westby agreed, stating there have been many roadways changes over the years, including Armstrong Boulevard re-alignment and the Riverdale extension. He added the Municipal State Aid system needs to be reviewed, and the City is looking at re-assigning roadways percentages.

## **7. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Councilmember Johns, seconded by Councilmember Shryock, to adjourn the Public Works Committee meeting.

Motion carried.

The regular meeting of the Public Works Committee adjourned at 7:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Grant Riemer  
Public Works Superintendent

Drafted by Mary Mullen  
*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*