

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

The Public Works Committee conducted a regular meeting on Tuesday, June 15, 2021, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Chairperson Chris Riley
 Councilmember Debra Musgrove
 Councilmember Matt Woestehoff

Also Present: Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer
 City Engineer Bruce Westby
 City Administrator Kurt Ulrich
 Jeff and Bridget Sailor – 7650 178th Lane NW

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Riley 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 Woestehoff, seconded by Councilmember Musgrove, to approve the agenda, as presented.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Riley, Councilmembers Woestehoff and Musgrove.
Voting No: None.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve April 20, 2021, Meeting Minutes

Motion by Councilmember Woestehoff, seconded by Councilmember Musgrove, to approve the following minutes:

Regular Meeting Minutes dated April 20, 2021

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Riley, Councilmembers Woestehoff and Musgrove.
Voting No: None.

City Administrator Ulrich suggested taking Case 6.01 first as there are residents present for that case.

Councilmember Musgrove noted that case is under Committee/Staff Input rather than Committee Business and asked for clarification between the two categories.

Chairperson Riley explained that the intent of that case is to provide policy guidance rather than making a formal recommendation. It was agreed that Case 6.01 could be considered first.

6. COMMITTEE / STAFF INPUT

6.01: Review Gravel Road Elimination Policy

City Engineer Westby reviewed the existing Gravel Road Elimination Policy (GREP) and asked for input as to whether staff should continue to follow the existing policy or whether revisions should be explored. Staff recommends continuing to eliminate gravel roads as development occurs, as funds become available, and when residents petition to pave gravel roads and contribute to the costs.

Jeff Sailor introduced himself and referenced his previous discussions with the City dating back to 2006 and noted that annual maintenance costs for gravel roads are significant and need to be considered. He stated that traffic driving at higher speeds cause more dust, as does dry conditions. He commented that larger vehicles such as garbage trucks and buses put additional strain on the gravel roads. He stated that they are adjacent to a property that is developing and asked who is responsible for the costs for those roads. He noted that equipment would already be in the area and could perhaps be used to pave the unpaved roads (Xenolith Street NW and 178th Lane NW) leading to his house.

Chairperson Riley commented that the developer is funding the road improvements on that adjacent property.

Jeff Sailor asked if staff could investigate the cost to include his road with that adjacent development while that equipment is in the area to obtain a cost savings for paving his roads. He commented that there are seven homes on these roads with some older residents.

Bridget Sailor stated that they like the country aspect of their property, but it seems that other roads are being paved and they feel their roads should be paved as well.

Jeff Sailor asked if the residents along paved roads were assessed for that cost.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer replied that another roadway was paved through petition by the property owners and that project was assessed.

Chairperson Riley asked if a majority of the residents on their streets would want the roads paved.

Jeff Sailor commented that times are tougher financially than they were in the past, and he would not think all the residents would support an assessment.

Chairperson Riley commented that he does not believe anyone would disagree that they would like to continue to eliminate gravel roads. He commented that they have eliminated the assessment policy for the road reconstruction and overlay program as that has been replaced by another program. He stated that this program still remains, but it has been suggested that perhaps the money proposed to purchase a new road grader in the near future could be used for this purpose. He noted that the number of gravel roads are being reduced as adjacent parcels develop and the roads are paved to support the development. He asked for details on the funds that could be available if the City wanted to take a stronger role in this purpose.

City Engineer Westby asked if it would be helpful for the Committee for staff to gather estimates on the costs to pave the remaining gravel roads, splitting those into those that have future development potential and those that do not.

Chairperson Riley agreed that would be helpful.

Jeff Sailor commented that perhaps a comparison could be done showing the annual maintenance costs and paving cost.

City Engineer Westby replied that it is known there are some soils issues in different areas and therefore borings would be taken prior to paving to ensure the full scope of costs would be known. He stated that staff can gather the additional details as requested and bring that back to the Committee to review and discuss.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer highlighted some of the remaining gravel roads, the number of homes or business along the road, and whether there would be additional challenges.

Councilmember Musgrove asked and received confirmation that the gravel roads are City owned. She asked if there would be a process for public input. She stated that a funding source is mentioned in the case that splits the cost between the City and assessment to residents. She stated that she would explore reviewing alternative funding sources. She asked if it would be possible to use another city's road grader if Ramsey were to sell its grader.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer confirmed that Nowthen has a grader that could potentially be used if needed.

Councilmember Musgrove noted that even if a road is paved there would be ongoing maintenance costs.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked whether a gravel road would be easier to pave because there is already a gravel base.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer commented that it would depend upon the road. He noted that one gravel road may have class five material in anticipation of paving, while others are dirt roads.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked the estimated cost to pave a road.

City Engineer Westby replied that every section would be different and have a different cost. He stated that staff could look into the sections in further detail to provide estimated costs.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if assessments are based on the increase in value that would be provided related to the road improvement.

City Engineer Westby replied that by statute the City cannot assess more than the increase in property value resulting from the improvement.

Councilmember Woestehoff commented that the properties along Variolite were not assessed because the return would not provide the desired value. He stated that he is unsure as to whether that would be the same case for some of the smaller roads.

City Engineer Westby confirmed that could be part of the review.

Chairperson Riley stated that while he would like to see the road paved, he agrees that the additional information is necessary to make an informed decision.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if adding pavement to a gravel road could be considered as maintenance and then potentially funded through the pavement management plan.

Chairperson Riley commented that he would be resistant to that approach.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that he would agree to treat the two types of roads separately.

Councilmember Musgrove agreed that she would not want to see a gravel road take the place of another paved road that has been waiting for needed repair/reconstruction.

City Administrator Ulrich explained that one reason to assess a gravel road conversion to a paved road is because those properties never paid for the road construction in the first place, whereas new developments pay for the roads constructed through the cost of their home. He stated that it would then make sense that the property owners share in the cost because paving would be an improvement to their road.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that the assessment for gravels roads does not seem to specify the benefit to the property, it simply states 50 percent of the cost. She stated that if curb and gutter were installed that would be an additional cost, compared to a blacktop rural road.

City Engineer Westby replied that the current policy is to reconstruct existing pavement sections in kind, meaning a rural section is replaced with a rural section, and an urban section is replaced with an urban section.

Chairperson Riley stated that the reference to an assessment not exceeding the value added to the property is part of State law.

City Engineer Westby commented that staff will complete the information gathering and bring that back to the Committee to review.

5. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

5.01: Consider Recommendation to City Council to Adopt Resolution Requesting Traffic Study for CSAH 5 Between TH 47 and Alpine Drive

City Engineer Westby reviewed the staff report.

Chairperson Riley commented that this has been on the radar for most of the years he has been on the Council, and he has received many resident comments. He asked if Alpine would be the natural break for the study.

City Engineer Westby commented that there are concerns at different points along the corridor and he stated that while there is not a natural break, the section between TH 47 and Alpine Drive is pretty set in terms of development therefore Anoka County is open to beginning with this section.

Chairperson Riley agreed that it would make sense to begin with this section.

Councilmember Musgrove asked what would be learned beyond what was done as part of the previous project. She stated that she would be okay stopping at Alpine Drive if that is what is needed to get this moving forward but asked if it would make more sense to extend to Sunfish Lake or Ramsey Boulevards.

City Engineer Westby replied that the only drawback that he would note is that once the scope of the project is expanded, it could take longer, identify larger improvements that require additional funding, and ultimately delay the entire process. He stated that a lot of the work has been done between TH 47 and Alpine Drive and therefore the study itself could be completed fairly quickly, identifying potential improvements. He noted that perhaps then a future study phase could be identified to follow.

Councilmember Musgrove if it would be anticipated that the County would plan for future study phases as well.

City Engineer Westby stated that perhaps if there are efficiencies or economies of scale identified, that could be a potential.

Chairperson Riley noted that would be the decision of the County and he would not want the City to make that ask.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the County would be asking for funding from the City for this study.

City Engineer Westby replied that if the work is done in-house by the County, he would not expect a request for funding from the City. He stated that if a consultant is used, perhaps a request could be made to the City. He noted that if the City requested an expanded study area, past Alpine Drive, he would expect the County might use a consultant and request funds from the City.

Motion by Councilmember Musgrove, seconded by Councilmember Woestehoff, to recommend City Council approval to adopt a resolution requesting that Anoka County complete a traffic study for CSAH 5 between TH 47 and Alpine Drive.

Further discussion: Chairperson Riley noted that the City does not make this type of request to the County often, so perhaps this will emphasize the importance.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Riley, Councilmembers Musgrove and Woestehoff. Voting No: None.

6. COMMITTEE / STAFF INPUT (Continued)

6.02: Staff Updates on Improvement Projects and Items of Interest

City Engineer Westby provided updates on current and proposed City, County and MnDOT improvement projects and studies and on other items of interest to the Committee.

Chairperson Riley asked and received confirmation that the County is moving forward with the proposed interim improvements to Bunker Lake Boulevard between Armstrong Boulevard and Sunfish Lake Boulevard and asked for input on the section between Ramsey Boulevard and Armstrong Boulevard.

City Engineer Westby replied that turn lanes are being proposed at each of the public street intersections as part of this late fall project. He confirmed that initially the City was supposed to be responsible for paying for the permanent improvements per the adopted RTC JPA, but since the County is now completing these interim improvements, discussions with the County related to amending the RTC JPA seem to be in order.

Chairperson Riley asked if it is known as to why there is more train traffic on the tracks.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer replied that they are completing track maintenance.

6.03: Review Future Topics Calendar

City Engineer Westby asked if the August meeting should be canceled due to the EDA golf tournament being held the same day. He noted that the Committee's August meetings have been canceled for that scheduling conflict in the past.

Chairperson Riley asked and received confirmation that the meeting could be canceled without impacting the schedule for items to be considered. It was the consensus of the Committee to cancel the August meeting.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilmember Musgrove, seconded by Councilmember Woestehoff, to adjourn the Public Works Committee meeting.

Motion carried.

The regular meeting of the Public Works Committee adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Grant Riemer
Public Works Superintendent

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.