

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

The Public Works Committee conducted a regular meeting on Tuesday, June 21, 2016, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Chairperson Chris Riley
 Councilmember Jill Johns
 Councilmember Melody Shryock (arrived at 5:45 p.m.)

Also Present: Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer
 City Engineer Bruce Westby
 Civil Engineer IV Leonard Linton

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 Johns, seconded by Chairperson Riley, to approve the agenda, as presented.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Riley and Councilmembers Johns. Voting No: None. Absent: Councilmember Shryock.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve May 17, 2016, Meeting Minutes

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

Regular Meeting Minutes dated May 17, 2016

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Riley and Councilmembers Johns. Voting No: None. Absent: Councilmember Shryock.

5. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

5.01: Provide City Council Recommendation for Gibbon Street and 173rd Avenue Drainage Improvements Feasibility Report

City Engineer Westby reviewed the staff report and the Gibbon Street and 173rd Avenue drainage improvement project. He explained this plat is the Deerwood Plat, which is surrounded by wetlands/floodways. It was recorded in 1974. Several properties have experienced wet basements due to groundwater intrusion.

City Engineer Westby explained that while the drainage improvement project is feasible and can be constructed in 2017, given the estimated cost of \$325,000 and small number of benefiting properties, the project is not cost effective. It should only be constructed if benefiting properties are specially assessed for all or a significant portion of the improvements, or if external funding is available to fund all or a significant portion of the improvements. He stated staff recommends the Public Works Committee recommend the City Council accept the feasibility report but deny approval of a drainage improvement project pending development of a cost effective, equitable funding program.

Mr. Frank Miske, 17421 Gibbon Street, noted he first brought this to the Committee's attention in 2013.

City Engineer Westby explained there are properties on either side of the Miskes on Gibbon Street. For this project, staff would try to provide a positive outlet for the water. For the most part, basements are dry until there is a lot of precipitation or spring snow melt. Then there is nowhere for the water to go and it fills the basins and raises groundwater elevations. Providing a positive outlet should therefore reduce ground water elevations during these times.

Councilmember Shryock arrived at 5:45 p.m.

Mr. Miske stated he felt this would be the best alternative. He asked what the cost to the homeowners would be with option number 4. He stated he now has to take out flood insurance in addition to homeowner's insurance. Now that the house has flooded and that is on record, he wondered how he would be able to sell his house. His property value will go down. He stated if this project will not be going forward, he would still be assessed a tax that is supposed to maintain the city's ditches. He felt he was not getting his money's worth. If there is a lot of precipitation, it will drain into his basement. He said he is paying for a service he is not benefitting from.

City Engineer Westby explained the Stormwater Utility Fee goes to the City to maintain the infrastructure throughout the City for stormwater. He said Mr. Miske's point is well taken and that staff could potentially look at a cost-share approach based on his Stormwater Utility Fund contributions to date. It could set a precedent, but it could be looked into. Staff has been looking for external funding sources to minimize the share of both the homeowner and the City. He asked if the flood insurance was a new issue for Mr. Miske.

Mr. Miske said it is not new. He just paid \$20,000 out of pocket to fix his basement, and he can see that could happen again. He said he would like to see something be done so he doesn't have to do this again.

City Engineer Westby noted the County ditch has the capacity to accept water from this low lying area based on constructing option #4. This shouldn't be an issue with the County ditch.

Chairperson Riley questioned whether this project would really lower the water table.

City Engineer Westby explained water tables do not stay the same. The fact that this is a low-lying area means it will naturally collect more water. It is impossible to know whether this project would lower the water table. However, knowing that 99% of the time, the basement is dry, it means there is a good chance this would be of help.

Civil Engineer IV Linton explained as the water gets above normal, it would drain. He noticed at a site visit that the water was almost up to the street. He thought the sump pump was running constantly, and it was pumping into the backyard. The wetland is right there, so the water was just cycling. An outlet would help to carry the water away. If there is ground water getting into a system, and into a basement, the outlet would provide a way for it to not be cycled back in.

Councilmember Johns noticed that reducing frequency and severity was mentioned in the feasibility report. She asked if this will more or less cap the water so it doesn't go over the level that would begin flooding.

City Engineer Westby said there has been more rain in a shorter period of time in recent years. This increases the chance of flooding. However, with this project, it would reduce the frequency and severity because the low-lying area would have an outlet so groundwater elevations should remain lower.

Councilmember Johns asked whether Mr. Miske has drain pipe around his house and has waterproofed the basement.

Mr. Miske responded he has not waterproofed. He cannot get under the house to water proof, and the water is coming up from the ground. He said he has three sump pumps.

Councilmember Johns questioned where the outlet would be.

Civil Engineer IV Linton replied it would stop at the edge of the wetland.

Councilmember Johns confirmed there are four or five homes involved. She asked if a special assessment would include those homes.

City Engineer Westby answered the benefit to the properties would have to be proven.

Councilmember Johns noted the special assessments have to have criteria like the road assessments do. If the properties were assessed \$90,000 each, the Miske's could be a total loss.

City Engineer Westby pointed out the assessments cannot exceed the benefit to the properties.

Councilmember Johns questioned what the procedure is if one of the affected homeowners do not want the improvements.

City Engineer Westby responded the City Charter states 60% or more of the homeowners need to petition against the improvement.

Councilmember Johns asked if Mr. Miske would be obligated to carry the flood insurance if the project went through.

Mr. Miske responded he believed he would still have to. The cost of that is about \$400. However, he wouldn't have to pay the \$20,000 for repair if this project went through.

Chairperson Riley indicated he was under the impression that it wasn't clear that this would fix the problem nor lower the ground water.

City Engineer Westby responded it would help reduce the odds of area basements getting wet. It may not completely negate the chance, but it would prevent groundwater from rising as high during larger rain and snow melt events.

Chairperson Riley commented one of his concerns is that the City didn't do anything to make this happen. The City is being asked to do something that changes the land; not something the City did that needs to be corrected.

Mr. Miske stated he is charged a tax for the drainage, and that is why he believes there is a part of responsibility that lies with the City

Councilmember Shryock summarized if the pipe is put in, it will be above the basement level. She asked where the water will overflow to if it overflows before it hits the pipe.

Civil Engineer IV Linton explained when there is a raise in elevation in the nearby wetlands, it pulls the water up and it translates to more water in the basement. The pipe is not designed for the ultimate storm or even large, frequent rains. For normal storms, the wetland will stay at its normal level. When the larger quantities of rain happen, the pipe needs to be big enough to carry the overflow out.

Mr. Miske commented it would function like the overflow hole in a sink.

Chairperson Riley said the pipe would carry the overflow to a County ditch that has capacity.

Civil Engineer IV Linton stated the ditch leads to Trott Brook and there are no homes there. It would route the water away from properties.

Councilmember Johns questioned if snow melt was ever an issue.

Mr. Miske replied it was in 2014 but that was the only time.

City Engineer Westby suggested discussing the project further and talking to the residents to get an idea of how open they would be to work with the City. Staff will verify which properties would benefit, and then get an idea of how these preliminary numbers would work.

Mr. Miske said he understands he will have to pay something, and also understands there is no value to the city. He inquired how much he will need to pay. He stated he is concerned with the value of the house and whether it will be sellable.

Motion by Councilmember Johns, seconded by Councilmember Shryock, to recommend that the City Council accept the feasibility report but deny approval of a drainage improvement project pending development of a cost effective, equitable funding program.

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

5.02: Review Updated Estimated Costs for Sunfish Lake Sedimentation Basin Improvements

City Engineer Westby reviewed the staff report and request of the 14520 Sunfish Lake Drive NW property owner, Mr. Bergevin, that the City reconstruct specific stormwater treatment improvements impacting a portion of their back yard. The requested work includes constructing a settling basin at the end of the storm sewer outlet from Sunwood Drive where it intersects 145th Lane NW to reduce the frequency and volume of stormwater runoff running through the drainage swale along the rear of their lot. They are also requesting removal of existing cattails and other vegetation commonly found in wetlands from the swale and restoring the swale to a lawn condition.

City Engineer Westby reviewed past consideration and discussion of this ongoing situation and noted the swale is working as it was intended to work. Staff believes the water in the bottom of the swale in recent years is due to groundwater rising in conjunction with the lake level rising.

City Engineer Westby stated staff recommends the property owner be required to pay for the requested work since it solely benefits the use of his private property. However, the City could consider contributing an amount commensurate with the estimated long-term saving associated with maintaining a settling basin next to a public street versus maintaining a linear drainage swale along the rear of a private property. Based on a 50-year maintenance schedule, this cost would be approximately \$500 assuming the City would dredge and restore the turf in the swale twice, once every 25 years.

Chairperson Riley noted the largest number in the costs is the wetland mitigation. He questioned what is being replaced and where the basin is going.

City Engineer Westby replied the settling basin will be constructed at the end of the storm sewer outlet, and that some work will also occur around it. When the swale was first constructed, there would have been wetland impacts at that time. Where settling basin improvements fall within designated wetlands, the wetlands will need to be mitigated using a 2:1 ratio.

Councilmember Johns sought clarification on why the City would need to pay to mitigate a second time.

Civil Engineer IV Linton explained that to stop the water from going into the swale, a settling basin needs to be constructed which will impact the wetland. A berm will need to be built, which is part of the swale now. This work will be disturbing the wetland, and any time a wetland is disturbed, it needs to be mitigated at a 2:1 ratio. He noted if one foot of wetland is disturbed, two feet of land needs to be added to offset that.

Chairperson Riley asked if there is any ability to give up part of the unusable land that the Bergevins have, to become part of the wetland. He said he would like to avoid having to buy wetland credits.

City Engineer Westby replied there is a way, but he wasn't sure how it would work for the 2 to 1 rule.

Civil Engineer IV Linton explained this swale was put in to provide treatment. If the bank between the swale and lake is taken out, the water isn't being contained to provide treatment.

Mr. Bergevin commented there is a berm running along the swale that keeps the lake out. It has been under water the past two years. He wasn't sure of the height of that berm. He asked how the water would be treated.

Councilmember Shryock explained the treatment is the water coming off the road. That's why there is a berm. The majority of the time the berm is not breached.

Mr. Bergevin stated he tried to pump the extra water out the first couple of years. He said it is important to realize that now, it is sitting about 1.5 feet higher than what the water was measuring in 1986. Normally, the berm works, though there are times the water becomes part of the lake. It was breached only the last 2 years. He said the water level is 863 currently. He asked why the water isn't filtering and where the water goes if it is not filtering. This has overtaken his property because it is not working. He said he questioned many groups, including the DNR, the Watershed District and many people working in the governmental sector. There has been talk about water being pumped into the lake and the lake levels rose. Neighbors saw that happen while there was work being done on Bunker Lake Boulevard. However, there is no record of that happening anywhere.

City Engineer Westby asked if the water being pumped into the lake was about the time the double-barreled culvert under Sunfish Lake was being added. He said he would guess that groundwater needed to be pumped to install the culverts/bridge.

Civil Engineer IV Linton noted that bridge was constructed two years after the subdivision was built, in the late 1990s. The Bunker Lake Boulevard reconstruction was in 2011, and if there was dewatering going on, it would have been routed south to the river. He said he has made inquiries and has not found information on pumping into Sunfish Lake. He explained there may have been information that was redacted from the reports, which would be standard information to redact. The state agencies have input at that level. They have detailed information of removing the water down to a certain species of plants and this information is only for biologists. They want to stop people from trying to go find this certain species and thereby upsetting the vegetation. There is no outlet for Sunfish Lake at this elevation range. It is a landlocked basin. He commented if the lake rose 20 feet above where it is now, it would start flooding homes.

Mr. Bergevin raised the possibility of a rain garden. He noted the fact is that right now, he has a wetland in the back yard that he didn't have before. He questioned whether a rain garden could be an option worth looking in to.

Chairperson Riley stated the Council recently approved a rain garden in the area of 170th Avenue and Nowthen Boulevard.

Mr. Bergevin said he would like to look at that.

Councilmember Johns asked if the City has an obligation to clean out the swale from time to time.

City Engineer Westby replied the policy for cleaning is similar to cleaning ponds; it is done for functionality and not for aesthetics. As long as the water can flow through the vegetation and get from Point A to Point B, that is all that is done, unless it is threatening homes.

Mr. Bergevin asked if the berm could be extended, since the lake levels are low now.

Civil Engineer IV Linton stated he thought the swale would need to be built bigger on the other side to make the water flow right. He thought the water would go over the top before going over the swale. This could be something to look at, however.

Chairperson Riley stated he would like to think outside the box to find a way to fix this for the resident, and avoid mitigation costs.

Civil Engineer IV Linton pointed out the DNR was emphatic that whatever is done would need to keep water from going directly into the wetlands without being treated first.

City Engineer Westby suggested discussing the item further while conducting research into what it would take to share costs.

5.03: Use of Excess Material for Dirt Road Improvements

Public Works Superintendent Riemer reviewed the staff report and requested direction on the use of excess pavement millings (combination of asphalt and Class V) for road surface

improvements on Xenolith Street and 178th Lane. He said the only piece of equipment he would need to borrow is one that spreads the gravel out.

Chairperson Riley asked if there would be any environmental concerns with this material.

Civil Engineer IV Linton explained the road would not be widened. A silt fence would most likely be adequate.

Councilmember Johns asked what type of material this is.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer answered it is a pea sized mixture.

Chairperson Riley asked if there is any reason this shouldn't be done.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer explained there will be a neighborhood meeting to see what the residents think. He said he expected them to approve. At the request of a resident to use blacktop, staff conducted a cost study. This material is much more affordable.

Councilmember Johns noted it is a public road and it will need to be plowed, etc.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer confirmed.

Motion by Councilmember Johns, seconded by Chairperson Riley, to recommend that the City Council approve using the excess recycled asphalt material stored at the Public Works Campus to upgrade the road surface on Xenolith Street and 178th Lane in the Caroline Acres subdivision.

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

6. COMMITTEE / STAFF INPUT

6.01: Staff Updates on Improvement Projects and Items of Interest

City Engineer Westby reviewed the staff report that contained updates of on-going projects.

Chairperson Riley asked about striping Sunwood Drive. He asked if there will be additional costs incurred for this, every time something is built.

City Engineer Westby stated the construction is planned from City Hall to Peridot Street. Staff will look at the center turn lane and discuss the striping for that section.

Civil Engineer IV Linton stated he attended the open house at the Education Center regarding the Ferry Street railroad crossing. He explained there are two options under study. One option, to build the road over the tracks at Ferry Street, would be \$20 million. Another option is to go under the tracks which would be about \$40 million. It would take about a year to build the road

over the tracks and about two years to build under them. He noted there will be additional meetings in July and September.

Chairperson Riley asked what the benefit would be to go under the tracks.

Civil Engineer IV Linton explained one factor would be cost. To build over the tracks, there is more impact to other tracks and areas. The school district building would lose access. In either scenario, the appliance recycling business would be moved.

Councilmember Shryock stated she understood they couldn't dig much to go under because of the water table.

Civil Engineer IV Linton confirmed and added that is a factor in that cost.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer noted there will be costs associated with it being close to the river as well.

6.02: Review Future Topics Calendar

Noted.

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 7:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Grant Riemer
Public Works Superintendent

Drafted by Chris Moksnes
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.