

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND STREET MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: October 8, 2020, at 5:15 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall.

Members Present: Rasmussen, Larson Neal, Wadinski; *by WebEx*: Ryan

Also Present: Lindman, Wesolowski, Niksich, Herbst, Fitzgerald
By WebEx: Mayor Rosenberg, Alfonso, Buckner, Sippel

In compliance with Chapter 19, Wisconsin Statutes, notice of this meeting was posted and received by the *Wausau Daily Herald* in the proper manner.

Approval of minutes of the September 10, 2020 meeting

Larson moved to approve the minutes of the September 10th meeting. Neal seconded and the motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Discussion and possible action regarding the disposition of the old Westside Fire Station at 510 South 32nd Avenue

Rasmussen said a decision on this was held up a couple of months to see if the private sector was able to pull together their proposed plan for a senior center. The group has opted not to continue as they were not able to generate the momentum they had hoped. There is a memo in the packet from Groat indicating that they felt the best approach is to advertise the building through a commercial realtor. Doing a survey of the market, they located a realtor that provided the most competitive commission share assuming they are able to sell the building. That proposal came from Hocking Real Estate. They are looking for approval to list the building and see what offers come in.

Neal moved to approve. Wadinski seconded and the motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Discussion and possible action on stop sign placement at the intersection of Bopf Street and South 8th Avenue

Larson has been receiving feedback from his district asking for this measure to be taken. Buckner deferred to Wesolowski on his most recent count, which did coincide with their speed study on Bopf Street. Wesolowski stated traffic counters were placed on Bopf Street and 8th Avenue from September 22 to September 28. An average weekday was 885 cars on Bopf Street and 250 on 8th Avenue. The average speed was 25½ MPH. The 85th percentile was 30 MPH, which is an acceptable range. Staff does not recommend any changes; stop signs should remain on 8th Avenue with none on Bopf Street.

Rasmussen asked if we could get control of this with targeted enforcement. Buckner stated it is possible but to be consistent in any one area with speed enforcement is difficult to promise because of other impeding traffic concerns and high volume of calls. The speed study shows times of the day with speed concerns. He noted the reported speed of 46 MPH and added that sometimes higher speeds can be emergency vehicles. One of the reports they run show when there is more volume of traffic and potential more volume of people exceeding the speed limit. Rasmussen said historically there has been some correlation of increased speed before and after shift changes at Kolbe. She feels they all understand enforcement would be done as time permits.

Larson would like to see stop signs on the corner. Feedback he has received from the neighbors is removing the stop signs was the biggest mistake the City made. Signs were put up when Thomas Street was under construction and took down without warning.

Larson moved to remove the stop signs from 8th Avenue and place on Bopf Street. Seconded by Neal.

Rasmussen spoke of the robust discussion regarding stop signs at 10th and Stark Street. There was concern among enforcement staff and alders about deviating from MUTCD standards and creating a liability situation by placing signs against standards.

Wadinski asked how many people are complaining. Putting up stop signs because of a couple of complaints from neighbors is not the purpose of the committee. The purpose is to make sure traffic is safe according to standards. If there was a petition with a dozen or more households he may look at it differently. Rasmussen said in past discussion when former Alder Abitz received the same request, it was not a large number of people complaining but it was consistently the same individuals. At that time the committee opted to not act on making a change. After construction ended, the City was slow at taking the stop signs down and the neighborhood got used to having them there. Lindman feels the motion to remove the signs off 8th Avenue would not be a good decision. Bopf Street has more traffic and there would be even more conflicts and issues. When signs were installed during the detour for Thomas Street construction, the intersection was a four-way stop.

Larson revised his motion and moved to make the intersection a four-way stop. As the second, Neal agreed with the revision.

Alfonso's job is to let people know what the status of the law is. When establishing traffic control devices, which includes signs, state statutes require local authorities to conform to the MUTCD. This is our statutory obligation. During the 10th Street discussion, one alderperson used an intersection that was not proper as support for continuing to do an improper thing. Regarding 10th and Stark, Rasmussen noted criteria for a four-way is when traffic is relatively equal on both streets. Traffic counts showed it was not that far off on one versus the other. If it is found there is a significant volume on Bopf and not on 8th, we are really not in the same realm as we were with 10th and Stark. She cautioned using 10th Street and Stark Street as a benchmark. Wadinski agrees that was a different situation. His personal/professional feeling is to abide by statutes and follow regulations. It is the committee's job to make it right according to regulations and statistics. Rasmussen spoke of the former Parking and Traffic Committee and how it became a soap box for neighborhood complaints. Citizens would run a petition, come to the committee, get their way and stop signs were installed or modified. It allowed an element of politics to enter into the application of traffic standards. When the committees merged, she was Chair of CISM and her directive to staff was to make as many decisions at staff level using MUTCD standards as possible. She felt that as soon as one intersection goes through a political process like this, we are going to have 10 more. There isn't an alder who has not received complaints about speeding, parking or heavy traffic. She made the mistake with 1st Avenue and Bos Creek Drive. Residents petitioned and a stop sign was installed at a bottom of a hill. It has not fixed the problems they were complaining about. She hopes her experience serves as a cautionary tale. She does not want the committee to tread down a slope where every month we have to make a political decision about traffic controls.

Wadinski feels these problem need police presence, and not just a sector officer to go there when he has time. We need to work with PD for a part-time traffic unit. Rasmussen said we often rely on grant funding or special enforcement funding to conduct a focused enforcement. This is not the first time she has heard of a traffic enforcement unit that can move around town and get trouble spots. This is something from a budget standpoint that we should look at going forward.

Larson said there is more traffic going down Bopf Street because people cannot turn on and off Thomas Street like they used to. This has been an ongoing issue for years and he would like to see a four way stop.

From a planning perspective, Sippel mentioned there are street designs that can be used to help control speed. Research shows that when you use stop signs to try to control speed instead of street design, it increases the likelihood of crashes. When it is not warranted people tend to ignore it. In general, Sippel noted curb bump outs at intersections, creating chicanes in the road so it is not a straight shot, and utilizing on-street parking usually slows people down. Sippel feels adding bump outs would be most applicable at this location. Rasmussen said if either street comes up for a redesign we can look at adding a calming measure. We have often tried narrowing right-of-way as well. There are ways we can make an impact but it cannot be done overnight.

Neal asked about the nature of pedestrian traffic in this neighborhood. Larson has not surveyed this. Rasmussen feels it is standard neighborhood traffic and noted it is not a direct walking path to a neighborhood school. When this came up before, Abitz was more concerned with vehicle traffic than a bike/ped conflict. Neal stated if it is within the law to make a four-way stop, he would not be against it. This might not be the same as 10th and Stark; however, if the alder feels the neighborhood is requesting it and there is history with an alder before, it seems supportable and a nice thing to do for the neighborhood. Rasmussen is concerned because the standards indicate where the traffic is not equal a four-way is not warranted. We were able to legitimize a four-way at 10th and Stark because recent traffic counts showed traffic was relatively the same. That is not the case at 8th and Bopf.

There being a motion and a second, motion to make the intersection a four-way stop failed 2-3 with Rasmussen, Neal and Wadinski the dissenting votes.

Discussion and possible action on establishing No Parking on the west side of the 100 block of South 7th Street

Rasmussen stated this area has trouble with parked cars and access and egress to Olson's Body Shop. This would eliminate parking on the west side. Lindman did receive public comment from one landlord who owns property across the street. The landlord asked for parking to be allowed on the east side if parking on the west side is eliminated. Staff does not have an issue with swapping no parking from the east side to the west. The main issue with the west side came when Olson Tire installed additional drive approaches. The adjacent garages provide a visibility issue when people back out.

Kent Olson of Olson Tire and Auto and Olson Auto Body explained that since the construction of the Kwik Trip on Grand Avenue, there has been a tremendous increase in traffic. He understands the landlord's situation. He is also a landlord and knows he is supposed to have off street parking for the number of tenants. The City has done a great job of widening and improving the road. The access for delivery and garbage trucks will probably remain an issue if parking is allowed on the other side. People do not tend to park up to the curb or they park in the middle of his entrances. He understands it would be a fair compromise, but he feels it would be more beneficial for traffic if both sides have no parking.

Considering ingress and egress, Neal wonders if we should restrict mid-block parking on the east side. Lindman feels parking could be eliminated on the west side and on the southern east side across from Olson, leaving the rest of the east side available for parking. Olson explained that garbage trucks use Division Street and in the winter it is difficult to access. Houses along Kickbusch Street have garbage service on the back side. They have had to have the people next door move their cars to get trucks in and out.

Wadinski would support no parking on the west side because of the driveways and Division Street. It is hard to get in and out of Division Street because of parking. He would not want to change parking on the other side of the street until petitions are received from the residents. The only input we have is from a landlord who wants his tenants to park on the street. Tenants should not be parking on the street; the landlord should provide parking. Rasmussen feels that makes sense as it gives time for neighbors to try this with the restriction and if it is not manageable they can make a request to restore some parking on the east side. Olson feels part of the parking issue is the tenant's in that facility are using parked vehicles for storage; these are vehicles that never move. Larson asked if there are more than five vehicles on the lot that are not being moved. Per Olson, less than five vehicles are not being moved but there are more than 5 vehicles on the premises. Larson believes there is a five car limit on a premises. Rasmussen feels action tonight could cause the landlord to reevaluate the storage situation.

Neal moved to approve no parking on the west side of the 100 block of South 7th Street. Larson seconded and the motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Discussion and possible action on authorizing downtown snow/ice removal

Rasmussen indicated this item is approved every year with a recommended rate per foot for snow and ice removal

in the downtown. The owners are charged based on actual removals. Wesolowski clarified that there is not a set rate. There were examples provided from the last five years so owners know what to expect. Property owners are charged based on actual snow removal.

Wadinski moved to authorize downtown snow/ice removal. Ryan seconded and the motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Update on bicycle and pedestrian project priorities

Rasmussen explained that the Bike/Ped Committee was created to offer insight as to whether or not we are bike/ped friendly enough. Sometimes they find dangerous things that need to be resolved. Sippel brought this forward as there are a lot of improvement projects identified in adopted plans. He thought it would be good for the committee to start prioritizing those in order to aid in annual budgeting.

The first is for rectangular rapid flashing beacons at the River Edge Trail crossing by the Washington Street Bridge. This area gets a lot of pedestrian use and with three lanes of traffic it is difficult to cross. The second project is bicycle friendly signal detectors at priority intersections. A test of this was done at Kent and Grand. Going eastbound on Kent there is a bicycle painted on the intersection where you would place the bicycle to actuate the signals. The issue is that bicycles typically do not have enough metal to actuate signals. Other intersections that have consistent problems include 6th and Washington, the other side of Kent and Grand, and Sturgeon Eddy Road and Grand Ave.

Crossing improvements are suggested at Henrietta and Grand between Riverview Towers and the transit stop as this is a heavily used crossing. A pedestrian was hit and killed last year. The committee is looking at improving the beacons, improving the crosswalk visual signs, and improving crosswalk lighting.

1st Street was identified in the Toole Plan around the mall. This is basically a lane diet and eventually bringing it back to two-way with a buffered bike lane. Forest Street was also identified in the mall plan and would bring it down to two travel lanes with a bike facility. Sherman Street is part of a regional bike route and leads to the trail in Rib Mountain. Sherman Street would be reduced from 4 to 3 lanes with one lane being a center turn lane. Bike lanes would be added. The Northwestern Ave is a route connecting Wausau to the Mountain Bay Trail; an important regional connection. There are bike lanes on a portion of it now, wider paved shoulders on a portion and a portion with narrowed paved shoulders. This really only works for the most skilled bicyclists.

The Scott Street and Washington Street bridges could be improved with a road diet by removing a travel lane in each direction and adding bike lanes to connect with existing bike lanes. Thomas Street is a regional route and a river crossing. The addition of bike lanes across the bridge would connect with existing bike lanes on Thomas Street west of the river.

Adding a bike lane on 1st Avenue would continue the existing bike lane through the intersection when approaching Bridge Street from the south. Bicyclists would not have to merge with traffic through the intersection and then get back into the bike lane.

Rasmussen asked if a number of the projects, other than the ones requiring rapid flashing beacons or intersection modifications, are achievable by pavement marking projects over the next few budgets. Sippel feels that is possible. When looking at the Scott Street, Washington Street, and Thomas Street bridges, we want to make sure there are railings of an appropriate height. A bike lane was added westbound on Bridge Street and we later learned from the Bike/Ped Committee that the wall was not tall enough to accommodate the height of a bicyclist on a bicycle. There was nothing to stop a bicyclist from going over. Installing the railing after the fact cost nearly \$100,000. Before proceeding with these, she would like an accurate depiction of estimated costs and the bridges checked to make sure railings are at the right height.

Wesolowski noted that the Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons on the River Edge Trail came to committee earlier and have been proposed in the 2021 budget. He added that every year there is a pavement marking budget.

It gets more challenging with more bike lanes added. We keep adding pavement markings and in Wisconsin with plowing they may last 5 years. He cautioned the committee to keep in mind the more we add the more budget we will need. Rasmussen mentioned that we contract out epoxy work and as this gets bigger we should get an idea of what it would cost to get the equipment and do the work in-house. Wesolowski explained DPW identifies the intersections where epoxy is appropriate. If paint is used at heavy traffic intersections, it only lasts 6 months to a year. We set a certain amount in the epoxy contract for bike facilities.

Rasmussen asked if the recommendation would be to keep the projects on the radar and complete as projects or resources dovetail with them. Wesolowski indicated that some would be included if the area around the mall is redone. The Scott Street Bridge may be possible with an overlay project next summer. He is working with the DOT to see if they will restriping their portion of the bridge. There are opportunities as projects come up. We will try and do what we can within the budget. It is good when we can incorporate these into larger projects.

Rasmussen is concerned with the crossing at Grand and Henrietta. There is already a beacon and it is a well-marked crosswalk. This is a 25 MPH stretch that has a lot of pedestrian conflict. She questioned the cost of proposed improvements. Wesolowski will have to research regulations and work with the DOT as it is Hwy 51. It shouldn't be extremely expensive as an overhead structure is already in place and there is power.

Ryan noted 17th Avenue and Elm Street where there was a fatal accident a number of years ago. With Mountain Lane Apartments opening up she feels there will be more residents walking and crossing the street. Part of the issue is that the north side of Elm Street does not have sidewalk. She believes this may be a higher priority because of the grocery store and shopping in a heavy traffic area. Rasmussen said the committee talked about 17th and Elm after that accident. She believes the reason the pedestrian crossing was on the south side is because on the wall on the north side makes it a blind corner. Pedestrians are encouraged to cross on the south side because visibility is better. Part of the cause of the accident was people couldn't see him.

Wesolowski spoke of improvements at the Bridge Street Pick N Save for pedestrians crossing. About \$65,000 was spent to improve the crossing.

Rasmussen indicated these items will be kept on the radar and the report will be placed on file.

2020 Construction Projects Update

Wesolowski stated weekly updates are posted on Facebook and the City's website. Asphalt was placed on Cedar Street today. Fulton Street will be paved next Monday and Tuesday with pavement striping by the end of the week. The Riverwalk Trail will be paved shortly. With COVID, the railing is not scheduled to be delivered until November 23. The planting were pushed to next spring because it is late in the year. The contractor on the Bridge Street Bridge Repair Project works 8 hour days so they are done at 3:30, which is why residents do not see anyone working on their way home. They plan to pour the abutment and joints this week and early next. The concrete overlay of the south half of the deck is supposed to happen the end of next week. Staff is contemplating closing down the bridge for this work. This will be a major inconvenience. We received complaints on the finish and ride of the first half. They feel there was enough vibration that the concrete moved and we'll get a better finish if the bridge is closed. It will be a major detour but it will only be for a day. Wadinski asked if we could delay closing McIndoe and use it for the detour; however, that work is scheduled for Monday. The end result is a 20-year fix, which is worth one day of inconvenience. Rasmussen said good public information will help by asking people to avoid the area and plan alternate routes. Wesolowski indicated this is tentatively planned for next Friday or Saturday. Flashing boards will be placed on Bridge Street noting the upcoming closure and a traffic bulletin will go out early next week.

The Thomas Street Siphon Project has no impact to traffic. This should be completed by mid-November. 18th Avenue is complete except one section of asphalt. Hwy 52 Parkway should be completed by the end of next week. They had issues with getting supplies for the irrigation system. The sidewalk is in on the Riverlife Trail Project. The wall is in and they are to start landscaping and asphalt with completion within the next two weeks. The 3rd Street Retaining Wall is 95% complete. The sidewalk will be done this fall. Bridge Street / Pine Ridge

Boulevard intersection is done and has been opened. There are small landscaping items to complete. The Scott Street Signal Project will be done at the end of November. McIndoe/2nd Street will close October 12. TDS Fiber is completing concrete repairs on Grand Avenue. They have 8 crews in town with a lot of installs taking place. There are some challenges with this project, but it is going better than last year.

Rasmussen noted contract provisions and completion dates. Contracts allow the ability to fine contractors that are late with their work when they do not have a legitimate delay. The committee has been strong in the past with liquidated damages. Weather and supply delays are understandable but when it is a matter of overbooking work it is a different story. We do not like to extend projects past Halloween as we do not know when it will snow. We have been caught twice trying to plow streets where manhole covers are an inch taller than the asphalt. We have also had problems with leaf pickup when construction is not finished. Wesolowski indicated there have been a few minor extensions. Staff has gotten projects out earlier to bid with earlier completion dates. The lone exception will be the Thomas Street Trail. Landscaping will have a better chance of survival next spring. Rasmussen asked if Randolph and Cherry Street was paved. Wesolowski stated it has been paved but he is not sure if it was completed. If not, it will be done tomorrow.

Ryan noted concerns she has received of people totally against the landscaping project and concerns the rock is too close to the curb. Wesolowski stated the rocks have a 2' clear zone from the back of the curb, which was designed by a consultant. The rocks are pulled back from the intersection and are not in a sight line.

Discussion and possible action on stop sign placement at the intersection of North 1st Street and McIndoe Street

Given the closure that is coming on McIndoe Street to accommodate the Aspirus project, staff is recommending adjusting the stop signs at 1st Street and McIndoe Street. Niksich noted that last month the committee recommended swapping the stop signs on 3rd Street. This is a similar change to place stop signs on McIndoe Street and remove from 1st Street. The traffic volume on 1st Street will likely be higher than on the short section of McIndoe.

Rasmussen indicated public comment was received from Kathy Volkmann of Cloverbelt Credit Union. She has concerns of taking the stop signs out on 1st Street as it may create too long of a span for people to speed. Volkmann acknowledged that the committee would likely approve this change based on standards but she requested that we keep an eye on the area. She asked that we take steps to address any future crash data or pedestrian/vehicle conflict.

Neal stated the route before closure would be a standard route for him when heading to the west side. He understands why we would do this change but is concerned with Fulton Street. He imagines those who currently use McIndoe will go one block north. He feels Fulton Street traffic volume will increase considerably. The ABC Building is at the corner and one has to inch out to look for traffic. He asked what the chances would be to take the stop signs from the McIndoe intersection and move them a block north to protect Fulton Street. Rasmussen noted that 1st and Fulton is not on the agenda but we can have staff look at and bring forward if needed.

Wadinski feels this should be tabled until a study is done on Fulton Street as it most likely will become a substitute for McIndoe Street. Rasmussen said this would match what was done at 3rd and McIndoe and place signs on the road less traveled. We can wait a month but McIndoe Street is closing next week. Neal believes there is no reason why we cannot act on this and look at Fulton Street next month. Rasmussen added that when McIndoe was proposed to be closed, traffic was encouraged to adjust to using Fulton Street. The right-of-way is wider and parking restrictions were imposed to ease travel. If Engineering feels the need to take action on 1st and Fulton, we can do that in the future.

Wesolowski explained that McIndoe Street will basically dead end into the Aspirus parking lot. It is anticipated that there will be a lot less traffic on McIndoe Street than on 1st Street.

Ryan noted that the Eye Clinic is a regional center and many from out of the area may not know their way around. We need to look at how it may affect traffic and cannot assume it is going to be all locals coming to the eye clinic. Rasmussen said this can be taken into account and we can consider making modifications going forward. If modifications are found to be needed, staff can network with the Eye Clinic on proposed changes.

Neal moved to approve changing the stop sign placement from North 1st Street to McIndoe Street as proposed. Wadinski seconded. Motion passed 3-2 with Ryan and Larson the dissenting votes.

Discussion and possible action on repealing Section 10.01.025 Stop sign locations designated and recreating as Section 10.01.025 Establishment of certain traffic limitations and rules; repealing Section 10.01.030 Yield right-of-way intersection, Section 10.01.060 One-way streets, Section 10.01.070 Accident reports, Section 10.24.010 Right turns, Section 10.24.020 Left turns, Section 10.24.030 U-turns

Rasmussen explained these changes amount to compliance with new standards and housekeeping.

Wadinski moved to approve. Larson seconded and the motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Future Agenda Items

Regarding Bopf Street, Wadinski asked if the committee needs to request PD to look into. Rasmussen said a request for targeted enforcement can be brought forward without committee action. Regarding targeted enforcement, Larson would be looking for accountability to know it is being done. Larson can network with Buckner and a report of the findings can be provided.

Ryan would like Wesolowski to look into if there are any type of signs for hilly areas that might be a blind intersection. This is not necessarily for children crossing, but for seniors with scooters. Rasmussen stated staff can look into this without committee directive.

Wesolowski stated staff is contemplating 2nd Street from Short Street to DeKalb Street for possible CDBG funding. Rasmussen said Block Grant funding was mentioned at ED. Before we would commit to this street where we are looking at a commercial development, ED wanted to see if there was any other street project in a low income area where property owners would benefit more from the Block Grant funds. Wesolowski said the low to moderate income area is a huge area and staff can look at other areas. The project would probably be limited to one block as the funding is usually \$125,000 to \$175,000 which does not include utilities. Rasmussen wants to look at other areas because we are looking at development with Blenker where they would build market rate housing. Blenker is a for-profit company that can afford an assessment more than a low income resident. Wesolowski hadn't seen the building proposal before this street was considered. The street would have to make sense for a one block area that is not part of a larger project.

Adjourn

Wadinski moved to adjourn the meeting. Larson seconded and the motion carried unanimously 5-0. Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:40 p.m.