

INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: October 10, 2024, at 5:15 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall.

Members Present: Chad Henke, Lou Larson, Michael Martens, Sarah Watson, Tom Neal

Also Present: Allen Wesolowski, TJ Niksich, Andrew Lynch, Jillian Kurtzhals, Dustin Kraege, Lori Wunsch

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

Noting the presence of a quorum, at approximately 5:15 p.m. Chair Henke called the meeting to order.

Approval of minutes of the September 12, 2024 meeting

Neal moved to approve the minutes of the September 12th meeting. Seconded by Larson and the motion passed 5-0.

Public Comment/Discussion on the closure of 28th Avenue between Madonna Drive and West Wausau Avenue

Mark Lehmann, 716 North 30th Avenue, researched proposed 5-year projects and found that 28th Avenue is recommended for reconstruction in 2026 estimated at \$1.5 million. He asked why that is not one of the two options provided in the letter he received. One option was to reroute it and one to install cul-de-sacs. If there is \$1.5 million allocated for it, why are we not going through with it. He has major opposition to Option 1. Option 1 was first brought up many years before homes were constructed on North 30th Avenue. If a road was put it at that time, it would not have made a difference. It makes a major difference now that homes are constructed on North 30th Avenue. They have a north direction of exit and entrance and a south direction of exit and entrance. They prefer the north as North 30th Avenue is a very steep drop off on the backside and is very treacherous. If there is a need to come up that hill, he is not sure his wife's car would make it up the first grade. On the exit, last year there was a major accident where a propane truck rolled as he lost control coming down the hill. If the northern exit is taken away, something will have to be done with North 30th Avenue to make it safer. If he had to vote on the two options, he would vote for Option 2. It is probably less expensive and he is hopeful it is the option the City would undertake. It makes the most sense to him. He asked why the City is not looking at redoing 28th Avenue and redoing it properly. The overlays wash out every time. If it is done correctly with storm drains installed, and there is \$1.5 million to do it, he suggested having that as an alternative.

Tom Christopher has lived at 815 North 28th Avenue for 20 years. He recommends the second option and thinks the cul-de-sacs make a ton of sense. There are cars going up the hill 50-60 miles per hour and it is not safe. Every year the road has to be reconstructed. He is not sure how much the City has spent on the road, but it seems every spring there is a major renovation and the road is closed for a while. He wants to be done with it, put the cul-de-sacs in, and find a better way of doing business.

Gary Stein, 2900 West Belmont Drive, would like to keep 28th Avenue open. It's his understanding that about 1,700 vehicles use that stretch every day and he is one. It has been a pain to go around to 32nd Avenue and down. There are 27 driveways and 7 intersections on the detour compared to 1 intersection and 7 driveways down 28th Avenue. He disagrees with the last person as the road is not reconstructed every year; it may be fixed here and there. He believes it was lightly reconstructed about 20 years ago. If it is done right it would last another 20-30 years. It seems like we are coming up with some kind of solution for something that hasn't been a problem. He questioned the issue of fire and ambulance access. It is not their typical route but if they had to use it, it would be there. The maintenance of this stretch has been great. He has been up and down the hill in all kinds of weather and it has been fine. He thinks people on 32nd Avenue have been complaining because there is a portable radar unit. He hopes the City finds a way to fix it and reopen it.

Karen Signsheim, 5177 North 28th Avenue, Apartment 16, takes this road every day. She feels it should be redone. The road has not been reconstructed but patched. If it is reconstructed properly, it would work. She put

out an e-petition and has about 150 signatures. She does not know if it is an ambulance route, but she knows there are a lot of people from Merrill that use it. She is out by WW and tons of people every day use it along with her. Her friend lives on 29th and Maple Creek and hears races at night. She has seen people racing down the road. There are kids that are playing near those roads. Drivers do not care. People on 32nd Avenue bought their houses for the quietness. They don't have that anymore. The signs at the top of West Wausau Avenue are not correct. There is a road closed sign going down but there is nothing on West Wausau. This week alone she has seen six cars turn down 28th Avenue only to have to turn around. She thinks it should be reconstructed. If cul-de-sacs are installed, there will still be people going through subdivisions.

Fred Schroeder, 2715 West Wausau Avenue, said 18 years ago it was proposed to make 28th Avenue 4 lanes. It wasn't changed to 4 lanes because of the grade and it conflicted with state standards. There was another meeting with a proposal of the sale of the property on top of the hill, the east side of 28th, for 28-unit condos with a number of stories. Residents objected because all that traffic coming down 28th would be a tremendous amount of risk with accidents waiting to happen. He was told that Aspirus was in favor of closing the hill and wanted people to use Westwood. He is not questioning the ulterior motives of Aspirus but is concerned if that property might be available for developers.

Bret Lichtenwald, 3007 Ridgewood Drive, is in the cul-de-sac. He is in favor of redoing 28th Avenue. He moved into his house in 2015 and did not know about the master plan the County had to redirect 28th Avenue. There was anxiety while building their house thinking there may be a 4-lane road built in their backyard. Fortunately, that plan is off the table. He is not looking forward to having traffic diverted behind his house. He has talked with neighbors on 32nd Avenue and they think the current detour should be changed to Westwood Drive. There are young kids who go to the bus stop at 32nd and West Wausau Avenue. About a week ago there was a fairly long line of cars. One of the cars got impatient and tried to cut off the bus while kids were getting off the bus. There is still building going on in the area. We are sending traffic through a residential neighborhood.

Rick Langbecker, 806 North 28th Avenue, said if he had a preference, it would be Option 2. However, he thinks the city should do a better job of promoting 20th Avenue. It is a 4 lane north and south road. It would take the traffic away from 28th Avenue and not routed to 32nd Avenue. 20th Avenue is a fairly new 4-lane road that could be utilized more than it is today.

George Mosher, 710 North 32nd Avenue, would vote for 28th Avenue to be reconstructed. Since the detour went up, there is 60% more traffic on 32nd Avenue. People go fast and do not pay attention. When he built 13 years ago he did not expect this.

Bill Panzigrau has lived at 2708 West Wausau Avenue for 9 years. His neighbor, who is an engineer, has said there is no reason they cannot reconstruct 28th Avenue. He asked what year the \$1.5 million is for. Wesolowski said the \$1.5 million is a placeholder for 2026; it depends on what is considered for reconstruction. The \$1.5 million would not account for Option 1 and would not be enough to reconstruct 28th Avenue on its existing path. The \$1.5 million would likely get Option 2 with the cul-de-sacs and rerouting. Panzigrau said the equipment they make today can go through rock. There is a new parking lot going in by the Walk About building. There was rock there and they took care of it. He is sure they can take care of rock on 28th Avenue. A lot of people use 28th Avenue to go to work at Aspirus and the clinics.

Jeff Seidler, 3001 Maple Creek Drive, lives at the bottom of 30th Avenue. He is the one that got the propane truck in his yard. Every year at least one vehicle ends up in his yard, so something has to be done. His first thought is to reconstruct 28th Avenue, but something needs to be done on 30th and 29th with the vehicles that come down that hill, especially during the winter. He has lived there 42 years and this is constant every year. He cannot encourage enough that something needs to be done. He was in favor of the cul-de-sacs, but a good point was made about not being able to go up that hill in the winter if there are cul-de-sacs. He suggested putting up a ton of signs with the decline and to slow down so he stops getting vehicles in his yard.

Mike Witter has lived at 2904 Maple Creek Drive for 59 years. His first car was an El Camino. He got up and down the hill in the winter. His dad had a van and got up and down the hill every day. The property at the bottom of 29th and Maple Creek Drive always has someone in his yard in the wintertime. It is going to happen.

Wausau is on a big hill. Everyone that lives in the area knows about the hill and knows it is an inconvenience in certain situations. The City needs to redo 28th Avenue. It is a hill and water will go to the lowest part. Dig it out correctly for ditches. If there is a lot of rain it will come down the hill; nothing will stop it. The road needs to be redone. He uses it every day. People from Marshfield Clinic, Aspirus, other clinics, Menards and Home Depot use it as it is the easiest and most effective way to get home. Residents on other streets do not want to see extra traffic. Someone wanted to build a house on the west side of 29th off of Maple Hill Drive. He could not do it because there was so much granite. Now there are machines that can get into the rock and fix it right. Emergency vehicles need to go up and down. He asked again to fix 28th Avenue and make sure 29th and 30th have good pavement.

There were no further comments and the public comment period was closed.

Henke has talked with Wesolowski at great length. They are considering moving the detour from 32nd Avenue to Westwood Drive, which is a 4-lane road. Martens asked if there is additional travel time in moving the detour over to Westwood. He can see benefits of moving it to Westwood Drive as it is a 4-lane road, but he asked if it takes people out of the way. Wesolowski said it is definitely longer. We can post a detour, but people will go where they want to go. Using West Wausau to Westwood Drive to Bridge Street is a longer route, but it may relieve some traffic through the neighborhood.

Paul David, Assistant General Counsel for Aspirus said rerouting traffic around the hospital becomes an issue. That will take a tremendous amount of traffic by areas that are fairly sensitive for a number of safety reasons. It goes right by the helicopter landing area. He asked for more of an opportunity to assess before a determination is made. He does not know what the traffic volume numbers are. There may be issues related to temporary closures in that area because of construction work that will take place on the Aspirus Campus. Safety issues related to the helicopter landing pad will need to be considered. He feels there should be more time to evaluate and comment before taking action. As a citizen, if he had to take a position, 28th Avenue, while a challenging corridor, is a natural and good corridor. 28th Avenue has been a natural travel area for a lot of people for a number of years. Maintaining it as the corridor is the appropriate thing. More importantly, they need an opportunity to evaluate any rerouting of significant traffic through those areas as there are significant safety issues and concerns that would arise.

Neal stated that Wesolowski and staff have spent a lot of time looking at this and we have had meetings discussing different options. Tonight, we have public input that will be compiled and considered. There will be no decisions tonight. Going forward we have to lay it out in terms of what seems to be the best, which also includes things like funding. Everything will be taken into account and people will have another chance to chime in. Henke stated his monthly meeting is scheduled for December 9th in the basement of Grace United Church at 6:00 pm. This will be more of a Q&A and discussion with Engineering. The plan is to have more photos, pricing, and details at that meeting.

Wesolowski stated traffic counters will be placed on 28th, Madonna, 32nd and West Wausau before winter. Cost estimates will be worked on and results will be ready for the December 9th meeting.

Public Hearing: Vacating and discontinuing certain right-of-way along East Thomas Street abutting a portion of 700 Grand Avenue and vacating a portion of right-of-way formerly known as 804-806 Grand Avenue, 810 Grand Avenue, 814 Grand Avenue, and 816 Grand Avenue

No one came forward to offer public comment and the public hearing was closed.

Discussion and possible action on vacating and discontinuing certain right-of-way along East Thomas Street abutting a portion of 700 Grand Avenue and vacating a portion of right-of-way formerly known as 804-806 Grand Avenue, 810 Grand Avenue, 814 Grand Avenue, and 816 Grand Avenue

Martens is generally in favor of vacating this right-of-way. If the proposed development for this corner is moved to the south, we can maintain a 20' strip for the road reconstruction and still be able to get the housing development. He wants to see more affordable housing and wants to see that intersection reconstructed. He

received an email from a constituent who would like to see enough space allocated so the intersection is more of a complete street with protected lanes for cyclists and pedestrians. Martens is in favor if we can reserve enough space for that intersection to be properly reconstructed while still maintaining the development of affordable housing.

Martens moved to approve the vacation. Larson seconded and the motion passed 5-0.

Discussion and possible action on first revision to the State/Municipal Agreement for Grand Avenue, Kent Street to Thomas Street

Wesolowski stated this will be a big project that includes the reconstruction of the intersection of Thomas Street. Originally, the DOT had this project on the books and then took it off. The project is now back on the table. The DOT will pay 100% for the reconstruction other than costs for sewer and water. The agreement includes an estimated cost for right-of-way acquisition, which will be the DOT's responsibility. The DOT may buy some real estate for the possibility of widening the road. This is currently in the planning process, but they will widen it for pedestrian and bike accommodations if they can. This road had new asphalt 6 to 7 years ago, which has held up well. This would give a chance to completely reconstruct the roadway.

Larson asked if there is a cost estimate for replacing the sewer and water lines. Wesolowski said the project is not at that stage yet, but it will not be cheap. This is an old section of town and it is likely that all sewer and water will be replaced. There is a placeholder of \$1 million for sewer and water. That will have to be refined as planning moves along. He expects that cost will go up.

Neal said this is a main artery and the sooner we get it behind us the better.

Neal moved to approve. Seconded by Larson.

Henke asked about the recent project approved to redo the intersection at Townline Road. Wesolowski explained that the DOT gave us money to reconstruct those signals and we have started that design process. We will probably back off on that as it would not pay to reconstruct the signals and then redo them again in a few years. The signals were planned for 2026 and the reconstruction project is planned for 2030. The DOT may advance the reconstruction project if they can.

Martens asked if the reconstruction of Grand Avenue would entail a partial reconstruction of Townline Road. Wesolowski said all intersections on Grand Avenue will be redone. Martens feels the turn lanes on Townline Road are poor. At least once a month a semi clips the signal on the intersection. Wesolowski explained the redesign would put trombones up and take the signals out of the center median.

There being a motion and a second, motion to approve passed 5-0.

Discussion and possible action on assessment rates for 2025 construction projects

Wesolowski explained that the current rate is \$55 per foot. Traditionally, the rate is to represent 60% of the cost of putting in the roadway. If we want to cover 60% of the roadway, the rate should be closer to \$120 per foot. That would be overburdensome to people living on the street and we could have people paying \$20,000 for street reconstruction. Wesolowski believes we need to get away from the notion of residents carrying 60% of the cost of the roadway as it is not feasible. He recommends keeping the rate at \$55 per foot.

Neal appreciates the explanation and respects it. While things do go up, we cannot expect a dramatic increase for citizens.

Neal moved to approve the assessment rates as recommended. Seconded by Martens.

Henke asked how many years the rate has been at \$55. Wesolowski said this is the second year. The last increase went from \$42 per foot to \$55.

Neal asked if this recommendation would go to the Finance Committee. Wesolowski indicated it typically has not gone to Finance. It will go to Council.

There being a motion and a second, motion to approve the assessment rates as recommended passed 5-0.

Discussion and possible action on preliminary resolution levying special assessments for 2025 Street Construction Projects

Wesolowski explained this would give the right to hold public hearings on assessment rates.

Watson moved to approve. Seconded by Martens and the motion passed 5-0.

Discussion and possible action on preliminary resolution levying special assessments for 2025 Alley Paving Project

Wesolowski stated a petition was received to pave the alley bounded by 1st Avenue, 3rd Avenue, Sherman Street, and Rosecrans Street. This would give the right to hold a public hearing on assessments.

Henke asked if this would be scheduled for 2025. Wesolowski confirmed, pending the results of the public hearing. Henke asked if there is an alley paving fund. Wesolowski said last year \$35,000 was budgeted for alley paving, but no petitions were received. This is the only petition that has been received for 2025.

Since there were no alley paving projects this year, Martens asked if the funds are carried over. Wesolowski said that depends on Finance. A carryover request can be made or the funds go back to the general fund. That is yet to be determined.

Larson moved to approve. Seconded by Neal and the motion passed 5-0.

Adjourn

Watson moved to adjourn the meeting. Neal seconded and the motion carried 5-0. Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:10 p.m.