

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND STREET MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: January 8, 2015, at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall.

Members Present: Rasmussen, Gisselman, Kellbach, Mielke, Abitz

Also Present: Mayor Tipple, Lenz, Wesolowski, Gehin, Jacobson, Giese

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 5:30 p.m. Chairperson Rasmussen called the meeting to order.

Approve minutes of the December 11, 2014 meeting

Mielke moved to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Abitz seconded and the motion carried unanimously 5-0.

PUBLIC HEARING: Vacation of the alley abutting 720 and 724 Franklin Street and 715, 717 and 721 McIndoe Street

Rasmussen asked those in attendance who wished to speak regarding the proposed vacation to come to the podium and give their name, address and comments. No one came forward to offer comments and the public hearing was closed.

Rasmussen stated a petition for the vacation was received from the abutting property owners. Wesolowski indicated that staff recommends approval.

Gisselman moved to approve the vacation of the alley abutting 720 and 724 Franklin Street and 715, 717 and 721 McIndoe Street. Mielke seconded.

Abitz questioned if the property owners on each side of the alley would get half of the alley after vacation. Wesolowski replied not necessarily as it depends upon the original plat. The City Surveyor would research the plat before vacation.

There being a motion and a second, motion to approve the vacation of the alley abutting 720 and 724 Franklin Street and 715, 717 and 721 McIndoe Street passed unanimously 5-0.

Discussion and possible action on the sale of City-owned property at 1001-1003 North 3rd Avenue

Wesolowski explained that the City Attorney's office received an email from the abutting property owner expressing his interest in the property. The City Assessor has valued the property between \$5,800 and \$7,800. Staff recommends the parcel be advertised for sale. Abitz questioned the future use of the property. Rasmussen said the abutting property is a mixture of office and rental. She is unsure if he intends to use the lot for parking. Abitz is concerned about view of traffic if a building is constructed. Rasmussen stated the corner is right turn with no stop so the view of traffic is not a concern. Wesolowski added that driveway access would not be allowed and entry would have to be off the alley.

Kellbach moved to offer the City-owned property at 1001-1003 North 3rd Avenue for sale with the minimum bid of \$6,500. Mielke seconded and the motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Discussion regarding engineering services to study 1st and 3rd Avenues and possible conversion to two-way traffic

Rasmussen explained that this has come up in discussion several times within the last year. Wesolowski stated that there is money budgeted in the TIF for the study. There would be a lot of impacts if 1st and 3rd Avenues are converted to two-way traffic. The DOT is very concerned and would have requirements to the study, such as traffic impacts and analysis. Rasmussen stated this committee would also have similar concerns and would want the study to include those elements as well. She questioned if there is an estimate of what the study would cost. Wesolowski replied \$50,000 was budgeted but the cost would be based upon how detailed the study is. Rasmussen indicated this discussion will not go away as there is neighborhood and business owner interest. Since 1st Avenue from Thomas Street to Stewart Avenue will be rebuilt in the near future, we should have insight into the matter. Wesolowski stated that plans for Stewart Avenue are 90% complete. The plans include new signals with timing coordination with the railroad. There is a lot of money in the signals that are not accounting for two-way traffic. Rasmussen added that the City would have to bear the cost of future signal changes and noted there are several questions that need definitive answers.

Abitz stated that Kolbe & Kolbe and 3M are not happy with two-way traffic as it would put a big burden on their trucks. She stated an area of 1st Avenue was collapsing and had to be rebuilt. If it is converted to two-way traffic this area would have to be rebuilt again with a major cost. There are already issues with Kolbe & Kolbe traffic in the area and if converted, traffic would turn from 1st onto Thomas causing more issues. She feels it is more important to keep manufacturing than to change the traffic flow. Rasmussen explained if a study is done it will take a definitive look at all of the factors for a well-educated answer. Abitz stated Thomas Street is already having an issue with the flow of traffic. There was bumper to bumper traffic tonight. She feels it is the wrong idea. Rasmussen stated in recent meetings with stakeholders in the near west side, there was interest by the residents, Main Street, Visitors Bureau, River District and two Alderpersons in at least having questions answered.

Abitz feels that no one listens to her residents and her neighborhood does not matter. She added that no one listened to her residents regarding Thomas Street. Rasmussen shifted gears to urban planning. She asked if the City was being proactive by looking into this as 1st Avenue is about to be rebuilt. Lenz stated this has been talked about by several people and the design of 1st Avenue needs to start soon. Staff thought the topic should be brought up to see if a study should in fact be considered. He agrees that there are a lot of challenges, which a study would identify and associate costs to the challenges. A study may find that it is not worth the cost.

Mayor Tipple questioned if the DOT could stop the conversion of traffic even if the study is in favor. Wesolowski said the DOT has jurisdiction on the section from Stewart Avenue to the north. He was told if the traffic analysis is not a level C or better, the DOT will not approve it. Additionally, transportation funding will be affected as the City receives funding for north and south bound Business 51 as a connecting highway. Rasmussen asked how long the study would take. Wesolowski replied it would depend upon how quickly the RFP is released, but anticipates late summer or fall. Rasmussen questioned if that would affect the design of 1st Avenue. Wesolowski indicated the RFP for design has not been completed yet and survey work would be completed in spring of 2016. Rasmussen would hate to miss the opportunity to look at it and then have to field outcry from stakeholders.

Gisselman agrees with Abitz and feels that 3M and Kolbe & Kolbe are major factors. He questioned if City staff could inquire with 3M, Kolbe & Kolbe, and the DOT and not have to complete a \$50,000 study. A letter from 3M and Kolbe stating they would like 1st Avenue to remain one-way would be good enough for him. He does not see a driving force for this study at this time. Rasmussen fears that if a study

is not done with analysis showing the pros and cons, 1st Avenue may turn into another Thomas Street or 2nd Avenue. By completing a study the City is not committing to converting traffic. She feels if it is not studied the committee will become the subject of acquisitions.

Mielke agrees to a limited extent and does not feel \$50,000 needs to be spent. He also agrees that 3M and Kolbe & Kolbe are major players and the City cannot afford to lose them. Rasmussen added that because \$50,000 has been budgeted, it does not all have to be spent. Rasmussen questioned if it is feasible for a study to be conducted for less than \$50,000 or complete an in-house analysis of the pros and cons from the City's perspective. Lenz stated staff can look at basic information and could complete a limited analysis but he feels putting numbers to it is beyond staff's ability.

Abitz stated 1st Avenue between Thomas and Stewart is narrow and 3M trucks or any trucks would have a difficult time if 1st Avenue is converted. She said the study should be done but feels her residents, 3M and Kolbe & Kolbe will not be in favor. She added that on 1st Avenue from Stewart Avenue to Merrill Avenue there are several curves in the road that would make two-way traffic difficult. Rasmussen feels that is the reason for the study.

Gisselman asked where the drive for the conversion is coming from. He can understand the drive of converting one-ways into two-ways within the City but feels this is a special circumstance with 3M and Kolbe. Lenz stated this has come up over the years and he can trace it back to at least 2007 in the Near West Side Master Plan. Staff needs to move forward on the design of 1st Avenue as the City has received STP Urban funding for the project and there is a time frame for completion. Since it has come up over the years, staff does not want to get questioned for not looking at it. Alderpersons have specifically asked that the traffic pattern be looked at when 1st Avenue is reconstructed. The stakeholders are looking at more of a main street feel for economic development and not necessarily having thoroughfares through the City where people may not stop and shop. This is just a preliminary step to identify what the challenges. He added that the question does not seem to go away.

Mayor Tipple stated generally one-way streets are not a friend of cities. He recalled when 3rd Street was studied. After the stakeholders got involved with their wish of parking and outside tables, the talk of conversion ended. He feels it is worth the study and does not believe it will cost \$50,000. He added that as a City there is a judiciary responsibility to review it when the opportunity arises. Mayor Tipple also stated that one would not design a city like Wausau is with 6th Street and Grand Avenue going around the downtown.

Rasmussen does not want to be accused of not looking at it when people have asked about it. Abitz stated there is a want of two-way streets for stakeholders, but asked about individuals who want to go from one destination to another. The flow of traffic should keep going and traffic should not have to stop at traffic signals on every corner. She receives a lot of calls as the chair of Parking and Traffic regarding traffic signals and stop signs. She would like a stop sign on Bopf Street, but has been denied. Traffic turns off 17th Avenue onto Bopf Street to avoid signals. Rasmussen feels a study would just give fair consideration. This committee has never been afraid to tell stakeholders no. 3rd Street was given fair consideration and with all factors weighed it was not worth it. 2nd Street and the Jefferson Ramp were also considered and this committee declined it. We do not have to be controlled by stakeholders but we need to understand their concerns and have an official answer with an educated background.

Abitz moved to proceed with the study and direct staff to compose and release a RFP with the proposal not to exceed \$50,000. Mielke seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Update on Thomas Street design for west half of project and possible action on side street access

Lenz stated that AECOM is present to provide an update on the Thomas Street project. There are some specifics of the design that staff would like the committee to weigh in on, particularly the side street access. AECOM's draft of the design shows medians across some intersections where they were not shown in the concepts drawn by GRAEF. Staff wanted to bring this to the committee's attention and see if that is the direction to move forward with.

Bruce Gerland, AECOM, stated they have concentrated on the intersections at 11th Avenue, 3rd Avenue, and 1st Avenue. He realizes that 3rd and 1st Avenue intersections were not included in what they were told to move forward with, but they need to be designed to understand the transition from the proposed section back to the existing. They need to make it function with whatever project happens from 3rd Avenue to the river. Traffic engineers used the 2012 traffic counts to develop what the intersection of 11th and Thomas should look like. At 11th Avenue for east bound traffic there is a left turn lane, a through lane, and a right turn lane onto 11th Avenue. For west bound traffic there is a through lane, left turn lane south and a single lane heading east. This will be a signalized intersection. Abitz questioned the crosswalks at the intersection. Gerland referred to the drawing which showed the crosswalks. He noted that the intersection is signalized and there would most likely be pedestrian countdown timers. Based upon the latest traffic counts and projections, the intersection of 3rd and 1st were also designed. The intersection at 3rd Avenue is one-way for south bound traffic, with a left turn, through lane, and right turn. The 1st Avenue study would impact the design of the 3rd and 1st Avenue intersections. Abitz questioned access for the Krist property on the southwest corner of 3rd and Thomas. Gerland stated in 2008 when the initial layout was completed, one of the things looked at was access and safety. With every access point, there are chances for accidents. At a T intersection there are nine points of conflict. A key component of this project is safety and how safety can be increased. Therefore, some side road intersections were proposed to be closed, which was received fairly well from residents. The study regarding economic development included a consideration to open the intersections but sign them as left out. Therefore, if you are on a side street you can make a left out, but you could not make a left turn off of Thomas Street. The traffic engineer feels that signing the intersections will be unsuccessful as people will still make left turns off of Thomas Street and accidents will not be eliminated. Also, the left out movement is the most dangerous. There would be a 10' median, 18' including paved areas. There should be 24' for a vehicle to complete two-stage crossing. This means a vehicle wanting to cross half way before proceeding is unprotected. The traffic engineer tried to determine if accidents would be reduced. However, with either option a percentage cannot be determined. Intuitively, they can say that the option of closing intersections is going to be safer than a left out. AECOM does recommend that the intersections be closed. From an economic development standpoint, the City could work with a developer to open the median and allow access. Gerland clarified that with either alternative a left turn cannot be made off of Thomas Street. Abitz stated that because of traffic issues, most residents have already modified their traffic pattern to get to their property. Discussion followed on traffic movements into businesses along Thomas Street.

AECOM internally has discussed the mid-block pedestrian crossings. The crossings will become safer as pedestrians will not have to worry about a left turn movement. It will be a two-stage crossing as pedestrians can cross and will have 10' to stand in the median.

Discussion followed on traffic flow, especially during peak times when employees are leaving Kolbe & Kolbe. Abitz noted she is for increasing safety but during certain times there will be traffic flow issues. Abitz feels that some of the economic growth may be prohibited because of access issues. She added that if the businesses on the south side notice a decrease in business there will be issues. Discussion followed on adding alternative access at various side streets.

Rasmussen believes the best option for 6th and 8th Avenues would be to restrict access as shown in the alternative diagrams. Left turns and through movements would be allowed off the side streets onto Thomas Street; however, left turns would be signed as restricted from Thomas Street onto the side streets.

Rasmussen passed the Chairman duties to Gisselman and moved to direct staff and AECOM to continue with the design as drawn with the addition of alternative access as depicted at 6th Avenue and 8th Avenue. Mielke seconded and the motion carried 4-1 with Abitz the opposing vote. Rasmussen resumed the Chairman duties.

Gisselman questioned if this item would go to Council. Rasmussen stated it does not need to at this time as the project is still in the design phase.

Mayor Tipple stated caution should be used when talking independently with business owners regarding access as the design may change.

Discussion and possible action regarding renewal of Stormwater Memorandum of Agreement with surrounding communities

Gehin stated this is to renew the Stormwater Memorandum of Agreement with neighboring communities, which has currently expired. This agreement allows Marathon County to avoid adopting a separate stormwater ordinance and allows the County to follow the stormwater ordinance in place by the municipality. Staff recommends approval.

Mielke moved to renew the Stormwater Memorandum of Agreement. Kellbach seconded and the motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Mayor Tipple stated the League of Municipalities also has an association that the City has been a part of. The City does intend to rejoin it and will participate at state and local levels.

Future agenda items for consideration

Gisselman stated there is an upcoming meeting regarding Brokaw and questioned if that will be brought to this committee. Mayor Tipple indicated that the report with suggestions and recommendations has not been released yet. This will be a huge endeavor that will involve multiple players. If the City does get involved, the information in the report should direct which committee would review.

Adjourn

Mielke moved to adjourn the meeting. Kellbach seconded and the motion carried unanimously 5-0. Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:55 p.m.