

Street/Sidewalks/Yard Waste Committee Meeting Minutes
Vergas City Office
February 9, 2023

1.) A meeting of the Vergas Streets/Sidewalks/Yard Waste (SSYW) Committee was held on Thursday, February 9, 2023 at 1:00 PM at the Vergas City Office. Present was Bruce Albright and Paul Pinke, Vergas City Council; Julie Lammers, City Clerk, Mike DuFrane, Utility Superintendent; and Blaine Green, Widseth. Albright called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM.

2.) Agenda Additions or Deletions. Albright wanted to add purchasing an additional sign for the recycling site. Lammers said the sign has already been ordered. DuFrane wanted to add Hardware Store drainage.

3.) Minutes for the 12/08/22 and 12/28/22 SSYW meetings were attached in the agenda packet. Albright said there were a couple of small changes for the 12/08/22 minutes, which have now been made. Motion by Pinke to approve both sets of minutes, seconded by Albright, approved.

4.) Sidewalk Policy. Sidewalks are addressed in Title IX: General Regulations, Section 93. Green distributed a couple of maps that they prepared showing the sidewalk and trail ownership within the City. The larger scaled map showed the downtown sidewalks, and which were maintained by the adjacent business, which were maintained by the City, and a private sidewalk (Karen Hill). The Committee felt the downtown "private" sidewalks should be relabeled "commercial". Green will make the change. Chapter 93, Streets and Sidewalks, is about 9 pages long. Albright felt in keeping with our goal regarding ordinances, we should look at the entire section. 93.03, (B) 1 states: "no person shall obstruct any street or sidewalk by depositing snow or ice thereon". There are no mentions of whom is responsible for maintaining the sidewalks. Section 92.01 also talks about sidewalk maintenance. Albright said now that we have the maps, and the sidewalks are labeled, we can place jurisdiction on who's responsible. Albright has looked at other sidewalk ordinances from neighboring communities. For example, if the snow is not removed from a business commercial sidewalk like within 48 hours, the City will do the work and charge the respective business owner. Green questioned if the City has ever considered maintaining the sidewalks and just billing the respective business owners? DuFrane didn't feel that City utility staff would have time to do this extra work. DuFrane also asked if the new ordinances should address the sidewalk overhangs constructed by several of the businesses. They make snow removal more difficult, and snow from the roof can slide onto the street. Albright said he did see one business that was pulling the snow off their awning which then fell on the street, and he assumed DuFrane had to haul it away on a Monday morning. Green said they could also present American with Disabilities Act (ADA) issues. Previous Councils had approved the overhangs for the businesses. One bid was received for the Request for Proposals (RFP) regarding snow removal for the city streets. Regarding Chapter 93, Albright suggested that SSYW Committee members should get their suggested changes for this section to Lammers by the next SSYW meeting. Most likely, we're not going to get anything new in place that will be applicable for this winter.

5.) 1ST AVE S Parking. At the last meeting, Widseth presented a drawing that would widen the driving lanes on the noted road segment between West (W) Main Street (ST) and East (E) Linden ST. The diagonal parking south of the old fire hall (Hanson's Plumbing shop) would revert back to parallel parking. The sidewalk along Franklin Fence would be moved 10' west. The Otter Tail County Highway Department has said they would not participate in the costs of said modifications. Green estimated that the work could cost \$30,000 if the existing sidewalk

is not replaced, or \$50,000 if the sidewalk is replaced, including a possible new easement. Albright said the diagonal parking is getting used quite frequently. As time goes on, he felt people will get more familiar with the idea. Once the County Garage property is acquired and developed into a parking lot, this should also help relieve congestion along 1ST AVE S.

6.) County Garage Land. At the 12/28/22 SSYW meeting, the Committee recommended to Council that they adopt Option 1B parking for the County Garage property. At the 01/10/23 Council Meeting, the Council did not adopt the recommendation because Councilman Haarstick had not seen the plan. The County has moved out of the building, and Lammers felt the City would own the building by our March Council meeting. Lammers is still working on the Otter Tail County grant application for demolition of the building and development of the parking lot. She said the City is eligible for \$50,000/year from the County, or \$25,000 per project. The grants have to have a 50/50 match. Lammers thought that we might need fences on both sides (east and west) of the property. As the County has moved their equipment, the adjacent business owner to the east is already starting to allow employee parking on the County property. We'll also have to check the City Ordinances (Section 151.45 to 151.48) for compliance regarding fences. Albright questioned if we could break the project into two separate projects, maybe qualifying for the entire \$50,000? Such as the building demolition as the first project, and the second project could be the parking lot development? DuFrane felt we'll need some specifications for the building demolition, as the one bid we've already received, just talked about crimping the waterline under the building. Lammers said she is still waiting for some quotes before submitting the grant application. Albright felt ideally, doing the parking lot with Class V gravel for one year before paving would allow the backfill to settle.

DuFrane thought the alley from 1ST AVE S to S Railway AVE behind the City building should be repaved at the same time. Traffic leaving the new parking lot will use the alley to exit. The alley pavement is not in good condition. DuFrane also questioned if the alley between the Post Office and City building should also be repaved at the same time. There is a storm sewer in this area, and already this spring, the water is starting to backup because the storm sewer is frozen. Albright said this area is not an alley, and the property line between the two buildings was looked at on the County's Graphic Information Systems (GIS) website. We'll also probably need specifications for the parking lot development, such as Class V depths, etc. Widseth said when needed, they could develop said documents.

7.) Complete Streets. The Otter Tail County Board of Commissioners adopted their Complete Streets Policy on 01/24/23. On 12/14/21, the City adopted a resolution to develop a Complete Streets Policy, once the County was done with their plan. Today's meeting agenda included a copy of the County's Policy. The County's policy is 17 pages long. The City's policy will be much shorter, as we have less streets to deal with. Time permitting, City Staff can start drafting the County's policy for City use.

8.) W Lake ST. Widseth had preliminary engineer's estimates for this improvement project. The first estimate would only deal with that segment of the roadway from the Glenn ST extension to County (CO) Road (RD) Number (NO) 17. This segment is 775' long, and includes road improvements and paving. The road improvements are expected to cost \$86,336.25, and paving at \$62,946.40. Including design engineering and construction staking/inspection, the total cost is \$179,082.65 (\$103,536.25 w/o paving). For this segment, he also included a number of assessment options in his report. Most of the various options included a 50%, 80%, and 100% landowner assessment. The analysis did not include right-of-way review or acquisition. It appears the Mike Maneval property near Co. Rd. No. 17 does not have any designated road R/W. If this road is like the Town Line road, our attorney determined that by use, the driving surface of the roadway was already public, and did not have to be acquired again via payment.

The “full length” option improves the entire road to the west end of the city limits. Construction is estimated at \$190,500. Paving is at \$146,950.80. Including design and construction management, the estimated total cost is \$405,050.80 (\$228,700 w/o paving). The option also includes a number of assessment possibilities.

The project was previously identified in the City’s 2019 Capital Improvement Plan, and that project only identified graveling the roadway for an estimated cost of \$80,000, which would be 100% assessable to the adjacent landowners. The project’s narrative did talk about widening the road for safety reasons. Albright doubted we could find the funding to pave the road at this time. In fact we might need to back down on the amount of work done to get landowner agreement before even starting the design work. DuFrane said the road part with the worst slope issues is on the Mike Maneval property near CR No. 17. Albright said there are other ways to deal with a steep road slope, such as fencing or a guard rail. Discussions questioned if it might be cheaper to go straight north with the road to CR No. 17 instead of across the Maneval property? Albright thought building a new road for a quarter of a mile wouldn’t be cheap either. The Committee felt that no matter what happens with the road, starting the process to acquire the right-of-way across the Maneval property could get going anytime. Widseth will develop an estimate for doing this work for an upcoming Council meeting. Looking at the County GIS maps, there are other people that will use the improved road section, but are outside of the city limits, and therefore cannot be assessed by the City, unless through an agreement. Albright felt that SSW Committee should meet with these landowners, as well as Candor Township. Lammers thought Candor Township met in the evening on the second Tuesday of each month at the Vergas Fire Hall. Albright felt that ultimately, we’ll need a meeting with all of the affected landowners, and he felt the notice needs to be mailed to the respective parties. The City’s 2011 “Special Assessment and Trunk Area Policies and Procedures for Public Improvements and Maintenance Costs”, are just “Policies and Procedures”, subject to change at anytime by the Council, without a hearing.

9.) Glenn ST Extension. Apex Engineering has developed the construction plans for the Lawrence Lake Acres project. Widseth has looked at the plans and has developed a list of questions. There is about 400’ of Glenn ST that is currently on the City’s property before reaching the subdivision. We have to determine if the developer is paying for this segment of roadwork? It is shown on his plan set. The developer is ready to present “Phase II” of his project regarding the subdivision lots for his next final plat approval. He intends to build the entire road when conditions permit this spring. He has also applied for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). Albright said the City’s road design standards are covered in Appendix III of the Land Usage Ordinance.

10.) R/W E Lake ST and N Railway Ave. Widseth is done with their work, and everything has been turned over to the attorney for preparation of the necessary documents. We are waiting for the paperwork.

11.) W Sunset Strip. It’s been noted that there is no R/W for this roadway segment. The City is currently maintaining this roadway. It is difficult to snowplow, as there is no place to turn around. The road probably has some “prescriptive” rights, at least over the graveled portions that the City has been maintaining. Albright thought that the affected landowners would be willing to enter into R/W agreements, as they want the City to continue to maintain the road. Without easements, maintenance might be their responsibility. It appears that the City already has a water and sewer easement on at least part of the roadway. Perhaps a cul-de-sac could be installed in Garrett Dahlgren’s yard, or at least a turn around created to the west on the City’s easement. DuFrane said the road needs to extend to the Wallace property, but as of right now, they go south for the winter. We’ll keep this matter on our agenda for further discussion at our next meeting.

12.) Budget-Goal Setting. With the filing of the “Complete Street Condition Survey” by Widseth at the 01/10/23 Council meeting, the next step will be for the SSYW Committee to start planning for an implementation plan including annual funding allocations. Last session the Legislature did not approve funding for the Small Cities Assistance Program. Hopefully, this year, the Legislature approves this funding. The survey has identified over \$1 million dollars in work that would be completed on City streets. Implementing the program earlier, could have saved the City close to \$700,000.

13.) Hardware Drainage. DuFrane said the Hardware Store is looking at possibly rerouting their roof drainage in the southeast corner of their building directly into the City’s storm sewer. During the winter, the roof drainage creates an icing problem on the sidewalk. DuFrane thought the storm sewer extended past the building in S Railway AVE. The SSYW Committee wasn’t opposed to the idea, but felt more research was needed, such as where the storm sewer is actually located in this area. With the City’s new GIS mapping system, another layer, including the City’s storm sewers could be added. They could be located this spring after the snow melts. Albright felt this would be good information to have documented. Perhaps the County’s road plans might show where the storm sewers are located in W Main ST. Albright also felt it would be good to use DuFrane’s knowledge in this regard. Widseth will prepare a cost estimate for doing said work for the 02/15/23 Council meeting.

14.) Adjournment. Albright adjourned the meeting at 3:00 PM.

Respectfully prepared and submitted by;

Bruce E. Albright, City Council Member

Council Recommendations:

- Option 1B for the County garage property (pending).
- Authorize Widseth to add “storm sewer” mapping layer to GIS tool.

Follow up Actions:

- Landowner review of Feasibility reports for W Lake Street/funding options.
- Glenn ST extension.
- Address R/W needs for W Lake ST improvement project.
- Finalize work on R/W needs for East Lake Street and N Railway AVE (waiting for Attorney).
- Continue to work on budgets, and future road funding needs. -
- Continue to work on City parking, Work on handicap parking spots.
- Assess needs/budget for Small Cities Assistance Program funding. Lobby legislators for future funding, explain our needs to Legislators.
- Evaluate County and MnDOT speed study data regarding public safety concerns along trail. Look at creating an “urban” district or just extending speed limits to City boundary.
- Continue to work on snow removal, sidewalk, and parking ordinances/policies to address concerns. Snow emergency routes?
- Look at making W Sunset Strip an official street.
- Cost estimate for N Railway AVE repairs north of Elm ST intersection.
- Hardware Store roof drainage.

Additional Future Meeting Agenda Items:

- none, at this time.