

MEETING MINUTES
PUBLIC SERVICES COUNCIL COMMITTEE

Monday, April 22nd, 2024

City of West Des Moines Training Room

In Attendance:

Council Member – Matthew McKinney

Council Member – Kevin Trevillyan

Deputy City Manager – Jamie Letzring

City Attorney – Greta Truman

Assistant City Attorney – Larry Dempsey

Finance Director – Tim Stiles

Principal Engineer – Ben McAlister

Community & Economic Development Director – Ryan
Moffatt

City Engineer – Brian Hemesath

Public Services Superintendent – Gary Rank

Deputy Public Services Director – Joe Cory

Principal Engineer – Jason Schlickbernd

Principal Engineer – Nick Rentel

Transportation Engineer – Jim Dickinson

Transportation Engineer – Eric Petersen

Parks & Recreation Director – Ryan Penning

Guests in Attendance:

None

Meeting was called to order at 11:30 AM by City Engineer, Brian Hemesath.

1. Walnut Woods Drive – Sewer Inquiry (BJH)

Issue Summary:

Brian Hemesath, City Engineer discussed a recent inquiry from a property owner along SE Walnut Woods Drive regarding the ability to connect to public sanitary sewer. The area in question is not currently served by sanitary sewer but it is in a sewer fee district with fee district gravity mains, a lift station and force main planned.

Mr. Hemesath provided the committee with the history of the area, stating it was annexed into the city in 1988. A sewer study was done in 1996 by Veenstra & Kimm looking at different options for the area. A South Area sewer fee district was established in 1999 and updated in 2010. In 2015 there were inquiries about providing sewer to the area. In 2016 sewer extension in the Walnut Woods/Browns Woods area was discussed at length with the property owners and PSCC. There were concerns with where the sewer would be located and how it would affect the landscape in the area. It was determined that there was not enough interest at that time to move forward with a project.

A map was provided to the committee of how the area currently drains. North of Walnut Woods Drive and Browns Woods Drive are creeks that flow north towards the Raccoon River. Mr. Hemesath mentioned that Staff have looked at the possibility of constructing the sewer along the bluff on the opposite side of the Raccoon River from Raccoon River Regional Park. He added that, from an engineering standpoint that location would be ideal because the sewer could rely on gravity, but the construction of the sewer would be difficult due to the area being very hard to access and being built along the bluff would subject the sewer to erosion issues.

Mr. Hemesath then provided committee members with what Staff deems the best solution to provide sewer to the area. The area will require significant infrastructure to build the sewer and get the sewer to the sewer trunks. Some of the work involved includes a lift station between Walnut Woods Drive and

Browns Woods Drive with a force main going west. To serve the area north of Browns Woods Drive individual properties could pump to the sewer main or small packaged lift stations constructed that dump into a smaller collector sewer.

Mr. Hemesath pointed out that the property owner inquiring about connecting to sewer is located close to an existing sewer main. He added that a smaller project could be done but that would result in all of the homes to north pumping to a gravity sewer since everything flows north.

Council Member Matthew McKinney asked if there have been any changes in the area since the 2016 analysis.

Mr. Hemesath responded there may be some new houses in the area but overall, no major changes.

Councilmember McKinney inquired about the existing sewer fee district and if any of the property owners were currently paying into the district.

Mr. Hemesath explained that the property owners would not pay the sewer fee until they were ready to connect to the City sewer. He added that single home residential lots are charged fees based on acreage up to a maximum charge of 1 acre.

Council Member McKinney asked Staff if the situation would be similar to the Barnes Heights development, where if their sewers fail they would be compelled to connect to City sewer at that time.

Joe Cory, Deputy Public Services Director stated one of the big differences is some of the lots are larger, giving the property owner the ability to construct different lateral fields if the County allowed.

Council Member Kevin Trevillyan discussed Sylvan Rill's unique topography and the feasibility of providing sewer to the area.

Mr. Hemesath responded if unable to utilize a gravity sewer in the area Staff would look at a low pressure sewer option, similar to what was constructed in Thornwood.

Council Member Trevillyan added that the costs could be quite significant and asked about funding within future budgets for the project.

Finance Director Tim Stiles commented there is nothing currently budgeted for this project and noted that the City is fully reimbursed if and only if every single person connects to the sewer.

Councilmember Trevillyan stated he was not in favor of proceeding with the construction of the sewer for the fee district.

Councilmember McKinney requested Staff notify the property owners, so they are aware of the risk that exists.

Mr. Hemesath explained each individual location would be a bit different so a letter and FAQ could result in significant Staff time. He suggested Staff focus on specific areas and include language to let the property owners know that if your septic system fails and the sewer district has not been constructed it will take a considerable amount of time to respond.

Direction: Committee members would like Staff to draft a letter and FAQ for property owners within the fee district and explain the risks associated with not having the sewer constructed.

2. Railroad Quiet Zone - Raccoon River Park Entrance (ERP)

Issue Summary:

Eric Petersen, Transportation Engineer provided an update regarding the establishment of a “Quiet Zone” for the railroad crossing near Raccoon River Park. The issue was previously discussed in October 2023, at a PSCC meeting when nearby residents expressed concern about the horn noise being made when the train crosses the park road at 2:30 am and 5:30 am. He pointed out that train horns are required by law to be sounded at all public at-grade crossings for the safety of drivers and pedestrians crossing the tracks, unless certain improvements are in place. The Raccoon River Park crossing is a low volume street with gates and flashing lights in place.

Mr. Petersen stated, per the committees request, Staff has had discussions with Union Pacific Railroad, Iowa Interstate Railroad, and the Federal Railroad Administration to get an idea of what costs would be for the required improvements to implement a quiet zone.

Mr. Petersen explained the next steps of the process. A diagnostic meeting would need to be scheduled which is one part of a required \$30,000 reimbursement agreement. The agreement covers the travel and lodging for railroad engineers to come here and meet at the site, as well as the diagnostic work. He added that since the agreement is pay as you go, the City would be able to discontinue the process at any time during the agreement. He estimated final costs for a quiet zone at this location could range from \$30,000 - \$75,000 total costs depending on what is learned at the diagnostic meeting. Mr. Petersen noted there are not any grants available for quiet zones.

Councilmember Matthew McKinney inquired if Staff would have an idea of exact costs prior to signing a reimbursement agreement.

Mr. Petersen responded; they would not know exact costs until after the diagnostic meeting with railroad engineers. He pointed out that the Raccoon River Park crossing already has majority of the quiet zone requirements in place, which should keep total costs lower compared to what it would cost at other railroad crossings that do not already have gates and flashing lights.

Councilmember Kevin Trevillyan stated he was not in favor of implementing a quiet zone at this location. He referenced the train crossing near Commerce Drive and that property owners would still hear the train horns from that location. He also noted the various train crossings throughout West Des Moines that are located within residential areas and the precedent that would be set.

Councilmember McKinney stated he would like to speak with other Councilmembers regarding the issue prior to making a decision. He stated quality of life is important and some of those amenities, such as Raccoon River Park may be impacting the neighboring area.

Councilmember Trevillyan clarified the railroad crossing was in place before Raccoon River Park was established. He added that the train crossing was in place prior to residents purchasing their homes within the neighboring single-family development.

Mr. Petersen reiterated Councilmember Trevillyan’s point regarding precedent, adding there are many areas throughout the City that do not have gates and flashing lights. If residents were to request quiet zones at those locations the costs could be significantly more to meet railroad requirements.

Direction: Committee members were split. Councilmember Trevillyan was not in favor of moving forward with a quiet zone at the Raccoon River park crossing. Councilmember McKinney will discuss the matter with other Councilmembers and bring back to the committee for discussion at a later date.

3. 2024 Sidewalk Program – Update (JC)

Issue Summary:

Joe Cory, Deputy Public Services Director provided an update on the progress of the 2024 Sidewalk program. He provided a map showing the areas Staff are focusing on this year. Mr. Cory stated there are approximately 50-60 sidewalk panels Staff will have to fix, with a few of them being tree related. Letters will be sent to approximately 50 property owners along with a hold harmless agreement if they would prefer the city take care of grinding or mud jacking the sidewalk panel(s). Mr. Cory stated previous costs for the program were \$3,700 for grinding and \$2,700 for mud jacking.

Direction: Information Only

4. Review of Items for Council Meeting (May 6th, 2024)

ENGINEERING COUNCIL AGENDA ITEMS:

CONSENT AGENDA

Resolution – Authorizing Construction of Public Improvements

- SE 35th Street Improvements – Veterans Pkwy to 1500’ South

Resolution – Authorizing Construction of Public Improvements

- Prairie Fire

Resolution – Ordering Construction *Eng Est: \$6,304,330.20*

- Mills Civic Parkway - Sugar Creek & Fox Creek Crossings
(0510-071-2021) McClure Engineering Company 500.000.000.5250.490 *Coachlight Urban Renewal Area TIF*

Resolution – Accepting Work *\$374,561.00*

- RecPlex Operational Improvements - General
(0510-048-2022) Munro Construction 692.400.700.5250.490 *Local Option Sales & Service Tax (LOSST)*

Resolution – Approving Professional Services Agreement *Basic (Unknown at this time)*

- SW Kerry Street - Woodland Avenue to SW 60th Street
(0510-020-2024) HDR, Inc. 500.000.000.5250.495 *Ruthenium Urban Renewal Area TIF*

Resolution – Approving Professional Services Agreement *Basic (Unknown at this time)*

- Woodland Avenue - Veterans Parkway to SW Kerry Street
(0510-021-2024) Foth Infrastructure & Environment 500.000.000.5250.495 *Ruthenium Urban Renewal Area TIF*

Resolution – Approving Professional Services Agreement *Basic (Unknown at this time)*

- Middle Creek Lift Station & Forcemain
(0510-022-2024) Veenstra & Kimm, Inc. 640.000.000.5250.495 *Ruthenium Urban Renewal Area TIF*

Resolution – Approving Professional Services Agreement *Basic (Unknown at this time)*

- Supplemental Construction Administration Services

(0030-037-2024) HR Green, Inc. 500.000.000.5250.495 *Alluvion Urban Renewal Area TIF*

Motion – Approving Change Order No. 4 \$43,600.00

- **8th Street Reconstruction - I-235 to Clegg Road**
(0510-038-2020) Absolute Concrete Construction, Inc. 500.000.000.5250.490 *Reimbursement up to \$3,000,000 from the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program, along with the local match being funded either using available TIF Funds from the Midtown Urban Renewal Area or General Obligation Bonds*

PUBLIC SERVICES COUNCIL AGENDA ITEMS:

CONSENT AGENDA

Resolution – Approving Proclamation

- **National Public Works Week**
(May 19 – 25, 2024)

Motion – Approving Contract Agreement

- **Fire Systems**
(May 19 – 25, 2024)

5. Staff Updates:

None.

6. Other Matters:

- Councilmember Matthew McKinney inquired about overgrown yards. Deputy Public Services Director Joe Cory responded Community & Compliance staff are fully staffed and aware of the situation.
- Councilmember Matthew McKinney asked about the status of restoration regarding the City's Digital Enterprise Conduit network. City Engineer Brian Hemesath stated restoration started April 15th and will continue until mid-June.
- Councilmember Matthew McKinney inquired about the Digital Enterprise Conduit network and how Staff are ensuring new developments are included in the network.

City Engineer Brian Hemesath explained Staff recently met and discussed this topic. He stated Staff are actively working on a solution.

The meeting adjourned at 12:34 pm. The next Public Services Council Committee meeting is scheduled for May 13th, 2024.

A recording was made. Respectfully submitted by Juanita Greer, Executive Assistant to Director.