

City Of Birmingham

AD HOC UNIMPROVED STREET STUDY COMMITTEE

Birmingham City Hall Commission Room
151 Martin, Birmingham, Michigan
Thursday, August 22, 2019

Minutes of the Ad Hoc Unimproved Street Study Committee meeting held Thursday, August 22, 2019. Chairman Scott Moore called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m.

1) ROLL CALL

Present: Chairman Scott Moore (left 9:26 a.m.)
Pierre Boutros
Jason Emerine
Michael Fenberg
Katie Schafer (left 9:23 a.m.)
Stuart Sherman (arrived 8:09 a.m., left 9:10 a.m.)

Absent: Janelle Whipple-Boyce

Administration: Joe Valentine, City Manager
Tiffany Gunter, Assistant City Manager
Paul O'Meara, City Engineer
Aaron Filipski, Public Services Manager
Mark Gerber, Finance Director
Austin Fletcher, Asst. City Engineer
Laura Eichenhorn, Transcriptionist

2) APPROVAL OF MAY 16, 2019 MEETING MINUTES

Motion by Mr. Emerine

Seconded by Mr. Fenberg to approve the Minutes of the Ad Hoc Unimproved Streets Committee of May 16, 2019 as submitted.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Emerine, Fenberg, Boutros, Schafer, Sherman, Moore

Nays: None

3. ROAD DESIGN OPTIONS: PRESENTATION

City Manager Valentine presented the background on the item.

Timothy Judici, principal with OHM, presented the item.

Mr. Emerine pointed out that total costs for concrete versus asphalt roads must take into account the fact that asphalt roads will require total rebuilds about twenty years after they are paved.

In reply to Committee questions, Mr. Judici explained:

- Local communities tend to use concrete and asphalt roads in equal measure, with each community largely maintaining the material they originally used to pave their roads in order to maintain consistency.
- Many local communities have been very successful in repaving roads through petition-driven special assessment districts (S.A.D). Usually communities are able to offer different encouragement and incentives to neighborhoods interested in repaving their roads, which increases the likelihood of success.
- Upfront costs are the main appeal when a community chooses to pave their roads with asphalt. It is often much easier to get a neighborhood to agree to a S.A.D. when the upfront costs are less. In addition, if various homeowners are not sure they will be in their homes for the next fifty years, meaning they may not see a full return on investment, they may be satisfied with the twenty year roads asphalt can offer.

4. INITIAL DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION: DISCUSSION

City Manager Valentine provided background on the item.

Assistant City Manager Gunter, Public Services Manager Filipski, City Engineer O'Meara and Finance Director Gerber presented the item.

Dr. Schafer noted it would be useful to know whether the deterrent to paving petitions is knowledge of the process, or the potential cost to homeowners. Dr. Schafer also replied to Public Services Manager Filipski's statement that petitions to improve a street would be best begun in December or January in order to get out in front of any cape seal considerations for a street. Dr. Schafer noted that if the cycle changed so that improvement petitions did not have to be initiated during the winter months of December or January, residents might be more inclined to pursue street improvements.

Mr. Boutros opined that lack of awareness is often the bigger impediment.

City Manager Valentine confirmed Mr. Boutros' comment, and said he was hearing from the AHUSSC that the current process may be too cumbersome to be fully effective. He said that perhaps a resident could notify the City of initial interest in street improvement, and the City could then bear the responsibility for gauging how unanimous interest is.

Dr. Schafer said that in her experience trying to advocate for sidewalks, the fact that the City would not get involved in the discussion until there was 50% interest created space for an abundance of misinformation among the residents. She said more education at the outset of these discussions would benefit everyone in the community.

Chairman Moore suggested that millages and bonds would likely be unpopular options for funding. The 70% of improved Birmingham roads were already paid for through S.A.D.s, which means it is unlikely that those residents would want to pay again to help improve the final 30% of Birmingham roads which are currently unimproved.

Mr. Fenberg pointed out that bonding could be an option as long as residents in a S.A.D. were paying for the bond.

Chairman Moore concurred with Mr. Fenberg.

City Manager Valentine noted that the interest costs would be higher in that situation since it would be a smaller bond.

Mr. Fenberg acknowledged that was the case but posited that it may be a more attractive option than the current funding options available.

Chairman Moore invited public comment.

City Manager Valentine explained to Michael Bressler that an S.A.D. is a specific part of the City assessed for the purpose of funding a project local to that area.

Rob Lavoie explained that he and his neighbors overwhelmingly preferred to use asphalt to improve Lakeview, and urged the AHUSSC to give serious consideration to the merits of asphalt use. He suggested that the City could maintain the street for the 20 year life of the asphalt, and then do a 'mill and fill' at the 20 year mark. He said that would increase the longevity of the asphalt streets to 40 years, identical to the concrete ones. Mr. Lavoie then suggested that instead of sending out cape seal postcards to residents of unimproved streets two months before the improvement, the City could send those postcards out a year-and-a-half in advance asking whether there is interest in improving the street. He said this would be an easier way to determine neighborhood interest in improving streets.

Mr. Boutros asked Mr. Lavoie why people seemed to favor asphalt over concrete.

Mr. Lavoie said on a sunny day in the winter snow melts more quickly on an asphalt street than on a concrete street. He also said that the oil drippings from parked cars are less noticeable on asphalt streets than they are on concrete streets.

Chairman Moore said the AHUSSC would keep Mr. Lavoie's suggestions in mind moving forward.

Dave Lurie stated that asphalt is 3-6 decibels lower in road noise. He explained that 3 decibels is 50% more noise than zero decibels, which means the lower road noise is a very significant difference. Mr. Lurie noted that asphalt can also be repaired with less noise than concrete. He also noted that most people on unimproved streets do not rake their own leaves, which means improving the streets with concrete to create a gutter is not necessarily a significant benefit to those residents.

Herbert Danziger explained that while only four homes have addresses on Cherry Ct., an unimproved street, 11 homes have driveways or garages which exit only onto Cherry Ct. Mr. Danziger said that if Cherry Ct. were improved the assessment should be split among all 11 houses that regularly access the street, and not just the four with Cherry Ct. addresses.

Mr. Fenberg suggested the City could consider drainage improvement and cape seal for Cherry Ct. since drainage is non-functional on the street and since it sees almost zero traffic.

Ms. Danziger said that, according to maps she saw, the City originally planned to improve all of Stanley, but now only intends to improve Stanley from Lincoln to Wallace. She asked why the rest of Stanley was no longer scheduled to be improved in the near future.

Assistant City Manager Gunter said she was unsure which maps Ms. Danziger was referencing, but would look into the matter in order to clarify it for Ms. Danziger.

Mr. Boutros also invited Ms. Danziger to contact City Engineer O'Meara or Public Services Manager Filipski for further information about planned improvements for Stanley.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

6. NEXT MEETING: TBD

7. ADJOURN

No further business being evident, the Committee motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 a.m.

City Engineer Paul O'Meara

Assistant City Manager Tiffany Gunter