

City Of Birmingham

AD HOC UNIMPROVED STREET STUDY COMMITTEE

Held Remotely Via Zoom And Telephone Access
October 29, 2020

Minutes of the Ad Hoc Unimproved Street Study Committee meeting held Thursday, October 29, 2020. Chairman Scott Moore called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1) Rollcall

Present: Chairman Scott Moore (location: Birmingham, Michigan)
Pierre Boutros (location: Birmingham, Michigan)
Jason Emerine (location: Birmingham, Michigan)
Michael Fenberg (location: Birmingham, Michigan)
Katie Schafer (location: Birmingham, Michigan)
Stuart Sherman (location: Birmingham, Michigan)
Janelle Whipple-Boyce (location: Birmingham, Michigan)

Absent: None.

Administration: Joe Valentine, City Manager
Eric Brunk, IT Director
Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist
Austin Fletcher, Assistant City Engineer
Mark Gerber, Finance Director
Lauren Wood, Director of Public Services

2) Approval Of October 22, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Motion by Ms. Whipple-Boyce

Seconded by Mr. Boutros to approve the Minutes of the Ad Hoc Unimproved Streets Study Committee of October 22, 2020 as submitted.

Motion carried, 7-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Whipple-Boyce, Boutros, Sherman, Fenberg, Moore, Schafer, Emerine

Nays: None

3) Review Of Input From October 22, 2020 Meeting And Discussion On Draft Plan

Current City policy has corner lots charged differently according to whether the road(s) adjacent to the home are to be cape sealed or improved. The City charges only 33% of the cost of improvement to the long side of the property (if that is the side being constructed), with the other 67% charged to the Local Street Fund. In contrast, cape seal projects on unimproved streets charge the resident 85% of front-foot costs for all property fronting the cape seal or

25% of side-foot costs for all residential property siding the cape seal. Neither Assistant City Engineer Fletcher nor DPS Director Wood were aware of a reason for the difference in how these costs are assessed. While agreeing that it was not under AHUSSC purview to make a recommendation regarding that fact, there was AHUSSC consensus that it should be brought to the attention of the City Commission so they could determine whether they wanted those cost breakdowns to remain different or to be made equal moving forward.

In response to public comment at the October 22, 2020 meeting, the AHUSSC discussed whether it would be appropriate for the City to provide greater subsidies for the improvement of more heavily-travelled streets. It was discussed that the City would have to devise criteria for the definition of a more heavily-travelled street if that option were pursued. Some options considered for criteria included using traffic counts or advice from the City's engineering consultants. Assistant City Engineer Fletcher explained that sometimes when a road is used more often by weightier vehicles it requires a more substantial base or a wider width than other Birmingham streets.

In terms of the argument that some roads are used as 'cut-throughs' more than others, it was noted that arguments could be made that most roads in Birmingham are used as cut-throughs and not exclusively by residents of that road.

There was consensus that while all residents should pay the same percentage of costs for road improvements, when a road requires a more substantial base or a greater width than normal those cost increases should be removed from the calculation of the residents' costs for improvements.

Motion by Mr. Sherman

Seconded by Ms. Whipple-Boyce that all street improvements shall be charged to residents in the same percentages as the City currently uses. Streets that require a substantially increased cross-section or pavement width shall be reviewed by both the Engineering and Finance Departments of the City to determine the excess costs resulting from those changes, and that excess amount shall not be included in the sum used to determine the resident's payment for the special assessment.

Motion carried, 7-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Sherman, Whipple-Boyce, Boutros, Emerine, Fenberg, Moore, Schafer

Nays: None

In reply to Ms. Whipple-Boyce, Assistant City Engineer Fletcher said the Engineering Department would likely be able to begin putting together its road rankings for improvements in April 2021. Mr. Emerine and Assistant City Engineer Fletcher noted the City's consultants would not be able to perform certain parts of their road studies, which would be needed to devise the rankings, until the 2020-2021 freeze-thaw cycle has completed.

City Manager Valentine advised the AHUSSC that the idea of 'equalizing' the costs of concrete and asphalt would not be legally possible. It was agreed that the third bullet point on page 67 should be removed to reflect that fact.

Since concrete is a much more resilient road surface than asphalt is, and asphalt roads cost more to maintain over their lifetime, the AHUSSC agreed that their strong recommendation to the City Commission should be that only concrete should be used for road improvements with the exception of rare, extenuating circumstances.

Assistant City Engineer Fletcher said he might consider asphalt on a road if it were a cul-de-sac or another very low-volume road, or if the price difference between concrete and asphalt were so vastly different that using asphalt would result in significant cost savings to the City. He said he could not immediately think of any other circumstances in which he would select asphalt over concrete.

The AHUSSC considered ways of allowing asphalt, including charging the cost of road maintenance to roads that select asphalt over concrete. They ultimately determined that none of the options would have results that were fair and equitable for the City overall.

The AHUSSC concurred that it would be inappropriate to recommend that residents be able to select asphalt given that the desire for asphalt is usually solely aesthetic, that it has poorer longevity, and that the increased maintenance costs would be borne by all the City's taxpayers and not just the residents of that particular road.

Motion by Ms. Whipple-Boyce

Seconded by Mr. Fenberg that the Ad Hoc Unimproved Street Study Committee recommends that all unimproved streets being reconstructed be constructed in concrete, with the understanding that the final decision for material to be used for road improvements should be made by the Engineering Department.

Motion carried, 7-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Whipple-Boyce, Fenberg, Moore, Sherman, Boutros, Emerine, Schafer

Nays: None

4) Public Comment

David Young said he believed the 85%/15% cost split for road improvements should remain. He added that his road, Clark Street, was improved with concrete, and that he and his neighbors have been very content with that material selection.

5) Next Meeting: Thursday, November 12, 2020 at 7:30 p.m.

The AHUSSC agreed that City staff should make slides available that review all the draft recommendations of the report, while the staff's verbal presentation during the upcoming meeting should focus only on the changes to the draft since the last presentation.

6) Adjourn

Motion by Mr. Boutros

Seconded by Mr. Sherman to adjourn the meeting at 8:41 p.m.

Motion carried, 7-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Boutros, Sherman, Whipple-Boyce, Fenberg, Moore, Emerine, Schafer

Nays: None

City Manager Joe Valentine