

Street/Sidewalks/Yard Waste Committee Meeting Minutes
Vergas Event Center
March 30, 2023

1.) A meeting of the Vergas Streets/Sidewalks/Yard Waste (SSYW) Committee was held on Thursday, March 30, 2023 at 3:00 PM at the Vergas Event Center. Present was Bruce Albright and Paul Pinke, Vergas City Council; Julie Lammers, City Clerk, Mike DuFrane, Utility Superintendent; and Jeff Kuhn, Widseth. Albright called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM.

2.) Agenda Additions or Deletions. Albright wanted to add Graphic Information Systems (GIS) storm sewer mapping. Lammers wanted to add a summary of the various ordinances that are being updated. DuFrane wanted to add snow placement.

3.) Minutes for the 02/09/23 SSYW meeting was attached in the agenda packet. Motion by Pinke to approve the minutes, seconded by Albright, approved.

4.) Sidewalk Policy. Sidewalks are addressed in Title IX: General Regulations, Section 93. Last year, we looked at sidewalk snow removal ordinances from Frazee, Nisswa, Battle Lake, and Walker. Last month, a Facebook post from the City, relayed the City's current ordinance in this regard. This prompted numerous responses from business owners. The existing ordinance reads: "No person shall (1) obstruct any street or sidewalk by depositing snow or ice thereon". Councilperson Fischer wanted the words added at the end "once the streets have been cleared". This was tabled at the 03/14/23 Council Meeting, as Albright said that SSYW would like to update all of Section 93 at one time. Plus, winter is almost over, and nobody has ever been fined for violating said ordinance the way it currently reads. Nisswa has a rule that if snow is not removed from a sidewalk 48 hours after it was deposited, the City can go in and remove the snow, and bill the business owner. If they don't pay, the billing is placed on their property taxes. Kuhn questioned if the City would consider removing the business sidewalk snow, and then billing said business. DuFrane said staff does not have the time. Albright thought there also may be businesses that want to do their own removal, and would question City costs in said regard. DuFrane said the City has been taking care of the snow removal for the Fire Department, but have not been maintaining the sidewalks bordering their property. While we do all the snow removal, the City's contribution to the Fire Department's is 12.6% of their overall operating costs. Albright felt our Ordinance update also had to take into account the County's policy in said regard. We've had several complaints this winter about broken windshields in vehicles that were hit by people blowing snow onto the roadway. It takes a coordinated effort between the County and City to address snow removal along the County roads that traverse through the City.

DuFrane felt the ordinance also had to address the piling of snow on City owned property by the business owners. A problem south of the City Offices and Liquor Store was discussed. Another problem is the snow removal on West (W) Elm Street (ST) north of Lakes Area Word Fellowship Church. They have a large pile of snow on the County (CO) Road (RD) Number (NO) 17 right-of-way (R/W). DuFrane thought they could have pushed the snow to the west.

Albright felt when the City gets their new one ton pickup and 9.2' v-wedge snowplow, we'll be better able to keep the curb lines cleared of snow from the sidewalks and overhangs. DuFrane said that the box on the 2001 International snowplow truck is really starting to rust out, plus the sander is not doing a good job, primarily dripping the sand/salt mixture in the middle of the road. The old 1990 Ford plow truck is no longer useable, and the SSYW Committee felt it needs to be sold. There are a number of companies that make ice control equipment and

would fit in the box of our new pickup. Some of these are stainless steel, so they don't rust out. This might make more sense, as we are not sanding long road stretches, and we wouldn't always have to dump the sand when we want to use the plow truck to haul snow. Preliminary pricing on a new salt box would be around \$9,000. Dean Harstick has been keeping the gutter open along the east side of South (S) 1ST Avenue (AVE). If this gutter doesn't drain to the north, water can back up into this shop. Along West (W) Main ST, the water has to run east in the south gutter down to the catch basin by the Hardware Store. DuFrane said the snow piles behind the City Office has debris, including boards, nails, etc. He has talked with the Plumbing shop about the source of the debris. Albright felt the update of our sidewalk snow removal ordinance needs to be coordinated with the Otter Tail County Highway Department, as their rules may differ from ours, even though we coordinate on the removal effort.

5.) County Garage Land. Lammers was looking for assistance on developing bid specifications for demolishing the building and establishment of the parking lot. There was discussion about properly abandoning the sewer and water lines. DuFrane questioned why we should pave the parking lot, when we don't have paving funding to properly maintain our streets and alleys. There was discussion if the parking lot should just get Class V gravel? It might be better if the lot was paved in 2024, to let it go through a freeze/thaw cycle next winter. Lammers said the amount of available grant could change if we don't do the work this year. Albright said he noticed the other night, that the lights were on in the building. We took ownership of the building after the 03/14/23 Council meeting. He felt the heat should be turned down, and everything turned off. Lammers said someone commented that the unique ceiling tile could be salvaged and resold. Albright felt this would be up to the demolition contractor. DuFrane felt if we were going to pave the parking lot, the alley between S 1ST AVE and S Railway AVE should also be paved. There was also discussion if the parking lot behind the Liquor Store should also be repaved? There was also talk about adding fencing to the grant application. Each north-south fence on the west and east sides of the parking lot would be about 150' long. We talked about a vertical board fence on the west side, and a split rail fence on the east side. DuFrane said the fences will require maintenance. It was back on October 11, 2022 at the Council Meeting when a unanimous decision was made to demolish the building and make it a parking lot, in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan and the need for City parking. When there is a need to modify or relocate the City shop, Lammers said it will have to be moved, as the current building is on land donated by the State of Minnesota, and was to be used only for the water tower/water plant.

7.) Speed Signs. Lammers intended to bring some information about an Evolis Radar Speed Sign, Twin Pack Special, good through 07/31/23. The price is \$6,199 for two complete Evolis Packs. Last summer, we applied for funding through the Otter Tail County Highway Department for a grant they have to install electronic signs where needed. Lammers said we are like number 8 or 9 on the list. The County would support our use of electronic signs if we were to purchase them.

8.) W Lake ST. At the 02/09/23 SSW meeting, we spent a fair amount of time discussing the feasibility report by Widseth Engineering for this roadway. To date, no one has reached out to Candor Township or any of the landowners in said regard. The Township meets on 04/10/23 at 7:00 PM. Albright is not available that night, as he will be on his way home from Washington, DC. Pinke said that he could attend the meeting. There was discussion again about R/W along the noted road section. According to the County's GIS website, it doesn't appear that we have R/W along the Mike Manual property near C.R. No. 17. DuFrane thought that when James Sandau, Ulteig Engineers, was working on the R/W, it had all been obtained except the Todd Bunkowski property. Lammers will check the City's records. DuFrane said that Robin Manual would like some type of a cul-de-sac or turnaround at the road's end, as right now, vehicles turnaround in his yard. Kuhn said one other possible option would be to review the proposed improvements with a local contractor to get a price for tree and brush clearing within

the R/W, possible widening of the road where needed, possible lowering some of the steeper grades/hills, and road graveling. Once the R/W needs are figured out, Albright felt that we should get a proposal from Widseth to determine the remaining R/W needs. This will be needed, whether or not, the road is ever improved. R/W calculations should take into account the graveled surface, which may have some prescriptive rights. Next steps include further discussions about project funding/assessment options and meeting with the affected landowners. Kuhn has furnished Lammers with road standards for either a cul-de-sac or a T-turnaround.

9.) R/W Needs for E Lake ST and N Railway AVE. Tom Winters, City Attorney, said he was going to have the required R/W exhibits for our meeting today. Lammers said she didn't receive the documents. The Committee urged her to continue to contact Winters in said regard.

10.) W Sunset Strip. The Committee felt we needed a proposal from Widseth to gather the R/W requirements along said roadway. It only involves five landowners: Bruce Sonnenberg; Shelly Day; Garrett Dahlgren; Wallace Family Trust, and Heath Courynea. It appears there is an easement strip (0.35 acres), all the way down to Lawrence Lake. Engineering calculations also need to take into account the existing "prescriptive" rights, or graveled surface, that has been historically maintained by the City. Perhaps, because of the close proximity to the houses, etc., the R/W calculations will be something less than the 33' on each side of the current road centerline.

11.) Storm Sewer GIS Mapping. At the 03/14/23 Council meeting, there was some questions about the proposal submitted by Widseth, so the Council did not approve the work. Albright felt the proposal should include about 8 hours of staff time to: meet with DuFrane in the field (when conditions allow) to document storm sewer locations; and some time for Widseth Staff to review County and State Highway Department plans for storm sewer locations that may show up on their various road plans. Albright thought there was some underground storm sewer at the intersection of C.R. No. 4 and old Trunk Highway (T.H.) No. 228 or now C.R. No. 60. Kuhn will revise the estimate accordingly for the upcoming 04/11/23 Council meeting.

12.) Ordinance Updates. At the Clerk's Conference last week, Lammers learned that the Minnesota League of Cities (LMC) had an update of the Minnesota Livable City Code of Ordinances (LCC). Back in 2009, Vergas adopted the same thing, for a cost of \$895, but we never purchased the Word Document, so that we could make changes without retyping everything. Because we are currently a licensed holder, the update would now cost us \$400, with an extra \$40 for a Word Document version we could modify. The "limited" version costs \$495, but doesn't include sections for sewer or water, subdivisions, etc. Lammers said with the recent Council efforts to update complete sections of the law, it might be cheaper to buy the modifiable version then retyping everything. Expenditures less than \$1,000, do not require Council approval. Lammers will send out the LMC information for the Committee's review.

6/13.) Complete Streets/Budget Goal Setting. In 2022, the State had the Small Cities Assistance Program (SCAP). There was no funding allocated for fiscal year 2023 or after. In 2021, Vergas received \$15,385 (\$18M appropriation) from this program. There are currently bills in the Minnesota House and Senate (H.F. No. 2897 and S.F. No. 2922) appropriating \$15 million again to this program in fiscal years 2024 and 2025. The recent "Complete Streets" policy developed by Widseth for the City of Vergas identified needs of \$1,026,829 for Condition Nos. 1-4 pavement reconditioning. The overlay program, if implemented, could save the City \$738,991 for 1.39 miles on the Condition 2-3 roads. To implement an overlay program on the Condition 2 and 3 roads, it would cost \$343,115. If we were to implement this program over the next 5 years, it would take about \$60,000 annually. The City has a total of 6.31 miles of paved roads/alleys.

Lammers said there are currently bills in the Minnesota House (H.F. 1377) and Senate (S.F. 1828) that would increase local Government Aid (LGA) to Cities in 2023-2024. The proposed increase if the Legislation is approved for Vergas is about \$7,500. Lammers said we could request from the Council that these extra funds be placed in the Street Department budget.

The Committee went through the 2023 City budget regarding roads. The general budget has \$7,500 for seal coating. It also has \$25,000 for "improvements". The general fund/special revenue money market has (effective 01/31/23): \$5,226.12 for easements; \$31,416.18 for seal coating; \$14,886.63 for sidewalks; and \$41,409.78 for street improvements/equipment. On 02/01/22, there were general revenue bonds sold in the amount of \$132,000 for 10 years, to help finance street work on Eva ST, Diane AVE, 3RD AVE, and Scharf AVE. According to the City's Special Assessment Policies and Procedures (10/03/11), the life expectancy of a street project is 20 years for reassessment. Also in accordance with the policies, seal coating projects are not assessed. Reconstruction and overlays are assessed 50% to the City and 50% to the benefitted landowners. There was discussion if the City could tap into any of the funding from the infrastructure bill?

14.) Adjournment. Albright adjourned the meeting at 4:45 PM.

Respectfully prepared and submitted by;

Bruce E. Albright, City Council Member

Council Recommendations:

- Authorize Widseth to complete R/W studies for W Lake ST and W Sunset Strip
- 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/RCP costs, share with developer?
- 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.
- 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. Possible electronic signs.
- 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.