

Street/Sidewalks/Yard Waste Committee Meeting Minutes
Government Services Center
October 29, 2024

1.) A meeting of the Vergas Streets/Sidewalks/Yard Waste (SSYW) Committee was held on Tuesday, October 29, 2024 at 2:00 AM at the Vergas Government Services Center. Present was Bruce Albright and Paul Pinke, Vergas City Council; Julie Lammers, City Clerk; Mike DuFrane, Utility Superintendent; and Krysten Foster, Engineer, Otter Tail County Highway Department. The meeting started with a tour of the Main Street (ST) sidewalks. After the tour, Albright, called the meeting to order at 2:35 PM.

2.) Agenda Additions/Deletions. Lammers wanted to add Sunny Oaks street lighting, utility permits, and Council Workshop. Albright wanted to add East (E) Lake ST right-of-way (R/W), Glenn ST culvert, and handicap parking. DuFrane wanted to add snow removal on City property and speed limit signs for Scharf Avenue (AVE) and Glenn ST. **Motion** by Pinke to approve the revised agenda, **seconded** by Albright, **approved**.

3.) Minutes for the 10/02/24 SSYW Committee meeting were presented. **Motion** by Pinke to approve, **seconded** by Albright, **approved**.

4.) Sidewalk Review. Two accidents were reported this summer with people tripping on sidewalk cracks. Foster said Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements are for less than a 1/4" deviation in height, or no cracks greater than 1/2" wide. When these standards are exceeded, the County may still not be liable, as the law pertains to the time when the sidewalks were built. DuFrane had photographs of the worst sidewalk areas, which included the area in front of the Liquor Store and Post Office. Albright questioned if these areas were damaged when a heavy tractor was used for snow removal in this area? Foster said the County is looking at a mill and overlay project for Main Street in 2026. It was also noted that the R/W line does not extend all the way to the buildings. The County project scope and magnitude could be changed, but mostly likely this would delay the project. DuFrane referred to League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) rules regarding sidewalks. Pinke said the City has used mud jacking to level sidewalks before.

Foster said other area projects include: resurfacing County Road (CR) Number (No.) 4 in 2028, resurfacing CR No. 60 in 2027. Both projects could be delayed. The County is starting a pavement management strategy. Those roads beyond repair will no longer be seal coated. The newer pavement projects will be seal coated to improve their longevity. DuFrane questioned the projected lifespan of water and sewer lines. Our services were installed in 1993. Both were expected to have 50 year life spans. There was discussions about "hot soils", and Albright didn't feel that Vergas had that problem. It's usually associated with alkaline soils in wetter areas.

5.) Trains. There has been several webinar meetings with the Otter Tail County Highway Department regarding TRAINFO. Vergas has been selected by the County as a starting point for use of this application. The County would be our fiscal agent. Foster said there is a new way to report blocked crossings. The website is far.dot.gov. This is where a blocked crossing needs to be documented. There are a number of signage options for TRAINFO. Foster noted one problem is the fact that in Vergas, we don't know how long the train may be blocking the intersection? For example, Burlington Northern is on more of a schedule, so they know exact times the train will be blocking an intersection. Signs noting train blockages could other be hardwired or bluetooth. The County continues to explore these options. Pinke questioned when the track is blocked on Main AVE, north to town there is Old Detroit RD, and he

wondered if that crossing was also blocked? We know the crossing on Town Line Road is blocked. Lammers said next month's city newsletter will have the up to date train information.

6.) Handicap Parking. Foster said the County would use the U.S. Access Board Public R/W Accessibility Guidelines. The City should discuss where they would want such a spot. Thoughts were on Main ST, either in front of the Post Office, Loon's Nest, or the Bank. The County would review and have to approve the spot. The spot would have a R7-8m handicap sign and would have the curb painted blue. Foster will send Lammers the information.

7.) County RD Speed Limits. Albright questioned where we were at in getting another electronic sign for CR No. 4 for the south side of town. Citizens have requested a sign for this location. Foster thought we were years away, unless the City wanted to buy the sign (\$5,500). The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) did a study several years ago on the north end of town by the Park for CR Nos. 4/60. Their conclusion was that even if the speed limit was reduced from 40 miles per hour per hour (mph), people would still basically drive as fast as conditions allow. Albright can attest that the electric sign by his place works to slow things down. There has been a number of accidents at the 4/60 intersection. Primarily, because CR No. 4 does not meet CR No. 60 at a 90 degree angle. Albright thought years ago, the County was looking at changing this intersection, or maybe when it was State Highway (HWY) No. 228 operated by MnDOT. Foster said the County has received some funding for a "Safe Streets" program, and maybe next year at one of our festivals, they can have a booth, asking people about their highway and traffic concerns in the Vergas area.

8.) Trails. Albright said the City is planning for improvements for Long Lake Park. Because we have limited space, especially in the beach area, primarily due to the location of CR No. 60, he questioned if the County might ever consider the installation of a pedestrian walkway under CR No. 60 to connect to property on the north side? There is a 26 acre parcel on the north side, that someday might be available for development. If the beach parking could be moved to that side of the road, it would greatly improve safety in the beach area,.

Regarding the Heart of Lakes Trail, Foster said the County plans to improve CR No. 35 between Dent and Vergas in 2025, to include a wider shoulder for the trail on the edge of the road. The funding for the road widening will come from a trail grant. Lammers questioned if the City needs to do anything to be included in the trail funding? Foster thought we should contact Kevin Fellbaum, Otter Tail County Parks and Trails Director.

The last issue was routing for a snowmobile trail to Vergas. Lammers said the snowmobile club will need the routing by 11/15/24, so they can get their maps printed for the 2024/2025 season. Foster said a representative from the Club will attend the 11/05/24 Commissioners' meeting to further discuss this subject. The two options being discussed are coming into town on CR No. 4 or using CR No. 36 to Townline RD. Albright felt depending on the winter, snowmobiles can be a big economic boost to area downtown businesses. He felt we also have to consider safety for road traffic and the snowmobilers. DuFrane said the County has a clear policy for winter roads, therefore they might not be much snow along CR No. 4 in town. For snowmobiles, this makes it difficult to steer, provides no lubrication for the suspension, and doesn't properly cool the machines. Landowners along the Townline route have expressed concerns about trespassing. Albright felt if that happens, it is a separate issue to deal with. From a "safety" perspective, most felt the Townline option was better. **Motion** by Pinke to recommend to the 11/12/24 Council meeting a Townline route. **Seconded** by Albright, **approved**.

9.) Snow Removal. DuFrane said we have a number of businesses that pile and deposit snow on the City property behind the Liquor Store. He also said Paul Bruhn has no where to go with

his snow. DuFrane understands that Bruhn does not want anything heavy on his concrete apron. However, DuFrane would be willing to remove the snow between Bruhn/s building and the Government Services/Post Office building. Usually, Bruhn has a tailer parked on his property in this area. Melting snow in this area can also cause drainage and water problems for the Hardware Store. Albright said he would be willing to visit with Bruhn on this subject, and to report back at the next SSYW meeting.

Foster and DuFrane left the meeting at approximately 3:30 PM to field review a hole in the asphalt by the laundromat.

10.) Alley/Parking Lot Drainage/Paving. Blaine Green, Widseth, reported at the last meeting, that when their field crews return to the office with the winter weather, they will prepare the projects plans and specifications. He felt we were still on track for a February, 2025 bid opening.

11.) Budgets - Goal Setting. The SSYW Committee has furnished the Budget Committee with our numbers for 2025, and the next four years thereafter. Perhaps the City will end up with a surplus in the overall budget for 2024, that way, designated funds in certain accounts can carryover, with Council approval.

12.) Sunny Oaks Lighting. Lammers felt with four lots sold, now was the time to order the required street lighting from OtterTail Power. It probably won't be installed to next year.

Motion by Albright to recommend to Council that they order the required street lighting for this subdivision. **Seconded** by Pinke, **approved**.

13.) Council Workshop. Lammers would like a possible date/time for scheduling this meeting. Starting on July 1, 2024, the Personnel Committee required that DuFrane and Engebretson clock in and out for a 1/2 hour noon break, without pay, from Monday to Thursday. Staff have indicated that technically, they are no longer on call. Albright said we have a snow removal policy that says on weekends, if it snows a certain amount, staff will be available to clean it up. Right now, if staff was available for weekend work in excess of 40 hours, they would be paid time and a half for their efforts.

DuFrane returned to the meeting at 4:00 PM.

DuFrane felt both he and Engebretson would agree to being available as needed, if their "mandatory" lunch break was removed. Albright suggested a Workshop for Thursday, November 7, 2024 at 4:00 PM. Lammers will check with others regarding their availability.

14.) E Lake ST R/W. It has been a while since we've heard from the City Attorney, regarding his review of the R/W documents. Lammers said she also has him working on an assessment question for Scharf AVE. She will contact him regarding the status of both matters. Albright felt we needed a deadline from Tom Winters. Albright said we have other R/W projects around town, and it would be nice to get this one finished first. **Motion** by Albright to have the Council ask for a deadline from the attorney regarding the E Lake ST project. **Seconded** by Pinke, **approved**.

15.) Speed Limit Signs. MnDOT requires the speed limit for city streets to be 30 mph. DuFrane said the traffic by the City Shop on Glenn ST is going considerably faster than that. Scharf AVE should also probably properly signed. Lammers will contact Foster for the suggested signage guidelines and County policy in this regard. Once we determine the requirements, **motion** by Pinke to have the Council post the signs on both Glenn ST and Scharf AVE. **Seconded** by Albright, **approved**.

16.) Utility Permits. Currently, the City has a R/W permit for any work done in a City Street, the cost for said permit is \$350. Recently, Lammers said the City received notice from Arvig Communications that in 2025, they will be installing new fiber optic cable along Scharf AVE. DuFrane said we have a deal with Great Plains Natural Gas, that if they do work in town, and it is not satisfactory, we can correct the situation and bill them for our costs. Albright said when he used to work for the Watershed District, we put a disclaimer on our utility permits that if said utility was ever found to be in the way of one of our construction projects, said utility company would relocate their utility at their expense. Albright felt utility companies need to let the City know when they are working in town, the extent of their work, and that they will be responsible for all cleanup, and possibly providing record drawings of where their utilities were installed. DuFrane said when the sewer and water lines were installed in Vergas in 1993, Larsen-Peterson didn't do that good of a job documenting actually where things were placed. Albright questioned if DuFrane was documenting where things were located whenever there was an excavation project in town? DuFrane said he tries to put it in his notes. DuFrane also said that a number of neighboring cities require that whenever gas lines are installed, that all sewers in vicinity of the work be checked with a camera to make sure that they were not hit. Albright questioned how many R/W permits the City has issued? Lammers questioned a fee for a utility permit? New fees will be set to go into effect as of 01/01/25. **Motion** by Pinke to recommend that the City enact a utility permit, with the fee to be researched as to what other neighboring cities are requiring. **Seconded** by Albright, **approved**.

17.) Glenn ST Culvert. The subdivision developer had his contractor install a culvert for a driveway on Loren Menz's property in September, 2024. The estimated cost was \$1,800. When the project's plans were developed in February, 2023, Menz did not have a driveway at this location. In the fall of 2023, he built a garage that he needed access to from Glenn ST. No permits were applied for from the City for his driveway. This summer, with all the rain early on, there was erosion problem at this location, and Menz was not happy with the access left by the subdivision contractor. During the review for the project's cleanup list, it was recommended that a culvert was needed for the Menz approach. The culvert was installed, but Menz feels that it is too narrow. At the time, there was talk that maybe the culvert and installation expense be shared three ways, the City, Menz, and the developer. Lammers and DuFrane said that typically, the City doesn't pay for driveway culverts. If we cost share on this one, what are the future ramifications? For example, there are 28 lots in Lawrence Lake Acres. Each lot may require a driveway culvert, and what do we tell others when they ask for cost sharing? The SSWW Committee felt this issues was between the two landowners.

18.) Yard Waste. DuFrane asked if Albright has had time to investigate a possible cellular camera at the site to catch violators? He said he had not. Monthly plans start as low as \$5.00 per month. DuFrane said probably the biggest issue is where to locate the camera? Albright will take a look.

19.) Ordinance Updates. Albright still needs to review Section 7. Lammers said she's been busy, and there are still some ordinances that need to be reviewed by the Council.

20.) Next Meeting. A date for the next SSWW Committee meeting was not scheduled at this time. Committee members should check their schedules and get back to Lammers with possible meeting dates.

21.) Adjournment. Albright adjourned the meeting at 4:35 PM.

Respectfully prepared and submitted by;

Bruce E. Albright, City Council Member

Council Recommendations:

- recommended route for 2024/2025 snowmobile use for Townline RD.
- lighting be ordered from OtterTail Power for Sunny Oaks Subdivision.
- obtain a date from the City Attorney for completion of the R/W documents for E Lake ST.
- speed limit signs be installed on Scharf AVE and Glenn ST In accordance with County guidelines.
- that the City enact an utility permit and associated permit permit fee (perhaps the R/W and utility application can somehow be combined?)

Follow up Actions:

- Continue to work on budgets, and future road funding needs.
- Continue to work on City parking, Work on handicap parking spots.
- Continue to work on snow removal, sidewalk, and parking ordinances/policies to address concerns.
- Continue to work with the Community Club on possible lighting changes for Main ST, maybe coordinate with County road project(s).
- Research options for W Lake ST funding. R/W acquisitions. Meet w/Candor Twp.
- Status of E Lake ST and N Railway AVE R/W acquisitions. Finish process.
- Meet with Garrett Dahlgren/Heath Courynea regarding W Sunset Strip R/W.
- TRAINFO

Future Meeting Agenda Items:

- Alley/parking lot paving/drainage.