Committee of the Whole

May 20, 2019

Present: Council President King; Committee Members Buxton, Clausen, Larmore, Scott, Fleck and Sovinski; Safety-Service Director Hitchcock; Mayor Hazel; Auditor Strawn; Eric Lochtefeld; Bill Kincaid, The Daily Standard.

President King called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 6:00 pm for discussion of the sidewalk program.

Director Hitchcock explained the sidewalks are replaced as a part of street reconstruction. Otherwise, they are complaint driven. $80,000 to $140,000 per year is being put into sidewalk replacement by the City. A couple years ago, there was an estimated $700,000 of sidewalk repairs needed. The debate is who should be responsible for replacement of the sidewalks.

CM Sovinski explained the process of how the sidewalk program had previously been conducted. The homeowners were responsible for payment to replace sidewalks, and the City was responsible for intersection ramps. In the past a note was taken out for the remainder of the unpaid bills for sidewalk replacement. The amount was then assessed to the property taxes through the County Auditor.

CM Clausen stated in a previous committee meeting, it was passed with a 6-0 vote to split cost between landowners and the City. CM Larmore suggested homeowners could be assessed a monthly sidewalk fee of $8.00, which could go into a fund for replacement.

Mayor Hazel asked if the City is requiring sidewalks, should the City be responsible to put money into them also. CM Scott suggested the City could supplement the fund.

Eric Lochtefeld asked what the lifespan of a sidewalk is. Director Hitchcock responded 10 to 20 years. Eric further stated, paying $8.00 per month for ten years is much more than the property owner being required to pay for their sidewalk replacement. Mayor Hazel responded the assessment would be reduced or removed when the needed sidewalk repairs are completed. CM Larmore stated he sees this as up to a five year replacement program.

Director Hitchcock stated that would be an easier program to conduct. Mayor Hazel stated the City cannot collect more than what will be used for replacement. Sidewalks, curbs and gutters could be included for the necessity of replacement from this fund.

CM Sovinski stated there would be no incentive for the property owner to maintain their sidewalk with this proposal.

Law Director Moore stated he does not believe a sidewalk assessment could be added to their utility bill.

CM Scott suggested the Law Director do research of how a sidewalk assessment program could be implemented. CM Sovinski suggested Administration conduct a survey of how other community perform their sidewalk programs.

Most of the properties that do not have sidewalks are commercial properties. There will need to be certain mitigation issues that the City take responsibility of sidewalk replacement. The initial new construction of sidewalks should be the homeowners’ responsibility.

Council President King adjourned the meeting at 6:49 pm.

Submitted by Joan S. Wurster, Clerk of Council