

City Council Initiatives

Midyear Report

July 2019

The City Council adopted its Goals for 2019-2020 at the Regular City Council meeting of April 22, 2019. These Goals were stated within nine “Initiative” areas. Council directed that periodic reporting occur to provide status updates on progress on these initiatives. This follows.

- **Accessibility**

Improving accessibility and bikeway/walkway infrastructure has been a focus for a number of years. However, a good share of City efforts has been planning for future construction. Included, of course has been the Bike/Ped plan of 2011, the completion of the ADA plan in 2018 and the cost estimating update of the Bike/Ped Plan during 2019. In looking back at accounting records, it is difficult to confidently state what the public investment has been in this area. Trailway/walkway costs are not typically segregated from other roadway project costs (excluding Robert Street roadway project costs in total have averaged about \$2.6 million/year between 2008-2018).

What we are certain of, however, is that 2019-2020 projects under construction and in queue include significant investment in bikeway/walkway infrastructure. Trailways are currently under construction under the Dakota County joint projects on Wentworth and Oakdale/Marie with a County ped crossing of Wentworth at Marthaler Lane funded. The R2R trailway from Wentworth to Oakdale/Thompson is currently under design for a 2020 bid project. The County Thompson Lake restoration project had a trail component. Sidewalk improvements are part of the Livingston construction project.

Past trail/sidewalk expenditures, according to accounting records have been:

2008: \$194,509

2009: \$109,411

2010: NA

2011: NA

2012: NA

2013: NA

2014: Construction of Marie Trail included in Marie Street project

: Construction of Ped improvements included in Robert Street Project (2014-2018)

2015: \$12,101

2016: \$4,596

2017: \$75,254

2018: \$597,035

2019: Marie/Oakdale: \$2.4M trail project (\$1.35M City Cost)

: Wentworth: Trailway included in \$6M County road project (\$1.9M City Cost)

: Livingston: Sidewalk included in \$5.1 million street construction project

: Wentworth Crossing at Marthaler: \$70,000 (City cost \$0)

: Thompson Lake Reclamation with trail component: \$2M (\$144K City Cost)

2020: R2R Trailway: \$6.7 Project Cost (Grant and County funded)

Through the design process for Robert Street, there was inclusion of Transit planning along the corridor. Ultimately, the net of that planning was revisions in bus stop location and reconstruction of transit stop shelters. There has not been recent transit deliberations within which the City has been a participant. However, the Dakota County Chamber of Commerce and East Metro Strong (a regional transit planning non-profit) have collaborated recently in order to pursue a transit study for portions of Dakota County including West St. Paul. That four month study is intended to commence in August. The County is also beginning a review of the current transit plan.

- **Blighted Properties**

An ongoing activity of the community has been to address owner occupied and rental properties that do not meet community standards. With that focus, staff operates a monthly Problem Property Committee including public safety, inspections, and housing staff. Enhancements to the code/rental inspections program have been implemented during 2019 (see “Housing Stock”). Staff has also identified all residential structures with EMV’s below \$100K for future program recommendations to Council.

- **Branding and Identity**

A facet of branding for West St. Paul includes success and appearance of public and privately owned properties within the community. Advancing our brand, thus, includes development and redevelopment activities. Included this year is \$12M in improvements (total) to Garlough and Moreland Schools, the new \$1.8M Solas Salon, \$1.6M buildout of the Children’s Clinic at 963 Robert, the \$1.4M remodel of Walmart, the new \$750K Animal Hospital at 2000 Robert, the \$600K remodel of Taco Bell, the expansion of Michoacan a Pedir de Boca Ice Cream at Signal Hills, and build out of Tokyo Sushi at Southview Square. \$24.4M YTD in permit value. The final plat for a Hy-Vee grocery store was approved in 2019 for 2020 anticipated construction.

Council has allocated funding to ensure that newly reconstructed Robert Street continues to create a draw for consumers. Included is an approximate \$60,000 allocation on litter and planting bed maintenance programming specifically for Robert Street. We have struggled to keep ahead of maintenance needs in this area and are intending to revisit our current approach. Through our Volunteer Program, we have been successful in improving citizen participation throughout the community on clean-up activities of roadways, parks, and transit stops.

We are focused on communication to stakeholders through internal/external newsletters, social media, and collaboration with NDC4 (Town Square Television) to promote City programming, events, and activities throughout the community. To date, we have hosted a number of stakeholder meetings including Council led listening sessions, public safety neighborhood meetings and events, coordination of ROMA (rental owners and managers) meetings and more recently listening sessions as part of the Police Chief selection process.

In 2019, we collaborated on a joint hosting of the West St. Paul Days event at Harmon Park during which we marketed WSP T-shirts. While the event venue was somewhat lightly attended (cold weather) T-shirt sales, which was a pilot marketing effort, met expectations.

- **Diversity and Inclusion**

Considerable efforts to recruit diverse applicants have been implemented since early 2018 resulting in a significant increase in number of diverse applicants. Four new diverse employees have been hired into permanent positions since 2017. Females have been hired or promoted into male-dominated jobs in Police, Police supervisory, and engineering intern.

During 2018 we established an outreach Committee to assist with our inclusion efforts. That committee was shelved during 2018 and has not yet been re-energized. However, internal communication enhancements such as a growing menu of dual language communication has been ongoing.

- **Fiscal Constraints**

Perhaps our most significant 2019 achievement to date is legislative/gubernatorial adoption of a Local Option Sales Tax for WSP. Council has approved implementation of this tax effective for 2020 which is projected to generate \$28M over the next 20 years toward major maintenance (mill/overlay or reconstruction projects) of collector and high priority roadways over that span. As part of this initiative the Council has adopted changes in capital planning, fiscal and debt policies to set a direction toward debt reduction and improved fiscal metrics.

The Council has also approved contracts to install solar panels on the Public Works and City Hall roofs as well as a contract to join a solar garden consortium. The net will be long term savings in energy payables absent a capital investment by the City.

A review of the 2020 Legislative agenda and priorities will be in front of Council by August.

- **Housing Stock**

Approved during 2019 has been a 174 unit affordable senior housing project by DARTS/REE, on Marthaler Lane, a portion of TIF revenues from which are targeted toward future housing rehab programs. Another project which should be going through the entitlement process soon is a County approved senior assisted living (18 units) /memory care (14 units) project at Robert and Haskell. The EDA has approved a development agreement for a 152 unit market multi-family development on 5 acres at the former Thompson Oaks property. We do anticipate projects coming forward yet this year for the 900 Block of Robert and Town Center 1 project areas. The grand opening for the Rooftop 252 market multi-family project on Marie Avenue was July 19.

The City Council has approved an updated contract with Dakota County for administration of CDBG entitlement funds. In West St. Paul program funds are targeted toward housing rehab programming. This year, staff has revamped the Code Enforcement/Rental Inspections program to assign staff toward both aspects of the program with assignments either east or west of Robert Street. Compliance correspondence has also been amended to include photo depictions of non-compliant features of a complaint as suggested by members of Council.

- **Infrastructure and Public Facilities**

The 2019 Street Improvement Project is reconstruction of Livingston Avenue. There are a number of County and State led projects finishing up from 2018 or under construction in 2019 within the community. Public Works staff recently completed a one mile drive lane temporary bituminous mat on Annapolis from Smith to Robert. The draft 2020-21 budget includes an

allocation to the street department to continue similar mat construction in future years. The forcemain 1 project should be completed by August as part of a 2018-2024 forcemain/lift station replacement project.

In 2017-2018, the City has replaced all of the HVAC units on City Hall (but for those on the Fire Department which were newer than all of the others) and has replaced the entire roof on this facility. We have also reconstructed all of the parking lots and replaced overhead doors. In total, addressed deferred maintenance on this building has cost \$1,054,887 through 2018.

In 2019, we will be replacing all of the windows in City Hall as approved by Council on June 24, 2019 (amount of \$173,763). The City has contracted with Wold Architects to design the next phase of this project, which includes improvements within the Police Department and common area enhancements in City Hall. In 2019-2020, the project fund is budgeted at \$1,006,000 in revenue and \$1,061,400 in expenditures. Total project fund balance at year end 2020 is projected at \$406,345. Given the favorable window bid, we are anticipating the opportunity to begin the 2020 project during the 4th quarter of 2019, which may allow for more favorable bidding than would otherwise be the case.

On July 17, Wold presented concepts for reconfiguration of both the PD upper and lower levels. Those layouts will be provided to staff for review and comment prior to cost estimating of a project proposal for consideration by the City Council.

- **Parks**

The City Council has adopted changes to the CIP and fiscal policies that include limiting future debt incurred to fund Park development projects. However, due to projects in queue and through third party funding there are a number of enhancements to the Parks system underway. Concurrent with the Wentworth reconstruction project will be \$150,000 in improvements made to the north side of Marthaler Park this year. Smaller improvements are being made to Oakdale and Haskell Parks. We continue to undertake scheduled improvements at both the Pool and Arena and are in the process of planning a larger five year plan for the latter which may include a request for funding assistance from third party stakeholders. Finally, the planning for the Thompson Oaks wetland reclamation/R2R project is well underway for funding requests yet this year.

- **Recreation**

The recreation department has initiated some new collaborative programming in 2019. A new joint program with Mendota Heights called "Tour de Rec", travels to different parks throughout West St Paul and Mendota Heights. Every 2 weeks, kids 6-12 years old are welcomed at a designated park for 1.5 hours of free recreation programming. Staff leads the kids in group games, sports, crafts, art and more. This is a free drop in program with no registration needed. It has been a big hit for the first half of the summer. Recreation staff is also collaborating with the YMCA to offer free "Fitness in the Park" classes this summer. This inaugural program is being offered 3 times in 2019 at varying times and locations. It is open to all ages. If successful, we hope to expand this partnership in 2020. West St Paul is partnering with Mendota Heights and South St Paul to hold the first annual light up the night "Glow Dash" in September. This 1.36 mile dash is designed for all ages and abilities. The modest fee will cover refreshments and a glow swag bag for each registered participant. Staff will once again be offering movies in the park, youth safety camp as well as many other

programs. Other new programs being offered this year include art and musical theater camps, music together programs for parents and young children, new parent child birthing classes, and adult and family yoga classes.

The new management contract for dome operations is under way. This new 5 year contract limits staffing reimbursements, while also expanding maintenance duties to include summer dome maintenance outdoors. Year to date rentals are tracking behind 2018 totals, but that is most likely due to a late spring in 2018 that kept more spring sports indoors. The projected rentals for the rest of the year are trending upwards. The management company is in the process of securing multiple new advertising contracts.