



MOBILITY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

**September 5, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.
Novi Special Conference Room
(248) 347-0475**

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm.

ROLL CALL

Present: Brian Smith (Chair), Justin Fischer, Joe Tolkacz, Ed Roney

Absent: Ericka Thomas, Gary Becker, Jay Dooley

Staff Present: Barbara McBeth, City Planner, Community Development
Jeffrey Herczeg, Director, DPW
Rebecca Runkel, Plan Review Engineer, DPW
Aaron Staup, Construction Engineer DPW
Wesley Scallions, Public Works Management Intern, DPW

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Smith made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded and passed 4-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Smith made a motion to approve the minutes from July 18th, 2024. The motion was seconded and passed 4-0.

REMARKS

Director Herczeg introduced City staff present and briefly commented on the purpose and scope of the presentation to be given.

STAFF PRESENTATION

DPW Mngt. Intern Scallions gave a presentation titled 'Sidewalk Program Goalsetting' and answered some of the Committee's clarifying questions throughout.

DISCUSSION

Chair Smith opened the meeting up for questions from the Committee.

Engineer Staup spoke to two specific items that City staff would like direction on. The issue pertaining to ponding water on sidewalks which the City currently does not address and issues regarding residents requesting reimbursement for sidewalk work performed outside of the City's program. Chair Smith inquired as to whether City staff is aware of any details pertaining to why residents did the work themselves, how they did it, etc. Engineer Staup stated that that information is not known and that no inspections have taken place in these instances; there is a lot to consider including care for city owned infrastructure like

water mains and whether the appropriate materials were used. Yes, we would like residents to take it upon themselves but there are some downsides to that. Chair Smith commented that we wouldn't want to be reimbursing just because someone didn't like the color or something like that. Mayor Fischer added that one may be getting a driveway redone and they do all of their sidewalk and then when the City comes through they want reimbursement.

Engineer Staup stated that the right of way permitting process could be used as a way to mitigate this issue in that if the resident never came to the City for a permit, it wasn't verified that the sidewalk was constructed properly. Director Herczeg added that there will probably be people that have called about reactive sidewalk maintenance regarding a deflection of two inches and then we went out and said it's a half inch or three quarters of an inch. Mayor Fischer inquired as to the number of calls regarding reimbursement. Engineer Staup stated that he has received four calls. Mayor Fischer asked if these are people who have logged tickets in the past about this issue. Engineer Staup was not sure; these go to another department. Director Herczeg replied that any calls would be logged in CityWorks.

Engineer Staup stated that, when residents take these issues upon themselves to remedy, they are doing so in small quantities. The contractor hired will be greatly more expensive than what the City would have seen within a program. Mayor Fischer stated that he is not in support of cutting checks for the same amount of money to the penny. Mayor Fischer continued, stating that a program would be looking for certain replacement criteria and that said program would need to be well established, on the internet, and be very transparent. Residents should know who to call and if there was a reason why the city would reimburse. If there was a situation where they could prove that they had called and the deflection was two inches then the City could look at reimbursement of the total minus some factor but he does not want to be in the business of promoting this whatsoever; just his personal opinion. Member Roney added that he would be hesitant; doesn't want to set a precedent where property owners can start requesting reimbursement for everything done on their house. Mayor Fischer pointed out that one could hear that their neighborhood is up for sidewalks the following year so they choose to get it done now and wait for the City to reimburse the work – it is a bad precedent and he is not in favor.

Director Herczeg stated that the answer truly is some residents are caught in the transition and we apologize – but that was the current policy and we are in the process of changing the policy; it may or may not change.

Member Tolkacz stated that he had no questions at this time.

Chair Smith stated that there are just too many variables – even with a formal reimbursement program it would be tough for staff considering inspections – we shouldn't be promoting that kind of stuff. Engineer Staup replied that he can stick with a hard line on this.

Mayor Fischer stated that the pooling water issue is a little different; he stated that, based on what other communities have done, there may be some type of criteria that he could get behind. Director Herczeg clarified that there are two different kinds of pooling: pooling that is caused by an overgrowth of sod where panels are not deflected – the

water just has nowhere to drain. Then there's pooling which is caused by a settled sidewalk panel. Director Herczeg continued, stating that these can be differentiated in a written policy once all of the details have been figured out.

Member Tolkacz asked whether the City has policies on how people drain their sump pumps. He stated he has seen some situations where sump pump drainage practices have contributed to pooling water in the area of a sidewalk. Engineer Staup responded, stating that this has grown over the years. It depends on the community and how they're set up. If they have rear yard storm sewer facilities, that's where it is taken. They sometimes have lowland or wetland area they can send it to. Some older neighborhoods took it upon themselves to do any number of things. Engineer Staup continued, clarifying that tying this into edge drains and daylighting at the back of the curb are both prohibited. Engineer Staup provided further information regarding City regulations for sump pump drainage.

Mayor Fischer requested that the presentation recording be distributed to the Committee. City staff stated that this should be possible.

Mayor Fischer stated that the meeting was very helpful and recapped some of his thoughts. He recommended that from here the Committee should look to answer some of the major questions regarding sidewalks that have emerged like what kind of cycle there will be, what kind of criterion are established, is cost-sharing going to be implemented, how do we get to an agreeable funding level. The exact questions need to be laid out for the next discussion.

Chair Smith mentioned that a Microsoft Teams space can be set up and he will look into it. He also mentioned that any materials or discussion shared on Teams must not violate the Open Meetings Act.

Director Herczeg recommended that the next Committee meeting be focused on discussion of the sidewalk program. Mayor Fischer agreed and stated that City staff should hone in on questions to include on the next agenda which will drive direction setting.

The Committee collectively made comments on the quality of the presentation given by City staff, stating that it provided good information and helpful benchmarking.

Mayor Fischer mentioned that there was some information displayed regarding communities having full-time personnel dedicated to a sidewalk program. He inquired if staff thought that, if the Committee and City Council saw value in it, they would recommend the addition of any staff for the program. Director Herczeg responded that he would have to think about what the position was because the City wouldn't be able to get away from using consultants under the current model. City staff spoke to the organization of staff in other cities where full-time personnel inspect the sidewalks themselves and experience some frustrations as to the level and type of work put on City staff via a sidewalk program. Director Herczeg concluded, stating that he thinks there is a model where an employee could be added as long as responsibilities beyond sidewalks are clearly defined. He stated that City staff could come back with a recommendation if it was included moving forward.

Engineer Staup spoke to how sidewalks are much more difficult to design and layout than roads because there's so much more movement. Six months down the line, the sidewalks in a neighborhood may have changed considerably and this leads to higher rates of inspection – probably why some communities bring in full-time staff. Director Herczeg added that consultants can staff up with more bodies for this kind of work. He continued, stating that roads are like painting a big wall whereas sidewalks are like painting in a closet – you're in a cramped space and constantly turning around and rolling things in in small sections. He said this is why a lot of communities don't have a program – the effort outweighs the value which is something to consider.

Chair Smith stated that there is the question of boardwalks and shared use paths. Mayor Fischer stated that he would like to get through one thing at a time – those are a bigger CIP thing. City staff confirmed that boardwalks were addressed via the CIP Millage last time. Mayor Fischer concluded by stating that the City has been trying to get sidewalks in a good direction for so long he would like to keep the current momentum going – the other issues can be addressed at another time.

Director Herczeg reiterated the importance of having a policy in place. City staff needs something that they can point to. He acknowledged that this would not be an overnight thing, but the goal is to have direction on a policy.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

Chair Smith indicated that this was sufficiently covered throughout the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

P. Cantalamisa briefly spoke on the quality of the presentation given by City staff.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Smith made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:11 pm.