

Goodview City Council
Special Informational Meeting
Goodview Elementary School
October 26, 2011
Meeting No. 20-2011

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Weimerskirch at 6:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Present: Mayor J.P. Weimerskirch, Councilmembers Dick Ledebuhr, Sandy Erdman, and Mike Alexander. Councilmember Steve Baumgart was absent.

Also present were City Administrator Dan Matejka, Director of Public Works Greg Volkart, Yaggy Colby Engineers Christina Peterson and Dillon Dombrovski, and Goodview Elementary Principal Marianne Texley.

Mayor Weimerskirch welcomed everyone to the informational meeting, stating that the purpose is to bring information about the proposed plan to the community so they can be informed with the correct information about the project.

City Administrator Dan Matejka stated the intention of the meeting is to share information about the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) grant with the citizens, take public comments, and answer questions. The information shared is what is currently in the successful grant application. We are not certain if the application can be altered, and if so, by how much. We are not sure whether we can do part of the application, or if we have to complete all of it. Is it an all-or-nothing deal?

Dan introduced Director of Public Works Greg Volkart and Yaggy Colby Engineers Christina Peterson and Dillon Dombrovski. Yaggy Colby Associates wrote, and submitted, the grant for the City.

Ms. Peterson introduced the SRTS video, explaining the goal of the grant is to create and foster inviting and fun ways for kids to walk and bike to school safely. The video shared several reasons why fewer children walk or bike to school, including distance (fewer children are located in the center of their respective communities); personal safety, and fears of crime. The concept behind SRTS is there are numerous dangers in getting children to and from school. These include; traffic danger (more cars equal more danger), and more driving & less biking equals poorer overall air quality. These reasons have added to the fact that children are becoming less active and more overweight. The time is right for a change and SRTS is part of the change with programs working to make it safer. According to the video, the benefits of walking and biking to school are increased activity, better health and self-esteem, kids who walk and bike arrive to school more alert and have higher test scores, it improves traffic safety around the school, and the air quality is better around the school with less traffic.

Dan Matejka: SRTS is about getting kids to school safely. MNDOT administers the successful grants using federal dollars allocated for this purpose. In addition to offering students a safe walking/biking route to school, it will benefit all citizens who walk through the city. This is the third year the City of Goodview has applied for this grant. The first two applications were not successful. In May of 2011, Christina informed us there was funding available for 2011, but any applications needed to be submitted by June 15. Mr. Matejka, Mr. Volkart, and Christina met to discuss where we should start this application. We used the previous year's discussion as the basis to this year's application. We met with Marianne Texley, Goodview Elementary School Principal, and it was determined there was a glaring need to improve the pick-up area behind the school. Dan put up a slide showing the proposed sidewalk from 44th Avenue and 8th Street to the intersection of 51st Place and 7th Street. He stated that based on information obtained from the School District there are currently 59 students who live within the 1-mile walking boundary of the school, and of those 59, 36 live east of the school and could benefit from the creation of this proposed sidewalk route. He also said there are currently five school bus stops in this stretch of 8th Street, of which there are 30 students assigned to them. These students currently stand either in the street or in the yards to wait for their buses. If this project went through, they would have a safer place to stand and wait for their buses. In mid-August the City was informed we were one of only 16 successful SRTS grant applications awarded in Minnesota this year. Statewide there were 82 grant applications submitted, totaling just over \$23 million dollars. The City of Goodview's application is for approximately \$283,000. This project will need to be completed by December 31, 2013, twenty-seven months from now. Mr. Matejka explained why this specific route was chosen, stating 8th Street is a flatter piece of land than 9th Street, it is centrally located down the middle of the community, and the first 1.5 blocks going west from 44th Avenue is City property thus no private property would be disturbed. The concept of connecting 8th Street & 6th Street along 44th Avenue allows connection of Memorial Park and Goodview Park. This would be a benefit to the City not only for SRTS, but for such events like ball tournaments and Goodview Days. Also, 8th Street can connect directly with the walking path which encircles the school. It also would allow for one continuous sidewalk from the intersection of 7th Place and 51st Avenue to the intersection of 8th Street and 44th Avenue. Mr. Matejka pointed out that the entire project would be constructed all within the City's right-of-way, with no personal property involved. He then went on to describe the details of the proposed project. This includes pushing the existing curb on the south side of 8th Street out 3', thus making this side of the street a no-parking zone. A grass boulevard would be installed from the back of the new curb to the current location of the existing curb. The actual sidewalk, which would be 5' in width, would go from the back of the boulevard up towards each house. This entire process would be repeated on 44th Avenue from 6th Street to 8th Street, with the exception of moving the curb out. The City right-of-way in this stretch is wide enough to allow for the boulevard and sidewalk to be installed without narrowing the street. Eighth Street behind the school would be widened by 4' to improve the traffic congestion after school.

Dan Matejka asked for questions and comments, requesting that each person state their name & address so it can be included in the minutes.

He also stated that the School, its PTA, and State Representative Steve Drazkowski all wrote letters of support for the project, and those letters were included in the submitted grant application.

Comments:

Diane Larson, 815 49th Avenue:

1. Where is Yaggy Colby located?

Christina: In Rochester.

2. How many nearby communities have done this?

Christina: Not many in this area. However, the City of Lewiston was awarded a grant this year – just like Goodview.

3. The City of Red Wing installed some sidewalks as part of a successful grant application they submitted a few years ago, and she said nobody is happy with it.

Christina: La Crescent is using this program and is happy with it

4. If you think you'll get kids to walk & bike on sidewalks, you're wrong. I spoke to 60 people in the neighborhood, and none of them are for this project. The City is throwing away money even if it is free money from the Federal Government.

5. I question 36 children living east of the school? I only see 3 that walk beyond 49th Avenue, and that is not every day.

Dan Matejka: These are the numbers provided by the school.

6. Everyone is wondering why we need this? We walk in the street - pavement is not that good for you to walk on anyway. Putting in a sidewalk won't change the attitude of people. Kids and parents won't take the time to walk on a sidewalk. They are too busy with after-school programs.

7. Will you move the telephone pole? If so, it better not be moved in front of my picture window because that will lower my property value.

Dan Beyers, 655 44th Avenue:

Are you nuts? I grew up here and what's nice about Goodview is that there are no sidewalks. Kids don't walk to school.

Dan Matejka: We not only want kids to have a safe place walk, but also to stand waiting for their buses.

Dan Beyers: Safe pick-up stops are a school district issue, not a City issue. The taxpayers that are affected don't want it. He asked the Councilmembers if any of them are affected by this. None of them were.

Dan Beyers: Then stop shoving this down our throats.

Mayor Weimerskirch: We are not shoving this down your throat. We are getting your input. If it looks like it's moving forward, we'll have a public hearing and it will be voted on by the Council. This is not locked in concrete. We are looking for your input.

Dan Beyers asked the audience to raise their hands if they want this. Nobody raised their hand.

Bill Wissman, 4430 8th Street:

Regarding snow shoveling, will the City take care of it? If not, we will have to get up at 6:45 to shovel walks by 7:45. Is there any consideration for cleaning the sidewalks?

Mayor Weimerskirch: It is typically the responsibility of homeowner. And, your concerns are understood and will be a part of our discussion.

Greg Gabbert, 4815 8th Street:

How many children walk on the sidewalk? Most on are on the street. How are we going to get them to stand on the sidewalk on 8th Street? There are 36 kids east of here, but they all won't walk down new sidewalks just because they are there. The kids are walking down 9th Street, not 8th Street.

Dan Matejka: Another goal of the Safe Routes to School's grant is to establish school programs that will encourage walking and biking. Such ideas include the school implementing classroom programs, and potentially a "group walk" to and from school.

Christina Peterson shared that this has worked well in La Crescent. She has seen first-hand that there is a huge difference in the number of children who now walk or bike to school. They have "walking to school days" and she drives her kids from Hokah to the drop-off spot and they all walk together. There is follow-up support that goes along with the program. Parents' attitudes about it change with programs that educate and encourage kids to walk.

Diane Larson, 815 49th Avenue:

The School needs to shovel the snow on its existing path around the school. Eighth Street is not the central street in town. The people that turn on 49th Avenue want the sidewalk on the other side because they have trouble crossing the street. Put it on other side because our issue is getting across the street.

Day Beyers, 655 44th Avenue:

He loves Goodview Days, but spends a lot of time picking up trash. The sidewalk will bring more traffic and trash to his yard. Sidewalks will make things worse during Goodview Days.

Don Mueller, 4715 8th Street:

Don't want this to be a fiasco like the water treatment plant. Would like to take a look at the application.

Dan Matejka assured the audience that there will be no assessments charged to their properties. He also stated that per City ordinance, the City is responsible for repairing and maintaining all sidewalks. He also said there is an ordinance dealing with snow removal from sidewalks, and if you don't shovel the sidewalk in front of your property within a certain number of hours you could be cited.

Karen Malewicki, 720 47th Avenue:

Can you permanently lower the speed limit throughout the City for the safety of the children? Or put a sign at the corner of 47th Avenue and 8th Street reminding people to drive safely.

Police Chief Russell said that he could look into it.

Don Mueller, 4715 8th Street:

Why not put a bike lane instead of a sidewalk?

Dan Matejka: This is something we can look into it, but a bike lane wouldn't be visible during the winter months with snow on the ground.

Don agreed that this was true.

Mary Grafton-Krough, 4619 9th Street:

She asked for further information about adding a sidewalk behind the school.

Dan Matejka clarified that the project would widen 8th Street about 4' to add space in the pick-up lane.

Rita Bestul, 4510 8th Street:

After 43 years, this is the fewest children walking that she's ever seen. The children are all picked up by their parents.

Dan Matejka: Currently there are only a small number of kids walking, but nobody knows how many would walk if a safe route was created for them. I am not arguing for or against this. Statistics say there are 36 children east of the school and within walking distance. Nobody knows how many of them would walk if a path was created. I hear where you are coming from. But houses sell, new families come in, and they may have students who would attend Goodview School, and I have to believe they would see sidewalks up 8th Street as a plus to get their children to and from school along a safe path. I am not disputing your thoughts; I'm just saying it is unknown who might use the sidewalks if they were there.

We only have sidewalks on 6th Street. And, who is to say that we wouldn't look at expanding the concept onto 47th Avenue from 6th Street to 8th Street, or to eventually include 9th Street. It is about what is best for the whole community, not just the residents affected, and not just for today but for the future. Who knows, maybe potentially we may expand sidewalks all the way down to 34th Avenue along 8th Street. This is a piece of the vision for Goodview. The project is completely paid for. It is not coming out of the City's budget. It could possibly be the first part of a bigger project - a larger vision.

Diane Larson, 815 49th Avenue:

36 kids may be using the bus for after school program or to the Y, but we aren't seeing them walking.

Aaron Lofgren, 760 53rd Street:

The SRTS grant would offer a safe way for kids to get from school to either Memorial Park or Goodview Park. It would create a place for kids to ride their bike, instead of in the street. God forbid it's your child who gets hit. We have the opportunity for this now and should take advantage of it.

Dan Matejka added that each spring teachers walk their classes down to City Hall and the Fire Station when studying government. In the past, they have walked down 8th Street to 44th Avenue, then to 5th Street. There is not a single sidewalk along that path. You have two classes of 40 kids walking down city streets without sidewalks – a major safety concern.

Other questions? (None)
Council?

Mayor Weimerskirch: We appreciate your input and are glad you came. The only thing that is a "done deal" is that the grant has been approved and we are now reviewing what this means. Sidewalks have been brought up before. A bike lane makes sense. Our task is to make sure we have a safe area for our kids. It is our responsibility. We aren't going to do this just to spend free money. Don't stop the discussion. Our purpose for meeting tonight was to make sure you knew what was here, to be transparent. You are appreciated. We don't sit here with a deaf ear. We take it all into consideration. Sometimes we vote in a fashion that doesn't make everyone happy, but we take your input into consideration.

Diane Larson, 815 49th Avenue:

The biggest concern is not sidewalks to school, but the area in back of the school. You need to fix the mess behind the school. If I have to get a sidewalk, please make sure that the area behind the school is improved as part of the plan.

Christina Peterson: This grant is about encouraging children to walk to and from school. Focusing on the pick-up area makes it easier for the cars, but it's not encouraging the children to walk, which is what this grant is intended for. So it might not be possible to just improve the pick-up area using these grant funds. We will have to check into it and see.

Bill Wissman, 4430 8th Street:

We have two parks off 44th Avenue and a sidewalk may save a life.

Dan Matejka: Feel free to stop in or call me at City Hall, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. If I'm not in or you would rather speak with someone else, please feel free to talk to Greg Volkart. We want it to be clear in your mind what has been proposed and what has been accepted by MNDOT.

Thank you for coming. I feel tonight was beneficial for all groups. I hope you feel the same.

Mayor Weimerskirch: The City Council will be the five people voting on this matter. Before that happens, there will be a public hearing.

Dan Matejka: We will take tonight's information and discuss it at the next City Council meeting on Monday, November 7, 2011. Do we continue exploring this opportunity or do we let it go? Maybe we take a look at just the pick-up area. Tonight we presented the successful application. The Council will tell Greg Volkart and me where we go from here. The Public Hearing will be advertised, but you will not receive a personal letter like you did for tonight's meeting.

Diane Larson, 815 49th Avenue:

Is there a deadline?

Christine Peterson: It is a reimbursable grant. Whatever they spend will be reimbursed by MNDOT. Regarding a deadline, the sooner the better.

The meeting concluded at 7:10 p.m.