

Hacker, Marsha

From: Phillips, Rob
Sent: Tuesday, November 27, 2012 1:09 PM
To: Pien, Janet; Hacker, Marsha
Subject: FW: Lighting the SW path

Please distribute to the BPW.

-----Original Message-----

From: Ken Golden [mailto:kengofpluto@yahoo.com]
Sent: Tuesday, November 27, 2012 11:09 AM
To: Dryer, David; Phillips, Rob; Solomon, Brian; Bidar-Sielaff, Shiva; Schmidt, Chris; Ellingson, Susan; lveldren@cityofmadison.com; Soglin, Paul
Subject: Lighting the SW path

Note: May I request that this be distributed to members of the board of public works, ped bike motor vehicle commission and to the remainder of the city council. I will drop off a paper copy at the (Rob's) city engineer's office, dave Dryer's office, council office and the mayors office later today. Please let me know if you need to have multiple copies. I am unable to attend the public hearing on the 28th but will be at the city council meeting in december (13th?)

KEN GOLDEN
2904 Gregory Street

Madison, WI

53711

November 27, 2012

TO: Dave Dryer, City of Madison Traffic Engineer
Rob Phillips, City Engineer
Board of Public Works and
Pedestrian/Bike/Motor Vehicle Commission
Alds Sue Ellingson, Brian Solomon, Chris Schmidt and
Shiva Bidar-Sielaff
Other Members of the Common Council
Mayor Soglin

FROM: Ken Golden

RE: LIGHTING THE SOUTH WEST PATH

There are a number of very compelling reasons we should install lighting on the SW path. While you may have heard these, let me echo them. In contrast, the valid reasons for opposition are frankly weak and contrived and are predominantly voiced by immediate neighbors who appear to fear change. We often see this kind of resistance when public works improvements are proposed. I will justify both of these assertions but first, let me describe a homeowners life along the path with lights. This picture is itself a compelling reason to support the lights. It assumes we can make decisions a bout when to light the path and when to turn them off.

Lets start with summer. In the morning, lights may not even go on due to the early sunrise. In the evening, with sunset as late as 9pm but averaging some time around 7:30-8, the light will be visible from then until we decide to turn them off (to save electricity and because of light traffic). This might/could be 10 or 11 PM. So lights are on for 3 or so hours. Meanwhile, it has been observed that many backyards are lit with floods and other lighting spoiling the darkness.

In Winter, the lights come on early in the morning so the path can be lit for use by commuters. At night, with darkness coming before the 4-5 pm rush time, lights come on for the commuters we say we want to encourage. Walkers can use the path safely after they come home from work or school. Folks in their houses at both times will in all likelihood have their shades/insulating window covers drawn for much of this time, will not be in or using their back yards and may not even see the lights.

In spring and fall, lets just split the difference. Use of and exposure to the lights will be more than winter and less than summer.

WHY LIGHT THE PATH

1. Resource utilization: This is a multi-million dollar facility that attracts thousands of users who commute to work or school or use the path for recreation and/or exercise. The use of this gem is extremely limited in the dark months of the year denying access to many users. The current debate has all but forgotten the return on investment that comes from making the path available year round.

2. Safety: Use of the path by pedestrians when it is dark is simply unsafe. For peds, even with reflective clothing or a flashlight, the possibility of being hit from behind by a bike is an unacceptable risk. In some areas, other risks are present but the current opponents don't live in those areas. The risk of injury just after sunset is real and should be avoided

3. Policy: We light our streets and paths. There is no logical reason to distinguish this path from any other path or transportation corridor. Denying lights would be precedent and thus a new policy. Will we now remove lights anywhere for the same reasons as here?

4. Liability: Whether or not the city is financially vulnerable to a suit were somebody significantly hurt, the ethical liability of knowingly leaving an unsafe condition that may cause major injury must be considered by the decision makers. What reason would you give that parent or spouse of a seriously insured person for not lighting this corridor even though we lit all of the others? Compare the avoidable injury to the neighbors not wanting to see light out their back window.

5. Operational options available that minimize the Impact: As described, above, there is no need to light the path when its dark. The time for lights on the path can be rationally determined based on our experience with its use year-round.

WHY NOT LIGHT THE PATH

1. It is a natural Area: The SW Path has been a mapped transportation corridor for decades before and after the railroad ceased operations. It is also a utility corridor for electric lines and a major gas main. It is not governed by the parks commission nor is it zoned conservancy. I had an owl in my garage last year- shall I ask for a rezoning? Add to this the thousands of users passing every day, its proximity to a golf course and one cannot define this the new arboretum.

2. Light spillage, spacing and cost: As you know, everyone in Madison has a PhD in everything. The latest universal degree is in outdoor lighting. I hear criticisms about spacing and spillage. If you accept the spacing argument, be prepared to modify the lighting for the entire city- paths and streets. As to spillage, it is no longer an issue. Come to my back yard and see. Costs too much? Why here and not every other path.

3. You can see the light: This seems to be the only remaining valid reason for opposition. While I strongly disagree, I respect this point of view. But again, why on a path mapped as a transportation corridor for almost a century.

SUMMARY: I think the reasons for supporting the lights are compelling and the reasons for opposing are weak. As with many issues, it seems like the opponents are the loudest and are scaring some decision makers into supporting a position they know is not the right one. This is an atrocious way to govern. Whether you are for or against for these and any other reason I did not anticipate, vote on the merits and not on your intent to be reelected. Doing the opposite is a cowards way out and makes you irrelevant in the governing process.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Phone: 608.238-4370 (Preferred)

Cell : 608.332-8208

E-mail: kengofpluto@yahoo.com