

Pien, Janet

From: Phillips, Rob
Sent: Wednesday, October 20, 2010 3:12 PM
To: Pien, Janet
Subject: FW: BPW #7 Plans, Specs etc for Williamson St/Ingersoll

For distribution to the BPW.

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

From: Rummel, Marsha
Sent: Wednesday, October 20, 2010 3:05 PM
To: Palm, Larry; Skidmore, Paul
Cc: Phillips, Rob; Briski, Kevin
Subject: BPW #7 Plans, Specs etc for Williamson St/Ingersoll

RE: 20126 Approving Plans, Specifications, And Schedule Of Assessments For Williamson Street and South Ingersoll Street Assessment District - 2011.

Greetings-

Unfortunately I am not able to attend the public hearing tonight on Willy St reconstruction, I have another city committee meeting. I'd like to share my thoughts.

In 2009, the Marquette Neighborhood Association and GWABA, the Greater Williamson Business Assoc requested that the proposed 2010 Willy St resurfacing be delayed to 2011 in order to weather the impacts of the recession. The city requested and received permission from the DNR to postpone lead pipe service replacement. The project was delayed and the process of gathering public input for a 2011 resurfacing project began in July 2010.

The neighborhood and the business association have had a series of robust conversations about this project over the last year and a half.

Neighborhood and local business proponents of 'complete streets' and greening the street have asked for the city to consider ways to enhance pedestrian safety on Willy, calm motorized traffic, preserve the tree canopy and the cooling impacts of trees, and consider ways to improve storm water management on this busy arterial. The result of the public process has been an agreement to change the resurfacing project to a reconstruction project and to narrow Willy St from Blount to Baldwin from 48' to 44' which matches the width of Willy from Baldwin to the river.

Narrowing the street represents a huge improvement in the project. The benefits are manifold: increased pedestrian comfort on sidewalks and at street crossings, a larger terrace to buffer people from traffic and allow preservation of more trees and opportunities for businesses to have outdoor uses, and increases space for bike storage and snow storage. There is a trade off with bike users who may experience more conflicts with car doors. At several public meetings, the neighborhood, including bike advocates discussed this concern and decided that narrowing the street and all the related benefits was worth the tradeoff. Supporters noted that the Capital City trail is one block to the north and Jenifer and other residential streets to the south provide alternatives for bike commuters and while we all agree that new streets should be constructed to insure space for all users, the older urban street grid is not as easy to retrofit.

Other improvements that came out of the public process include the installation of conduit to allow future undergrounding of utilities, the addition of bump outs at two non-signalized

intersections, colored crosswalks, traffic islands at Brearly and Few, more historically appropriate fixtures, and the construction of a loop detector at Blount St to activate the signal at Jenifer St to allow gaps in traffic for Blount St residents. Engineering staff have indicated that we can add more bike racks on side streets built over permeable concrete. They are also willing to consider decorative concrete in areas where the adjacent property owner would like to maintain a concrete terrace area, about eight businesses could benefit if they are interested and it could add design coherence to the street.

In a letter from Rob Phillips dated 10/5, Engineering has agreed to test "a more cutting edge technology to treat storm water and evaluate the effectiveness of those devices". I understand this pilot will be the construction of two 'bio vaults', a type of water vault with a filter medium that would be installed at several stormwater inlets to filter water and reduce the total suspended solids, litter and oil and grease from entering our storm water system. The vaults could also contain trees. They would need to be closed during the winter to prevent the infiltration of salt. I think this is exactly the kind of test the proponents of green streets want to see. The installation of catch basins throughout the project area to collect sediment is another improvement that will green the street. Unfortunately rain gardens are not a viable option even with enlarged terrace since they require about 10' to be effective.

MNA has proposed delaying this project until 2012 in order to plan for a better street. They have been joined by the adjacent Schenk Atwood Starkweather Yahara Neighborhood Association and EINPC. I support the goals and efforts of MNA and other near east side neighbors to make streets more sustainable and user friendly for all modes of transportation. But I am not clear what additional stormwater management or other green techniques will be available if we delay. I support planning to review the near east side traffic plans that have been adopted by MNA, SASYNA, Tenney Lapham/TLNA and Capitol Neighborhoods/CNI and have circulating for many years. For Willy St, ideas include eliminating parking restrictions during rush hour and improving the Nolen/Willy intersection. I realize these are bigger issues than a street reconstruction project and I will work to start this larger conversation. At some point, if we are serious about these ideas, the city will need to do a traffic study and this will be expensive, approximately \$100,000. Meanwhile, nothing in the Willy St project as described to the neighborhood will preclude this in the future, as Rob Phillips noted in his letter.

My concerns about delay are informed by several factors and conditions.

Lead pipe replacement was delayed in 2010. The city is obligated to replace the lead pipes in our water service and staff has informed me they don't believe there is a valid reason to ask DNR to delay for an additional year. We have an obligation to protect the quality of the drinking water for residents with lead pipes and Willy St is one of the last streets to be done. The street will be torn up in patches to install the new pipes in 2011 even if the reconstruction would be delayed.

High Speed Rail is coming (I assume) and 2012 is the year that the new tracks will be installed along the corridor, intersections upgraded, some streets may be closed, a second set of tracks added in stretches and left turn lanes will be added the Blair/Nolen intersection. From what I understand, the city is unlikely to reconstruct Willy St when HSR work is being done so the delay would be in some out year, TBD. If the project is delayed, I don't think we can say at this point what year it would take place. I sincerely believe we have an incredible opportunity with the feds/DOT paying to improve John Nolen and I have been urging interested neighbors to focus on making sure that DOT improves safety and enhances the effectiveness of this complicated intersection.

GWABA supports the green and complete street concept but in a letter dated Oct 13 they do not think the project should be delayed. No business looks forward to the disruption to their business, dirt and assorted hassles. As the first circle of stakeholders affected by street reconstruction I want to respect the efforts they have spent over the last year planning a

"Willy Lives" marketing campaign and preparing business owners for construction. They applied for a city neighborhood planning grant and received donations from MGE to help fund a part time project manager to interface with contractors and the city.

My outstanding request regards tree replacement. I have urged Parks to plant canopy trees, not ornamental trees, where existing power lines are located. If we have installed conduit, I believe we can accomplish undergrounding utilities before the canopy trees grow tall enough to conflict with power lines in 20 years.

Overall, I think the neighborhood and businesses have improved the project significantly.

Thanks for your time and attention.

Alder Marsha Rummel

