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## Jenifer Street poems to find homes in the sidewalk, more stanzas expected

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Poetry would go from chalk to concrete in the new sidewalks on Jenifer Street this June and in the official policy of the city under a resolution to be presented Tuesday that sets a formal process for setting words into concrete.

The resolution, which the City Council is expected to refer to the city Arts Commission, sets rules for choosing poems that can be embedded in city sidewalks as part of the city's public art framework.

The poems, the policy says, can only come from a city poet laureate and cannot contain "religious content or commercial, political, hate or public issue speech."

They cannot be obscene or contain profanity. No images allowed.

And they may be no longer than about 250 characters, including titles, spaces and punctuation, or less than two tweets' worth.

The Jenifer Street reconstruction project, scheduled to begin in May, will have seven embedded poems, said Jack Kear, co-chairman of the Marquette Neighborhood Association's arts committee. The neighborhood group is getting a city grant of about \$5,000 to pay for the imprinting.

The Jenifer Street project continues a 2011 project that imprinted four poems onto the sidewalks of Williamson Street. That was before the city had a policy for content, author and length.

The city has received inquiries from other neighborhoods about putting poetry to concrete, said urban planner Linda Horvath. The city's Planning Division expects to see one or two sidewalk poetry projects per year at a cost of \$5,000 per project.

“We’ve been working on our plans for it for quite a long time,” Kear said. “We have been working with the imprinter for the mold, and went through the city to apply for a grant to cover the expenses.”

There was a delay when the city attorney’s office said guidelines for the entire city were needed, Kear said. An earlier resolution to the City Council was withdrawn while that issue was resolved.

The Jenifer Street poems, selected by residents, will come from three city poet laureates, Sarah Busse and Wendy Vardaman, and current laureate, Oscar Mireles, Kear said.

The new policy requires a public meeting and includes restrictions on poem placement. A poem can’t be placed on a sidewalk adjacent to a property if the owner objects, for example, and the city can remove any sidewalk poetry panel “at any time and for any reason.”

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**George Hesselberg | Wisconsin State Journal**

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