

COUNCIL WORK SESSION April 11, 2022

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a Council Work Session of the North Mankato City Council was held in the Council Chambers on April 11, 2022. Mayor Dehen called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm. The following were present for roll call: Council Members Steiner, Norland, Oachs, Whitlock, and Mayor Dehen, Interim City Administrator Fischer, Public Works Director Host, and City Clerk Van Genderen.

Lookout Drive Corridor Study

Interim City Administrator Fischer stated the Project Manager from Bolton & Menk, Ross Tillman, would be providing an update on the Lookout Drive Corridor Study funded by the Mankato/North Mankato Area Planning Organization (MAPO). He noted that City Planner Lassonde is working on a Lookout Drive Redevelopment Plan separate from the corridor study being completed by MAPO.

Project Manager Tillman reported the study area was divided into three study areas. North is from 512th Street to TH 14, Middle is from TH 14 to Marie Lane, and South is from Marie Lane to Lower Lee Blvd. The project timeline studied existing conditions from June 2021 to November 2021. MAPO continues to evaluate alternatives from December 2021 to July 2022 and plans to bring recommendations to the participating stakeholders in August and October 2022. The goal is to identify a vision for the corridor that responds to the various contexts and users, (existing and future), build public and agency consensus around the corridor and develop a fiscally responsible and reasonable implementation plan. Project Manager Tillman reported general public response showed more satisfaction with Lookout Drive North of US 14 and less satisfaction with Lookout Drive South of US 14. Public concerns included lane configuration, bike access, traffic speeds, pedestrian safety, and traffic noise.

Project Manager Tillman stated that the purpose of the project is to identify multimodal improvements and create a reasonable and implementable implementation plan. The project needs include maintaining acceptable traffic operations and safety, aligning speeds to match the context of the roadway, and improving pedestrian and bicycle connections both along and crossing Lookout Drive.

Project Manager Tillman reviewed North Segment Alternatives, which included potential roundabouts at Lookout Drive/Timm Road, Lookout Drive/Carlson Drive, and Lookout Drive/Howard Drive. Possible alternatives also included the addition of a middle turn lane.

Project Manager Tillman reviewed Middle Segment Alternative, which included potential roundabouts at Lookout Drive/Commerce Drive, and Lookout Drive/Marie Lane. Alternative lane configurations had two-lane traffic both ways with a median down the middle, one-lane traffic with a wide median, or a three-lane reconstruction with one lane in each direction and a middle turn lane.

Project Manager Tillman reviewed the South Segment Alternatives, including retrofitting the roadway to have two lanes down and one lane up with a trail heading south or one lane up and one lane down with a trail going south.

Project Manager Tillman reported the next steps in this project include receiving feedback from the Council today and a presentation to Nicollet County Board for their feedback. Then it will go to the MAPO TAC and MAPO Policy Board. After the reviews and feedback, the project and concepts based on public engagement and feedback will be further developed. Once concepts are updated, the project will be brought back to the public for input and then to the City Council and County Board for final review.

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Council Member Oachs noted concerns about roundabouts due to the number of children using the corridor to travel to school. Project Manager Tillman stated that the proposed roundabouts would be single lanes, reducing driver distraction.

Discussion was held concerning the speed on the road and options to calm traffic by implementing a median or other options. Mayor Dehen expressed concerns about the use of medians if the plan for the area is additional commerce. A discussion was also held concerning bicycle and pedestrian use of the area. A discussion was held concerning the posted speed, and Project Manager Tillman stated the study would not recommend a speed, but through design, the study would help control the speed. Mayor Dehen requested the plan be returned to the Council with suggested phases to help manage the changes and expenditure of funds.

Annual Parks, Solid Waste, Recycling Report

Public Works Director Host reported the Parks Department's objectives are Safety, Quality, and Productivity. He reported that 60% of Park Department hours are spent on park rounds, mowing/trimming, flowers, Caswell Park and Swim Facility support. The North Mankato Park system has 4.5 full-time employees and hires between 10 and 12 seasonal employees. The staff manages 280 acres of green space, 20 playground structures, 100 natural prairie acres, and 10 miles of trail.

Public Works Director Host reported opportunities for the Park system include an expanded event schedule, new equipment, and searching for grant funding to support the Parks plan. Challenges include staffing, which includes the struggle to locate seasonal help and the need for additional staff for the Parks department. The current staff does a great job of working to meet the community's needs, but the growing community puts a strain on the Parks department. Additionally, the staff provides a lot of support for the pool and Caswell Sports which is a significant number of person-hours. The City is attempting to replace playground equipment, but aging infrastructure means there is some equipment beyond its useful life that is not scheduled for replacement.

Public Works Director Host reviewed Solid Waste. He noted West Central Sanitation is contracted for residential pickup and averages 3,400 tons of pickup per year. The fund has been subject to rate increases from \$80.56 per ton in 2013 to \$98.32 per ton in 2022, for an average yearly increase of \$1.97 per ton—the Spring Junk Event averages 244.25 tons with 234 craft hours and \$7,730 per event. The Fall Junk Event averages 190.5 tons with 156 craft hours and \$8,660 per event. The drop-off costs more due to weekend hours and overtime. The challenge facing the junk clean-up events is the cost of mattress and box spring recycling.

Public Works Director Host reviewed recycling. The residential recycling is contracted with West Central and averages 1,480 tons per year. Tonnage peaked in 2018 and 2019. Rates for recycling have remained steady. He noted it is harder to find users to recycle. The department also manages the compost site, open for brush and tree waste.

Mayor Dehen suggested additional publications on recycling to encourage users. A discussion was held concerning the rising cost of mattresses and box spring recycling.

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Council Member Norland moved, seconded by Council Member Oachs, to adjourn the Council Work Session at 12:51 pm.

Mayor

City Clerk