



PUBLIC WORKS STAFF REPORT

MEMO DATE:	May 4, 2021
MTG. DATE:	May 11, 2021
TO:	Public Works & Properties Committee
FROM:	JJ Larson – Village Director of Public Works & Utilities
RE:	Sidewalk Ordinance

BACKGROUND

When I first proposed the Village implement a Sidewalk Maintenance Plan back in 2015, I was charged by this committee with researching how other area communities handle their sidewalk installation and repair financial responsibility. If you recall, responses varied across area communities, with roughly 1/3 of communities putting all the responsibility on the adjacent property owners, 1/3 of communities funding repairs and installations entirely, and 1/3 sharing the cost 50/50 with the adjacent property owners. This last one, 50/50 shared responsibility, is codified in Village ordinance §270-2.

The Village is nearing the end of our first time through the Village with sidewalk assessments and repairs; given the relative age of the last two areas set for assessment in 2021 and 2022, the budget may even allow us to complete both in 2021.

In reading through old documents, and in one instance I was here for (Seldal Plat reconstruction), the biggest hurdle to completing missing sidewalk connections is the significant cost burden it puts onto individual property owners through the ordinance-required 50% assessment.

OVERVIEW

Given the Village's commitment to responsible financial planning, put in place with the approval, continuous review and annual re-approval of the Financial Management Plan a number of years ago; transportation system improvements are now planned and budgeted years in advance and efficiently funded utilizing the Village's expert financial consultants. Our sidewalk network is no less important than our streets and bike paths and serves all of our residents and visitors, not just those immediately adjacent to them.

Given that the Sidewalk Maintenance and Repair Policy is nearing one "full lap" through the Village, meaning every property will have been assessed one time, I wanted to discuss with this Committee the possibility of an ordinance language change that would impact how we finance our annual repairs. This proposed change would positively affect and make politically-viable expanding and filling the gaps in our sidewalk network by removing the required 50% assessment to property owners and having sidewalk work be financed entirely by the general fund.

I am confident that we could maintain the level of service in the Annual Maintenance & Repair Plan with the same modest, inflationary increases in operating dollars that have been approved annually. And, changing this language would mean that we could plan and implement larger projects that fill in the missing links in our network without arousing the anger of entire neighborhoods and making it politically awkward (or nearly impossible) to complete these connections.

RECOMMENDATION

I would like to see a recommendation to the Ordinance Review Committee that this language is changed in §270-2.