

Main St. project spurs plenty of public input

Written by Carol Pomeday
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Village creates panel to recommend design, accessibility decisions

Village of Belgium residents and business owners packed the Belgium Fire Department Hall Monday to learn about plans for the reconstruction of Main Street from Highway LL to the village limits near Lilac Lane.

When Ozaukee County reconstructs Highway 32, which is Main Street, the village plans to repair its sewer and stormwater system to reduce the amount of inflow and infiltration during heavy rainfall that has caused sewer backups in homes and taxed the village's wastewater filtration plant.

It is also an opportunity for the village to redesign the main thoroughfare, Village President Kevin Kowalkowski said.

A Main Street Reconstruction Committee is being formed to make recommendations on the design and accessibility during the construction period.

Several residents signed up that night to be on the committee, which will include citizens, Village Board members, Public Works Director Dan Birenbaum and Village Engineer Matt Greely.

The reconstruction is expected to be done in two phases, with work on the intersection of Highways D and LL scheduled for 2012 and the remainder of Main Street done in 2013.

"We know the roadbed is falling apart and we know the infrastructure in certain parts is in bad shape, and we have to take care of it," Kowalkowski said.

"It will be up to the committee to recommend how it should be done. Ultimately, the Village Board will say aye or nay, but they will take the lead from the street committee. We have to move quickly — 2012 is coming soon."

The village will work with Ozaukee County and the state Department of Transportation, which is expected to cover the majority of the cost for the project.

Greely discussed several design options Monday, including a roundabout or streetlights at the intersection of Highway LL and Highway D where there have been numerous accidents. Other options include widening sidewalks, reducing the street width, limiting parking to one side, creating bicycle lanes or trails and installing a median strip in the downtown area.

The village will pay for replacing sewer and stormwater pipes in village right-of-ways, but property owners will be responsible for the cost of laterals to their property.

Most laterals in the area are old and will need to be replaced, Greely said.

The entire system will be televised to identify problems. Property owners will be notified if their

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laterals need replacing, he said.

Several business owners said it's important that customers have access to businesses and parking available during construction.

At least one traffic lane will be open at all times, Greely said. Trucks will be able to make deliveries to downtown businesses, but most trucks will use a detour route that will be determined by the county, he said.

"The more accessibility you require, the longer it will take the contractor and the more expensive it will be," Greely said.

Richard Uselding, owner of Belgium Hardware and Beverage, said the committee should explore getting another railroad crossing in the village, possibly at Park Street, to handle traffic during construction and for fire safety. Currently, the only crossing is at downtown Main Street.

"I think the design we have now is pretty simple," resident Kevin Schueller said. "If you start having what's on that board (referring to Greely's display), that's going to cost money."

Although he prefers underground wiring for street lights on Main Street, Kowalkowski said, it may be too expensive based on preliminary talks he had with We Energies.

The cost of bike lanes or trails could be offset by state and federal grants if they are still available, he said.

The Highway LL and Highway D intersection design will be determined by the Department of Transportation and the Ozaukee County Highway Department, but public hearings will be held for residents to express their concerns, Kowalkowski said.