

Village wish list has high price tag

Written by CAROL POMEDAY
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Following through on all proposed capital projects would have significant impact on local tax rate'

The Belgium Village Board has an expensive list of capital projects it wants to undertake, most of them related to the Main Street reconstruction scheduled for next year, but the financial impact on taxpayers concerns officials.

The projects and time frames include:

n Main Street reconstruction in 2014 with the village's share estimated to be \$700,000 paid in 2015. Ozaukee County has applied for a state transportation grant that would pay 80% of the cost.

- Burying private utilities in 2014 during the Main Street reconstruction estimated to cost \$1.75 million.
- Lighting on Main Street in 2015 estimated to cost \$500,000.
- Paving one mile of Silver Beach Road from Highway LL to the industrial park in 2016 to take heavy truck traffic off Main Street at an estimated cost of \$1 million. Half the cost will be paid through the tax incremental district.
- Regional stormwater pond in the tax incremental district in 2016 estimated to cost \$500,000. The entire project would be financed through the TIF district.

If all projects are done in the time frame proposed, the village's financial adviser Dave Wagner estimated the debt levy rate will increase from the current \$1.33 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation to \$2.39 in 2017, then start to decrease.

That is in addition to the village's operating budget, which is subject to state revenue caps. The village's debt limit is \$8.6 million. The current \$4.5 million debt is 52% of that limit. If all projects are undertaken, the debt will be 80% of the projected limit.

The projects to be financed by the TIF district, which will close in 2022, must be completed by 2018.

Village President Richard Howells said burying utility lines while Main Street is being reconstructed is his top priority to avoid digging up the new street in the future, followed by the storm water ponds, then paving Silver Beach Road.

The village's cost for reconstructing Main Street and installing street lights are required by its agreement with Ozaukee County, which is doing the reconstruction because it is a county road.

Trustee Vickie Boehnlein disagreed with Howell's priorities.

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“I think burying lines should be the lowest priority,” she said. “I think Silver Beach Road is much more important than burying utility lines. It will cost more to bury the utility lines than to pave Silver Beach by almost \$1 million.”

Sara Jacoby of the Luxembourg American Cultural Center and a Chamber of Commerce member said the village should consider the impact of construction on businesses. Digging it up twice will hurt businesses, she said.

Trustee John Hise, who said the project should be done right the first time, supported burying the lines during reconstruction.

The need for the storm water pond was also questioned.

“Can we add another business out there without the storm water pond?” Jacoby asked.

“It’s getting iffy,” Public Works Director Dan Birenbaum said. “When it rains, we’re getting water in the (wastewater) system.”

Howells said he will continue to meet with property owners on Silver Beach Road about acquiring rights to widen the half mile that is too narrow for a village road.

“The town wants the road, but it doesn’t want to pay for it,” Howells said. “If we pave it, it will be our road.”

He expects to have more information on the projects and firmer costs when the board meets in September.