

Village won't pursue state funding

Written by MARK JAEGER

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Concerned about Fredonia Ave. design requirements, officials choose to partner with county on project

It turned out Village of Fredonia officials didn't have to debate the pros and cons of using state funding for the pending reconstruction of Fredonia Avenue.

The Village Board unanimously voted last week to work with Ozaukee County to design the road work as a local project.

Even though using state money from the County Highway Improvement Program for the work would significantly cut into the cost of the road project, village officials have contended the costs of meeting state-mandated design requirements would be unacceptable.

There is also no assurance Fredonia would get the state money, which is also being sought by the Village of Belgium.

Earlier in the month, a consultant from the engineering firm Ayers Associates said design fees for a state-driven project would cost as much as \$244,000. Designing a locally funded project would cost about \$65,000, the consultant said.

The actual cost of rebuilding the village's main east-west thoroughfare won't be known until bids are received, but the cost has been estimated at \$2 million as a state project or \$1.3 million as a local project.

If the village qualified for the state money, the village's share of the cost was expected to be about \$200,000.

That amount would grow significantly, however, if the village had to acquire properties along the road for the widened right-of-way.

Village Engineer Roger Strohm said meeting the state's minimum road width could infringe on as many as 16 buildings along Fredonia Avenue.

Condemning properties was something Village President Chuck Lapicola said he would not support.

"I wouldn't be in support of losing even one home or business," Lapicola said.

Still, the threat of losing properties in right-of-way acquisition was enough to bring Fredonia Avenue resident Scott Roberts to last week's board meeting.

Roberts said he and his wife were planning on making significant improvements to their corner property, but were reluctant to follow through if the road work was going to take a large bite out of their yard.

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He said the village's decision to pass on pursuing state money and with its various design restrictions was a relief.

Lapicola said by working with the county on planning for the road reconstruction, it is likely property owners will lose no more than six inches of their property for right-of-way.

"That's what I wanted to hear," Roberts said after the vote.

"I have had people who live along Fredonia Avenue who said they don't want to lose their homes, and we don't want them to either," Lapicola said.

By working with the county to bond the road project, the timetable is also likely to be accelerated significantly.

The consultant said pursuing state funding could push the project off for five years or more, but keeping financing divided between the village and county could allow work to start next year.