

Village may pass on road funding

Written by MARK JAEGER

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Design constraints linked to state money has officials rethinking how to pay for Fredonia Avenue work

Village of Fredonia officials may be having a change of heart when it comes to paying for anticipated improvements to Fredonia Avenue.

Officials have long gone under the assumption that the best way to pay for the reconstruction of the village's main east-west thoroughfare would be through the use of state highway money.

The sentiment at Monday's Public Works Committee meeting was that it may no longer be the preferred approach.

After meeting with Ozaukee County Highway Commissioner Bob Dreblow last week, Village President Chuck Lopicola said the village may be better off taking out a long-term bond for the work.

Lopicola said the villages of Fredonia and Belgium are competing for \$2.1 million in state money being funneled through the county. The pool of money is not enough to fund the road projects of both communities.

"That is what the county's allocation is, although there is no guarantee the money will be available from the state," he told the committee.

"If we pursue the state money, we are looking at the design work being done in 2014 and construction being put off until 2015. I don't think our road can take another two years. It is the worst road in Ozaukee County."

Of equal concern, Lopicola said, are the stringent design standards the village would need to follow if it received matching state highway funds for the project.

The minimum road width acceptable to the state would be 56 feet, which would threaten properties along the narrow road.

"Not only would we have to put in bike lanes on both sides of the street, but it would probably require the elimination of parking — and even buildings along the road," Lopicola said.

Depending on the design approved by the state, the village could be forced to acquire a number of properties deemed to be encroaching on the road right-of-way.

"I don't want anyone to lose their home or business," Lopicola said.

"I feel it might be in the best interest of Fredonia to keep away from the state money for this project."

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As an alternative, Lapicola said, the village should consider working with the county to include the cost of the roadwork in a large bond issue being considered by county officials.

If an agreement could be reached on how costs could be shared between the village and the county, the resulting bond could be paid off over 30 years.

“It makes sense for the people who will be using the road to pay for it, instead of having it be a road that grandpa paid for years ago,” said Trustee Don Dohrwardt, who is also a member of the County Board.

Dohrwardt said the state usually limits payback terms to 10 years for projects involving cost-sharing agreements.

To move the process along, the engineering firm Ayers will be asked to prepare a drainage plan for how the rebuilt road should handle surface water runoff.