

Falls Rd. reconstruction tabled until 2013

Written by Steve Ostermann
Thursday, 23 December 2010 17:06

Board agrees to delay project two years due to concerns with town's share of cost, future development

The Village of Grafton has tabled the Falls Road urbanization project until 2013.

Village Board members on Monday agreed to delay the improvements for two years at the recommendation of the Public Works Board, which has been discussing the capital improvement project for several months.

Plans call for the reconstruction work to widen the road from Blackhawk Drive to Port Washington Road and install curbs, gutters, sidewalks, sewer and water mains and a bicycle lane.

Village Engineer Dave Murphy said the work was expected to cost \$1.6 million for road improvements and another \$300,000 for sewer and water work. The costs are to be paid for with a combination of funds, including at least \$1.1 million from the village and \$500,000 from the town.

The village's share would include \$750,000 in special assessments to property owners, including residents of the Falls Crossing and Blue Stem subdivisions. Property owners in the town would not have to pay assessments unless their land is annexed into the village.

However, last week the Public Works Board recommended delaying the project. Murphy said the decision was made after the Town of Grafton said it does not have money in its 2011 budget to cover its share of the cost and needs to pay for other road work.

In addition, he said, future development of the Blue Stem subdivision is in doubt due to a bankruptcy proceeding.

"The village could go forward with the project next year, but if we hold off for two years, some of those issues should be resolved," Murphy said.

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Murphy said the goal of the project is to provides safe pedestrian, vehicular and bicycle traffic along Falls Road, a rural thoroughfare that has fallen into disrepair. With the project delayed for two years, temporary repairs will include filling potholes in the road as needed, he added.

More than two dozen property owners have been identified on a draft list estimating special assessments for the project, which range from \$12,000 to \$255,000.

Many of those owners have voiced concerns about the need for the work and its cost impact during public informational meetings the village held in August and November.

Final assessments will not be determined until the reconstruction plans are finalized and bids are obtained. However, Murphy said delaying the project could increase the cost 3% annually.