

**Lake Center District Steering Committee Meeting  
Tuesday, November 10, 2020  
Minutes**

**Present:** Lori Knapp, Jim Pearson, Joe La Margo, Rex Simpson, Kendra Gwin, Dan McGlaughin, Chris Forth, Tim Kirkby, Vita Khosti, Danielle Anderson, Doug Farr, Mary Beth Block, Carmine Avantini, Terry Patterson

**Absent:** Shelly Pastor, Julie Ahlberg, Gary Goodrich, Sherman Potter, Doug Lynes, AJ Spicer

Lori asked the Committee about their opinions concerning undergrounding overhead utility lines. What are your thoughts on investing in undergrounding or re-locating?

Rex said he likes the idea of undergrounding but agrees with Doug that it's not necessary unless we have a lot of money to spend. Perhaps a mix of undergrounding and relocating.

Danielle agreed with Rex.

Terry also agreed and said it's such a clean look when you can get rid of them but it's too expensive. Perhaps a combination of undergrounding and relocating is the best plan.

Jim stated that he agrees with everyone to move them off the roadway and behind businesses. I think we want to make the isthmus warm, attractive and inviting. The current poles look bad and in certain areas are in the middle of the sidewalk.

Joe said that if we can move them behind the businesses, he think it's worth it. It's a once in generation project and we should do it right. Definitely in the isthmus. If we can move them out of sight, we should do that. If not, we should spend the money to underground them.

Chris agreed with Joe. We should leave it in the plan and fund it when and where we can. He thinks it should still get consideration.

Lori agreed that if we can re-locate, that it would be worthwhile even if incrementally. Especially in the isthmus. She summarized that everyone likes the idea if it is fiscally manageable and if can be done in the long-term.

All agreed.

Dan said that he likes Chris's idea to keep it in the plan.

Doug said that the final master plan will assume undergrounding or relocating of overhead lines. He recommends an opportunistic implementation of the plan – in synchronization with other improvements.

**CHAPTER 2:**

Pages 72-73:

Jim asked how difficult will it be to get business owners to consolidate driveways?

Joe said it might be somewhat difficult but that we can collaborate by offering incentives.

Chris stated that we may not be successful 100% of the time, but we can definitely sell it better than tell it. We should show them overheads and what it could look like and offer to help facilitate cross access agreements.

Tim stated that an attempt was made to consolidate driveways between Forest & Ames but the terrain causes challenges.

Doug F. shared that in Traverse City, his team mapped 57 curb cuts that they thought had a practical consolidation. They went door to door to try to negotiate closures. Spent good money. Less than 10% of the driveways were eliminated.

Page 74-75:

With regard to the crosswalk at Forest, Doug F. asked what is the distance between the existing crosswalk and the proposed crosswalk?

Tim: 374 feet.

Doug: How far south do you have to go to the next safe point of crossing if you eliminate it?

Tim: More than 1,000 feet.

Doug F. stated that pedestrians won't walk that far to cross the road. If a pedestrian district is desired, we may want to consider leaving it. Having more frequent crosswalks is better.

Lori polled the committee to determine if there is support for leaving the crosswalk.

Danielle: Yes

Rex:

Terry:

Jim: Yes

Joe: Yes

Chris: Yes

Lori: Yes

Lori asked if the crosswalk could be shifted further south instead of eliminating it.

Chris suggested relocating it to Ames.

Tim commented that the sidewalk runs out on the west side of the street, so you have to cross there unless you want to make sidewalk improvements.

Kendra indicated that the sidewalk was installed with the crossing and the city does have easements that run the rest of the way down to Ames, except for one.

Danielle suggested that the existing crosswalk is exceedingly dangerous. The only way she would want to leave it is if there are significant safety precautions made.

Lori asked Doug F. for his recommendation since there are mixed opinions on the committee.

Doug F. advocates for all the things we're talking about to make the isthmus a cool place. Need to get from one side of the street to the other. He suggested that the committee members cross once at the legal crossing and see how it feels. If you feel like you want to get in your car to cross, we haven't done our job. If the crosswalks are more than 300 feet apart, people will drive. The existing crosswalk is a sitting duck – not part of a system of crosswalks. I urge the steering committee to think it through and imagine getting to anything by walking.

Tim stated that the crosswalk is within what may be the lane reduction area. It is realistic to think that the safety issues may be diminished when there are only three lanes and it is reversed. It is almost directly centered between Forest and the next one down at the Cove

Lori polled the committee again.

Rex agreed that it will work a lot better on a three-lane road and if you split the difference, it would be halfway. He is not sure if it's worth it to move it.

Terry asked if Ames can be closed, with traffic being fed to Forest since it will be signalized.

Danielle mentioned that Biggby entrance is right there.

Rex agreed and said that perhaps Biggby entrance can be reconfigured.

Jim asked about the recommendation for re-aligning Ames.

Tim shared that the aim is to get it a little closer to perpendicular.

Jim asked if there is there a way to relocate the driveway to Biggby.

Tim shared that the driveway and parking lot at Biggby is not affected by the realignment.

Lori asked again about dead-ending Ames with a driveway to Biggby. If we're concerned about left-hand turns, and safety is a consideration, why wouldn't we dead end Ames, which is an alternate to Forest so that traffic can safely turn at a traffic light

Doug F. stated that we really like to have multiple intersections that allow left-turns. If you close it, all of the left-turns have to shift to Forest. We need to fix the geometry. Good practice is to keep the street network intact and keep the access points.

Lori asked Rex as a resident of the neighborhood his opinion.

Rex shared that he thinks that most neighbors don't like the way it is now. There is a lot more traffic. He believes that if there is a light at Forest, most would be happy.

Danielle reminded the committee that Ames will be aligned with a private driveway, which is not commercially used or gives access to other businesses.

Chris shared his opinion that keeping access open is a good thing. As for closing Ames, he sees advantages and disadvantages. He shared that the owner of Biggby advocates for closure of Ames.

Lori asked about making Ames a right-turn only.

Doug F. doesn't think we need to do that. To build on Danielle's point, he said that Ames could be squared up to a right angle slightly further south to misalign them. Who knows what the

long-term plan will be? What if the driveway became a street? He recommends keeping Ames open and to allow right and left turns.

Lori asked the committee to weigh in on the crosswalk and the closure of Ames.

Terry said that he is not a traffic engineer but he keeps going back to loading traffic to Portage and closing Ames. Modify Ames intersection. No. #5 Yes

Danielle said, with regard to the crosswalk, that we shouldn't just leave it alone, add one or two. With regard to Ames, she said she'd like to see the accident reports. If there is a way to straighten it out, maybe it would be better. If it's a safety issue, I would be more inclined to say close it.

Rex isn't sure about closing Ames. As for the crosswalk, he would keep on a three-lane road and remove on a five-lane road.

Jim defers to those who live in the area. He suggested that the city get some input from the residents there.

Joe agreed with the recommendation from Doug.

Chris shared that there was a warrant study done on that signal at Forest. He believes that if it is signalized, we want to get as many people as possible to use it. As for the crosswalk, he doesn't feel like he can weigh in until we decide what we do with the speed of the roadway.

Kendra shared that the intention was always for this walkway to go away once the signal at Forest was installed. She believes that if you're going to have more stores, it's good to have more crosswalks.

Tim wondered if a signal goes in and people find it more attractive to use, will Forest back up with cars wanting to turn left?

Kendra pointed out that McClish is awful close to Forest as well.

Dan reminded the committee, you're not going to all agree on all of these recommendations.

Lori suggested that there be some flexibility on some of the recommendations so that if we need to make changes further down the road, we keep the integrity of the other recommendations.

Number 3: Retain a crosswalk in the vicinity.

Number 5: Leave the recommendation as is ... with alternate language that we could move it to the south. In the name of safety?

Number 8:

Tim pointed out that the piers align directly with the crosswalks.

Jim said that he believes people will like the idea of the pier/boardwalk. He asked of the idea is to have a public private partnership with the Cove or will the city pay the maintenance?

Joe said that maybe the boardwalk is the city and the piers are theirs. They've been thinking about it already.

Rex thinks that the residents will like it for sure but said he thinks that Millennium didn't put it in due to liability.

Chris asked if it would be a public walkway – open to the public?

Tim said yes, for boats on West Lake and for public to walk to.

Doug said that he thinks that the public should be allowed on the dock.

Number 9 and 10:

Doug F. said that the property swap is essential to the success of the plan.

Dan shared that he doesn't know why the property owner wouldn't believe it would be a positive for his development.

Carmine said that this is a key site and when we put a corridor improvement authority in place, we'll have additional tools to make the swap more viable to the owner.

Lori suggested that we keep in plan and assume that we're going to work it out.

Joe agreed and said we'll start picking up the pace of the conversations over the next couple of weeks.

Doug asked about the current building moratorium. Be wary about people filing plans to be put on hold to squeeze the city to get more money for their land. Is there a time where a more focused building moratorium would be beneficial?

Dan suggested that perhaps we approach the potential property owners ahead of releasing the plan. He recommended that a live audience be present for the public unveiling. He said that doesn't mean that the city has to overpay to the extreme. Negotiate a price a little above true value.

Jim agreed that the public meeting must allow in-person attendance

Lori asked if the committee has any additions or comments on 76-77.

Rex asked if the traffic signal should be installed before the lanes are reduced to make it more successful.

Doug said he would defer to the traffic engineers and would only say that you don't want to pay to install it first then have to pay to reconfigure/reinstall it again.

Kendra said that there are ways that you could install a signal to meet the requirements for five lanes, then do the lane reduction.

Jim asked when the moratorium expires and wondered if it should be extended.

Joe said that the moratorium expires in March and he doesn't think should be extended. We also have to approve the zoning overlay and it could be February before this is accomplished.

Jim wondered if the new zoning code will be presented to Council for approval by then.

Chris shared that the final draft of this plan must be in place before moving forward with the zoning plan.

Carmine also said that the zoning framework can be set up and the details can be filled in based on this plan.

Joe asked how long that will take.

Chris said it could take 90 days to get through the public meeting / approval process but we might be able to pare it down to one or fast-track it.

Joe asked what everyone thinks about an in-person public meeting?

Lori agreed that it must be in person. It will feel more transparent. She asked the Administration to come up with a way we can do that and report back to the committee.

Lori asked about parking in the area. Where will people who come here to walk around park? Have we factored that in?

Tim shared that there should be some kind of parking district where you're allowed to park anywhere. Also the drive-in property would be available for parking. He didn't recommend a parking structure. There is plenty of existing parking, just so long as people are allowed to park.

#### Page 76-77

Doug pointed out that a roundabout is drawn but it's not a current recommendation.

Tim agreed and said that it doesn't get you much bang for your buck.

Dan suggested it be left in.

Jim agreed with Dan. We could set it aside.

Terry agreed as well.

Kendra likes the idea of a roundabout because if a boulevard section is installed to the south, the roundabout eliminates the need to install curb cuts in the medians for turning purposes.

Jim, returning to the parking conversation, mentioned that Lakeview Park offers parking.

The committed discussed having one or two additional meetings to discuss the remainder of the plan. Mary Beth will coordinate.