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CITY COUNCIL MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Klynstra and City Councilmembers

FROM: Tim Klunder, City Manager

SUBJECT: Elm Street Reconstruction Concept Follow-Up and Request to Set a Public Hearing on a One-Way Street Design for the December 5, 2016 City Council Meeting

DATE: November 18, 2016

CC: November 21st City Council Agenda

BACKGROUND: At the last City Council meeting staff presented design concepts for the reconstruction of Elm Street from Lincoln to Washington in 2017. The concept includes a Woonerf with snowmelt for the block from Cherry to Main and directing traffic from Lincoln to Main one-way to the north. I have not attached the design concept to this memo due to the large file size but I will have the concept available at Monday's meeting. At the conclusion of the presentation the direction was for city staff to follow-up on questions that were raised at the meeting as the next step in the process. I would like to address those questions at Monday's work/study session and request that the next step in the process is to set a public hearing on the one-way concept for Monday, December 5, 2016.

One of the primary concerns expressed at the last meeting was the loss of parking spots in the block from Cherry to Main. We agree with this concern and we are in the process of modifying the plan to retain as many parking spots as possible in this block. There are currently 13 parking spots (2 are handicap) in this block. The plan shown at the last meeting revealed 7 parking spots. We are very confident that we will be able to add some parking spots into the plan in front of the gate to the splash pad (the plan had this as an open space) and toward each end of the block. I'm estimating that we can add at least 4 additional spots bringing our total to 11+ for the block. We would also note again that with the one-way concept we could introduce new parallel parking spots in the block from Central to Cherry.

The other questions primarily concerned a change to a one-way street from Lincoln to Main. Staff did meet with our Traffic Engineer, Pete LaMourie, to obtain his insights on the one-way traffic component of the project. Bob Bruggink was also included in the meeting and he issued a "report" identifying the pros/cons of changing the street to one-way. Our findings are attached to this cover memo. Some of the more "significant" findings are noted below – significant from the standpoint that these findings address issues that were specifically mentioned at the last meeting.

FEEL THE ZEEL



It would not be impossible to maintain two-way traffic in the block from Central to Cherry, while converting the other two blocks to one-way, given the fact that the geometry would work as both intersections have a bit of an offset with the other blocks of Elm. However, from a consistency standpoint it would seem to make more sense to have all three blocks one-way. From Pete's observations it definitely makes sense to have the block from Lincoln to Central one-way and also the block from Cherry to Main given the various safety features we are trying to enhance. He also would agree that having traffic flow north seems more appropriate if we go with a one-way street.

The primary concern we heard from the standpoint of keeping Elm Street two-way in the block from Central to Cherry was vehicles leaving the downtown parking not being able to go south on Elm. As you look at our traffic grid system of streets we feel it is appropriate to direct traffic to Church and/or over to State. Church Street is wider than Elm, it has all-way stop intersections at Cherry and Central, and in the blocks from Main to Central there are no residences along Church while there are residences on Elm.

In regards to school traffic we do not feel it is inappropriate to encourage traffic leaving Lincoln Elementary (wanting to go south) away from the Lincoln/State intersection and instead to the Central/State intersection as the latter is a signalized intersection. Further, Elm Street is a very narrow street from Lincoln to Central and it often has congestion due to parents using the street to pick-up children – both sides of the street right now. With a one-way street they would still be able to pick-up/drop-off children in that block but we would help minimize the congestion with traffic only flowing one-way on that street. Scott Nienhuis did contact ZPS Transportation Director Dave Meeuwsen and he does not have concerns with changing the street to one-way. He noted that busses probably should not be using Elm Street as it currently is due to the narrowness and times of congestion on the street.

Pete did not feel a full traffic study was necessary for consideration of this change. We could obtain some traffic counts if we wanted to verify the low volume of traffic on the street but general observation shows that volumes are low during a 24 hour period on the street. I would note that low traffic volumes are sometimes relative. Low traffic volume in Grand Rapids for example would be perceived differently in Zeeland. Additionally, there are times that we note congestion on the street. For example, we might challenge the low volume conclusion immediately prior to and after school and during a hot summer day by the splash pad. Nevertheless, diverting traffic that may have used Elm Street traveling south to other streets will not create a significant traffic problem on adjacent streets.

As noted in the report staff feels that the pros outweigh the cons of changing the portion of Elm from Lincoln to Main to a one-way street. At Monday's work/study session I would like for City Council to further discuss these pros/cons. From a timing standpoint if there is general support from City Council to further consider the idea we would like for City Council to schedule a public hearing on the one-way street concept at your December 5th meeting. Depending on the results of the public hearing City Council could then make a decision at your December 19th meeting on if you want to proceed forward with the project concept.



RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that City Council set a public hearing for Monday, December 5, 2016 on the concept of changing Elm Street from Lincoln to Main to a one-way street with northbound traffic movement.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Timothy R. Klunder', written over a horizontal line.

Timothy R. Klunder, City Manager



MOORE & BRUGGINK, INC.
consulting engineers

**Elm Street Reconstruction
Considerations for One Way Traffic Designation
from Lincoln Avenue to Main Avenue
November 11, 2016**

Background

The City of Zeeland has contemplated and budgeted for reconstruction of Elm Street from West Cherry Avenue to Washington Avenue for several years. As the project is moving towards implementation, design details have generated many conversations regarding the nature and extent of the proposed construction. Among the ideas explored, the concept of a woonerf shared roadway from West Cherry Avenue to Main Avenue and a one-way traffic condition from Lincoln Avenue to Main Avenue are being considered.

A woonerf is a type of construction that emphasizes non-vehicular transportation and shared use of a road corridor. Very low traffic speeds are desired and can be attained by construction of textured pavements (pavers), side friction (planters, street furniture, trees, and parking), in addition to posted low speed limits. A one-way traffic pattern here would be beneficial to attaining the full benefits of a woonerf.

The originally considered project corridor – Cherry to Washington – was expanded as a result of a Board of Public Works determination that the water main should be replaced in Elm Street from Lincoln Avenue to Central Avenue. With this section of road added to the project scope, attempts to mitigate traffic congestion that occurs during school transportation hours were evaluated. Included in such evaluation were options to improve the safe route to school for children walking to school on Elm Street on a sidewalk that currently has no separation from the roadway.

Considerations

In walking through the decision-making process, several iterations of outreach to the community have taken place: internal staff meetings, meetings with property owners directly adjacent to the proposed woonerf, meeting with the downtown SARB, an informational City Council work session with Elm Street (and cross street) residents invited, and meetings with the City Traffic Engineer. As a result of those meetings many sentiments were shared and discussed. Listed below is a generalized list of concepts in a “pro” and “con” format regarding the one-way traffic designation from Lincoln to Main:

Pros

- The road right of way width in Elm from Cherry to Main is only 50 feet wide in contrast to a more typical 66-foot width for most roads. This block of roadway currently includes parallel parking for the downtown area and the splash pad. Changing the parking from parallel to angled parking will improve safety, particularly for children using the splash pad. Such geometry will then only allow room for one way traffic.
- The road right of way width for Elm from Lincoln to Cherry is only about 33 feet. The existing road width is substandard (only 21 feet) when compared to the typical residential street (29 feet). Such a narrow road makes two-way traffic and on-street parking difficult.
- The one-way traffic condition will reduce traffic volumes slightly on Elm Street from Lincoln to West Cherry.
- Will reinforce the best use of the Central/State traffic signal by not allowing a southbound movement onto Lincoln and proceeding to the Lincoln/State un-signalized intersection.
- A “one way” condition northbound at Lincoln will eliminate the prohibited on-street parking by southbound vehicles during school drop-off and pickup times.
- “Channeling” available on-street pickup areas will result in a safer drop-off/pickup environment.
- Reduced congestion at the Elm/Lincoln intersection by eliminating the southbound component of traffic.
- The Elm/Lincoln intersection is manned by a crossing guard at appropriate times of the school day. Consequently, students walking to school tend to walk down Elm Street to cross Lincoln with the crossing guard. The Elm Street sidewalk is located immediately adjacent to the road curb and no separation currently exists. A one-way road can allow road design geometry to provide a narrower road pavement and a resultant grass parkway separation between vehicles and sidewalk.
- A one-way condition will allow for parking on Elm Street between Central and Cherry, where it is currently prohibited. Adding parking here will benefit downtown parking, particularly during events.

Cons

- One-way streets can be annoying in general.
- Elm Street as a one-way northbound will restrict exit from the downtown area.
- A school bus driver has testified that she drives southbound on Elm and a one-way northbound will require modification of her route.
- Elm Street residents will have access to their property restricted.
- Main Street eastbound traffic will be forced to drive through downtown to get to the south SARB parking lot. Such movement may result in Splash Pad patrons using storefront parking?
- South SARB lot users with destinations west and south of town will need to learn to exit out to Church Street down to Central Avenue rather than taking Elm south to Central.

Recommendations

We have been told that the SARB Board has been supportive of the woonerf concept. Several property owners have also expressed support of the project, both verbally and via email. There has also been some verbal and written objection to the one-way portions of the project. As a staff and consultant group, we recommend that the City take steps to formalize this traffic change. While the pros of moving to a one-way street would appear to outweigh the cons at this time, the following should be considered as the City moves forward:

1. Check with the School Transportation group to see how the one-way Elm Street would impact their busing routes.
2. Check with School Officials to discuss congestion issues with parking and access to Lincoln School.
3. Check with public safety officials to determine if there are any major access issues for their emergency response.
4. Schedule a public hearing to formally take comments regarding the proposed one way designation.
5. Based on feedback from the above, make a decision regarding the project so that design and bidding can proceed.