

BAXTER CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

**Work Session
August 1, 2017**

Mayor Darrel Olson called the Work Session to order at 6:00 p.m.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Darrel Olson, Council Members Quinn Nystrom, Todd Holman, Steve Barrows and Mark Cross.

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Bradley Chapulis, Community Development Director Josh Doty, Assistant City Administrator Kelly Steele, Finance Director Jeremy Vacinek, and Public Works Director Trevor Walter.

2018 Baxter Drive Feasibility Report Discussion

Aric Welch, WSN consulting engineer, requested council input for the design of Baxter Drive between TH 210 and the Westgate Mall. Council direction at an early stage will save the city time and money by better defining the project scope and limit the number of options to be studied in the feasibility report.

The original project scope was a relatively simple full depth reclamation project with the main purpose of restoring and preserving the existing pavement section. After further review, several issues were revealed that resulted in the delay of the Baxter Drive project. The issues included the need of further review of the project limits and costs associated with the reconstruction of the existing private section of Baxter Drive located between Mann Lakes 12 Theatre and the West Gate Mall; trails and sidewalks connectivity; street lighting; intersection alignment modifications; and roadway pavement markings and lane layout options.

The Westport Shopping Center entrance and south Westgate Mall entrances are currently offset by approximately 30'. This configuration creates left hand turning movements that are in conflict. This can be corrected by creating designated left turn lanes with pavement markings. To make the turn lanes work and eliminate the existing conflict, it would be necessary to move the south Westgate Mall entrance approximately 30' north. This would line up the entrance with the Westport Shopping Center entrance.

The existing roadway is approximately 65' wide, which is more than enough width for the current lane configuration. The roadway north of Fairview Road is proposed to be narrowed to the standard commercial roadway width of 44'. This will accommodate the proposed turn lanes and allow room for a boulevard area and separated grade trail along the west side of the roadway. Roadway improvements would stop at the southwest corner of the Westgate Mall and would not extend through the private drive to Excelsior Road unless an agreement could be worked out with the adjacent property owners to address project costs and assessments.

Proposed trail improvements include ADA pedestrian curb ramp improvements and the construction of a 10' wide grade separated bituminous trail with a 5' wide boulevard area along the west side of Baxter Drive from TH 210 to the Mann Lakes 12 Theatre property. By narrowing the roadway, the proposed trail can be constructed within the existing right-of-way. A 12' wide bituminous trail is proposed along the south side of the Mann Lakes 12 Theatre property from Conservation Drive to the Westgate Mall. Construction of this section of trail as proposed would require the removal of 45 existing parking stalls and associated parking lot modifications. Removal of the parking stalls would create a parking shortage, as defined by city ordinance, which would require a variance or possibility a parking study.

The council discussed the purpose and cost of the trail south of Mann Lakes 12 Theatre. The trail would be included as an alternate in the feasibility report. A trail connection behind Dollar Tree is proposed, but is not included in the cost estimate and would be constructed on private property.

Three existing streetlights are currently located along Baxter Drive between TH 210 and the Westgate Mall. None of the lights appear to be in operation and ownership is unknown. Because of the proposed trail and commercial roadway designation, new street lighting is proposed along the City portion of Baxter Drive from TH 210 to the Westgate Mall. Lighting the roadway and trail would be consistent with other recently completed commercial roadways within the City. Council consensus was to include streetlights in the scope of the project.

The existing Westgate Mall parking is non-conforming and does not meet the required set back from the existing right-of-way. The current parking is separated from the existing curb on Baxter Drive by a narrow concrete median that is in poor condition. To bring the parking lot into conformance, it would be necessary to remove one row of parking to create the required 10' set back. New curb and gutter would be constructed to define the new aisle and create a boulevard area along the east side of Baxter Drive. The area could be landscaped to create an attractive entrance to the commercial properties.

The proposed improvements would reduce the amount of impervious surface in the project area. The proposed green spaces could be used to collect and treat stormwater. The combination of less runoff and additional storage in the project area would result in less stormwater contribution to the Whiskey Creek watershed and ultimately the Mississippi River. Council consensus was to support the recommendation.

The roadway between Westgate Mall and Mann Lakes 12 Theater is currently a private roadway. There is also a triangular piece of right-of-way south of the mall that extends down into the City "street". Property acquisition is proposed to clean up the existing right-of-way and provide additional right-of-way/easement for the proposed trail connections and roadway improvements. Property acquisition for Baxter Drive may trigger the need for a variance for building setback on the Westgate Mall property. Council consensus was to clean up the right-of-way as recommended.

The cost of the proposed project is estimated to be \$500,000. This estimate includes all of the proposed improvements, property acquisition, engineering, legal, and administrative costs. This is considerably more than the estimated \$151,000 project cost to complete a full depth reclamation only project but most of the identified issues are being addressed.

Council discussed the reason MNDOT has classified TH 210 and TH 371 through Baxter as rural. Council asked staff to discuss upgrading ADA pedestrian crossings at TH 210 and Excelsior at TH 371 with MNDOT. Mr. Welch has not discussed the proposed layout with Westgate Mall. Council discussed marking the north private drive as private. Staff will continue discussion with the Westgate Mall about what is the long term plan for the north roadway section.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Council Member Cross, seconded by Council Member Barrows to adjourn the council work session at 6:46 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Approved by:

Respectfully submitted,

Darrel Olson
Mayor

Kelly Steele
Assistant City Administrator