

**Falcon Heights City Council Workshop Minutes**  
**Wednesday, May 6, 2015**  
**6:30 p.m.**

**Members Present:** Mayor Lindstrom, Council Member Long, Council Member Harris, Council Member Mercer-Taylor

**Members Absent:** Council Member Brown Thunder

**City Staff Present:** City Administrator – Sack Thongvanh  
City Engineer – Kristine Giga  
Finance Director – Roland Olson  
Deputy Clerk/Rec Supervisor – Tim Sandvik  
Community Development Coordinator – Paul Moretto

**Announcements:** Mayor Lindstrom welcomed new City Administrator – Sack Thongvanh. Mayor Lindstrom also announced City Engineer Kristine Giga will be leaving the city later in the year to pursue other opportunities.

**1) Discussion regarding Sidewalks along Garden Ave**

City Administrator Sack Thongvanh presented three options to council regarding the 2015 Pavement Project.

**Option 1:** Proceed with the project as currently bid, and award the contract. The current design does not include a sidewalk on Garden Avenue, but does include changes to the lane and parking configuration to allow for a walking/bicycling lane on-street.

**Option 2:** Reject bids, reevaluate the construction of a sidewalk on Garden Avenue and re-bid the entire project in 2016 (or later).

**Option 3:** Reject bids, delay the improvements on Garden Avenue and re-bid the Snelling Avenue Service Drives to still be completed in 2015.

City Administrator Thongvanh stated that Option 3, if directed by the Council, would allow City Staff to collect data and conduct analysis. The additional time to study sidewalks would allow City Staff to develop a Master Sidewalk Plan for the entire community if directed by Council.

Jan Vanderwall of Roseville Schools – Transportation Director: Garden Ave is currently a part of the ‘walking route’ as defined by Roseville Area Schools and this road is seen as a semi-arterial route. Additionally, this road is served by school patrols. In terms of safety, paint is better than no paint, but an off-road sidewalk would be the best option. Jan Vanderwall works largely with school buses, but there would not be a trade-off of resources as the school district has no funding available for the project. In favor of

sidewalks because it incorporates healthy options for students and parents. Jan Vanderwall also has the support of Falcon Heights Elementary Principal Beth Behnke.

Mayor Lindstrom discussed this is the culmination of a long conversation over the past year to year and a half. He stated he has received 30-40 emails supporting the sidewalk and 7-10 opposed to it. He noted he is in favor of delaying the project because it would increase safety, mobility and health of the community. He noted there are alternative options for funding the sidewalk and there are options the city will have to maintain the proposed sidewalk. Mayor Lindstrom also made a statement on behalf of Council Member Brown Thunder's support for sidewalks.

Council Member Long discussed that before payment and maintenance options are explored, there needs to be a better understanding of whether there is a safety problem. Councilor Long stated that it seems like we are putting the cart before the horse. In order to address safety concerns, those concerns need to be understood. Council Member Long stated he is not opposed to sidewalks outright, rather the primary focus should be understanding the problem whether it is speed, congestion, or something else. He also noted maintenance needs to be considered and residents directly impacted as they would be vulnerable to fines. Council Long stated that we need to determine if sidewalks a long Garden Avenue is a need or a want. He also noted he is not in favor of franchise fees as a way to cover this cost as it is difficult to explain to residents the additional value from the utility company.

Council Member Harris stated that she agreements with the majority of comments made by Council Member Long. Councilor Harris discussed that if there is not a safety concern that is well defined, there is no need for a solution. She went on to discuss that it is an extremely expensive project and maintenance is a concern. Furthermore, installing a sidewalk is a city-wide concern and not just a concern for Garden Ave.

Council Member Mercer-Taylor noted she is undecided on the issue. Safety has multiple components and while sidewalks are safer, safety is a difficult issue to understand. In this case, perception is important in regards to safety. She noted that there are some areas of Falcon Heights that do have sidewalks, but other areas that do not and some of these residents enjoy the 'feel' of a rural community in the metro. Councilor Mercer-Taylor noted that there are other priorities such as how the proposed park plan would be funded. Finally, she noted that it is important to recognize the concerns of new residents as well as residents that have been here for many years.

Resident Jim Goodman 1803 Arona St presented there are other options to improve safety. There are busses that are empty that could be rerouted, no parking in front of school could be enforced, and extending school speed zones. Additionally, children can be more visible, walk with safety patrols and wear optic backpacks.

Resident since 1969 stated there needs to be a concern for safety for all of us. She also mentioned she walks every day and not having sidewalks does not discourage her.

Tony Fischer of 1493 Hoyt Ave stated that the school has made the decision to make kids walk to school so the community should keep them safe.

Sam Berger of 1810 Holton St. stated if sidewalks were installed he would have roughly 150 feet to maintain. It would not be safe for kids to walk on the snow if he was unable to shovel before school. He discussed this would impact him as he would be assessed, he would go from 3 parking spots to 0, and he would be liable for people using the sidewalk in front of his home.

Anna Zbacnik of 1808 Asbury St stated that while her kids do not attend Falcon Heights Elementary, kids in the community need to be safer.

Denise Blomquist of 1530 Iowa Ave W has kids that attend Falcon Heights Elementary but thinks the community should pursue other opportunities to improve safety.

Paul Kuettle of 1879 Simpson St stated that safety is a feeling and it cannot be argued. However, it is important to understand the problem whether it is speed, congestion, or otherwise. He suggested getting Falcon Heights Elementary involved and that sidewalks are not the only solution.

Mary Jacobson of 1754 Simpson St noted most people have suggested delaying the project and she supports doing that to explore all options. She also discussed dangerous vehicles do not show up in police reports unless reported.

Adele Hodlin of 1803 Arona St stated she is in support of moving forward with the project as is. She is in favor of improving safety through things like painting in cross-hatched lines. She also discussed a sidewalk does not eliminate potential risks and will not change children's behavior.

Margarethe Beech discussed that we do not know whether a sidewalk will improve safety. Not having a buffer means the kids will be the same distance from traffic.

Jim Utne of 1806 Pascal St N noted installing a sidewalk would reduce the width of the street.

Karen Schmidt of 1802 Arona St stated she is not in favor of a sidewalk. If congestion is the issue, that is how the problem should be addressed.

Sherrie Lamb of 1811 Simpson St discussed the safety issue involves the school so they should be included in the discussion and not just impacting the residents. There also needs to be a benefit to residents to be assessed.