

Portland City Council approves low-cost model for street paving

By Lee Perlman
The Southwest Portland Post

The Portland City Council last month unanimously adopted "Out of the Mud," a low-cost model for paving streets.

Standard city streets contain a minimum of two travel lanes, two lanes of parking, curbs and sidewalks on both sides.

Installing such streets costs the average homeowner \$300 a month under the City's Bancroft bonding system and creation of a Local Improvement District.

Until last month, the City would only provide financing, and long-term maintenance, for streets that met this standard.

Under an L.I.D., the City supervises the work of the paving, and provides financing through low-interest Bancroft bonds. However, in most cases adjacent property owners must pay 100 percent of the cost.

The proposed new standard consists of a strip of pavement 16 feet wide, enough for one standard vehicle in each direction, plus a gravel shoulder for car storage and pedestrian access.

The new model will cost the average homeowner \$65 per month, staffer Christine Leon told Council. For about \$85 a month, they can add a separated sidewalk, she said.

To qualify, Leon said, a street must not only be classified as a local service street, "but it must operate as one," with fewer than 500 vehicle trips per day. It must have good visibility and a "definable edge."

The street must have a 15 miles-per-hour speed limit. It must have speed bumps and other forms of traffic calming.

These and other standards were inserted in response to concerns by Roger



Unpaved street at SW Wood Parkway and Collins St. (Post file photo by Leslie Baird)

Averbeck of Ashcreek and others, who feared for pedestrian safety on streets with no defined sidewalks.

In answer to a question by Commissioner Randy Leonard, Leon said that except where development is occurring, "No one has to do anything" to improve their street beyond what already exists. "This is one more tool

in the tool box," she said.

A possible future financing feature is that participating property owners can defer payments for new streets for five years if 51 percent of them or more earn 80 percent or below median local family income.

Commissioner Amanda Fritz asked if such deferments could be offered to

all low-income property owners even if they didn't constitute a majority on a street. Staffer Jennifer Cooperman said no, "You can't do this property by property."

Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc. board chair Marianne Fitzgerald said, "We have many miles of streets that could benefit from this program, and many miles of streets that look like this program. This could make a difference." However, she also called on Council to be sure to retain the program standards.

Southwest Trails chair Don Baack added his support, saying that people in Southwest do not walk more often because they are afraid to. His own street contains just 18 feet of paving, he said.

Fritz, in voting for the proposal, praised Leon and Mayor Sam Adams. "Folks in southwest definitely will be pleased," she said. "This makes a lot of sense for a lot of people."

Adams said, "I wish every neighborhood had a Marianne Fitzgerald and a Don Baack."

Environmental Services pays \$1 million for pump station repairs

By Lee Perlman
The Southwest Portland Post

The Portland City Council last month made an emergency allocation of \$1 million for a new surge tank at the Fanno Creek Pump Station.

According to Stephen Sykes of the Bureau of Environmental Services, the tank contains "spikes" of sewerage that occur when the pump at 6895 SW 86th Ave. in Garden Home is turned on or off.

The pump is activated automatically when storm water runoff reaches a certain level.

Problems with the existing facility have generated complaints of bad smells from neighbors and users of the Fanno Creek Trail.

Sykes said BES may have helped generate some of these calls through signage advising people where to call in the event of problems.

In a related matter, BES and Clean Water Systems of Washington County have signed an Inter-Governmental Agreement allowing for expansion of the pump station to two adjacent properties.

The project has been controversial; the proposed site is in Washington County, and neighbors have com-

plained that they will bear the impact of a facility that serves Portland residents.

Nonetheless, a Washington County hearings officer approved the proposal subject to a number of conditions. Among these are that the City put together an advisory committee to discuss and deal with public concerns and issues.

This committee, now being formed, will include representatives from trail advocates and the Fanno Creek Watershed Stewards, but will "absolutely" include neighboring residents, Sykes said.

For more information, email stephen.sykes@portlandoregon.gov. or call 503-823-7898.

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