



Clinton to start 'ambitious' streets project

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— CLINTON — The city of Clinton is ready to embark on an ambitious road — an effort so elaborate, long-time Clinton representative Bob Soesbe said citizens have never seen anything like it. During Tuesday's Clinton City Council Committee of the Whole meeting, the council directed city staff to begin a street improvement project that would cover approximately 107 blocks, funded by borrowing and a \$4.46 million bond issue.

Soesbe, Ward 1 councilman, approved the plan, but questioned if contractors would finish the job on time. "This is the most ambitious street improvement plan in the history of Clinton, Iowa," Soesbe said. "I think (before we hire) we ought to take a look at past performances of contractors. The low bid is not always a good thing. We give contracts and they never get done and they drag and drag and drag."

The initial project calls for 43 blocks of streets to be improved starting in July and ending in the fall. That maintenance would cost an estimated \$1.875 million. This plan coincides with a previously approved 13-block East Central Lyons storm sewer and street improvement measure. With the heavy workload, At-large Councilman Ron Mallicoat hopes the city can keep its promises. "There have been many years that projects have been promised, and then oops, fall came too early this year and they can't be done," Mallicoat said. "For me, I'll believe it when I see it."

Nineteen projects are included in the initial maintenance plan. The plans are split into three separate categories — street reconstruction, concrete patching and asphalt resurfacing.

Larger tasks contain a \$300,000 mill, overlay and storm sewer program on North Third Street, from Eighth Avenue North to 17th Avenue North. Also, north to South Fourth Street, from Seventh Avenue South to Second Avenue South will endure mill, overlay and curb and gutter work, costing \$210,000. "We should be able to get done as long as contractors stick to the stipulations presented," City Administrator Gary Boden said. "We're going to do this."

Not included in the bond proposal is a Second Avenue South curb and gutter, resurfacing and storm sewer project that accounts for \$1.025 million. This nine-block endeavor would not be started until the end of the 2010 school year, and would be completed before school starts again in August 2010. Bonding would add approximately \$538,000 annually during the next 10 years to the city's debt service, Boden said. However, during fiscal year 2009-2010, debt service will drop from \$4.4 million to \$3.4 million. The decline will continue to 2011-2012, when the debt service reads \$2 million, Boden said.

Also, if citizens approve a November referendum, switching sales tax allocation currently being used toward sewer work, the city would generate \$1.525 million, in today's dollars, on an annualized basis, Boden said. Boden also said property tax used to pay off debt service will dwindle. Currently, citizens pay \$1.918 in property taxes for debt service. In the coming years, that number could drop to as little as \$1.38 and level off at approximately \$1.80.

Included in the 107-block tally is a 12-block reconstruction of Liberty Avenue currently ongoing, the probable mill and overlay of 12 blocks of North Second Street, this year's first phase of 19th Avenue North and next year's six-block sewer separation and street reconstruction along the 18th Avenue North corridor.

Boden said the final phase of the 19th Avenue North project should begin in the middle of 2010. With a high level of construction happening at one time, Boden said phasing is important. "We have to phase projects so that we don't have complete traffic jams all over town," Boden said. "We won't have the whole town torn up at once."