

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS
BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA
Work Session – Monday, March 9, 2020

Pursuant to due call and notice, a work session of the City Council of the City of Bemidji, Beltrami County, Minnesota, was held on Monday, March 9, 2020, at 5:30 p.m. in the Chambers of City Hall, Mayor Albrecht presiding.

Upon roll call, the following Councilmembers were declared present: Albrecht, Meehlhause, Johnson, Rivera, Erickson, Thompson.

Staff Present: City Manager Nate Mathews, City Attorney Alan Felix, City Engineer Craig Gray, Assistant City Engineer Sam Anderson, City Clerk Michelle Miller

Others: MnDOT – Darren Laesch, JT Anderson, Bill Pirkl

Mayor Albrecht stated the purpose of the work session was to discuss Trunk Highway 197 Project with MnDOT as well as receive an update on the 71 Corridor Improvement Project.

Highway 197 Corridor

Gray stated that the August 19, 2019 council meeting, council was presented with an implementation plan for improvements on Highway 197 from 23rd Street NW to Highway 71. After hearing numerous comments from affected business owners, a motion to approve the implementation plan was made and failed on a 3-4 vote. MnDOT is still planning an improvement project on this section in 2026 and is requesting the City's assistance in establishing a vision for this corridor that will be supported by the community. They feel their recommended improvements to the west of Hannah Avenue can be constructed within the existing right-of-way and can be developed to minimize impacts on the affected businesses. MnDOT would like the City's assistance in selecting a community review panel that represents all of the users of this corridor so that a series of project development meeting scan be held.

Laesch stated that the 197 Corridor will need some kind of improvement in 2026. One of the priorities for improvement is increasing walking and biking opportunities especially along the section west of Hannah Avenue to Menards. The improvements east of Hannah Avenue to Bemidji Avenue are higher density and closer to the highway resulting in additional constraints to corridor improvements. Meaningful improvements to travel safety, walking and biking in this area, would have some level impact to the adjacent businesses. The challenge is defining what level of business impact is acceptable to the community. Laesch stated that the staff at HRDC will be facilitating the group discussions.

Council suggested the following:

- Business owner buy in is critical.
- Participation on a task force is important.
- Counteract sensationalism.
- Engage and obtain input from supporters of the project.
- Equal representation of residents, businesses, etc. and not as heavy with staff.

TH 71 Corridor Improvement Project

Gray stated that this project is scheduled for 2022. Involvement of the city includes realigning Hannah Avenue. Pirkl stated that the corridor requires pavement replacement as well as reducing high crash rates at Anne Street, Balsam Road, Lakewood Drive and Town Hall/Glidden Road. A community review panel of approximately 25 people has been meeting regarding this project. Intersections proposed include roundabouts, turn lane restrictions and reduced conflict intersections. They are also reviewing a current four lane intersection to a two lane intersection at Town Hall/Glidden Road to improve intersection angles.

Adjourn

There being no further business, motion by Meehlhause, seconded by Rivera, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Michelle R. Miller
City Clerk