



Subject:
Norwood City Council Streets & Infrastructure Committee Meeting.
June 10, 2009

On Wednesday, June 10 I attended a meeting in Council Chambers of the Norwood City Council's Streets and Infrastructure Committee, of which I am a member. Also present was Councilperson at-Large, Joe Sanker who is Chair of the Committee, the other Committee member Ward 3 Councilperson Chuck Barlow, Safety/Service Director Joe Geers and Mr. Randy Terry, a consultant representing Terry Asphalt Materials of Hamilton, Ohio. The meeting was videotaped by Norwood Community Television and will air for the foreseeable future (beginning 6/15/09) at 4pm on Mondays; 8 pm on Thursdays; 2:30 pm on Fridays and 9:30 pm on Saturdays.

The purpose of the meeting was to bring the Committee members up to date on the City's 2009 street maintenance program and the other street projects that are either underway or planned in the next two years.

The 2009 Street Maintenance Program

At the meeting I was given a copy of the most recent "Street Survey," an Excel spreadsheet listing each of the 49 individual projects planned for this year that includes the rating given each section of road being addressed. As he explained, the condition of each section is rated on a scale of 1 (excellent) to 5 (critical). Mr. Terry did an excellent job of summarizing the history of the street maintenance program that has been implemented in the past few years. He pointed out that the 2009 program differs from the 2008 program in that it focuses more attention on preventative measures. In 2008, he explained, more attention was paid to sections of our streets that fell into the category of "poor or critical" condition.

According to the survey, as of today, 39 percent of the 43 miles of streets in Norwood are classified as "good" or "excellent," 21 percent are considered "fair," while 40 percent are rated as "poor" or "critical." These ratings are used to help prioritize the work being done.

The survey lists a particular section of a street, it's rating and the dollar estimate for the level of work to be done. Although there are, technically, seven categories of work, they can be lumped into three types: crack and joint sealing, patching, and pavement "planing" and replacement. According to Mr. Terry, last year's work was primarily planing and replacement. This year, it will be more of a mix of all three categories. As Mr. Terry explained, the street repair program tries to strike a balance between major repairs on the "worst" streets and some level of preventative crack and joint sealing that helps keep streets that are in "good" shape today from more rapid deterioration.

A good example of the latter is what is scheduled to be done on my own street, Floral Avenue. Floral is among a group of streets that was fortunate enough to have enjoyed total rehabilitation over ten years ago when nearly the entire length of the asphalt surface was completely repaved with the added bonus of all the cement curbs and driveway aprons being replaced. At first glance, while driving on Floral, it may not seem like putting any money into it would make sense. This year's street maintenance plan, however, has allocated a certain amount of dollars for two different levels of service. The first is to address a few rough spots that have developed that will be patched and sealed - what the Street Survey terms "partial depth repair." The second is for sealing cracks and joints that may have begun to appear. As Mr. Terry and Mr. Geers were quick to point out, this sort of preventative maintenance now will go a long way toward postponing the day when Floral Avenue is, once again, in need of a complete (and considerably more expensive) repaving.

All in all, the meeting went a long way toward answering a lot of the questions I've had about our street maintenance program and helped me understand the process being used to evaluate and plan the work that needs to be done. In analyzing the list of the sections of streets being addressed, I'm satisfied that the plan takes into account a broad cross-section of the city. It's hard not to notice, of course, that the First Ward streets of Allison, Carter and, especially, Ivanhoe will be looking forward to the most significant work in the coming months, just in time for the November elections. But it's also hard to argue that those streets, like so many in our City, need considerable attention.

According to Mr. Terry, with this year's effort, 33 percent of our street surfaces will see some work. He noted that we should see the first signs of the work in late June when they begin marking the areas that will be worked on.

Other Projects Utilizing Grants

It's important to remember that what I've described above involves street maintenance that is 100 percent funded by the City's general fund. This year's program is budgeted for \$395,318.

That amount does not include projects that are either currently underway or planned for the next two years that will be partially funded by grants from the State of Ohio (via the Ohio Public Works Commission - often referred to as "Issue 2" funds), Hamilton County (via the Municipal Road Fund or "MRF") or the Community Block Grant.

The rest of meeting involved a discussion of those projects, the most visible of which is the work on Marion Avenue nearing completion just above the Lateral between Norwood Avenue and Buxton.

Future projects that have received approval for grant funding and have been factored into our budget projections for the next few years include:

- Repaving that will be done yet this year on Sherman Avenue from Allison west to the Corporation Line at Victory Parkway.

The Gist continued;

- Major rehabilitation of the section of Beech Street that runs from the traffic light at Waterworks up to Highland Avenue (2010)
- Major rehabilitation of both directions of Park Avenue from Forest Ave. to Smith Rd. (2010)
- Water line work under Smith Rd. that will connect with lines at Cornerstone (2009/10)
- Major rehabilitation of the final stretch of the “Montgomery Road Project” that will complete the work from White Castle north to the Corporation Line just past Cypress Way heading into Pleasant Ridge (2010).

A big difference between most of these projects and the 2009 street maintenance projects mentioned earlier is that these involve a near total rehabilitation of the street, the curbs and driveway aprons and, in some cases, some utilities under the street. Again, if you drive over to see what’s going on along Marion Avenue, you’ll get a sense of what that means. Naturally, if you compare that level of work with what’s happening on your street with the 2009 maintenance project you may be wondering why your street can’t enjoy the same level of rehabilitation.

The simple answer is the availability of resources. A percentage of the cost of the Marion Avenue project was covered by one of the above-mentioned grants which help us get more “bang” for our general fund “buck.” The same goes for the projects planned for Sherman, Beech, Park and Montgomery. The other factor is that, when these projects are approved, they are required to encompass a broader scope of repair per the governing body issuing the grant. At a Council meeting a few weeks ago I asked the Safety/Service Director what qualified streets like Beech and Marion and Park for these kinds of grants. He indicated that it was a variety of factors that included their condition, their role in traffic flow as well as their proximity to commercial routes and schools.

All in all the meeting left me feeling that a decent process is in place to assess the condition of our streets and address the need for steady progress in maintaining and upgrading our infrastructure. If you have any questions or comments about the above information or any other issues related to these subjects, feel free to contact me by phone or email.

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