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Citizens of Washburn:

Recent water line breaks along Bayfield Street are pushing the issue of the Bayfield Street Reconstruction Project forward. Our window of opportunity is approaching to address this project, and if we do not, there will be dire consequences. This project includes the complete reconstruction of Bayfield Street (STH 13) and the water and sewer lines that are underneath it. In addition, various stormwater improvements are also needed.

The Problem: In general, the water and sewer mains from 11th Avenue West to Superior Avenue were placed in the 1950s. The sewer main, with old brick man holes are crumbling. A collapse of a manhole, or a stretch of the clay pipe, could cause a significant issue for the businesses and homes not only along this street but in nearby areas as well. The water line is cast iron, which is very brittle. A slight shift caused by a frost heave is enough to crack it in half. Six significant breaks along this line have occurred in less than three years. The last such break at the end of March almost drained our water supply which could have lead to contaminating the system. The break that occurred in the beginning of March caused damage to several homes by completely filling basements with water and sediment ruining furnaces, water heaters, personal items, and damaging home foundations. These problems are not going to go away, and the risk of further breaks and damage is high unless these utilities are upgraded. By not taking on this project, the City will spend thousands of dollars each year to patch the system.

What Are We Doing About It?: At the May 13 Council meeting, the Council will consider formally requesting the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to consider the reconstruction of STH 13 from Thompson's Creek to Superior Avenue in 2024. If approved, we will begin working with the DOT on the scope of the project, and identifying all the costs involved. A great deal of planning would need to take place for not only the project, but also for how the businesses and community will be affected.

How Are We Going to Pay for It?: It is estimated at this time that the project would cost \$4,235,000, for the water, sewer, and parking lane. This does not include storm water improvements. These estimates are subject to change. A large borrowing will need to occur to pay for much of the project. Of course, we will seek grant funding to off-set as much of the project as we can.

Knowing that that this project was looming, in 2015, the City established Tax Incremental Finance (TIF) District #3. TIF is a tool that allows the City to take the taxes generated from new development from a defined area, and apply it to specific improvements or projects to promote development. Various proposals however, including proposed housing on the Omaha Street property, have not been supported. As a result, some of our opportunities to generate hundreds of thousands of dollars from the TIF District for potential projects like this

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are not occurring. The Council and the community need to consider what type of taxable development they want in the City in order to help offset the costs of this project.

What can you do?: If approved, that gives us a little time, but we will need to use it wisely. I encourage you to stay informed on what the City is doing to address this issue. Please discuss with your friends and neighbors what and where you want to see taxable development within the City to help pay our bills. Finally, we all need to work together in helping to address this project. It is very doable as long as we are united in our resolve to address it, plan for it, and actively work to get it done.

Sincerely,



Scott J. Kluver
City Administrator