

**MINUTES of a TOWN BOARD WORK SESSION:
Neighborhood Meeting – Mishawaka Road
February 2, 2011 – Harris Town Hall**

The Harris Town Board met on Wednesday, February 2, 2011 at the Harris Town Hall for a work session / neighborhood meeting with Mishawaka Road residents. The purpose of this work session was to:

- Discuss the road improvement project planned for a portion of the Mishawaka Road, with residents of the road. The project is planned for the spring/summer of 2011.

The work session began at 7:30pm and the following officers were present: Supervisors Dennis Kortekaas, Gary Rosato, and Larry Key, Clerk Michele Smith, and Treasurer John Jokela.

Also in attendance was Julie Kennedy - Township Road Engineer, and approximately 18 road residents (please see attached sign in sheet copy for names.)

The work session was called to order at 7:30pm by Chairman Kortekaas, and then turned over to Julie Kennedy, who led the meeting according to the following agenda:

Project Presentation (Julie Kennedy, Township Engineer)

Julie explained that this was a neighborhood meeting for residents of Mishawaka Road, for a road construction project being considered on Mishawaka Road. The purpose was to inform residents of what's going on, and what options the Harris Town board is considering. She shared a large map of the road with the residents and board, indicating where the town line is, and the two sections being considered for the project: a.) the north/south section area, from the Mishawaka landing to the township line and b.) the east/west section, from the landing to Highway 169.

1. Limits:

a. Proposed option (a): Public landing, north to Town line

This is the portion that the board is currently considering for reconstruction, as they see it as being in much worse condition than the east/west portion from the landing to Hwy 169.

b. Considered option (B): TH 169 to Town Line

This is the entire length of the Mishawaka Road, the east/west section and the north/south section combined. The Town Board has considered reconstruction of the entire road, but due to the length and corresponding expense, they instead are proposing that just the north/south option be reconstructed at this time.

2. Cost

a. Proposed option (a): Predesign engineers estimate = \$285,000

This is the estimated cost for the north/south section of Mishawaka Road, that is currently be considered for reconstruction by the town board.

- b. *Considered option (a & b / entire road): Predesign engineers estimate: \$500,000*

Due to the road's length, the cost to reconstruct the entire Mishawaka Road is significantly higher than the cost for just the proposed north/south section.

3. Schedule

- a. *Proposed option: Summer 2011(as originally planned)*

The board is considering continuing with reconstruction plans for their portion of Mishawaka Road, in the summer of 2011.

- b. *Considered option: Do in coordination with the Grand Rapids project (likely 2012)*

The town board, through quarterly round meetings with the staff of Grand Rapids, found out that the city was going to be improving their portion of Mishawaka Road in 2011. The board thought this would be a good time to do the township's portion as well and started preliminary plans to do so. However, city is now considering putting in a requested walkway along their section of Mishawaka, and as such the road improvement project may not happen until 2012. The township's project could wait and coordinate with the city's project – or it could continue as originally planned.

4. Proposed Improvements

- a. *Reclaim and overlay (from landing, north to town line)*

This process is what is typically done with township roads. Reclaim is where the top 6" of bituminous is ground up with any class V, and re-laid. Then it's overlaid with 2" of new bituminous.

- b. *Partial Reconstruction (where needed)*

In areas where there is a bad culvert and surrounding soils are poor, the bad soils need to be taken out and replaced with good soil. And there are at least two "bad" areas on the north/south portion of Mishawaka Road where this partial reconstruction process would be needed.

- c. *Drainage improvements (where needed)*

Julie said that this is an area where she could really use the residents' input, to determine just how bad are certain areas of Mishawka Road are. She may only see problem areas in the spring, but residents may know of other times/areas that are a problem year round.

- i. *Culverts*

For improved drainage by way of the existing culverts, soils borings show that reconstruction will probably be needed.

- ii. *Ditching vs. curb & gutter*

And for improved drainage in areas that are flat, curb/gutter will probably be needed. With that, an outlet will be needed for the water to be channeled out of.

d. *Traffic calming*

In order to reduce the speed along Mishawaka Road, especially in the densely populated area, there are several ways of 'traffic calming' that are being proposed. Unlike stop signs or speed limit signs that require law enforcement to be effective, there are two techniques used to give the perception that a person needs to slow down, and thus are *self* regulating. (See hand out, attached to these minutes.) The two methods are as follows:

- i. *Striping* – A double center yellow line is used, with white fog lines placed as close as possible to center line. Doing this makes the road appear narrower to drivers and slows them down. It also helps people walking on the side of the road feel safer, as there's a wider shoulder to walk on.
- ii. *Speed humps* (different than a speed bump) – These are humps placed on the roadway, which are only 3" high, and more rolling in nature than a speed 'bump'. They are meant to keep people going over it at 15 mph, and 25-30 mph in between speed humps. If a person goes over one too fast, they know it – causing the self regulating action the next time they approach one.

The placement of the speed humps is critical, and they would need to be placed strategically – especially with regards to the boat landing and people's driveways. Warning signs at the speed humps would be posted, and the humps themselves would be marked with some sort of painted design. To see what they are like, residents were encouraged to 'try out' sample humps in the DonAl addition of Grand Rapid. Residents of that area seem to like them. And they *may* also detour large truck through traffic from using the road.

e. *Pedestrian corridor*

The city of Grand Rapids is likely going to be putting in a pedestrian corridor / walking path along their section of the Mishawaka Road, and thus is considering a 1 year delay on their road improvement project. However, the exact type of corridor/walkway has not yet been determined, in part due to the high cost of doing so. The initial proposed design was over 1 million dollars - just for the walking path.

Julie commented that it would make sense to consider a trail with GR, but that we may be able to get by with a wider shoulder (see striping above).

5. Comments (property Owners):

a. *Correspondence received*

- i. Leanne Stoll: Communicated with Julie that she is very supportive of a pedestrian corridor and any traffic calming methods.
- ii. Jim/Judy Christiansen: Communicated via attached email that they'd like to see the speed limit signs moved closer to hwy 169, and that speed humps would be beneficial in slowing down traffic – preferably 3 of them. They also had a concern that improving the road may cause traffic to

speed even more along this section of Mishawka Road (see attached email for comments in their entirety).

b. People in attendance

About 18 residents were in attendance at tonight's meeting – approximately 50% of the total road residents (including seasonals). Those that signed in are on the attached list.

What follows are the comments voiced by the residents in attendance at tonight's meeting, for consideration by the board:

- Q: Would the road width stay the same?

A: Yes, Julie confirmed that the actual width of the road would stay the same, but the travel lanes would be narrower with the traffic calming striping option discussed above.

- C: Loves the idea of speed humps, and would be fine with one in front of her house. Also likes the idea of a wider area for walking with the striping option discussed earlier.

- Q: How many speed humps would be used? And where?

A: Julie commented that there would be between 1 and 3, depending on spacing. She prefers 2 – 3, as this creates multiple points in which to slow down. As to where, this has not yet been determined.

- Q: Likes the idea of a pedestrian walkway as so many elderly walk there, and have no other place to walk, but is there room along the entire road for one?

A: Julie commented that the ROW does vary along the road, but that she believed there would be space. One problem, however, is that many people's landscaping are in the ROW, and comes right up to the road (part of their yard).

- Q: What is set back from center of road for buildings along Mishawka Road?

A: This is a county regulation, and it depends on classification of road. Neither Julie nor the board were able to answer this question.

- Q: Has/will the traffic volume be measured on Mishawka? How can we meet the continuing demand of traffic on this road? What's the long term plan?

A: A traffic count has not yet been done, but SEH could do one this spring, to get a 'before' count. With regards to long term, the reconstructed road would be at a 9 ton standard and so could handle truck traffic.

- C: In favor of law enforcement to detour traffic.

C: The board commented that they've struggled with enforcement, especially with the landing, but that this is an option. They also noted

that there is additional costs to the township to request coverage for a certain area/road.

- Q: Is the board aware of the platted ROW (of Cottage Grove), which extends behind the existing houses of Mishawaka Road (from the landing, north to the town line)?

A: Yes, the board was aware of this, and added that it was platted 90 years ago, and was where the road was intended to be placed back then. It is still considered a township ROW.

Q (continued): When would it be cost effective to put a road in there, as the main thoroughfare, which would allow the current roadway to be for local traffic only?

A: The board has considered this option, but because it's a narrow ROW (only 33' – and at least 66' would be needed), that means property acquisition from road residents would be needed. Also, there are some very large, deep & swampy areas that would need to be filled in before a road could be built there. In addition, there is an existing garage in the middle of this ROW. Overall, it would be a very expensive project. The board added that if a new road was build in the Cottage Grove ROW, the current proposed reconstruction project would have to be taken off the plate.

- Q: Is there any way to discourage truck traffic from using Mishawaka Road?

A: No, as delivery vehicles need to be allowed through.

- C: Prefers to try the traffic calming striping first, and then if that doesn't work, then go with the speed humps. From where she lives, she hears how noisy it is when people hit rough areas with pontoon boats, trailers, etc.
- C: Agrees traffic is going way too fast on Mishawaka and that the sign for 25 mph is too far back – it should be moved so people see it sooner.
- C: Hawkinson pit traffic is usually going toward Hwy 169 and they avoid going down Mishawka Road as much as possible - unless there is a job located there. (Other residents in attendance agreed that Hawkinson trucks are *not* the problem; its other construction companies and tanker trucks.)
- Q: In addition to the truck traffic, the semis and tanker trucks, screeching brakes are also an annoyance. Could we put in “no jake braking” signs?

C: The board added that again, for enforcement of this, the township would need to pay for extra patrol from the sheriff's department (need to pay for a deputy)

- Q: Strongly in favor of speed humps – and 3 of them. Also, in 2012, the city will be reconstructing a portion of Pokegama Avenue in the

downtown Grand Rapids area, which will likely cause additional traffic to detour down the Mishawaka Road. Can we put up sign to say “no through traffic”?

A: No, per Julie, but the township could do an agreement with the city to recommend that construction traffic be routed a certain way – similar to when part of Airport Road was reconstructed.

- Q: On the city portion of Mishawka, will the city be bringing all utilities to the town line?

A: Not now per Julie; they are just talking about road and ditching improvements.

- Q: Are there still plans for the City of Grand Rapids to annex the northern portion of Harris Twp?

A: No, the city staff has said they have no plans to annex, as has the current Mayor.

- Q: East/west traffic – is there any way to keep the speed limit down to 25 or 30 mph?

A: That’s tough, per Julie, because when people hit a straight stretch, their speed increases. In addition when MNDOT does a speed study, they set the speed limit at 80% of the speed that most people go, in the non-densely populated areas.

- C: Speed humps work, especially with signage and when painted.
- C: Traffic has increased with location of the new hospital, and traffic will continue to increase; speed humps would help slow traffic down.
- C: A resident for 66 years has seen more and more traffic over the years. Reduced speed will not eliminating the amount of traffic on the road, and so he is in favor of a new road in the Cottage Grove ROW. All the other stuff is great, but traffic will only continue to get worse.
- Q: What is the cost to the residents, for an assessment for the proposed road project on Mishawka Road?

A: The Board explained that they have never assessed its residents for road improvement. However, as an Urban Township, they could specially assess residents of the road if they want something done and township doesn’t have the money.

C: Julie added that as a township, we don’t get state aid from the gas tax, like the City of Grand Rapids does. The township’s funding for road repair comes through levies. Townships also don’t get grants like cities do, since they don’t have sewer & water. It might be possible to get funding for a trail, if joined to another, bigger trail. However, for roads, a township doesn’t qualify for anything.

- Q: With regards to the pedestrian walkway, could the striping be done such that just one side of the road has a extra-wide walkway?

- A: Julie explained that because there would not be enough room to do one, 10-foot walkway (wide enough for 2 way pedestrian traffic), the walkway would need to be on both sides of the road.

Board Comments:

- The board would like to explore cost putting in a road through the Cottage Grove ROW. It's hard to know what the cost would be, but there's no doubt it would be very expensive given the swampy area and that a corner reconstruction would be needed where the new road would meet the east/west section of Mishawaka. And then there's the cost of property acquisition.

The resident who has the garage building in the middle of this ROW was in attendance at tonight's meeting. The board asked what he was willing to do with it. The resident said he'd like to keep it, but if it turns out that it's the *only* reason for not building the road, he'd work with the township.

Another resident who lives near the ROW said he does *not* want a road behind his property, and is totally against it.

- The board discussed that perhaps they could just do an overlay on existing road until funds were available to build the new road.

Julie commented that yes, that would help, but that it wouldn't save a lot of money, as even the overlay is expensive.

- At this time, the residents were allowed to come up and look at various detailed maps of Mishawaka Road proposed improvement plan, and personally discuss any concerns/questions they had with Julie and/or the Board on a 1:1 basis.

- **NEXT STEPS:**

Julie will prepare a cost to construct a new road as discussed, through the Cottage Grove ROW. However, residents were asked, if a new road proves to NOT be feasible, would they want the proposed Mishawaka Road improvements does this year (2011) or next year, in conjunction with the City of Grand Rapid's improvement to their section of the road? The majority seemed to indicate that they would like something done this year (summer 2011) – and perhaps just crack patching and speed humps would be enough.

Future contact information

In about 3 – 4 weeks, Julie will send out a summary of tonight's meeting minutes, and a follow up letter to all residents of Mishawaka Road, with the estimated costs for a "new road" in the Cottage Grove ROW.

The Mishawaka Road neighborhood adjourned at approximately 9:35pm, by a motion of the board.

Respectfully submitted,
Michele Smith, Harris Township Clerk