

Planned road projects a step closer

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Up to \$100,000 will be spent to retain consulting firms to complete engineering work on a series of proposed road improvements in Farmington Hills later this year.

But the unanimous 7-0 city council decision Monday to authorize \$100,000 worth of engineering work came only after Councilman Dennis Wiest insisted on an estimated cost before he voted to authorize administrators to proceed

with the engineering.

"I hope we are not getting the cart before the horse here. What are the engineering studies going to cost?" Wolf asked.

"I don't have cost estimates yet," said City Manager William Costick, adding that a consulting firm generally charges a percentage of the project's total cost.

Costick later offered \$100,000 as an estimate for retaining five or six consulting firms to complete engineering.

WOLF'S INQUIRIES followed a request by Costick and Director of Public Services Thomas Biassell for council authorization to proceed with needed engineering on a series of major road improvements that have not yet been approved by council.

"Our concerns at this time, however, have to do with timing. Unless we begin immediately to engineer these projects, we will not have the opportunity to bid them in the spring, even if the authorization is given next month," Biassell wrote in a report to council.

Last year, some road projects were postponed because they were bid in the summer and fall and were considerably more expensive than city officials expected.

Biassell and Costick told council the idea now is to get the engineering completed as early as possible, return to council for council approval and methods of financing projects and then seek bids in early spring in an effort to get

the best price possible.

"It should be noted that should the projects not receive authorization, the engineering can be canceled. Engineering work done to that date would still be valid when the work is approved in the future," Biassell said in his report.

BEFORE SUGGESTING \$100,000 as an estimate for the engineering work, Costick said, "If we delay, we are not going to be able to get these done."

He also assured Wolf that the city has approximately \$300,000 available in the budget that wasn't spent when some of the road projects were postponed last year.

But Wolf insisted he wasn't comfortable approving a request without knowing the cost. Because money is available in the budget doesn't mean it must be spent on administrators' request, Wolf said. Some of the projects may not receive council approval, he added.

Councilwoman Joan Dudley took is-

sue with Wolf's concern about engineering costs. Although saying his concern is legitimate, Dudley said she felt it is not justified because the projects must be completed, Dudley said.

"I firmly believe we have to move forward," Dudley said. "I consider these all critical jobs that have to be done. The engineering won't be wasted."

WHILE COUNCILWOMAN Jody Soronen supported Dudley's remarks, Councilman Ben Marks shared Wolf's concern.

"I don't think that what was said was meant or intended to stop the projects," Marks said. "Engineering design relates to money."

Finally, Costick offered \$100,000 as an estimate for retaining five or six consulting firms. Engineering work for projects that would be financed through a special assessment district won't be completed until petitions from

the property owners along these roads are received by city officials, he added.

"All right. We have some figures to go on. I appreciate that," Wolf said, "am going to judge each project on the project. This is not an approval of the projects."

Included as potential projects in 1988 is the paving of 13 Mile, from Drake to Haggerty; paving of Drake, from 13 to 14 Mile; widening 14 Mile from Orchard Lake one-half mile west; widening 13 Mile from the former Bond School west, including construction of a storm drain outlet; and widening 13 Mile east and west of Northwestern Highway.

City administrators also plan to develop a plan for needed road safety improvements, particularly along local roads. In the next several months, administrators will list projects according to priority, as well as the method in which the projects will be financed, Costick said.

Planners' focus: massage places

By Casey Hans
staff writer

Those wishing to locate a massage parlor or massage school in Farmington may need a "special exception use" from the Farmington Planning Commission before opening the business.

Commissioners voted unanimously Jan. 13 to recommend passage of an ordinance limiting such businesses to a C-3 commercial zoning district and allowing them only by approved exception of the planning commission.

The recommendation now goes to the Farmington City Council for consideration.

Planning commission action followed a public hearing — at which there was no public comment — at the beginning of the commission's regular meeting.

"I would expect the planning commission to recommend the exceptions, providing the necessary regulations are met," City Manager Robert Deadman said Monday. Commissioners said they felt "quite comfortable" recommending the ordinance.

THE PROPOSED C-3 locations are zoned for heavy industrial and commercial business in Farmington. They include the Kmart Shopping Center on Grand River and property around the Farmington Plaza along Money fac-

ing Orchard Lake, Deadman said.

Massage-related businesses would be restricted from other areas of the city, including those zoned C-2, community business district, and the central business district area.

There are currently no massage parlors operating in Farmington, but Deadman reported "several" recent inquiries by those interested in opening such facilities. Allegations of health spa-related prostitution surfaced recently in Farmington's neighboring communities, causing them concern.

A 30-day moratorium on issuance of occupancy permits to massage-related businesses was passed by Farmington City Council Jan. 6. The moratorium was approved to give planning commissioners and council members time to review the proposed zoning restriction ordinance, introduced by council Jan. 6.

ALSO INTRODUCED Jan. 6 was a sister ordinance requiring massage-related businesses to be licensed by the city, subjecting them to a Department of Public Safety investigation. The council also set fees for such businesses.

"The idea is not to outlaw massage parlors," Deadman said. "There's nothing wrong with massages. But that's apparently not what they're being used for today."

Farmington Observer

(USPS 187-840)

Published every Monday and Thursday by Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 38251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150. Second-class postage paid at Livonia, MI 48151. Address all mail subscription, change of address, Form 3589) to P.O. Box 2428, Livonia, MI 48151. Telephone 591-0500.

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