

LOCAL

Tecumseh Chicago Boulevard road diet nearly complete

Mary Lowe The Daily Telegram

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TECUMSEH — The road diet construction on Chicago Boulevard is moving along as planned. City officials, businesses and residents are seeing significant improvements, city manager Dan Swallow reported to the city council during its meeting Tuesday evening.

A couple of remaining items that city staff continues to work on with the Michigan Department of Transportation are the installation of directional signs to ensure drivers know what lane they need to be in as they approach downtown and the restoration of residential lawns where driveway work occurred.

“The new lane configuration will improve safety of pedestrians and patrons of the downtown businesses. With the previous four- and five-lane cross section, the travel lanes were very narrow, particularly for trucks and larger vehicles that were traversing through the downtown area. Many people reported near misses with trucks and having little or no room to maneuver their vehicle,” Swallow said. “Additionally, people felt very unsafe parking on the boulevard to run into their favorite business. When pedestrians attempted to cross the boulevard, they also felt unsafe facing four lanes of traffic and the uncertainty of if and where vehicles were turning. Unfortunately, there have also been several incidents of pedestrians being struck by vehicles as they crossed the street.”

Lane reductions or “road diets” have been shown to significantly improve pedestrian safety by slowing traffic down and making traffic movements more obvious, Swallow said.

The U.S. Highway Administration and traffic safety organizations have studied road diets and documented the following benefits:

- Reduction of rear-end and left-turn crashes due to the dedicated left-turn lane.
- Reduced right-angle crashes as side street motorists cross three versus four travel lanes.
- Fewer lanes for pedestrians to cross.

Opportunity to install bicycle lanes and safer on-street parking.

Traffic calming and more consistent speeds.

A more community-focused, complete streets environment that accommodates the needs of all road users.

Space rented to watershed council

The city council also entered into a lease agreement with the River Raisin Watershed Council for the Smith House at 804 N. Evans Street.

Currently, RRWC has a small space in the county drain commissioner's office. The lease will span September 2022 through August 2023. The organization is opting for sole occupancy during the lease dates to use the space for offices and meeting space.

The watershed council was among 20 organizations that recently received grants from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy for capacity building. In total, \$600,000 was awarded to organizations throughout Michigan.

RRWC received \$14,512 and will be using it to rent the space for its one full-time employee, two part-time employees and several interns, its executive director, Steve May, said.

In addition to use of the Smith House, the lease includes 50 square feet of space in the garage onsite. RRWC has agreed to a monthly rent payment of \$900 in addition to paying utilities, phone and internet.

The lease stipulates that the city will pay the sewer and water bills because the city regularly uses the water spigot located on the property. The lease agreement is subject to final edits by the city manager and city attorney. Swallow has been granted some wiggle room to reduce the rent payment if RRWC agrees to some form of joint use for the property.

In other business

During its Tuesday evening meeting, the city council:

Passed a proclamation recognizing Sept. 10 as Lenawee County's bicentennial.

Learned that 95% of residents paid their summer tax bill on time. The final due date without penalty was Wednesday, Aug. 31. As of that date, the city had collected \$12,821,943.64. The city of Tecumseh retains approximately one-third of the property taxes for city services. The remaining two-thirds are distributed to the other taxing

jurisdictions including the schools, Lenawee County, the library and the department on aging, Swallow reported.

Set a public hearing date for Dorin Enterprise's request for an industrial facilities tax exemption during its regularly scheduled meeting at 7:35 p.m. Sept. 19. The project includes the occupancy of a new, speculative building in the Tecumseh Business and Technology Campus that is approximately 24,000 square feet in size, including office and light manufacturing space.