

Roads Committee Recommendations to the Birchwood Village Council

It doesn't take an expert to realize that we are badly in need of some road repair. This has been a particularly rough spring for our roads and streets here in Birchwood with the repeated freezing and thawing really tearing things up badly. And the fact that we are probably better than a year behind on our road and street maintenance compounds the damage we are seeing at present. Unless we want to watch our roads break apart within the next few years we need to take care of the pavement as soon as possible.

After several meetings involving many hours of education and work by Birchwood Roads Committee members, we have arrived at a set of comprehensive goals to maintain the streets of our city both now and into the future. This report addresses the various immediate streets and areas with the most repair needs as well as the roads that are in better shape and require less attention. There are also several unresolved issues which the Council will need to clarify before final hard costs can be determined and before repair can begin. These are outlined below.

First, in several areas the street edges have deteriorated as well as the driveway skirts into residents driveways. This is especially noticeable along the west end of Wildwood avenue, the east end of Hall as well as various areas on several other streets where the engineering was off a bit during the last resurfacing, leaving improper drainage with standing water here and there (a major cause of damage). Our Committee needs clarification as to what Birchwoods responsibilities are regarding driveway easements and whether the city will pay for each of these needed repairs, and how far up the driveway this would cover. If this is not the responsibility of the City, that resident would need to contract privately to have those repairs made. The current estimates you see with this report cover maintenance only to the current edges of the roads as we are unsure what Birchwood Ordinances allow for. Our Contractors were also encouraged to offer driveway repair at reduced costs if they were given the contract to do repairs, as they will have their equipment in the area and could offer discounts to our residents who need driveway maintenance. If the City is responsible only to the edge of the road, the Contractor(s) chosen would be able to also offer discounted repair to these damaged driveway skirt areas that abut the street.

Our Committees goal will be to eventually maintain one mile of road each calendar year per the recommendation of Tom Wood (MnDot). The roads we have indicated as needing immediate care and/or the most repairs comprise approximately 2.2 miles of the roughly five miles of roads and streets here in Birchwood. Being over a year in arrears on maintenance has caused the need to repair more this year than normal. These roads will have cracks milled and filled, grade adjusted in some areas to correct runoff and standing water problems, and a chip seal to protect the repairs. These actions would bring the P.C.I. ratings of all of our roads here in Birchwood to 70% or better and set us on a path to maintain these streets well into the future. Birchwood residents deserve nice streets and roads.

Within the last ten (10) days we have been dealing with unseasonably late and heavy snowfalls. The Asphalt companies we have chosen to do this work would like to review their bids one final time after the streets are totally free of snow. The two companies that we are recommending feel that although their bids are very close to finalizing, they would like one more look so as not to miss anything. For Owl street, the recommendations suggested that we go with with a procedure of clean, tack and 1-1/2" to 2" of overlay. This is the same recommendation given us by Tom Wood (MnDot) and we believe this would take care of that street for many years to come.

The re-striping of Cedar/Hall would be with traffic paint, The center would be double yellow lined with a white fog line down each side of that road. Currently the fog lines mark 11 feet on each side of the centerline (standard) but Tom Wood recommended we could decrease this to ten feet (or even nine feet) in an effort to slow traffic speeds on Cedar/Hall. Our Committee would recommend reducing this distance to ten (10) feet to begin, and a review the next time a chip seal is needed, leaving the fog lines at ten feet or reducing to nine (9) feet if a slower traffic speed is desired. This would also offer pedestrians an additional foot on each side of the road to walk on, an additional benefit at no extra cost.

Our Recommendations to the Council:

After much careful review (as well as questions for Tom Wood) we have concluded that the two companies best suited for these repairs, (also offering the best procedures and materials for our needs) would be Schifsky and Pearson Construction Companies, in the following manner:

Schifsky: To do the repair work on all the roads and streets including milling (Owl Street) and restriping (Cedar/Hall). This would also include the additional painting of three crosswalks over Cedar/Hall (one at Jay street, one at White Pine Lane and one at Oakridge), the main avenues of pedestrian traffic toward the park or beaches. Our committee has ruled out the intersection of Birchwood Avenue/Cedar Street as a feasible location for a crosswalk because the three-way stop at the top of the hill and the hill itself would make that an unsafe area for this purpose. We believe these crosswalks will offer residents a safer way to cross cedar/hall as well as slowing traffic a bit down that route.

Note: Proper signage for these crosswalks would be discussed and dealt with at a later date this summer – it was not included in any of our specifications or in any contractors proposal.

Pearson: To do the chip seal on Hall/Cedar Streets, Wildwood Avenue and Oakridge Drive.

Copies of these proposals are included with this report, and the Contractors have said that work could begin within three weeks after final approval, weather permitting.

Of course, the Council has one other option. We met with Washington County Commissioner Ted Bearth and County Engineer Wayne Sandberg last month and although they basically told us that the County does NOT want Cedar/Hall returned to their care (as County Road 29) that wasn't absolutely set in stone. They assured us that it would be an uphill battle if we chose to pursue it, and even if we managed to convince them to return that road to County ownership, that it could take several years before the county could allot the funds to make necessary repairs. In the meantime, we would have to put up with a roadway that would literally be crumbling under our tires and feet.

Also, if they finally did come up with funds to repair that road, they would definitely want to pursue their original plans for stormwater drains, gutters and curbs, along with a widening of the roadway and a definite loss of our beloved tree canopy along that roadway. Our committee feels that most residents would not appreciate this level of reconstruction and the end appearance and so we do not recommend any further pursuit of County takeover of Cedar/Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

the Birchwood Roads Committee
May 1st, 2013