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10 First Street Northwest  
Mason City, IA 50401-3224  
www.masoncity.net

December 11, 2006

To: Tom Meyer  
From: Scott Tornquist

RE: Sidewalks

Tom:

As Gary ends his time in Mason City, he has left us with the encouragement to re-evaluate our paving program, and investigate alternate paving methods that may make it more economically feasible for some folks to get streets paved for the first time. I am encouraged with the spirit of cooperation we have not only with staff, but also with local businesses that can offer insight to the paving opportunities.

Similarly, I'd like to see us tackle the many issues we have with our sidewalk program. We have a great many inequities with our sidewalk program, some of which include:

- Not all neighborhoods have been required to install sidewalks
- In those neighborhoods that sidewalks have been required, walks are not always continuous
- Individual property owners bear the cost of maintenance (repair, snow removal, etc.) of sidewalks to the benefit of the community at large, while these same property owners don't receive the benefit of sidewalks at locations where they should exist.
- There are some that may be receptive to liability for maintenance given the added benefit, but may not have the financial means to cover initial installation.

In short, we have inequities with application of policy, and the distribution of cost.

While street paving opportunities are technology driven, and therefore require the expertise of our engineering staff, the sidewalk opportunities are more policy driven, and can be addressed administratively with much less technical input. Therefore, I think it is possible for the community to tackle these topics simultaneously.

There are a number of ways we might go about moving forward on sidewalk issues; all of them should include a mechanism for citizen involvement in identifying existing problems, and evaluating potential solutions.

- Have staff take the lead in drafting a comprehensive sidewalk policy
- Form a council committee, which could include citizen membership
- Form a stand-a-lone committee (like the Sex Offender Review Committee)
- Other?

Attached is a letter of support from our neighborhood specialist, Pat Otto. I'd like to add this topic to the 12/19/06 council agenda for discussion and identification of next steps.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Scott Tornquist".

# Mason City

CITY OF MASON CITY

## Building and Neighborhood Services Department

10 First Street NW • Mason City, IA 50401 • (641) 421-3620 • Fax (641) 421-3623

**TO:** TOM MEYER, INTERIM CITY ADMINISTRATOR  
**FROM:** PAT OTTO, NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST *PKO*  
**RE:** SUPPORT FOR COMPREHENSIVE SIDEWALK POLICY  
**DATE:** DECEMBER 11, 2006

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According to the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center there are a multitude of reasons that sidewalks are important in a community:

1. Sidewalks provide a safe and level walkway, especially during inclement weather for people using wheelchairs, the elderly, or people pushing a cart or stroller
2. Sidewalks provide safe places for children to walk, run, skate, ride their bikes, and play
3. Sidewalks improve the ability for people to get around by providing ways for them to get wherever they need to go: work, parks, schools, church, shopping areas, transit stops, and home
4. Sidewalks enhance the appearance of individual properties, neighborhoods, and the entire community
5. Sidewalks significantly reduce pedestrian collisions with motor vehicles

In Mason City some neighborhoods lack sidewalks completely while others may have sidewalks that are not continuous. Areas with discontinuous sidewalks also discourage people from walking. People who are in wheelchairs or have vision impairments may find it impossible to navigate under these conditions. People may be forced to walk, or otherwise navigate, in the street or along the shoulder, close to moving traffic. The presence of sidewalks in neighborhoods can significantly improve Mason City citizen's ability to access their community.

I support Council member Tomquist's interest in presenting this important neighborhood issue for discussion at the December 19 Council meeting. I've attached a draft process for the development of a Comprehensive Sidewalk Policy for consideration.

*DRAFT*

### **Process for the Development of a Comprehensive Sidewalk Policy**

1. Determine stakeholders to be represented in the process
2. Take photos of the sidewalk situation in Mason City
3. Gather and review information on the current sidewalk situation in Mason City
4. Gather and review sidewalk policies from other Iowa communities
5. Prepare potential options for a Comprehensive Sidewalk Policy for Mason City
6. Present options to Mason City residents at input meetings for their comments
7. Review comments received from input meetings
8. Prepare (1) options for Comprehensive Sidewalk Policy, (2) financing plan for the policy, and (3) timeframe for implementation of the policy
9. Workshop presentation to City Council for comments of (1) options for Comprehensive Sidewalk Policy, (2) financing plan for the policy, and (3) timeframe for implementation of the policy
10. Review of comments from City Council and possible changes to draft policy based on comments
11. Request for approval of the Comprehensive Sidewalk Policy and financial plan from City Council
12. Implementation of policy according to timeframe.

Council Member Marsters thanked Zook for bringing this forward stating any time the Council could save the City \$60,000 a year it was a good thing.

Council Member Nelson asked if the retirement benefits, vacation, sick leave and insurance, would be comparable to other department heads with Administrator Meyer stating there were only two contracts negotiated outside the parameters of the personnel handbook (City Administrator and City Attorney) so it wasn't exactly comparable.

The Mayor called the question and the following resolution was introduced.

**Reso. 06-351(ADOPTED):**

Resolution No. 06-351, appointing the City Attorney as Human Resources Director and approving and authorizing execution of an amendment to the current Employment Agreement was presented.

On roll call, the vote was as follows:

Yea: Zook, Jaszewski, Nelson, Tornquist, Weaver, Marsters  
(Motion was declared carried.)

**23. Selection of City Administrator Candidates to Interview:**

Mr. Brimeyer stated there had been thirty applicants for the position and reviewed the selection process advising they had narrowed the field down to eight potential candidates and would like the Council to select at least four to be interviewed. He explained that due to confidentiality, the eight candidates would be assigned a corresponding number and he would be asking the Council to raise their hand as he went down the list if they were interested in interviewing that particular person.

The Council proceeded and the top four candidates were #3, #5, #6, and #8. Brimeyer stated he would contact those individuals, conduct the necessary background checks, and line up interviews for January 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of 2007. In addition, once the individuals were selected and agreed to become finalists their names would become public.

**24. Tornquist Requesting Discussion on Sidewalk Issues:**

Council Member Tornquist submitted the following information regarding discussion pertaining to the many inequities with the City's sidewalk program;

(As submitted: Discuss Sidewalk Program)

Council Member Tornquist stated he was not looking for the Council to take any action tonight rather he was hoping to start some dialogue advising when the Council had recently held Listening Posts in the four Wards, the subject of sidewalks always came up and it had come up a number of times during Council meetings over the past years. He stated today he had received the preliminary CIP from the Finance Department and referenced Item A, Neighborhood Goals, advising the sidewalk policy was one of those items listed as a priority. He mentioned the inequities with the current sidewalk program and pointed to a few he had listed in his memo explaining what he was hoping for was that the Council would start addressing this because the problems were not going to go away. In addition, he commented on a letter in the Council Packet from Neighborhood Development Specialist Otto who was supportive of the Council and the community working together to try resolve those issues, and tonight he asked the Council to agree that sidewalks were something the Council should begin thinking about. He further stated he did not see this as a problem that needed to be solved in the next two or four months, rather his hope would be that the Council would find a procedure for working through this that would result in some kind of policy which could be in place by November of next year so that the Council could in turn use that policy as it goes into the next budget cycle. He concluded his comments by suggesting the Council turn this over to the City Administrator and the Neighborhood Development Specialist for a recommendation.

Council Member Jaszewski stated he liked the idea of a citizen's committee and would strongly urge the Council set aside a Worksession to discuss this topic early next year.

Council Member Weaver asked about the paving part of Tornquist's memo with Tornquist stating that was not part of his request clarifying that he was trying to explain there were two separate issues that could both be worked on at the same time

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Council Member Jaszewski requested an update on the possibility of a stop sign at Polk Place and 6<sup>th</sup> Street with Administrator Meyer stating that, based on a recommendation from the previous City Engineer (Wilfong), staff did not feel one was warranted at that intersection.

Council Member Weaver requested a copy of the report.

Council Member Tornquist stated he would like to clear up some erroneous information given during the Public Forum. He asked the City Administrator if he (Meyer) recalled Mr. Knapp attending the last Sex Offender Committee meeting with Meyer stating "No, he was not there".