

Dear Councilmember Stark:

I am unable to attend this evenings City Council meeting, but I hope you will consider my comments on the Hamline-Midway RSVP project and assessment due for consideration this evening.

I would like to begin by expressing my appreciation for the project itself. Our neighborhood will benefit greatly from the new streets, curbs, walkouts, lighting and upgraded water/sewer services. I have also been pleased with the respectfulness of the crew working on this project. While the inconvenience of this sort of project cannot be avoided (parking restrictions, tree removal, noise, street closures, etc), I have been pleased at the work crew's efforts to minimize these inconveniences when possible.

I recently attended the community meeting led by Tom Stadskev and Lynn Moser and left with mixed feelings. While I found Mr. Stadskev and Ms. Moser willing to listen to my neighbor's concerns, there were few actual answers provided.

I arrived at the meeting with the following specific questions based on my observations and conversations with multiple neighbors.

1. Please explain what accounted for the work stoppage early in the project that has delayed the entire timeline?

Mr. Stadskev explained that the project was delayed for several weeks because the contract was delayed within the City's own offices and not routed to the necessary departments for approval to proceed. Apparently it took several citizens complaints and calls from supervisors within departments for contract to be located and acted upon. As a result, several weeks of ideal working conditions were lost in June. This sort of delay, unlike weather delays, was completely avoidable and undoubtedly has added to the frustration and cost of the project. That is inexcusable.

2. What is the average number of individuals on work sites for a project of this size, and how many people are assigned to this construction project?

Mr. Stadskev explained each project is unique and he felt the number of individuals working here was appropriate. He could not or would not provide a specific number, rather, he assured us at the contractor has a long and positive history with the City. He assured us that the project will be complete "by the end of the year". He also suggested the quality of the project will not be affected by the delays - he told us the sod will survive, even if laid on frozen ground, and that the concrete will cure despite pouring the majority of it in October. I think these are legitimate concerns. It seems to me that instead of allowing further delays and risking decreased quality, additional crew could be assigned to this project so that it is completed in a more timely manner. We are fortunate to live in the second quadrant of the project, so we have seen more progress than my neighbors on Van Buren, however, it is not unusual for days to go by with few or no workers on our street, despite the significant amount of work that remains. Even if additional workers increased the cost of the project now, it is still a better use of resources than paying to replace dead sod and cracked curbs. And, of course, reassures us

that our project is important, fiscally and practically well managed, and complete within two months of the original proposed completion date.

3. Is it standard practice for the City of St. Paul to add interest to assessments (5.4%) for citizens who are unable to pay the entire sum immediately?

Ms. Moser assured me it is standard practice for interest to be added onto the assessment cost if paid over time. It seems to be a significant interest rate considering the fact that my credit union is currently providing less than one percent return on my savings account; and as of today, I could secure a 30 year mortgage at 3.99%. Perhaps a more fair process would be to allow citizens a year to pay the assessment before interest accrues.

Ms. Moser did explain our options for the 20 year payment plan, but to me this feels like an additional tax.

On your website you reference the City's budget difficulties, and I agree with your assessment that "most Ward 4 property owners have been paying higher taxes and getting either the same or fewer services." My concerns related to this project seem to fall within this greater issue. I agree that now, more than ever, we must be good neighbors, good citizens, and good stewards of the financial resources in our homes and communities. The City of St. Paul must do the same. It is my hope that future projects will not encounter the same sort of bureaucratic delays and leave those neighborhoods in a similar mess. My husband Dan and I moved into our home 13 years ago and have great fondness for our neighbors and neighborhood. It is our hope that we will continue to find St. Paul is a city that cares for and about all its citizens.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Maureen Dunn

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