

Rebuilding Sidney's Streets and Alleyways

By Mike Barhorst

Why has the reconstruction of Port Jefferson Road taken so long to finish? Why did the City rebuild West Avenue adjacent to City Hall – my street was in much worse shape? I voted for the tax levy – why has the City not paved any streets yet? These questions and far more have been asked members of Council

In November 2014 voters in the City of Sidney approved a 0.25% increase to the municipal income tax rate with the proceeds from this increase being used exclusively for the “construction, reconstruction, resurfacing and maintenance of streets, alleys, bridges, and related curbs and gutters” within the City. The increase was approved for a five-year period.

While Council and Staff would have liked to have been able to begin paving projects immediately, we must have funds on hand before the City can legally spend them. We did not start collecting tax money until January 1, and we determined that if we waited until later in the summer to begin paving, we would have more tax money collected - thus the delay in seeing immediate progress. This year's street paving program will total \$1.33M, and is just now beginning.

The City of Sidney expects to spend more than \$15M solely for street improvements during the five-year period the additional 0.25% income tax is being collected. In addition to the additional levy monies, this amount also includes the \$600,000 allocated annually from the Capital Improvement Fund for street improvements.

Recently residents may have noticed contractors replacing curbs and gutters throughout the community; this marked the start of the levy-financed projects. The streets scheduled to be paved this fall include:

1. Hoewisher Road- Plum Ridge Trail to Parkwood Street
2. N. Main Ave.- Kossuth Street to Parkwood Street
3. S. Miami Avenue- Water Street to S. Main Ave.
4. Spruce Avenue- Railroad to Amherst Drive
5. Fairmont Drive- Spruce Avenue to Colonial Drive
6. Colonial Drive- Fair Road to Spruce Avenue
7. Stolle Avenue- S.R. 47 to Campbell Road
8. Stewart 3rd Subdivision (Stewart Avenue, Daniel Drive, Glenn Drive, Robert Drive, Cheryl Drive)
9. Wells- Hoewisher Road to Parkwood Street
10. Parkwood Street- Hoewisher Road to Greenlefe Court

Some residents have asked why streets that are in the worst condition, especially their street, is not being addressed before other streets that seem to be in much better condition. The answer is a relative simple one. The City has rated the condition of every street. We intend to crack-seal and/or microsurface those that are in relatively good shape to extend their lives. Those that have lesser ratings will be resurfaced to avoid costly repairs later. Those that are already in terrible condition will need to be completely reconstructed. Allowing them to wait until the later phases of the program will not cost the taxpayers additional money.

In addition, waiting also allows us to apply for grant funding from the State of Ohio. Grant funding will allow us to extend local tax dollars even further.

While we are gearing up for the first year of a widespread paving program, residents may have recently driven down the recently completed section of West Avenue from Court Street to North Street. This section of West Avenue had to be completely reconstructed in part because it was originally constructed for “horses and buggies” and not the heavy truck traffic it experiences today. Like most of our projects, the West Avenue Reconstruction Project was planned and budgeted well before the passage of the levy. No levy money was used for this project.

The City also completed renovations to the eastern half of Goode Street earlier this year. Goode Street was a concrete street (similar to Fielding Road) that had completely failed and was unsafe. This project was funded with street levy revenue.

Finally, the reconstruction of Port Jefferson Road from Russell Road to Wells Drive was begun earlier this year. This project, first identified in 2013, includes widening of the roadway, installation of storm sewer, curb, curb ramps, sidewalks and upgrades to sanitary sewer laterals.

The City was awarded an ODOT Small Cities Grant for up to \$1,372,000 and an Ohio Public Works Commission grant of \$200,000, leaving the \$157,600 balance for construction costs to come from City funds. This project too was approved and budgeted for prior to the passage of the street levy and no levy money is being used for this project.

There have been some delays. One included the unexpected lowering of the waterline, but the project is still scheduled to meet its completion date of October 30.

As the roadway construction season draws closer to the end, the City has already been planning for the 2016 construction season. Some notable projects planned for 2016 include:

ODOT/City funded projects:

- SR 47 Safety Improvements Phase II (Vandemark Road to Folkerth Avenue)
- SHE-SR 47 Urban Paving Program (Vandemark to I-75 & Fourth Avenue to Ohio Avenue)
- Fair Road & I-75 (Northbound Ramp) Traffic Signal
- Michigan Street Bridge over Starrett Run
- Vandemark Road & Industrial Drive Traffic Signal
- Michigan Street Bridge over CSX Railroad

Street Levy funded projects

- Fielding Road Reconstruction
- 2016 paving program projected to be awarded for approximately \$2.2M

Residents who may have questions regarding the street repaving program may contact Assistant City Manager/Public Works Director Gary Clough by phone (937.498.8141) or email (gclough@sidneyoh.com). Of course, residents should also feel free to contact their elected City Councilperson.