

CITY OF ROCHESTER HILLS
CITY COUNCIL ROAD COMMITTEE
REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE: 29 April 1998

SUBJ: Local Road Improvements - Policy

BACKGROUND AND PERTINENT FACTS

Funding Plan Background

Roads in Rochester Hills came under the city's jurisdiction in 1985, pursuant to our attainment of cityhood. Prior to that year, designing, maintaining and repairing streets in Avon Township were the responsibilities of the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC).

Following the tradition established under the RCOC, Rochester Hills' local road improvements relied upon special assessments for both paving gravel roads and rehabilitating paved streets, with a city contribution of 10% toward the total project costs and a 90% share to be borne by each special assessment district (SAD).

In 1990, the City Council decreased the SAD share to 60% of the total project cost for rehabilitating paved streets and increased the city share to 40%. It was reasoned that property owners on paved roads had already paid at least 90% of the cost for their initial paving. In most cases, the property owners had paid 100% of the cost of the road, since that cost was factored into the purchase price of their homesites.

A funding program change was proposed in 1996, contingent on the success of a ballot proposal to amend the City Charter by authorizing the city to levy up to 3 mills annually, the funds to be dedicated to local, residential road improvements and maintenance. Under that proposed program, the city's share for pavement rehabilitation projects would have been 100%. Special assessments for gravel-to-pavement road improvements would have been capped at \$3,500 per benefit unit. The voters defeated the proposal; and the SAD program continued in effect.

In 1997, the Council decreased the SAD share for gravel-to-pavement projects to 75% of the total project cost and increased the city share to 25%.

Both program changes (60/40 rehabilitation program; 75/25 gravel-to-pavement) were intended to encourage greater participation in local road improvements by reducing costs to residents. Nevertheless, many residents continue to find the costs under each program

to be prohibitive; and the existing program has been ineffective. As a result, not only are local roads not being improved, but neighborhoods have been divided between the property owners willing to pay the special assessment to receive the street improvements and those unwilling to do so. Council has witnessed this unfortunate scenario with almost every special assessment project to come forward.

Road Policy - Standards & Guidelines

The initial Road Policy established construction standards - 22' road width within a 60' right-of-way; 4" of paved surface over 8" of subbase; drainage requirements (existing if adequate or open ditch); and required that underground utilities (water, sewer, storm sewer) be in place prior to road construction.

Over time, the road policy was modified, or sections of the policy were waived on a project-by-project basis. Installation of driveway aprons was added to the policy including placement of driveway approach and culvert on vacant parcels where specified by the property owner. Ditch depth minimums were established regardless of topography; hydrant relocation costs were sometimes included 100% in the city's share of a project cost. Consistent application of the initial performance standards and design guidelines eroded over time as desires for specific amenities, such as curb-and-gutter versus open ditch or for sod rather than seed and mulch, were addressed on case-by-case basis.

The changes resulted in increasing total project costs for those projects and subsequent projects, wherein assumptions were made at the design stage that road policy standards and guidelines would likely be altered. Other decisions that occurred over time on a project-by-project basis were made with the good intention of shifting costs from the SAD property owners to the city. In some cases, these projects went forward; in other cases, they provided insufficient incentive to the property owners to continue with the paving projects.

Public Input

The City Council Road Committee held a series of public forums in 1997 and continued to seek public input in 1998 in order to help the Committee formulate a policy recommendation to replace the failed 60/40 rehabilitation program and the unpopular 75/25 gravel-to-pavement program.

Hundreds of residents participated in the public forums. The 1997 Public Opinion Survey of Rochester Hills Registered Voters has also provided valuable feedback from the community that has helped the Road Committee incorporate the expressed opinions of the public in our recommendation of a new local road improvement policy.

In open public forums and discussions with residents regarding the road paving policy, the Road Committee gained community suggestions for establishing a new local road

improvement policy with specific performance standards and guidelines for design and construction of local roads. Funding ideas were also discussed at length and will be addressed in a subsequent Road Committee report that will be presented to the Council at its next meeting.

ANALYSIS - GENERAL ROAD POLICY, GUIDELINES AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Through our discussions on the Road Policy, it became clear to the Road Committee and the members of the public who participated that local road and design standards should remain basic and consistent.

Local road improvement projects fall into three categories: Paving of gravel roads; rehabilitation of paved roads; and road maintenance. Each project type is an important component of a comprehensive, long-term pavement management approach to local road improvements and maintenance.

Paving Gravel Roads Each project may have some unique circumstances that must be considered in its design. However, it is also agreed that there should be clear guidelines that will be followed on a citywide basis. Special amenities, (e.g., curb and gutter) can be added to a project at the request of a homeowner at a reasonable point in the project (e.g., during the design phase) with the understanding that any added cost of such amenities will be the responsibility of the homeowner. Additional work, beyond minimum standards, deemed necessary by the city would be paid for by the city.

Rehabilitating Paved Roads Asphalt roads are easily replaced with asphalt roads; however, residents have concerns about replacing existing concrete roads with asphalt roads. It would be their preference that the city try to replace concrete with concrete. Curing time is a significant factor in such a decision. Original concrete roads were installed and given time to cure (28 days) when nobody lived in the subdivisions. In occupied neighborhoods, logistics will have to be carefully addressed to allow for ingress/egress of residents utilizing only one half width of a road surface at a time. Difficulties will arise in some locations more than in others; particularly for two-way traffic attempting to share half a road, or for a car attempting to share a narrow road with a delivery truck or other large vehicle. The greater difficulty will require neighbors to plan for and accommodate each other. The question of how people get in and out of their homes during the cement curing period will require either a "park and walk" plan or the willingness of neighbors across the street to share their driveway space. If these difficulties cannot be overcome, then the city may opt to use asphalt.

Major factors that will cause projects to vary in scope are subbase soils and drainage. These are also the significant factors that make the difference between a street that needs complete rehabilitation (e.g., east Christian Hills where soils are swampy and must be replaced) and a street the same age that can continue to provide good service with a maintenance overlay (e.g., west Christian Hills).

Maintenance Maintenance overlays and the use of other strategies are cost-effective, preferred methods for extending the service life of local roads. Residents took note of the per-mile cost of overlay projects as compared to rehabilitation projects, and expressed approval of the cost-savings afforded by utilizing overlays as part of a comprehensive, citywide, pavement management program. The city will then have the flexibility to replace sections of pavement and to address smaller maintenance needs on the roads.

RECOMMENDATION

The Road Committee recommends adoption by the City Council of the attached Local Road Policy that sets forth guidelines for the design, construction and maintenance of local roads.

Further, the Road Committee recommends adoption by the City Council of the attached Performance Standards for Paving Gravel Roads.

UPCOMING REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Funding and implementation recommendations that provide for an assessment cap on gravel-to-pavement projects and eliminate special assessments for pavement rehabilitation projects are being finalized and will be presented to the City Council at its May 13, 1998 meeting. An implementation program with at least the first three years of identified projects/costs will also be presented.

J:\ALL\DEPT\MAY\OPEN\EXECSUMM.POL

Resolution 1998-0215

MOTION by Gaber, seconded by Dalton,

Resolved, that the Rochester Hills City Council does hereby adopt the City of Rochester Hills Local Road Policy as presented by the Council Road Committee at the May 6, 1998 City Council Meeting; said Policy consists of a statement of purpose and intent, and guidelines for the design, construction and maintenance of local roads.

Resolved, that said Policy will supersede all prior Local Road Policies of the City.

Further Resolved, that the Rochester Hills City Council does hereby adopt the Performance Standards for Paving Gravel Roads as presented by the Road Committee at the May 6, 1998 City Council Meeting.

Ayes: deCaussin, Dalton, Gaber, Hill, Somerville

Nays: None

Absent: Robbins

MOTION CARRIED

Adopted at a Special Rochester Hills City Council Meeting held on May 13, 1998.