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Highland signs agreement for new east/west road

Christie Dalley - Correspondent Mar 6, 2011

For months Highland and Utah County have tried to come to a consensus on an interlocal cooperation agreement to construct an east/west connector road between the Alpine Highway (State Road 74) and 4800 West (North County Boulevard). The council has now approved the agreement after the county agreed to a change.

The road is slated to be constructed between Highland and American Fork, then continue to 4800 West across the Utah school trust land. After construction, Highland would take over maintenance. County Commissioner Larry Ellertson told the council at the meeting it was imperative to have the agreement signed before negotiations for the right of way across the trust land could commence.

Several points of contention arose, such as a clause in the contract that stated if the project exceeded the \$4.1 million the Mountainland Association of Governments had set aside for building the road, Highland would be responsible to pay the overages.

Since their last meeting, MAG had included an offer to allow Highland to use the funds from the sale of the Jensen House, which had been purchased previously to obtain part of the right of way for the road. Another clause stated the contract could be terminated by either party after October 2012.

An additional point in consideration was a proposal for Highland to put in a culinary and pressurized irrigation line during the construction. This was estimated to cost approximate



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"Where would we get the money?" Councilwoman Kathryn Schramm said.

City administrator John Park said they could take it from the general fund until the reserves for the pressurized fund came back up.

Schramm objected to the fact the road would be a major collector for other cities but Highland would be the only one impacted. Councilman Brian Braithwaite said people in Highland use the roads through other cities like American Fork and Lehi.

The Pheasant Hollow subdivision, which would be impacted by the road construction, is also being disrupted by construction to cover the Murdock Canal.

Councilman Scott Smith, who lives in Pheasant Hollow said, "Between the two projects, our neighborhood will be experiencing the perfect storm." Because he was directly impacted by the road, he stated his conflict of interest.

Craig Shields, whose home in Pleasant Hollow would be most affected, spoke against the road.

"We are the ones taking the most economic loss," he said. "The road would be close to my property line. Please take our pain and loss into consideration."

Many people spoke in favor of the road, including former mayor Jess Adamson, who said it has always been on the master plan.

"We should have an east/west road every mile, so we should have three connectors, and we currently have only one, S.R. 92," he said. "The next road that connects across is 700 North in American Fork. Why not participate with MAG? Mayors from all over the county helped make the decision," he added. "Let's not do anything to jeopardize the funds available for this project. You know the city will never have the funds to put it in."

Planning commissioner Roger Dixon also urged the council to allow the agreement to be signed so the road could be constructed.

"We need the road to give us better access to the high school as well as to the hospital and to North County Boulevard to get to I-15," he said.

Highland resident Lisa Hartman said she was concerned about the safety of the students of Lone Peak High School.

"This will benefit the students as well as the whole city. You were elected to represent the entire city," she said.

Councilman Tom Butler said he wanted to protect Highland from having to assume any cost in addition to the money available. He asked Ellertson if he would agree to the clause that stated if the bids went over the amount available the contract could be terminated. When Ellertson agreed, Butler made a motion to pass a resolution with that stipulation for the mayor to sign the interlocal agreement.

The vote was four in favor, with Smith recusing himself.

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