

MINUTES OF A WORK SESSION OF THE  
INDEPENDENCE CITY COUNCIL  
THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 2024 – 7:00 AM.  
(WHPS Conference Room)

1. CALL TO ORDER.

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a work session of the Independence City Council was called to order by Mayor Johnson at 7:00 a.m.

2. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Mayor Johnson, Councilors Spencer, Betts, Grotting

ABSENT: McCoy

STAFF: City Administrator Kaltsas, Administrative Services Director Simon, Public Works Supervisor Bode

VISITORS: Michael Hirsch (Engineer with Kimley Horn), Sergeant Dennison

3. Gravel Road Capital Planning

Kaltsas explained that this is really a follow up meeting to when the Copeland Road residents approached the city about the road and also a comprehensive look at gravel roads in general for the city. He said rather than just focusing on Copeland, let's look at the whole city since we know we have some issues with gravel roads. Then we can put them together into solutions and numbers as well. Michael Hirsch (engineer with Kimley Horn) and Shawn Body (Public Works Supervisor) went out and drove most of the city gravel roads. Bode told Hirsch about known issues and ongoing problems and ranked the worse problems to the less extreme problems. We broke them down into segments of longer roads or full roads. One thing that is a given is that we have run out of gravel, or we are running out of gravel for the roads. We are trying to get the city back to having a substantial amount of gravel on hand to maintain them. Some roads are hard to get to a reasonable standard of maintenance because the city doesn't have the materials. We are pulling clay, dirt or mud when we go out to try and repair them. The idea is, we need to put a gravel layer back onto our roads; about a 6" cap or replacement onto the roads. In addition to the 6" they identified other issues, such as: culverts – where and when. Drainage is another issue. We know we have known issues where ditches aren't functioning like they should, or we are rutting alongside the roads. The city is looking at what roads have the worst roads based on our ability to maintain those roads and what roads are most traveled.

Johnson asked if we have a travel count on all the roads.

Kaltsas said we do not. He said the city has been specifically monitoring Copeland Road, but we do have a tracker so we can get those numbers.

Kaltsas said the city has developed a prioritization based on our experience and where we are struggling to maintain roads and the high traffic volume roads.

Johnson asked if the quality of material we are using is the same as it was or are we running out of good material.

Bode said it is completely different. We do have granite this year so it won't break down as fast.

Kaltsas said the city understands that we need more gravel to maintain these roads. The city could do capital planning in increments or it could tackle a big project at once. Copeland Road is one of the highest traveled roads and also has the most well known issues with the highest level of road to maintain. The city will talk

with Copeland Road residents again on getting their road prioritized. Our top priority roads would be Copeland Road first, then Pioneer Creek Road on the West side of 92, Lake Sarah Rd, Nelson Road (high number of residents and it is a through road), Turner Road and then County Line Road. There are still a lot of roads outside of those that need repairs as well.

Johnson said the thought Pagenkopf West of 90 would be on there due to Valley Road closing.

Bode said from what public works can see when they are grading, Pagenkopf holds up fairly well. He said he thinks traffic is going out Lake Sarah Rd now. He will go out and grade once more after the rain and start traffic counts.

Kaltsas said he thought about doing a 6" across the city gravel roads but when costs and issues are identified it goes into excavating, ditch grading and drain tile in certain areas that it would increase the costs to do that.

The city could start to build into a gravel road budget item similar to how we have drain tile and seal coating set up. Five to seven years ago there was nothing in there and now it is annually building up. We could build it into the budget so we can always utilize those funds forever or do a lump sum to address some of all the roads at once. Then what is the impact on budget and what can we afford to do would be the question. The bonds we have out go until 2040 and we don't have a lot of tax capacity until 2040 based on our other debt. This is a different city than it was 25 years ago. The road traffic is different.

Grotting asked what if we did the same for Copeland and Nelson. Ask the residents if the city contributed  $\frac{3}{4}$  or less and asked the residents to help at a lower rate than a normal assessment.

Johnson said that residents are back and forth on being in favor and not in favor of improving roads.

Spencer said Copeland residents are not in favor of paving the North end.

Grotting said ultimately it has to be paved at some point. We are going there.

Kaltsas said when the residents came back, there were way more people that didn't want it. Speed is a major issue as well. From the golf course to County Road 6 the traffic count was 2,500 trips in one week, Mon-Fri. For the rest of the stretch to the north, the count was 720 for the same week. Residential numbers are exactly what they should be for normal residential use. No one is driving through Copeland Rd like we expected.

There are a lot of contractors that we seen out there such as landscapers, plumbers, etc going up and down that road which contribute to the wear and tear.

Grotting said maybe we come up with a plan for when someone comes through the door willing to write a check to cover a portion of the costs. If someone is able to step up, the city is willing as well.

Kaltsas said someone did do that. Actually, a couple properties are interested.

Johnson asked if there is a point where we are going to accomplish what we want to with tiling the roads.

Kaltsas said that's a really good point. The city does have a plan for tiling roads. We are still about 7-8 years out. One thing we lined up is Copeland, to tile the second half in 2024 from Pioneer Creek Rd to the South. Next year we are going to do Pioneer Creek Rd from County Road 92 West to Copeland. The 3<sup>rd</sup> year, Lake Sarah Rd from Fogelman to County Rd 92. We are going to be tiling roads and aligning that. At some point the tiling budget goes away. We did a one-time bituminous road overlay but that's a 15+ year fix.

Spencer said we are coming up on redoing another overlay. If you break it down by volume and we will have to do 1/3 of asphalt again in the coming years. Some of these roads were built with low standards. That's going to be coming back around about the time we need to pay on the bonds.

Kaltsas asked how we solve for that. He asked if it is through bonding or budgeting. Staff would like to manage a 10-year cycle so we know we have the money.

Betts asked if once it is bonded, can you refinance.

Kaltsas said yes you can. Tammy keeps an eye on that for us too.

Spencer said we are not projecting lower rates for a while.

Betts asked if we are getting a better deal if we go ahead with it or wait.

Spencer said we are flat to slightly higher over the next 3 – 5 years.

Grotting said cities are having this conversation across the country.

Spencer said we have so much taxable market value coming into our system to show a large budget jump but a steady tax rate. We have enough real estate coming in. Let's take a look at the roads that need attention, do a

bond and hammer those, the rest do the 6" gravel and get on track with a budget to do \$200-250k per year to address roads.

Kaltsas said it's the debt service issue. If we issue the debt, then we are stuck with the debt. The city currently has a budget bucket for sealcoating, tile and bituminous road maintenance.

Spencer said he is shooting for some visibility for our residents. He said show them that we are doing something for the roads. Start with gravel and culverts. Hammer the trouble spots, and set up an annual amount over the next 8-10 years and show a couple big projects. We might have to do a 8-9% overall jump but it would still be less than 35% tax rate. Asphalt is sneaking back up too. We won't have to do as many since some are lasting longer than others, so it may be less expensive. We need to do something after looking at Copeland and Lake Sarah Rd. We have to do something, or we will lose that road. Lake Sarah Rd, North of County Rd 11, we just did that less than 3 years ago. The moisture isn't getting off the road and we have to figure out how to do that.

Kaltsas said we have a plan that Michael has prepared. If we were to do a hybrid, looking at the map on a 15-year issuance, that may come down to \$200k annual after the first lump.

Spencer said we may just have to take a \$1.5 – 2m hit and then a \$200k in our budget every year after that. Do it in a visible way where residents can see things are getting done.

Johnson asked if the city knows what the state grant will max out at.

Kaltsas said the League said it is similar to what we have had in the past. We are talking about funding this without assessments. Copeland Rd asked if they had to pay anything. It's a lot better than assessments being issued to residents. Paving Copeland Road would be expensive. We have the numbers for the residents asking to pay for it. We need to sit down and talk to them. We have to have more communication with the Copeland Road residents and have them come back out and we can communicate some of this with them. We are going to visit Vinland as well to pave that. We will have to tell YMCA we can't keep it gravel. Kaltsas asked if council wants him to come back with a hybrid option.

Johnson said he thinks so. He said, like Brad said, we have to do something to show we are doing something. Most people aren't driving on other people's roads to know that there is work being done.

Spencer said we have to do something where we do Copeland and Nelson, something visible that most people use. Some roads will need top dressing, so they know coming back. It may be a patch job to start, but this is when we plan on coming back to finish.

Grotting said the city should tune up that map so people know where we are at on the list.

Betts said she thinks there are people on Nelson that will spread the word if things are getting done on their road.

Kaltsas said we do have more in depth plans we can go into on Copeland. We want to make sure we tie that into the budgeting. We won't be able to finish this until July.

Spencer asked when are we targeting these projects.

Kaltsas said 2025.

Grotting said the city should push a PR piece so people know.

Kaltsas agreed. He said he would like to push a PR thing. Also, go back to Sally on Copeland and tell her that because of her activism, this is on our list.

Spencer also said the capital plan for pw equip is low. We have to improve that budget as well.

Kaltsas said we will recalibrate that budget. We did add 3% inflation.

Bode said it was \$140k more than planned for the front end loader.

Kaltsas said we are going to take our ARPA funds and try to allocate those to capital and take \$100k into capital. Council can hopefully pass that resolution on Tuesday. The Federal Government is saying you have to account for those funds.

Johnson asked Kaltsas to check with LMC for resolutions for issues at the capital in regard to taking local control. He said there should be a generic resolution on their site.

*Grotting left at 8:12am.*

#### 4. Administrative Updates

Kaltsas said Ray asked for a fire update. We are stalled on fire district conversations with WS. Jeff Leuer isn't interested in the establishment of a fire district. There is going to be dialogue for MP and WS to merge the depts. He aside if we have interest in pursuing a fire district that would solve our MP fire JPA issue and set ourselves up for a future broader district. We will have to talk about this with MP and internally with Indy. We have a bad fire station that MP can't afford to fix.

Betts said if MP and WS do something like that, that is a whole new animal as far as how we have the JPA set up.

Kaltsas said it would, but it would be something we decide how we do it.

Betts asked if this would do away with JPA.

Kaltsas said it has been fine but our percentage is up yet we have zero input.

Betts said we have monetary interest.

Kaltsas said we do, but no say.

Spencer said it isn't worth much. About \$350k worth of equipment.

Betts asked if we could we use that for a partial payment for their services.

Kaltsas said we are so far out from that now. WS is driving. They met with Hamel, and they want to maintain our private corp. The question is if we can establish a fire district with MP and Indy that's just us. It gets rid of JPA but creates a district and solves for fire station issues. He asked does that district then have the ability to contract with WS and does that help long term.

Spencer said it opens up opportunity. Like if Minnetrista wanted to join, they could. It prepares us to become a part of a larger district quickly if we wanted it. The goal long term would be to fix the station, and where will it be. It might need better access, speed and placement. It depends on how big this district is. What do we do right now? This could solve JPA, figure out MP fire station, and get our corner of the world straightened out for whatever comes next. Let's take a look at what it will take to just form a district with MP and Indy. You would have a professional chief, accounting, admin, etc.

Kaltsas said the district could be a way to help. It would create a model so people can see it.

Spencer said maybe we just demonstrate and if people want to join it's a possibility.

Kaltsas said it would take fire out of the city piece.

Spencer said we could take it out of our budget and make it a taxing district.

Kaltsas moved on to say we didn't get the HC park grant. We were missing Diversity and Inclusion in one scoring category. I talked to Kevin Anderson at swearing in ceremony. He is coming on Tuesday, so maybe we can see what we can do to try to go after that again in the Fall.

Rick Denneson asked about Title 9.

Kaltsas said we thought about that. It is softball oriented. Baseball fields don't fit. That's a good angle.

Betts said it's a good location for Mound, Orono, Delano and Rockford to utilize if they wanted to.

Johnson made mention that County Road 19 construction starts on April 15<sup>th</sup>.

Denneson said it will start at Main St and go to County Road 11 and that will run until mid-May. Two weeks of that will be at the Perkinsville intersection where they are adding a median. There will be no hard closures. They are lining culverts, so nothing intrusive. Residents can get through all of the time. From mid-May until mid to late July the construction will shift from Loretto to Hwy 55 and that will be a hard close due to railroad work.

5. Adjourn

Johnson motioned to adjourn at 8:37a.m.

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Respectfully Submitted,  
Amber Simon/ Recording Secretary