

Shorewood trustees vote to oppose overpass on I-55

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By ALLISON SELK - Shaw Media correspondent



The action taken by the village of Shorewood Board of Trustees at their regular meeting Tuesday was to vote to oppose an overpass spanning Interstate 55 at Mound Road.

In November, Christopher West of Cullinan Property shared the plans for the new Rock Run Crossing Project in Joliet near the intersection of Interstates 55 and 80.

The proposed 265-acre development was planned as a mixed-use property with retail, medical and office space, entertainment, restaurants and homes. West said he wants three access points and that one of them would require a bridge over Interstate 55 on Seil Road and on Mound Road. The other access points would be from Houbolt Road in Joliet.

At the November meeting, Mayor Rick Chapman told West, "I will not send my signature of support as long as that bridge is there."

Chapman, at Tuesday's meeting, read a resolution to that effect aloud and it was approved by the trustees unanimously. The information in the resolution said Mound Road was under ownership and maintenance jurisdiction of the village of Shorewood west of Interstate 55, and the area has been considered for an overpass by the Illinois Department of Transportation and the city of Joliet.

Chapman said, in 2016, IDOT conducted a traffic study and found the average daily traffic on Mound Road between River Road and SW Frontage Road was 1,300 vehicles a day.

As Chapman read the resolution, he said the construction of the Mound Road overpass would create many obstacles within that property area. He said the Mound Road overpass build has been anticipated to bring about 15,000 vehicles a day on Mound Road between River and the Southwest Frontage Road in year 2040 as determined by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

He also said that the overpass would directly conflict with infrastructure and access to the Southwest Frontage Road, and development at the southwest corner of Mound Road and Southwest Frontage Road.

Next on the agenda was to adopt the fiscal 2019 budget, with the fiscal year to begin April 1. Village of Shorewood Finance Director Anne Burkholder said there were not a lot of changes over the prior year.

In the budget letter of transmittal written by the village administrator, Roger Barrowman said, "The largest undertaking in the 2018-19 fiscal year is the continued pursuit of a change in the village's water source from deep and shallow wells to a sustainable source."

According to the transmittal letter, in 2015, the village was granted Home Rule status by referendum, which grants the village additional means to raise revenues. In January 2016, the village's 1 percent Non-Home Rule sales tax was replaced with a 1.75 percent Home Rule sales tax with the additional 0.75 percent being used as a revenue source for the connection to an external water supply.

Barrowman also said that economic growth and expansion has been a "guiding priority" during fiscal 2019 and continued efforts to broaden sales tax were under exploration. A tax increment financing district which includes the east side of town was approved by the board in 2017. Funds raised will be used to conserve property values and encourage redevelopment. Barrowman said he expects TIF funds to be recognized in the upcoming fiscal year, but numbers were not known at the time of the meeting and budget proposal.

According to the transmittal, there were outside influences which guided the budget processes. Last fiscal year, the state legislature approved a 10 percent reduction in the amount of Local Government Distributive Funds, shared funding submitted to municipalities on a per capita basis. Through a special census in 2107, it was revealed that Shorewood's population had increased by 1,880 residents.

Barrowman wrote there was growth for the Shorewood area and during 2017-18 commercial projects such as a final building at Heartland Corporate Center was constructed, the Alden Center constructed a memory care facility, La Quinta Inn broke ground and Crossroads Business Center on Gregory Court completed construction.

The village has also maintained its AA+ bond rating from Standard and Poors.

The village's general fund shows a 2.91 percent increase over the fiscal 2018 budget. The increased amounts were because of growth-related personnel changes and the operating reserves should remain maintained through the proposed budget. The fiscal 2019 proposed budget shows a balance of revenues and expenses of \$12,661,067.

Notable expenses for village staff were for one full-time employee in the police department, one in the public works department, and one seasonal employee in code enforcement.

There also was a list included of major equipment needed and to be purchased from the major equipment replacement fund with a total of \$398,910 for fiscal 2019.

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