Mayor Paul Whitcomb called the meeting to order. Council member present was Thom Walker, Jack Edmonds, Jules Zimmer, and Jeff Reynolds. Staff present, Administrator Mark Karnowski, Finance Director Steve Jackson, Public Works Director Bob Gerold, Community Development Director Jolene Foss, Police Chief Todd Frederick, Clerk Shawna Jenkins, and Engineers Andy Brotzler and Andrew Plowman.

**Sherburne County Drug Task Force Presentation**

Frederick reported that at the City Council meeting on 12-22-17 it was discussed that the Sherburne County Sheriff’s Department providing a presentation at a study session in the beginning of 2017. This presentation for the council, regarding this topic, will allow for any questions as well as a brief background by Administration of the Drug task Force Unit, how drugs affect our community, and the use of drugs in our area. This presentation will not be a budget item discussion at this time because of time restraints. However, it is expected that this position will increase the budget to around $110,000 (which includes wages, vehicle and other required equipment or funds).

Creating another position within our department will be a significant budget item and will create a great deal of planning by the department. In anticipation that the presentation is liked and the position is acceptable by the City Council, staff will start working on the position as soon as possible to prepare for it to start in January of 2018.

Sgt. Luke McLean and Captain Scott Fildes gave a presentation on the Sherburne County Drug Task Force. The council is in agreement that this is needed and the cost is by far worth the benefit. Staff will begin working on details and necessary budgeting to begin the program in 2018.

**TH95 Roundabout update - WSB**

Brotzler reported that the TH95 95 at CR157 (21st Ave) Roundabout project continues to progress. At this time, he wanted to update the council on the progress of the design, options for construction staging, and project cost and funding scenarios for the local share of the project cost.

At the December 1, 2016 public informational meeting, a suggestion was received regarding the feasibility of using the abandoned 19th Ave as a temporary business access during construction. Since the public informational meeting, this option was reviewed and approved by MnDOT as a feasible option for the project with the understanding that the access will be removed after the completion of construction. Based on the feasibility and approval of this option by MnDOT, the construction staging alternatives have evolved throughout the design process. It has been identified that the full closure of the TH95 / County Road 157 intersection will accomplish a majority of the project goals, as listed:

1. Safety: Eliminating through traffic from traveling near the work zone creates a safer environment for construction workers and the traveling public.

2. Duration: It is anticipated the closure can be limited to 8 weeks, or possibly even less. Completing the project in multiple stages would require a minimum of a 15-20 week schedule.

3. Cost: The project funding is capped in terms of federal and state funding. Therefore, any cost increases will be the responsibility of the City of Princeton. The cost of adding the 19th Avenue access and maintaining TH95 through traffic, would increase the cost of the project by approximately $250,000 (above the original estimate) due to the
construction of the access and the additional costs associated with multiple traffic control setups. It is anticipated the cost of providing full closure at TH95 and CR157, and providing the 19th Ave access will be at, or even slightly below the original construction estimate.

4. Quality of Product: Constructing the entire roundabout in one stage will increase the quality of the concrete and bituminous pavement by eliminating unnecessary seams in the pavements.

5. Utility Delays: It is likely the chance for utility delays will be decreased with the full closure option since the utilities can be installed by open trench excavation rather than boring.

6. Access to local businesses: Access to local businesses will be maintained throughout the duration of the project with the construction of the temporary 19th Ave access.

Given the lack of other east-west trunk highways in the area, the initial understanding was that a long distance detour would not be feasible and TH95 would have to remain open to through traffic during construction. Typically, detours for trunk highways to not utilize county roads and/or city streets. The initial staging concept included constructing the roundabout half at a time, and closing access from TH95 to CR 157 while the southern half was being constructed.

The full closure alternative was shared with MnDOT and Mille Lacs County to understand if it was a viable alternative before sharing with the council. MnDOT responded that the alternative was acceptable provided the City and County were in agreement.

Alternatives Considered-

Construct in halves, maintain TH95 Traffic: Initial consideration was to construct the roundabout in two halves, and maintain through access on TH95 through the project area. The first state would cut off access from CR157 to TH95. Access would be maintained via a detour from TH95 to 100th Avenue to 1st Avenue, to CR157. The second state would be to construct the north half of TH95 and access to CR 157 would be restored.

Construct in halves, maintain TH95 traffic (with temporary 19th Ave connection): This alternative was acceptable to MnDOT, but did require a dedicated left turn lane from westbound TH95 to 19th Avenue, and it was highly recommended to create a two week duration closure and set up a detour in order to construct the splitter islands. The detour route would be 100th Avenue to 1st Street, to Rum River Drive to TH95.

Full Closure (with temporary 19th Ave connection): This option was considered and it is recommended that the City Council consider supporting this option for the above identified reasons related to safety, quality, schedule and cost. Review of the detour route shows the county roads to be in good condition and contains the necessary turn lanes and traffic control to accommodate the increase in traffic. Also, this option would still include providing the temporary connection at the old 19th Avenue access, so local traffic would still have access at all times from TH95 and TH169. The advantages are:

1. Safety: the removal of traffic work zones provides a safer area for construction workers and the traveling public. The presence of barriers can create sign distance issues during construction. The full closure option would eliminate the need for barriers and traffic operating near open trenches.
2. Duration: Based on previous experience with roundabout projects, they have seen roundabouts constructed as quickly as 6 weeks with a full closure. They have estimated the working days based on 10 hour working days, and determined construction could be completed within 7 weeks. There is potential that the full closure could be limited even further to 6 weeks, since off-line work could be completed while TH95 is still open to traffic. They have determined the duration to complete the roundabout project half at a time would need anywhere from 15-20 weeks to complete. This assumes a 20% reduction if efficiency, additional time to set up traffic control and additional items such as time waiting for concrete to cure at the end of each stage.

3. Quality of Product: The full shutdown will increase the quality of the work. This is due to the reduction of cold joints in bituminous and concrete. As well, it will reduce the number of excavations to connect storm sewer and water main, thereby reducing chances for settlement of existing materials.

4. Utility Delays: A number of the private utilities will be required to relocate their facilities outside the circulatory roadway. With the full closure, the private utilities can place their facilities in open trenches rather than directionally drill their facilities. This will reduce the potential delay as each utility needs room to perform the drilling operation.

5. Access Maintained for Local Businesses: the full closure will allow continual access to the businesses south of TH95. The half at a time option would require a minimum of a two week closure. They proposed to keep that area open throughout the duration of the project until the roundabout has been open to traffic.

Cost / Assessments

Funding: The project will be funded by a combination of Federal, State and Local Funding.

The summary of the proposed project that has been previously presented:

- Federal Funds $904,000
- State Funds $236,000
- Local Funds (City) $490,000

Special Assessments: From initial staff discussions, it has been proposed to assess up to 50% of the local share to the benefitting properties that are adjacent to the improvements and have direct access to 21st Ave between TH95 and 1st Ave.

A proposed per acre assessment rate was developed for the project area. When developing a per acre rate, a 15 acre parcel located at the northwest corner of TH95 and 21st Ave was included as an undevelopable area. This area was included in an effort to normalize the proposed assessments for all four quadrants to the intersection.

The proposed rate was calculated by taking the total acreage of the adjacent properties (103.1) and subtracting the undevelopable acreage (18.1) to determine the developable acreage (85). From the developable acreage, we determined the developed and undeveloped acreage for each property. It was assumed that 25% of the currently undeveloped land would be dedicated to the right-of-way and drainage and utility easements. This assumption gives a net assessable acreage for the project of 72.4 acres. The undeveloped acreage was then added back in to determine the area used to calculate the assessment rate per acres (72.4 + 18.1 = 90.5 acres) Dividing the anticipated project cost by this area gives a rate of approximately $2,700 per acre. Applying this rate to each property as it they were all devel-
oped gives a total of $194,748 is proposed to be assessed to the individual properties. The balance is proposed to be added to the City local share.

Based on that methodology, the assessments for the 26 properties that are proposed to be assessed for this project range from $1,614 to $39,272.

Staff would like to discuss with the Council the proposed assessment methodology and comments received at and after the December 1, 2016 public informational meeting.

Brotzler stated said there are a few options. One of which would be to have the assessment hearings after the bid opening so we would know for sure how much the assessments would be. The other option would be if there was an appeal, or more than one appeal, the project could be scrapped. However, the council needs to remember there are a lot of federal funds that would be lost if the project is not done.

He added that one other option would be to look at obtaining a benefit appraisal, before the assessment rates were set. The outcome of the benefit appraisal would provide some information to the council, so adjustments could be made prior to the assessment hearing.

Walker questioned if the city has to get a General Obligation Bond for the local portion. He asked Jackson what an approximate amount would be and if it would be for 10 years. Jackson responded that he has not looked at rates as of yet. Walker said there are a lot of undeveloped lots in that area and getting businesses in there would bring more taxes into the city.

Karnowski asked what the approximate cost of a benefit appraisal would be. Brotzler estimated that it would be in the $7,000-12,000 range. Karnowski said if the study was done, the council would have a pretty good idea of what the level of assessments could be. The Council make a decision to go with estimated assessment or, the study could be done to determine the benefit level of the project.

Karnowski asked if there were any bonds coming off this year. Jackson replied that there was not any at this time.

Reynolds questioned how long a benefit appraisal would take. Brotzler responded that they take 4-6 weeks on average.

Foss asked how many property owners were mailed notices of the public informational meeting that was held. Brotzler replied that all of those listed who will be assessed, and some additional properties in the area as well.

The Attorney for several affected property owners stated that whatever assessment amount is determined, they will be appealing it as they do not feel it is an appropriate funding option for this project. They feel that this does not benefit the properties in the area, and feel it is just a traffic regulation project.

Whitcomb stated that that only a small portion of the people that use the intersection are city residents, so he felt it was not fair for them to pay for the entire city portion out with city taxes.

Walker added that the project is being done as the council is looking towards the future growth in the area and there is a lot of Federal funds that can be used towards this project,
making it much less expensive, however he does not feel the property owners should be assessed.

Dan Howard questioned the different costs that were presented. Plowman responded that the project alone is approximately 1.2 million, and 1.6 million including engineering, right of way acquisitions, etc.

Linda Howard asked how the deferred assessments worked and if the interest accrues. Brotzler replied that the interest does not accrue so the the amount of assessment stays the same.

Brotzler commented that the NE Property that is owned by Ideality Development would be deferred until that property was able to be developed.

Zimmer asked how the financing would work if the whole project was bonded for and how long it would take. Jackson replied that it would only take 3 to 4 months. He stated that the first payment would be included in that amount, so the first payment from the General Fund would not be due until 2018. He would need to look into options, as the city has never done a project with no assessments. Karnowski added that usually a referendum is needed if 20% of the cost was not assessed. A referendum would need a special election and the public would vote on it.

Walker and Reynolds looked at the numbers and felt if the assessment was lowered to 20% to meet that requirement, it would cut those assessments considerably.

Whitcomb said it doesn’t make sense to do it on a referendum. Jackson will find out what kind of options there are for what the Council is asking, what type of time frame there would be, etc.

Whitcomb commented that if this project is not done, we lose the $904,000 in federal funds. When that area is further developed, the state is likely going to tell the city that something needs to be done to fix the traffic, and then the entire cost would need to be assessed.

Walker stated that the city does not know what the consequences of a roundabout would be there. Sometimes he feels they can create traffic issues. Such as on Alpha Road and County Road 1 just east of the roundabout. Sometimes the traffic backs up and it is difficult to turn onto 95 from those roads.

Whitcomb stated that staff will have more information at the next meeting.

EDMONDS MOVED TO ADJOURN THE STUDY SESSION AT 6:37PM. WALKER SECONDED THE MOTION. MEETING ADJOURNED

Respectfully Submitted,

____________________________________
Shawna Jenkins
City Clerk

ATTEST:

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Paul Whitcomb, Mayor