



*The City of Auburn Hills*  
City Council Special Meeting  
Minutes

November 24, 2014

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor McDaniel at 5:00 p.m.

**LOCATION:** City Council Chamber, 1827 N. Squirrel Road, Auburn Hills, MI 48326

**Present:** Mayor McDaniel, Mayor Pro Tem Kittle, Council Members Burmeister, Hammond, Knight, Mitchell, Verbeke

**Absent:** None

**Also Present:** City Manager Tanghe, Assistant City Manager Grice, Director Olko, City Clerk Kowal, DPW Director Melchert, Deputy DPW Director Herczeg, City Attorney Beckerleg, City Engineer Juidici  
15 Guests

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT** - none

**5. OLD BUSINESS**

**5a. Motion – Discussion of North Squirrel Road Project**

Mr. Melchert explained three options are proposed:

1. Narrow the roadway north of Thornwood Drive from the proposed three lanes to two lanes, avoiding the need for right-of-way acquisition and avoiding the need to remove the tree.
2. Remove the large Black Walnut tree that exists on the east side of the road and widening to the east side of Squirrel Road within the existing right-of-way and eliminating the need for west side right-of-way acquisition.
3. Obtain right-of-way from a private property owner on the west side of Squirrel Road, eliminating the need to remove a large Black Walnut tree, and shift the road widening to the west. A pathway could be added to this option as well.

Traffic counts were done, paying attention to the left turn movements for the northbound traffic onto Dutton Road. The City engineers concluded the level of service, level C, would not improve if the left turn lane was extended. A traffic projection out 15 years was conducted and determined there would not be a significant increase in traffic causing a left turn backup.

With the engineering results, City staff is recommending Option One be approved. This option will save the Black Walnut tree, less cost involved, and the level of service for the road won't be greatly improved.

Mayor McDaniel noted at the urging of many residents, that the City take the time to investigate all the options. City Council has been provided with more information from staff and has listened to the residents. With the additional information made available to Council, Council thought it would be beneficial to call this Special Meeting to put the resident's fears at ease and be able to enjoy the holiday. He thanked the residents for taking the time and attending this evening's meeting.

Mr. Kittle asked if level is A the best and less than C is worst.

Mr. Juidici explained the level of service at an intersection ranges from A to F; the existing signal configuration is what determines the level. The levels are measured in the number of seconds per each delay; level of service, the amount of traffic, the number of lanes. The proposed road configuration won't change and there won't be any changes to the signal which will keep the intersection much like it is today.

Mr. Kittle suggested a different traffic control device could increase the intersection to a level B or possibly C.

Mr. Juidici stated that is correct, there are other options for the intersection. A level C intersection is a very good intersection; typically a level A is over developed, too much pavement or too many lanes. The intersection ratings are based on peak hours of travel, a C is a very good rating; many of the City's intersections rate much less than a C. There is the possibility of reconfiguring the signals, but a green turn arrow for northbound Squirrel Road may improve that traffic flow, but would likely cause worse traffic flow for the other directions.

This signal is part of the County's system, a smart signal that makes accommodations and balances out the traffic as best it can.

Mr. Knight agrees there may not be the need now for an extended left turn lane at Dutton Road, but if the property to the west is developed at a later date, there may be the need for the left turn lane.

Ms. Verbeke is in agreement with Option One, and asked Mr. Juidici if there was to be any elevation change in this section of Squirrel Road like there will be further south.

Mr. Juidici noted there currently are no drainage issues and there won't be with Option One; with the other two options there was a proposed grade change of a foot or so. There are no deficiencies in that section of road that need correcting.

Ms. Mitchell asked how the 1% growth rate was determined to use for the projection out through 2029; is the 1% standard.

Mr. Juidici explained when doing a traffic study, SEMCOG is contacted for their population projection of growth for a particular area. In 2009 a study was done of this area and SEMCOG supplied the 1% growth rate. When contacted recently, SEMCOG's projections for this area was 0% growth change, so the 1% growth, per year, was used. OHM feels the 1% growth is a good representation for this area and the 1% growth rate is standard for the area.

Ms. Mitchell stated she is comfortable with the recommendation as presented, **providing the option is less costly to the residents and the level of service can be maintained through 2029.**

Mr. Burmeister asked if there are issues with the northbound traffic during the morning rush hour.

Mr. Melchert stated there isn't any backups due to left turns, the majority of traffic is headed south.

Mr. Knight asked when the intersection at Shimmons Road is lowered, if it improve the visibility for traffic approaching Shimmons Road.

Mr. Melchert stated the visibility should be improved, lowering the road will improve sight distance and make cars visible in all directions.

Mr. Kittle asked if there are any design perimeters regarding center of roadway to a tree edge when reconstructing or improving a roadway, from a safety standpoint.

Mr. Juidici stated yes from a safety standpoint, there are federal standards through ASHE, American Society of Highway Engineers, who has guidelines for reconstruct and brand new roads. If this was new road construction the tree would be in the clear zone, requiring the tree to be removed or protected with a guardrail or similar. This is a rehabilitation of an existing road, and the tree falls just on the edge of a rehab project.

The current left turn portion of the road is relatively new and will be milled down, with a new overlay.

Mr. Juidici confirmed for Mr. Kittle there won't be a liability issue for the City, because there isn't extensive work being done on the road.

Mayor McDaniel thanked all for attending this evening's meeting and acknowledged neither City Council or City staff wants to remove the Black Walnut tree. Since the beginning of the road rehabilitation plans, the Black Walnut tree was on everyone's mind. There was also the awkward position of a City Council colleague's property being involved in the process of the roadway improvements. Funding was sought by staff to help with the road improvements for 2015, in addition to City funds. There was consideration of purchasing right-of-way property on the west side of Squirrel Road so the Black Walnut tree could remain standing. The offer to purchase the property was rejected, so alternate plans were developed in order to preserve the Black Walnut tree. Additional evaluations were conducted by City staff, and alternate plans have no extension of the left turn lane. This results in having no impact on the Black Walnut tree and also no need to purchase additional land for a right-of-way, at taxpayer's expense. Information helping to make a decision included traffic count information from the Chief of Police and the engineers concluding that leaving the intersection as is will not impact the traffic flow. City Council heard the message from the residents rallying around the tree loud and clear; this is a win-win solution.

Mayor McDaniel noted a decision can be reached this evening and a recommendation has been made by City Manager Tanghe and DPW Director Melchert as noted in tonight's memo. He asked if there was anyone in the audience that would prefer City Council to not proceed with the recommendation (there were no showing of hands).

Mayor McDaniel asked for comments from the audience; Ms. Doyle requested to speak.

**Anne Doyle**, 4405 N. Squirrel Road, she is very pleased with the outcome of the tree remaining as well as the road project. Ms. Doyle stated her dismay in the transparency of this project.

**Tom Rapp**, 3502 Riverside Drive, is happy with the decision made this evening, a win-win result. He also wanted to commend the City on the way the oil and gas drilling issue was handled. He wished the Rochester Hills public officials had followed Auburn Hills public officials, example.

**Philip Clampitt**, 3744 Tienken Road, is pleased with the direction the City is moving with regards to the Squirrel Road paving project and the saving of the Black Walnut tree.

**Hanna Clampitt**, 3744 Tienken Road, thanked City Council for this decision and appreciates all the hard work and time that is put into the City. She too, would like the opportunity to have more input into some of Council discussions.

**Italia Milan**, 3744 Bald Mountain Road, wished there had been more notice for this evening's meeting. She **is** happy the Black Walnut tree will be preserved, the tree is appreciated by many residents as well as others.

**Don Hughes**, is pleased with the results this evening as well as appreciating a City Council who listens to their residents. He noted the petitions presented to Council at a previous meeting, aren't a statement against Council, but one of support of what the residents are concerned with. He appreciates all the work that has been done to preserve this landmark tree.

Mayor McDaniel, being a Member of Council since 2007, stated the Council has been extremely transparent throughout this project as well as all the City's projects. There have been several public open forum meetings and many of the residents, including many of those here this evening, have attended those meetings and workshops.

Council is very sensitive to listening to the residents, and felt with this particular project it was worth notifying residents of the recent information received and the recommendation from staff to Council. It isn't possible to call each and every resident to notify them of the meeting. As some may know, the Community Center was flooded this weekend and many of the staff spent their Sunday trying to help with the cleanup and moving personnel to other offices. This special meetings was called so residents could enjoy their Thanksgiving, knowing the Black Walnut tree will be preserved.

**Moved by Burmeister; Seconded by Knight.**

**RESOLVED: To direct City staff to complete designs for the North Squirrel Road improvement project based on continuing the roadway surface as two lanes, beginning south of the Black Walnut tree in a location deemed appropriate by our engineers, and continuing north until such time it shall become three lanes again as it currently exists at the Dutton Road intersection.**

Mr. Knight noted he was contacted Friday about possibly having a special meeting. All the deliberations Council has had, nobody has said to cut down the tree or offer a proposal. Receiving the new information, and moving the meeting up, he didn't feel was railroading or depriving the people from speaking. This is a response to what Council heard and is supporting what was heard, and is in the best interest of all.

Mayor McDaniel stated the meeting wasn't moved up, this is an additional meeting. The thoughts behind the action was the additional information became available before the December 1<sup>st</sup> meeting, so to alleviate concerns of the residents, this meeting was held.

Ms. Verbeke requested Council receive copies of the engineering drawings of where the two lanes will begin south of the Black Walnut tree as soon as they become available.

**VOTE: Yes: Burmeister, Hammond, Kittle, Knight, McDaniel, Mitchell, Verbeke**

**No: None**

**Motion Carried (7-0)**

**Resolution No. 14.11.227**

Mr. Kittle noted that Auburn Hills is very proactive in maintaining, improving and constructing infrastructure. At some point that intersection will need improving and it will become the burden of a developer. He hopes the tree remains healthy as well as the health, safety and welfare of the residents that travel through that area.

Mr. Knight wanted to assure the residents, though the catastrophe at the Community Center, the majority of damage will be covered by insurance.

Mayor McDaniel thanked Mr. Tanghe and all the staff who showed up on a Sunday to help in the cleanup of the Community Center.

Mayor McDaniel thanked Mr. Juidici and his team, City Manager Tanghe, DPW Director Melchert and Deputy DPW Director Herczeg for all the hard work effort that's been put into the Squirrel Road project.

**6. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 5:48 pm.