

General Procedures for Residents To Initiate Special Assessment Projects

Residents may initiate the construction or reconstruction of Public Works Projects to be funded by Special Assessment by completing a **PETITION** that is available in the Office of the City Clerk. Public Works Projects include street or alley construction, paving of streets and alleys, installation of new curb and gutter or new sidewalk, and new sanitary sewer and water mains and house laterals. As most (if not all) of the cost of the project will be funded by **Special Assessment**, there is a statutory process that must be followed. The Special Assessment Procedure is covered in detail in Merrill Municipal Code of Ordinances, Chapter 18 - Section 83 for sewer and water projects and Chapter 32 - Section 58 for street and sidewalk projects. You may also visit Assessment FAQ on the Engineering Department Web Page.

At the very beginning of the process, the petitioner should contact as many of the property owners abutting the project as possible to inform them of the project and ask them to sign the petition (either for or against). Only property owners can sign the petition (**tenants or renters** can NOT sign). It is not necessary to contact every property owner at this time, but as many as reasonably possible should be contacted early in the process to determine if there is adequate neighborhood support for the project.

When a petition is received at the Office of the City Clerk it is forwarded to the Engineering Department, for a review and development of a scope of the work to determine the viability of the project. Occasionally, certain aspects of a project cannot be completed. For instance, possibly an alley cannot be paved because of grading or drainage issues.

The Petition is then forwarded to the Board of Public Works for consideration. If deemed appropriate, the Board of Public Works will forward a Preliminary Resolution to the Common Council. In addition, a preliminary report is prepared by the Engineering Department that will contain the summary of the scope of work associated with the project, as well as an **estimate** of the total cost for the project, and an **estimate** of cost for each property affected or benefitted by the project. If the Common Council approves the Preliminary Resolution, a Public Hearing shall be ordered to be held.

A Public Hearing will be scheduled and the Office of the City Clerk will mail a notice to **ALL** property owners affected or benefitted by the project. The notice will include information about the hearing and a preliminary **estimate** of the assessment cost for each property.

After the Public Hearing, the Board of Public Works will forward a recommendation to the Common Council, that could possibly contain some changes to the project along with a **final estimate** of the assessment

cost for each property. The Common Council will make the decision to approve or disapprove the Final Resolution. If approved, the Engineering Department will finalize engineering plans and specifications so the project can move forward to the bidding and construction phase.

If a petition is submitted too late in the year to include the work in the current year, or the City does not have budgeted funds for their share of any project, the Engineering Department may hold the project over until the following year.

After the project is completed, the Special Assessment invoices are mailed to each property owner, generally by October 1st. The invoices will include the final amount of the Special Assessment, which may vary (either higher or lower) from the previously approved estimate. The final amount depends on the actual total costs associated with the project.

The only way the process can be shortened is if 100% of all property owners are in agreement with the project, agree to pay the assessments, and all sign a "Waiver of Public Hearing" form. Then the project can proceed without a Public Hearing, removing approximately 2 months from the Special Assessment process.

Please contact George Schau in the Engineering Department at 536-6561 for additional information and assistance with the project.