



October 14, 2019

By email

Ken Trester, Mayor  
Mark Bekken  
Bill Hess  
Barry Johnson  
Chris Peterson  
Catherine Simon  
Jane Verplank

Re: Oct. 14, 2019 Council Meeting Agenda Item No.14B, Resolution No.191014-B,  
Non-motorized Trail Joint Resolution

Dear Council Members,

For the reasons set forth below, we respectfully request that you table consideration of the above-referenced agenda item until at least Council's November 11 meeting.

We first received a copy of the resolution late on the afternoon of Friday, October 11, about the time the meeting agenda was published. We were not consulted about the content or timing of the proposed resolution, although we had expressed concerns about the general topic to the three tri-community managers by memorandum, dated September 30, a copy of which is attached. The short notice has not given us time to confer with our Board about it.

We have been working with Council for over 2 ½ years regarding the Trail, and this is the first time Council has been asked to vote on a substantive resolution. The resolution has not even been the subject of a public Council workshop. The 3-minutes allowed for comments at Council meetings is hardly enough time to address the many issues raised by this resolution.

There will be two or three new Council members in three weeks, following the November 5 election. At the recent public forum, all of the candidates expressed strong support for the Trail and most said it would be their first priority. Over 250 residents of the City so far have signed a petition of support for the Trail. In light of those circumstances, rushing to pass the proposed resolution in this manner is unfair, not in the best interests of your residents, and will not reflect well on the Council.

A few of the concerns we have based on an initial review of the resolution are:

1. It unilaterally imposes significant terms without input from the Friends, including new financial commitments beyond what has ever been discussed.
2. It deviates in several key respects from the Allegan County resolution on which it is purportedly based.
3. It restricts the possible options for the Bridge when those options are still under discussion with MDOT and the Fire Department.
4. It does not commit the City to actually allowing the Trail to be constructed or ownership once it is, and so may not provide the needed reassurances to the Township or Douglas, or to our potential donors.
5. It would appear to further stall efforts to build the Trail until a detailed agreement is negotiated, which the City could delay indefinitely.
6. The cover memorandum from the City Manager states that “The intent of the...resolution is to confirm consensus of the three units of government regarding” regarding “an intergovernmental agreement...to identify and agree on roles and responsibilities.” We fully agree that representatives of the three communities should meet soon with us to determine how best to proceed with the proposed north section. If there is a need for a resolution now, it should simply state that the City wishes to proceed with the Trail and commits to a joint process for doing so that includes the Friends.
7. The Township and Douglas are on record as supporting the Trail—as evidenced by their joint Parks Plan, various resolutions, a maintenance agreement, and the sections they have already built. It is the City’s commitment for which everyone is waiting.

We will attend the Council meeting to renew our request in person and address any questions you may have.

Very truly yours,

John Adams, President

cc: Kirk Harrier  
Griffin Graham  
Rich LoBombard  
Editor, The Commercial Record