

**MINUTES  
MINNETONKA CITY COUNCIL  
JOINT CITY COUNCIL MEETING, SEPTEMBER 20, 2006**

**1. CALL TO ORDER.**

Mayor Callison called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**2. ROLL CALL.**

- A. Minnetonka Council Members Dick Allendorf, Bob Ellingson, Terry Schneider, Al Thomas, Tony Wagner, and Mayor Jan Callison were present. Brad Wiersum was excused.
- B. Hopkins Council Members Kristi Halverson, Bruce Rowan, Jay Thompson, Cheryl Youakim, and Mayor Gene Maxwell were present.

**3. PUBLIC HEARING:**

**A. Preliminary layout approval for Shady Oak Road Project, Excelsior Blvd. to just north of Highway 7.**

Callison welcomed the public to the joint meeting and stated the meeting purpose was to discuss the preliminary layout approval for the Shady Oak Road project from Excelsior Blvd. to just north of Highway 7 and receive public input.

Minnetonka City Engineer Lee Gustafson presented the joint staff report.

Hopkins Public Works Director Steve Stadler highlighted some of the resident concerns and how those have been addressed in the preliminary layout, including the property acquisition schedule included in the report. He noted both drainage improvements and buffering of the roadway in residential areas after the completion of the project will continue to be reviewed throughout the design process.

Schneider asked Gustafson about the alternative of a cul-de-sac on the north service drive and any impacts identified in the traffic study. Gustafson responded the traffic study included closing off the service drive (Lake Street Extension) at Shady Oak Road and creating a cul-de-sac at Auburn Drive. The study reported there were 1,040 vehicles per day using the north service drive. Staff was requested to re-look at the traffic counts because it was felt the counts may have been impacted by construction at County Roads 5 and 73. Another traffic count was subsequently conducted, when

no construction was ongoing, and that count was actually higher than the first one, at about 1,150 vehicles.

Gustafson continued that staff considered where these vehicles would go if access to Shady Oak Road were closed off. A recent traffic count on Lake Street Extension at Baker Road indicated about 900 to 950 vehicles per day. Installing the cul-de-sac and closing off the north service drive would create another 450 vehicles per day going to Baker Road, increasing the traffic count from over 900 to over 1,300 cars per day. Some cars would cut through on Huntingdon Drive to get to Shady Oak Road, but a good portion of them would go back to Baker, and the rest would find other ways through the residential area.

Gustafson continued that staff previously requested that Baker Road be re-striped to address some of the current turning movement problems at the intersection with Lake Street Extension. It was then re-striped, which helped people traveling northbound on Baker Road. However, currently there is a problem with people traveling northbound on Baker Road and turning right or left onto Lake Street Ext. and for people coming west on Lake Street Extension onto Baker Road. Adding another 450 vehicles a day would exacerbate the current problem. A signal was considered, but it did not meet the county's standards for a signal.

In response to a question from the Hopkins council, Gustafson stated the 1,000 trips on the service road at the Shady Oak Road intersection are coming from the neighborhood between Baker Road and Shady Oak Road. If somebody was on Baker Road, there would be no reason for them to cut down to the north service drive to access Shady Oak Road.

In response to a question by Allendorf, Gustafson explained the new configuration at Bradford Road will restrict access to right-in, right-out, where currently there is full access. This makes sense in order to improve safety on Shady Oak Road, and that recommendation is made because the neighborhood has full access a short distance away on Excelsior Boulevard.

Allendorf asked if this will lead people to go south on Shady Oak Road and make a U-turn at Excelsior Boulevard to northbound Shady Oak Road. Gustafson responded no, because once people figure out how to access the various roads from that neighborhood, they will likely not make U-turns or similar movements, although he could not guarantee there will not be someone who chooses to make a U-turn.

Allendorf asked if there is an accident problem currently at that intersection. Gustafson responded there are no records to indicate that. From experience, staff feels this is the most appropriate recommendation to eliminate some of the concerns about people pulling out at the wrong time.

In response to a question by Thomas about the size of the roundabout, Gustafson stated the outside diameter is 120 feet and the inside diameter is 80 feet. A typical cul-de-sac in Minnetonka is 80 feet in diameter from curb line to curb line. The inside would therefore be the same size as that, and the outside diameter would actually be 40 feet wider than the typical cul-de-sac.

Wagner asked about moving the roundabout to the Main Street intersection and also whether it is possible to install the cul-de-sac on Lake Street Extension now but have the opening of the north service drive as part of a 50-year plan. Gustafson responded that a roundabout was not considered; it becomes much more difficult to put a roundabout in that area because of the multi-lane situation. A much larger roundabout would dramatically impact many more properties. These are not as common in the United States, though they do tend to work well where used. It was not considered here because the concept is new to the U.S. and, as staff knows, redevelopment issues have to be addressed.

Gustafson continued it is possible to reconstruct Shady Oak Road, install a cul-de-sac on Lake Street Extension, and reopen the north service drive at a future point. Although some concerns would be eliminated in doing that, others would be created. Additionally, Hennepin County would not likely pay for right-of-way acquisition if it is not done as part of this current project, so it would be a cost completely incurred by Minnetonka.

In response to a question by Ellingson regarding a change of elevation on the roundabout, Gustafson explained there is a grade differential between where the roundabout is proposed and Main Street. The grade drops off significantly in the backside area. It may require modifications to reduce wetland impacts, but staff will not know for certain what the wetland impacts might be until the final design phase occurs. Main Street has a hump in the intersection, so he assumes that will be reduced to help eliminate the great differential, and it is likely some mitigation efforts will be required.

Schneider asked what would happen if the property to the south redevelops before the roundabout is needed to be built. Gustafson

responded it would be much easier if the road project progressed and the properties redeveloped at the same time. He could envision something like a very ornate landscape feature there. A 90-degree roundabout could also accomplish the same things discussed in the staff report.

Callison asked whether there would be enough traffic to trigger the need for a traffic signal at Baker Road if the cul-de-sac is installed on Lake Street Extension. Gustafson responded when that was reviewed in the traffic study, the warrants for a traffic signal were not met.

Callison asked if the impact of 25 percent more traffic would warrant a signal. Gustafson responded when reviewing that option, staff included that additional traffic and projected it out over 20 years and still the intersection did not meet the warrants for a signal.

Callison asked what the county approval process is after tonight's meeting. Gustafson responded receipt of the approved preliminary layout indicates to the county that the impacted cities are in agreement with the geometric layout. It also tells the county to proceed with final designs and right-of-way acquisition, while working with the cities on some of the finer details. The next step is final plan approval by both city councils. Staffs from both cities and the county will work together on as many details as possible regarding geometrics, drainage, and aesthetics prior to this returning to the councils for final plan approval.

Also necessary will be the approval of a number of agreements, including a cooperative agreement. The agreement reflects that both cities would agree with the county on cost participation, when payments would be made under what conditions, and other various requirements. Since this project is so complicated and involves many issues regarding geometrics, wetlands and road work, Gustafson estimates the funding agreements would be brought to the council once construction estimates are known (which could take several months). If preliminary layout approval is received tonight, right-of-way estimates will be obtained as well. Both councils will sign the same document.

Callison recognized County Commissioner Linda Koblick and noted a number of county staff members are also present.

Craig Twinem, Hennepin County Transportation Department, explained once the plans are developed, he and the county

engineer will sign the cover sheet in order to ensure it meets the intent of the preliminary layout. There will also be a construction cooperative agreement that requires county board approval. On this project, the county envisions a right-of-way agreement that will need approval a little sooner due to the complexity of right-of-way acquisition. Twinem then introduced a number of county staff who will be working on the project.

Rowan asked what it would take to install a traffic light at Baker Road and Lake Street Extension. Twinem responded there are several warrants which are uniform across the nation and within Minnesota. The time to restudy the intersection is after completion of the construction project to see if there have been any changes and to determine if a signal is warranted. Traffic signals cost \$200,000 to \$300,000. Since there is not enough money to install all the signals needed across the county, a hard look is taken at locations where cities request a signal. The county can review the intersection after construction is completed.

In response to a question by the Hopkins council on whether the county would fund opening of the north service road in the future if the cul-de-sac was installed now, Twinem responded this project is funded within the county's CIP. Ultimately, the county board would have the decision, but the county typically does not come back to an area where a project has been completed. From the county's perspective, the time to address the area is now, and it is an area that needs improvement. It does have some right-of-way impacts, and staff would work with the impacted residents. The county supports this layout as shown and cannot guarantee funding for a future reconfiguration.

In response to a question by the Hopkins council, Twinem explained the county supports the reconfiguration of the frontage road. From the county perspective, the county, like Mn-DOT, would like to remove as many access points as possible along county roads. They would support a cul-de-sac as well, though it is a local issue. There will be less traffic turning into this reconfigured frontage road.

Schneider commented that to study Baker Road and Lake Street Extension for a stoplight misses the point of those who want a cul-de-sac. He also asked Twinem's opinion regarding how the Baker Road and Lake Street Extension intersection would work, especially as it is already difficult to get onto Baker Road.

Twinem responded the problem of people exiting off Highway 7 onto Baker Road and trying to make a left turn would be magnified. There will also be people coming off of Lake Street Extension heading westbound, which magnifies the problem because of the close proximity to the Highway 7 exit. It is not an easy situation. A signal might create some gaps but could create a back-up problem as well. If these roads were by themselves, it would be easier to have answers and assumptions. But because of the close proximity of the roads, there are issues created when making changes to traffic in the area.

Callison stated she recalled the county discussing installation of a median on Shady Oak Road. She asked about the impact of making the improvements and not the frontage road at Shady Oak Road, and also putting a median in so cars would not be able to go east on 7. There will still be some movement at that intersection, but not all the traffic would be put onto Baker Road. She asked if that is more feasible today than it was six months ago.

Twinem responded the biggest concern is the close proximity of a frontage road to a major intersection. The movement coming out of the north service drive is the problem. The proximity of the north service drive to Highway 7 is so close that people cannot come out of north service drive and fully get in the left turn lane. That would be magnified if there was even one car in line they are trying to get behind. The big issue with this situation is the people who want to access Highway 7 or Shady Oak Road coming out or heading eastbound onto the north service drive.

Callison asked the public to remember preferred concept approval has been given. What is before the councils tonight are the three changes highlighted by staff: the slight movement of the road to the west, the issues regarding the Oak Drive Lane connection, and the north frontage road. She asked the public comments to focus on those changes.

Maxwell added this has been an important project and a long process between the two cities.

Callison opened the public hearing.

Pierre d'Albertis, 4828 Shady Oak Road, Minnetonka, stated he has lived at his property since 1974. He believes the most important thing to address is safety. The proposed frontage road realignment is an uncontrolled intersection without a four-way stop, meaning the traffic coming north will have to cross the traffic

coming south without any control. The turn will be a left turn into oncoming traffic without control. There is already a line of 10 to 12 cars at this intersection. He added that further up on Shady Oak Road are a number of school bus stops on both sides of the streets. The topography of the street will require changes to make a clear sightline to the lights. When people see a green light, they increase their speed. There are a number of families with small schoolchildren, and they will not be prepared to deal with a speedway.

D'Albertis also explained the cost considerations of this project. Lake Dimple is a real lake and would qualify as lakefront property, and there is 165 feet of lakefront property between his property and his next door neighbor's. He understands under the relocation mandate that someone will find him a home in a comparable situation on a lakefront, and that would likely be inordinately expensive. D'Albertis noted that the county's warrants do not allow the installation of a traffic control at this uncontrolled intersection. He liked Wagner's idea of possibly delaying part of this until a later date, as that may be more cost efficient. From a business approach, the idea of the expenses involved in what is not a completely safe bypass for the convenience of a shortcut does not make sense.

Gustafson noted the city has done frontage road realignment projects on Williston Road both north and south of Highway 7. This type of project has worked very well, and the city has received compliments on making intersections safer by providing separation from the roads and the major intersections and also by cleaning up the site distances. It is true this would be an uncontrolled intersection, but there would be a left-hand turn lane for north-bound traffic. Currently there are no turn lanes in situation. Under this design, there is a lane where someone can safely sit and make a left turn. Also, if somebody made a mistake pulling out of the north service drive, there is adequate width available to stop quickly and not be in the north-bound through lane yet. That type of situation does not exist today.

Gustafson addressed the notion of traffic signals at every intersection and stated besides being cost-prohibitive, Mn-DOT, the county, and the city all have obligations to keep the general public moving on the roads. If there are obstructions at every intersection, it can force people to do cut-through. There have to be very good rationales to put traffic signals in place, and so there obviously will be some uncontrolled intersections. Additionally, people are not

accustomed to stopping on a major thoroughfare for a minor intersection.

Gustafson continued he believes the project is worth the cost. It is a 50-plus year design. It is a very expensive acquisition, but spreading it out over 50 years meets a cost benefit analysis.

Vida Percy, 325 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, Hopkins, stated a lot of parents drive kids to West Junior High on Baker Road, and that intersection looks less appealing than it did in the previous plan. A cul-de-sac there would eliminate a lot of traffic. She also expressed concern about Second Street, as there will be more cut-through traffic in her neighborhood. She is concerned people in her neighborhood will be trapped in trying to get out and forced to get behind a line of cars on Shady Oak Road.

Curt Johnson, VFW, 100 Shady Oak Road, Hopkins, stated the VFW will lose approximately 20 parking spots with the road expansion. The VFW contributes a lot of donations to local communities, and he sees the demise of this post if this project goes through as is. He noticed the VFW is not on the list of acquisitions for the right-of-way, and he believes it should be included. Once the road construction begins, he predicted the VFW would be out of business in 30 days.

Callison asked staff to explain the process of redevelopment of parcels and location of adequate parking for businesses.

Gustafson explained after the geometrics are discussed, the process that will occur is the redevelopment of certain parcels along the corridor. The road is getting pushed to the west, and some parking will be taken. As part of this redevelopment study, both councils will have to look at ways to accommodate the VFW parking needs. Both councils have stressed at almost every meeting that they are concerned about current businesses, the ones that want to remain there, and how to keep them in business during the process. That process will be led by the city staffs of Hopkins and Minnetonka, with participation by the county.

Callison asked if there will be answers to some of these questions prior to construction in 2009. Gustafson responded affirmatively. He noted at times there will be some road closures, but for the most part, traffic will remain open on Shady Oak Road throughout the entire construction of the project.

Maxwell noted one of the major concerns of the council was how businesses were to survive with the parking that was left and how that was to be addressed. He believes that will be addressed through the process.

Craig Kepler, 3512 Laura Lane, Minnetonka, noted he did not receive a mailed notice of the meeting, nor did any of his neighbors. He voiced his objection to the design relative to the north service road and stated the county is not getting a 20-year design for its millions of dollars. The cost is not just the money; families will have to be moved from their homes, and two lovely homes will be replaced with a road. He understands the city has counted 1,000 trips per day. There are three kinds of trips. The first kind is area residents who use the road, and the number of local resident trips will remain the same over the next 30 years. There are others who find Shady Oak Road backed up and subsequently cut through that neighborhood. If Shady Oak Road is widened, every one of those trips will be eliminated because there will be an easy right-hand turn onto Highway 7.

Kepler continued that the third kind of traffic is cut-through to Baker Road. If the county wants to spend millions of dollars to improve an intersection for those cut-through drivers, they should upgrade the intersection at Baker Road and Highway 7. There is a lot of land there, with no homes, and it could look like the Hopkins Crossroads interchange over 394. The human cost and community cost would be less than what is being proposed. He does not like the idea of spending taxpayer dollars to move his neighbors for something that will not solve the problem.

Wendy Foty, 3836 Shady Oak Road, Minnetonka, commented she was also not notified of any of these meetings, even though the road changes occur in front of her property. She asked what further development is planned at that intersection. The only examples given were Williston Road and Highway 7, which are commercial areas. She questioned whether this plan can be justified for an area that is not commercial and does not have commercial traffic.

Callison noted there is no plan for commercial development by Minnetonka in this area. She added notification has been an issue for several people and asked Gustafson to comment.

Gustafson stated as this process progressed; the notification limits kept getting bigger and bigger and moved more northerly of Highway 7. Staff drew a line on the north side of the pond and went westerly. Staff sought to ensure that the folks who would

experience traffic impacts were notified. More people could have been notified, but it was a judgment call to notify the people who would be most impacted by changes in traffic patterns and inconveniences.

Nick Wogstad, 4007 Huntingdon Drive, Minnetonka, noted he is one of the petition signers who does not want a cul-de-sac in the north service road. He takes a left to Baker Road off the frontage road, and there have been a number of times when he has tried to cross safely, and it is not a good intersection. Visibility on the right and left are poor, and increasing the traffic flow would increase danger. Additionally, he lives on the road that would likely assume most of the increased traffic patterns.

Jeri Massengill, 4272 Oak Drive Lane, Minnetonka, stated she appreciates the work that the city staffs have done to address some of the neighborhood concerns over the last 18 months, but she still has concerns regarding the connection of her street to Main Street in Hopkins. The first problem is the projected increase in traffic. Most residents are young families and there is also a daycare on the street. There are no sidewalks, so kids play in the front yards and ride their bikes in the street. Last week she had to stop a car from speeding down the road while kids were riding their bikes in the road. Safety is her primary concern.

Massengill continued that her second concern is the neighborhood will be directly connected by a road to whatever commercial development occurs at the current location of the strip mall. She used to work in the development industry and has never heard of a developer who liked a roundabout. She is concerned it will disappear at the time the land is redeveloped or sold to another owner. They cause problems for access and create site obstructions, and she has seen them disappear from plans in the past. She has one issue with the traffic study; she disagrees with the assumption that the neighborhoods to the west of hers would not change their traffic patterns. If this connection is built between Oak Drive Lane and Main Street, drivers will use it.

Callison asked Gustafson to remind the council about the figures cited in the traffic study. Gustafson indicated the traffic counts for Oak Drive Lane, north and south, were 230 vehicles per day; that is a relatively low volume for a residential street. Under the proposal, the traffic projections increased from 230 to 367 on the south leg, and the north leg dropped by more than half to 93. Where both Oak Drive Lanes come together and head west, that traffic count did not change. Staff reviewed whether this will be a convenient way for

people living west of here to access Shady Oak Road. The proposed layout provides good connections at Excelsior Boulevard, including Lake Street connection. People who currently use the existing Lake Street access to Shady Oak Road will likely use the new Lake Street Extension access, and not switch over to Oak Drive Lane.

Callison asked what happens to the traffic patterns within the neighborhood if it is right-in, right-out on both legs. Gustafson responded the neighborhood traffic pattern would change. Drivers would have to choose how to access Shady Oak Road and use one of the intersections to do a U-turn or choose to use Lake Street Extension as their full access point.

Callison stated she assumes a developer would not have a choice about the roundabout being built, as it would be on public property. Gustafson concurred. Any developer would not have a choice regarding removal of a roundabout. He believes nowadays developers want roundabouts as access points into neighborhoods, as they slow traffic down and build some character. There are situations within Minnetonka where developers would like to see roundabouts, as it allows people an area to turn around. Traffic circles that were poorly designed in the past are difficult to maneuver around, but these are entirely different than a modern day roundabout.

Keith Strunk, 4001 Huntingdon Drive, Minnetonka, urged the council to accept the north service road design as it is. He does not believe roads like Huntingdon are designed to handle an increase in traffic.

Ann Annestad, 4255 Oak Drive Lane, Minnetonka, stated she lives in a quiet neighborhood and the proposal will increase traffic. A roundabout will create curiosity; drivers will want to use it; and the neighborhood will change. Currently, the neighborhood is not connected to the business area, and that is a concern for the neighbors. No one knows what will be developed there, and residents would like to keep the neighborhood separate and quiet.

Chris Annestad, 4255 Oak Drive Lane, Minnetonka, asked when the roundabout became part of the proposal. He does not have a problem with redeveloping the area, but he does not want to be connected with that. He inquired whether there are zoning laws that may keep the neighborhood separate. Having a road there is different than having a fence or a berm. He assumes all the neighbors' emails and petitions were heard by the council, but he is

not sure because the proposal calls for a roundabout rather than no access. He is also concerned about environmental impacts, given what happened recently at Glen Lake.

Gustafson noted it was after the July 11<sup>th</sup> joint study session that staff considered how to address those concerns and still provide full access, and a roundabout was considered. He added a layout showing all three street options was posted on the county's website prior to the notice of this meeting.

Callison asked Gustafson to address the environmental impacts of the roundabout. Gustafson responded the environmental impacts of the project will be studied when the county gets into final design plans. There needs to be an agreed-upon geometric design for the roadway first.

Callison added the zoning for the area is created to be part of the development process. Making decisions about whether it is commercial or residential, and what level of commercial or residential, is an ongoing process and the city councils will seek public participation. This project should not have an impact on the zoning of the residential neighborhood. The council would have to review the Comp Plan guideline, but this project should not have an impact on the neighborhood zoning.

Gina Musech, 3727 Shady Oak Road, Minnetonka, stated she lives north of the north service road intersection. She believes that intersection presents a safety issue, and there needs to be some resolution to that. The current proposal does not rectify that hazard area, most importantly because drivers will still be able to make a left-hand turn out of that service exit, as that is located at the bottom of a hill and curve. She would like some clarification as to the viewpoint by the people coming south on Shady Oak Road and also some clarification on any further improvements that are expected to happen further north on Shady Oak and if that has been taken into consideration by the county. The county and Mn-DOT prefer to limit access points onto major roads, but this is basically moving an access point further north, not reducing an access point.

Musech continued that her belief is a cul-de-sac would reduce traffic on the service road, which should be an objective of this process. Currently a lot of people use that service road as a shortcut. Shady Oak Road is oftentimes very backed up, and when that happens, people go along the shoulder to bypass those cars and take the north service road. With the improvement of the right

turn lane, that will hopefully be improved significantly. This is only a convenience for a fairly small, mature neighborhood in the northwest corner of the intersection of Shady Oak Road and Highway 7. They already have several other access points into and out of that neighborhood. She does not see significantly more traffic on Huntingdon from people not from the neighborhood, when they have Baker Road and Shady Oak Road to get to Highway 7 and Minnetonka Boulevard. She asked the county what is expected to happen further north on Shady Oak Road.

Gustafson indicated the construction limits of this project have previously been expanded to address some of the concerns mentioned by the residents tonight, specifically regarding poor site lines and dips in the roads. Regarding future plans, the Minnetonka city staff can state there are no future plans for upgrades of Shady Oak Road to the north. He is also certain the county does not have any plans; it is not even a provisional project. This should be some assurance that there is nothing planned in the near future for Shady Oak Road.

Callison asked if the next step of the process will provide additional detail about the sightlines of the road or the profile of the road, which gives a sense of the dips and the valleys. Gustafson stated that has already been looked at, and that is what has made the county decide to push the project further to the north because of the dips in the road and poor geometrics. That information will be further reviewed as the project gets further into design. The county surveyors will likely take survey shots of the driveways on Shady Oak Road to ensure poor geometrics of both the roadways and driveways are addressed.

Russell Thomsen, 3933 Shady Oak Road, Minnetonka, stated the cost is definitely a factor in terms of dollars, removal of trees and homes, as well as 50 years of property tax loss of the homes. Comparing Williston Road to the north service road makes no sense to him in terms of the amount of traffic. He also suggested taking care of Baker Road's current problems first.

The meeting was recessed at 8:38 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 8:48 p.m.

Callison noted she received a note from a resident on Huntingdon Drive who is concerned about the cul-de-sac and does not feel comfortable speaking publicly.

Perry Torvik, 4006 Huntingdon Drive, Minnetonka, stated he attended the initial meeting with the diagrams and the two options of closing the north service road or redesigning it. As soon as his neighbors saw the diagram, they realized the only way for them to get to eastbound Highway 7 is to go to Shady Oak Road. There are only two ways to get to Shady Oak Road: the north service road or Huntingdon Drive up to the stop sign, which is a bad intersection. He has not found one neighbor who would go along with shutting off the north service road. He obtained over 100 signatures indicating preference for keeping it open and redesigning it. There are residents who walk along the street who do not want the additional 400 to 500 cars a day. He thanked city staff for all their work.

John Hawkins, 4280 Oak Drive Lane, Minnetonka, stated he is concerned about the roundabout. Various reasons have been stated against it. The increase in traffic is an assumption. He would like to find out if that even takes into consideration future businesses going in the area. He has heard people talk about what little access they have already and how it will be blocked off. He believes a right-in, right-out makes most sense and will save money, allowing the money to be spent on other projects. He thanked staff for all their time working on this.

Callison asked Gustafson to comment on whether traffic projections reflect commercial redevelopment in that area. Gustafson indicated the projections did not, because it is not known what will occur on these sites in terms of redevelopment. Staff did look at the area and what is the destination to the west. Most commercial developments want to be on an arterial road like Shady Oak Road for access purposes and ease of people finding their businesses. It may be that some folks in the neighborhood come that direction, and they will likely continue. If there is a coffee shop, it could draw more people, but there is not a true destination for people going west on Oak Drive Lane. There is nothing that should attract them to the area west of there. After this is built, there will be a nice, safe access to Shady Oak Road.

Terri Urista, 1169 Bradford Road, Hopkins, stated her concern is noise once the buildings are taken down. She asked what is planned in terms of a buffer between the neighborhood and the businesses.

Callison responded the answer to that question will unfold as the project process unfolds.

Glydewell Burdick, Jr., 201 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue North, Hopkins, stated last year at this time residents were treated to 72 to 96 hours of a significant diesel pump running on his front doorstep, attempting to pump out the Shady Oak Duck Pond to reopen Shady Oak Road and Second Street from flooding. He would like not to have that experience again. That also included a hose line on 21<sup>st</sup> and a river down the other side of the hill on 21<sup>st</sup>. He asked whether this project includes a full solution based on at least a 100-year storm to controlling the water level at the Shady Oak Duck Pond.

Stadler responded the intention is certainly to design for the 100-year storm event. He remembers the diesel pumps, and Hopkins does not want to have to do that again. This project will be designed to prevent that from happening, but there will be more details as the project moves forward.

Jill Strunk, 4001 Huntingdon Drive, Minnetonka, expressed appreciation for this process where citizens can provide feedback. She stated Huntingdon was not designed to be a high-traffic street. If 55 percent of the cars move to Huntingdon Drive, that would be an additional 600 cars a day. North of her home is a hill with a curve, and it is especially dramatic in the wintertime. There have been a number of times in the winter where people have slid into her yard.

Rhonda Watkins, 4007 Huntingdon Drive, Minnetonka, stated she is opposed to capping off the north frontage road. She is also concerned about the increased traffic on Huntingdon. It is poorly designed as it is and there are lots of pedestrians and dog walkers on the street. The only way out of that neighborhood would be at Shady Oak Road and Huntingdon, which is already a difficult intersection looking to the north and south.

Maryann Remington, 4234 Oak Drive Lane, Minnetonka, stated the current design provides the best solution. It provides safety for the kids and the drivers. She is adamantly opposed to people trying to make U-turns on Lake Street Extension, as she lost a daughter to a U-turn accident.

Susan Haub, 4020 Shady Oak Road, Minnetonka, stated her home may be acquired with this road design. Her family does not want to move. They have just remodeled their house, and she is asking the councils to reconsider this, especially the personal side of the impacts. She agrees that Lake Street extension should be blocked off. She does not think there will be increased traffic on Huntingdon.

She does not believe that many people in her neighborhood will take Huntingdon as a shortcut.

Callison closed the public hearing at 9:05 p.m.

Schneider stated the north frontage road is one of the most significant issues the two city councils are dealing with. It has to improve to change the current configuration, and the only viable options he sees is to approve the current layout, which means taking some homes, or solving the traffic signaling at Baker Road. He has driven the neighborhood and has observed the traffic patterns and habits, and he does not see any devastating impacts on Huntingdon if the left-turn movements on Baker Road can be resolved. If they cannot be resolved, then Minnetonka should not do something that creates major safety issues that currently do not exist. Rather than just saying this is the best option, he proposes the two councils approve this alignment, unless a better alternative is found through further study and a more extensive look is taken regarding what can be done at Baker Road.

Schneider continued the other big issue is whether the county will approve a light without meeting warrants; that issue needs further discussion. He understands from the county staff perspective why they do not want to make an exception in this case, as there are a number of needs in the county. However, from a policymaker and taxpayer standpoint, the proposed configuration could potentially cost \$1.5 to \$2 million to acquire homes and build roads. It is a safer solution, but it still includes an access of people making left turns onto a busy road. That \$1.5 to \$2 million compared to \$300,000 to \$600,000 to resolve the Baker Road issue warrants further study. He is prepared to support the staff's plan because of all the work that has gone into it, but he proposes ongoing discussions with the county to further study alternatives to safely get people onto Baker Road and solve a current problem. He believes there is time to do this, as it could be done toward the end of the construction project.

Schneider stated he generally likes the way the project is developing. One of the problems he always has with acquiring properties is the true impact tends not to be on the homes that are being taken, as they are adequately compensated and get a new home somewhere else; the impact is on the people that are left, as they have a road closer to them. This plan allows for some significant buffering and separation that other road projects do not allow. All in all, the impacts are being mitigated.

Schneider continued that the other issue is Oak Drive Lane and the roundabout. He thinks the plan can be further refined, but in principle, it works quite well. He does not buy into some of the neighbors' sentiments that there will be all kinds of stray vehicles coming into the neighborhood as a result of it. He understands and hears their feelings but does not agree.

Wagner stated he is pleased with how the project has come along overall. He noted the Minnetonka and Hopkins Economic Development Authorities are focused on the businesses that are impacted, in order to ensure they will continue to operate. He supports the staff's recommendation of a roundabout for Oak Drive rather than a right-in, right-out for a long-term solution. He is troubled by the north frontage road. If the plan proceeds now, there is a cost dilemma, and if the cities wait, there is a cost dilemma as the county will not participate in the future. He is less inclined to fully support this as much as Schneider. He would like to more fully explore the other options, as he does not like the expense of taking that many homes. He will not hold up the project, as it is a good project, but that is a concern of his. The change does not justify the loss in property taxes and the cost of property acquisition.

Ellingson stated he likes roundabouts and they work very well, so the issue is not whether there should be one. The issue is whether there should be a connection from the south leg of Oak Drive Lane to Main Street. There is not much traffic on Oak Drive Lane either way, and this will not cause an increase. It is just shifting traffic from the north leg to the south leg. He thinks there are a number of reasons not to connect to Main Street. The first is there is a separation between the commercial area on Shady Oak Road and the residential area, and originally the plan was to keep that separation. Another concern is the change in elevation; it may not be easy to build a street there. He recalls Schneider being concerned about people making a U-turn, as there is a median on Shady Oak Road. That is still a legitimate concern, and perhaps a sign prohibiting U-turns could be installed. There really is not much traffic on these streets now, and there is no need to make the connection to Main Street.

Ellingson brought up the statements expressed during the public hearing by the VFW's representative regarding how the road construction will ruin that business. He recalled the impact on the businesses on Minnetonka Boulevard when the intersection of Hopkins Crossroad and Minnetonka Boulevard was closed. Those businesses lost business even though their street was not under

construction. They lost business because traffic was restricted and the project took longer than it was supposed to.

Ellingson added that he read in the paper that businesses shut down during the Lowry Avenue reconstruction because they lost so many customers. In that case, the street was closed off during the reconstruction, and Shady Oak Road will be kept open during this construction. The cross streets of Lowry Avenue were kept open, but still the businesses shut down. Ellingson suggested the city acquire the VFW property, even though it is not currently listed on the property acquisition list. He does not want to approve this plan knowing some businesses will be destroyed.

Ellingson stated it is difficult to tell people the city is going to take people's homes through condemnation. He attended a neighborhood meeting where this was discussed. Perhaps there is some way to work this out so people do not lose their homes. He stated all of the accesses to the county roads are overloaded, and this proposal does not solve that; it simply moves traffic around.

Callison asked if staff can comment on the property acquisition process, specifically as it relates to Ellingson's comments regarding the VFW.

Gustafson responded the Hennepin County Community Works representative has indicated that acquiring some property that is not technically needed for the roadway is a possibility. That will be addressed as part of the redevelopment and development of this area.

Callison stated a business could also choose to relocate entirely. Gustafson indicated that is correct, and he recalled a Hopkins council member addressed that at an earlier meeting. Those are questions that will be addressed to county staff and the city staffs at Minnetonka and Hopkins.

Allendorf stated he thought he heard one possible solution to the parking problem was acquiring a parcel contiguous to the VFW. Gustafson responded that is definitely a possibility. There are parcels that the city will have to acquire for this project. Counties may at times look at swapping land, so it could be a permanent taking from the VFW while supplementing them with land from the total take, and working out a design that is compatible to both.

Allendorf stated this is a good project, and he believes there are solutions to those parking and redevelopment issues. He recalled

at the previous study session he was concerned about the U-turns that would have been created by the right-in, right-outs on the north side as well as at Main Street. He has to take a U-turn to get into his neighborhood because the access has been closed off, and he does not believe a sign prohibiting U-turns will stop people from making them. He likes the roundabouts as a solution, and hopes when it goes in, there will be some development contiguous to it because one objective Gustafson laid out was to provide a visual barrier to people coming west on Main Street. That visual barrier would happen if the roundabout were in line with Main Street rather than off to the right. That will be taken care of when the development occurs. Closing off the street and the buffer will be a benefit to the Oak Drive Lane residents.

Allendorf indicated he would agree with Schneider's suggestion regarding the north frontage road, if it were not for the fact that the area has been studied apart from this issue. The solutions seem to be the three that have been articulated, and out of the three, this one appeals to him the most. The increase of 600 cars on Huntingdon is bothersome. The intersection of the off-ramp of Highway 7 as it hits Baker Road is very difficult currently; the addition of 450 to 500 cars will make it impossible. He hopes this will be studied whether this goes ahead as is or not. He thinks this is a good solution and a good project and will vote for it.

Thomas expressed agreement overall with most of the council's comments. He believes the roundabout provides an opportunity to lead people on around the roundabout, not through the neighborhood, when they realize it will not lead them to the commercial buildings. He thinks the idea of the right-in, right-out would create U-turns and would not be a good idea in that area. The north frontage road is probably the most difficult issue in the proposal. He does not want to have people's homes taken, but upon review of the plan, it is clear change must occur in the area. The question is obtaining the county support now or doing it without them in the future.

Callison stated she does not believe the traffic increase to Oak Drive Lane neighborhood will affect the area that much. It will avoid the right-in, right-out, which is not an optimal long-term solution. The roundabout did evolve out of the last joint study session, where there was a clear questioning about whether it made sense to cut off that access. The roundabout will not draw people in, but rather will make it a special place with some landscaping.

Callison stated the north frontage road is a more difficult issue. What is unacceptable to her as an alternative is to increase the traffic on Baker Road or to increase the burden on Huntingdon and Shady Oak Road. The access should not be cut off unless there is a way to improve Baker and Huntingdon, and she does not believe there is a way to improve them. If there was a way, it would be under consideration. The cost issues are clearly legitimate, but that intersection does not work well. She understands if the council feels it needs to continue to look at more information to be able to say every possible alternative has been considered. However, that drags the process out and may offer false hope to the property owners. She wants to be assured this is the only solution, and she does believe that.

Maxwell stated this process started a year and a half ago, and it has been important to keep the integrity of the neighborhoods in Minnetonka and Hopkins, and this plan keeps that. He is willing to vote for the proposal, as it makes sense, even though it has created difficult decisions for both councils. But the first decision was to make this a four-lane road rather than a three-lane, and that does create hard decisions. He supports the Oak Lane Drive proposal.

Halverson commended the city staffs for the work done so far. She believes the Oak Lane Drive roundabout will eliminate the U-turn traffic, which would be dangerous. There may be some gawkers wanting to try the roundabout when it first opens, but it will not draw traffic in. She believes the parts in the proposal that affect Hopkins are the best for its citizens.

Rowan stated it is very important to approve a roadway design for Shady Oak Road reconstruction tonight. It would be a travesty to not approve something because of items that do not affect the roadway. Regarding businesses, he indicated he does not have a problem with the layout plan, as long as there is clear understanding it does not preclude the city from further acquisitions. If the VFW wants to be acquired, they should be guaranteed that option.

Rowan expressed support for the roundabout. He liked the right-in, right-out solution until he considered the U-turn possibilities. He does not think there will be significant extra traffic as a result of that. He agrees once people realize the access and egress points have changed, their driving habits will change. He believes the roadway alignment can be approved tonight without making a decision on the frontage road. That would be his preference, but he

represents Hopkins and that is in Minnetonka, and the Hopkins council was not involved in those neighborhood discussions.

Thompson stated last evening the Hopkins council specifically opted out of discussions regarding the north side of Highway 7, as it is a Minnetonka decision. However, he finds it frustrating that some of that decision may be made based on the county's unwillingness to participate after the fact. This is a county-driven project. Some would argue this would not have to be done if the main arteries were built to capacity. If it were up to him, he would rather see the north part completed in phases, cul-de-sac it out, and see how it develops. There are problems with Baker Road now; he sympathizes with how Minnetonka will deal with that in this process. It seems to be an outrageous sum of money to remove a couple of homes to shift 400 to 500 daily traffic trips that may or may not be there once Shady Oak Road is improved as it is. Many traffic studies have been done with different developments, and many neighborhoods have doubted those studies. However, he cannot think of a single situation where after the fact the traffic count numbers have not made sense.

Thompson continued he is confident Main Street will work. It would be nice if the entire neighborhood would be satisfied with one solution, but that never happens, and if he lived in that area, he would have a very strong opinion on any of the options. He appreciates the staff work put into this project and believes they have come up with the best solutions, though he still does have doubts about the north access.

Youakim stated it is difficult to make decisions on parts of the plan, as the Hopkins council has not been involved in all the discussions. Every single time she has been on that frontage road with another car, they are going to the same place as she is, to West Junior High. She is not quite convinced the neighborhood will see that much more traffic, because half of those traffic counts are cut-through traffic. She believes that is something that needs to be looked at again.

Youakim continued that it would be nice for the city to acquire the VFW parcel because there will definitely be an impact as a result of the construction. If the city does not acquire it, perhaps a developer may want to acquire the VFW. Trying to redevelop that parcel without taking the VFW would be difficult. That is something that needs to be looked at during the redevelopment study. She expressed support for both legs being right-in, right-out at Oak Drive Lane rather than the roundabout.

Callison stated she is not aware of any meeting the Minnetonka council held on this road reconstruction project without involvement of the Hopkins council, nor is she aware of any discussions where the two councils have not met jointly and heard the same information. Youakim noted she was referring to the neighborhood meetings.

Callison clarified she believes the Hopkins resolution excludes the north frontage road. It will be acceptable to the county for their council to act on that, and then Minnetonka will act on a resolution slightly different than that. She noted the Hopkins resolution also includes the roundabout on Oak Drive Lane.

Minnetonka Assistant City Manager Geralyn Barone clarified it is appropriate for the project to move forward and the preliminary plans to move forward if the Hopkins resolution is slightly different, the reason being that they are approving plans that affect the city of Hopkins, and the north frontage road is not in Hopkins.

Hopkins City Manager Richard Getschow noted there is also a slight language difference as it relates to the county cost participation policy. That language is not included in the Hopkins resolution, but it is in the Minnetonka resolution. It is his understanding that is acceptable as well.

Youakim asked if there is no way to approve the alignment with the option of the roundabout, either insert A or insert B before the Hopkins council, with that decision to be made once the redevelopment phase begins. Maxwell concurred, noting that gets into their preliminary plans. They will move forward with the plans as submitted tonight.

Gustafson clarified that approval of the layout does approve some type of connection, and it tells the county something is desired in that area, which in this case is a roundabout. It also tells the county that right-of-way needs to be acquired in that area. If something is left out, the county will not proceed with any right-of-way acquisition for that area. If it is handled at a later date, county funds for acquiring the parcel that now includes the roundabout would not be acquired as a part of this. Approving tonight tells the county that the cities want to include it as part of the project and to follow their standard right-of-way acquisition procedures.

In response to a question by Rowan, Gustafson explained the right-of-way acquisitions being discussed tonight pertain to the road

improvements, and those have certain funding requirements that the county is obligated to. If it is approved at a later date, it is unknown whether there will be any county funding available. This guarantees both cities that the county will follow its typical funding policy if that connection is put in.

Schneider noted there are two types of acquisitions. What is being done tonight is approving the formal condemnation/appraisal process that the county is required to do and limited to do. The county cannot go out and acquire property that is not needed for a right-of-way. However, the councils and their EDA's can decide from a redevelopment standpoint that it may be beneficial to acquire all of those properties, put them all together, and put them out for RFPs to developers. That is a very strong likelihood in his mind that will ultimately happen in this situation.

In response to a question by Youakim, Gustafson explained the extra parcel needs to be acquired for any extension over Oak Drive Lane. There is a difference in what is required between having no connection to Main Street for Oak Drive Lane and having a connection.

Rowan moved, Halverson seconded a motion to adopt Resolution 2006-059 approving layout 1 for the reconstruction of CSAH 61, Shady Oak Road, between County Road 3, Excelsior Boulevard, and Highway 7, authorizing easement acquisition and imposing a parking ban. Rowan, Halverson, Thompson, and Maxwell voted "yes." Youakim voted "no." Motion carried.

Wagner stated the Minnetonka council would like further discussion regarding the north frontage road. There appears to be a division on the council's thoughts related to that, but there does seem to be consensus on approving the rest of the project. He would like to see if the council wants to move forward, put in a cul-de-sac, or study it and do everything else now. Wagner stated he believes it is too much to do and would probably be against it, but would like to hear the rest of the council's opinion.

Callison asked staff to comment on Schneider's suggestion for further study. Gustafson agreed that is something that could easily be added at a later date because it is the construction of a residential street out to a major intersection. He understands Schneider's intent was to approve this and take the next few months to see whether there are any other options. Gustafson believes the council could approve it under Schneider's scenario, spend a couple months looking at it to find other options, and it

would not slow down the process. The county would be getting good direction. The county has heard Hopkins approve the layout, and Minnetonka can approve the layout as shown in the packet, with the understanding that more time will be spent looking at other options.

Gustafson continued that the fear is, as some council members suggested, this direction would give false hope to the residents. That is possible, but staff can easily do this and stay in contact with those residents. He believes the council can pass the resolution and provide the county clear direction to proceed. The next two months are not critical for the county's project, but it is critical to the city and to these residents.

Twinem asked whether the council is okay with the Shady Oak Road alignment north of Highway 7, not considering the access point. The county needs to know that because going forward, there are partial acquisitions required of these properties. Approval means the county can study that in more detail as well as whatever needs to be looked at regarding Baker Road.

Callison noted if the council asks for further study, it is not study of the intersection with Highway 7; it is study of the intersection between the frontage road and Shady Oak Road.

Gustafson concurred and clarified there is acquisition necessary for these properties anyway, even just for temporary construction easements in someone's front yard. The county staff can continue to do all their work regarding this acquisition if there is a clear understanding that within the next few months the council comes back and says yes or no. That will not slow the county down because they still have to do title research on all of these properties.

Thomas suggested the council vote on the actual layout of the southern part of Highway 7, have the road layout north of Highway 7 approved, but just make sure all the options for the access points have been looked at. A time limit can be placed on that research so affected residents are not led on. He wants to ensure the traffic counts that are supposed to happen are accurate and that the best decision is made regarding the north frontage road. He does want the county to know the city will move ahead with this project, except for the decision regarding whether it is a frontage road access or a cul-de-sac. He suggested leaving those two things on the table for two or three months, dealing with them at that time, and then it will be over with.

Schneider stated he generally agrees with that, but he is concerned about the wording of "tabling," which implies there is no approval of either one until the study is completed. He is somewhat pessimistic there will be a solution for Baker Road, but it does need further study. He does not want to mess up the project timing by not formally approving the resolution yet. He suggested not changing the wording of the resolution, but also directing staff to spend the next three months conducting a thorough study on all the alternatives and then come back and present a solution where there is no need to acquire the homes.

Allendorf stated he prefers that alternative as well. He asked Gustafson if the decision has to be made within two months or if three would be acceptable to staff and the county. Gustafson responded he believes the county would be fine within three months, as there is a lot of work to do.

Allendorf stated he hopes false promise is not being suggested, but he likes Schneider's idea of taking a look at the solution to Baker Road. He is bothered by language leaving the cul-de-sac or other alternatives on the table. He prefers a solution to Baker Road be the decision point at the end of three months rather than arguing about things that the council has discussed for three and a half hours tonight.

Callison suggested the staff focus on if those houses stay, what the best alternative is that solves the problems at Baker, Shady Oak, and Huntingdon.

Schneider moved, Allendorf seconded a motion to adopt Resolution 2006-129 regarding Preliminary layout approval for Shady Oak Road Project, Excelsior Blvd. to just north of Highway 7.

Wagner asked to amend the motion to include that staff will come back within 90 days with a report on the north frontage road options and costs associated with those options.

Gustafson suggested allowing staff the entire month of January rather than just 90 days. Wagner, Schneider, and Allendorf agreed.

Callison clarified the motion includes approving the road moving slightly further west of the terminus at Excelsior Boulevard; it includes the roundabout design for Oak Drive Lane; and it includes what the staff shows on the screen for the north frontage road. There will be another decision point on the north frontage road, as

staff will bring information back regarding what traffic would look like in the neighborhood if those homes stayed.

Allendorf, Schneider, Thomas, Wagner, and Callison voted "yes." Ellingson voted "no." Motion and amendment passed.

**4. ADJOURNMENT.**

Maxwell moved, Allendorf seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:15 p.m. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted

Laura L. Ronbeck  
Acting City Clerk