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The Montclair Township Council had a short conference meeting on May 13, focusing most of its attention on a proposed resolution awarding a contract for a design and development of a pavement management system to help the township keep track of the conditions of its streets and keep them up to par accordingly, and it also looked at possible ordinance amending and supplementing its current ordinance governing affordable housing.

Township Engineer Kimberli Craft told the council that she had put out a request for proposal to develop a system to keep tabs on the street pavement. Of the two entities that answered, Craft opted for the \$40,000 contract offered by the Center For Advanced Infrastructure Technology (CAIT) at Rutgers University. Craft explained that the system would allow Montclair to collect data on the street network, determine

methods to maintain and redo the streets. The information collected would include street names, the years they were last paved, lengths, and widths, among other data. Craft said that the information would provide guidance for policymakers in deciding when and how to maintain and prioritize the streets based on pavement conditions and budget parameters.

Among the various forms of resurfacing available to keep the roads in serviceable condition would be crack sealing and milling and repaving, along with microsurfacing — a thin layer of asphalt less than an inch thick — and recycling pavement by milling it and mixing and heating it with asphalt to re-use it. Craft said that CAIT has a great deal of expertise in how to maintain streets and roads.

Fourth Ward Councilor Renée Baskerville balked at the \$40,000 cost for CAIT as a contractor, but Craft said that this very expertise made them essential to hire and to learn from.

“The first time around, they’re going to provide that [expertise] for us by doing these evaluations,” Craft said. “Part of that is the expectation that our staff would be with them when they do it, and they would train us to do it in the future. So this is a one-time thing . . . it’s basically an investment in training and a setup of the system.”

She said that the Engineering Bureau, comprised of only herself and a partner, have trouble keeping up a ratings system for the streets with their other responsibilities to tend to, and Township Manager Marc Dashield added that CAIT would help the bureau provide the best ratings system possible going forward.

Dr. Baskerville was still skeptical, saying that even with such a system, the township would face difficulties and that the money for the contractor would be better spent directly on road repairs. “I’d like to take that \$40,000 and put it into potholes,” she said. Craft replied that the technology involved would make the system more efficient.



Montclair Township Engineer Kimberli Craft discusses a proposed pavement management system while Montclair Township Manager Marc Dashield takes notes.

Third Ward Councilor Sean Spiller wanted to know how the new system would be more efficient with the same two people in the bureau overseeing it, and Craft conceded that they would always need ongoing help with it because the process of gathering data takes about a month and a half. Councilor Spiller said he would like to see what the annual cost would be, and he also asked about training new municipal employees in a changeover. Craft said that Department of Community Services personnel could be trained to evaluate the streets and paid overtime for it, which could be more cost-effective, along with trained employees training new ones.

“I’d like to see maybe either option, the maintenance yearly of bringing in a consultant, or if it’s the overtime cost, as you noted, and which one you think is better to maintain the data,” Councilor Spiller said, expressing concern about the long term impact. Mayor Robert Jackson said he was open to allowing adjacent communities to opt into the system in a shared-services agreement but said he preferred to move forward immediately rather than wait for another council to consider joining and cause a delay.

Also, Craft reported that the design for a traffic signal planned for Bloomfield Avenue and Lloyd Road and Parkhurst Place should be ready by the end of the month, with a contract to install the lights likely to be awarded in June and the signal to be operational by the middle of September. She also said she wanted to study traffic calling methods, a signal, speed humps, at the intersection of Walnut Street and North Fullerton Avenue to reduce car crashes there. Councilor-at-Large Rich McMahon advised that the area around the intersection should be studied to provide “a broader picture.”

With regard to amending the affordable housing ordinance, Planning Director Janice Talley suggested three changes.

One would be a voluntary program to offer \$10,000 as incentive to landlords extend affordable housing controls for a minimum of thirty years as an incentive, with the money going to rehabilitate the unit, with a proposal from the Essex Community Land Trust to help administer it. The second proposal would include a formalization of a down-payment assistance program that currently isn’t in any of Montclair’s current housing ordinances, while a third proposal is to eliminate a discrepancy in the inclusionary zoning rules.

“We have actually have two inclusionary zoning ordinances in the township code,” Talley explained.

“One’s in the zoning ordinance, and one’s in the affordable housing ordinance, and they conflict. What happened was, when we amended the affordable housing ordinance in 2009, we put that in the zoning code, and left the prior inclusionary zoning ordinance in the affordable housing code.” She said she wanted to take out the section that has to do with inclusionary zoning set-asides from the housing ordinance and keep it in the newer zoning code.

Dr. Baskerville said that she wanted the Montclair Housing Commission to vet the proposed changes first and wanted Talley to provide. The next meeting of the commission conflicts with a planning board meeting on May 19, and Talley hopes to set another date in the near future to meet with the commission.

