

## Montclair engineer looks to revamp how town looks at roads

File  
Photo  
by  
Adam  
Anik/  
Staff



Photographer

Township Engineer Kim Craft is looking to improve maintenance of municipal roads with technological and procedural improvements provided by Rutgers University.

In the midst of a multimillion-dollar effort to spruce up municipal roadways, Montclair is considering new protocols and technologies for its investments in streets.

Township Engineer Kim Craft cited a proposed \$40,000 expenditure to Rutgers University for technological improvements, staff training and evaluation of Montclair's roadways.

The goal, according to Craft, who spoke with Township Council members during the council's conference session this past Tuesday, is to stay ahead of roadway deterioration.

While milling and paving are more well-known methods, less invasive methods such as crack-sealing and micro-surfacing, or placing a ¼ inch seal over a roadway, are less expensive options. In-place recycling is also a cheaper alternative, Craft said, in which pavement is dug up, heated and reapplied in one process.

Any refurbishment's primary goal is to keep water out of the road's interior, as it leads to the most damage.

The contract with Rutgers, Craft said, would help Montclair determine which treatment is best for each road over the long haul.

There are incentives for maintaining the roads, noted Craft. For one, it saves residents money in car repairs. Well-maintained roads are also safer, according to Craft, citing a statistic that states that poor road conditions can equate to an increase in traffic accidents or up to 30 percent.

It is also cheaper to maintain roads early as well as later on, after more deterioration, Craft said. A road in "good" quality costs roughly \$2 per square yard to restore, Craft said. Roads in "fair" or "poor" condition cost \$20 per square yard and \$80 per square yard, respectively.

Craft said that she envisioned the Rutgers contract to be a one-time expense, after which Montclair employees will be trained in evaluation methods and have the software to track the condition of municipal roads.

Fourth Ward Township Councilwoman Renée Baskerville questioned why, if the township has an Engineering Department, it would need a tutorial from Rutgers.

Craft explained that Rutgers has a level of expertise and experience that Montclair does not possess, and that the contract would facilitate an improvement in both approach and technology.

Township Manger Marc Dashield added that, as the municipal Department has two persons, there are projects that are simply too large for them to handle alone. For instance, Dashield said, it's been two years since Montclair has developed a new ranking of roadways by condition, due to a staff shortage.

Craft said that, among the costs of software, training and road evaluations, the evaluation element will be the priciest. Third Ward Councilman Sean Spiller asked how, while understaffed, Montclair can expect to continue on with the work that Rutgers will initiate.

Craft acknowledged that her department will be hard-pressed to do so without additional resources. An employee formerly spent a month-and-a-half during the summer just evaluating roads. It is possible, she said, that Community Services employees could earn overtime rather than make an outside hire for continued road evaluation work.

Spiller requested cost estimates for both possibilities.

Second Ward Council Robin Schlager opined that curbs should be similarly evaluated, a sentiment Mayor Robert Jackson echoed. Schlager also recommended a call-in system for residents to report damaged roads.

Such a program is in the works, according to Dashield.

During public comment, resident Sandy Sorkin asked whether Montclair has reached out to neighboring municipalities to see if they would be interested in participating in the Rutgers program and sharing the costs. Craft said she had not yet gauged interest in whether Montclair could be joined by other municipalities.

Jackson asserted that Montclair should continue forward with its plans while, at the same time, reach out to neighboring municipalities to see whether they would join with Montclair and potentially reduce the overall cost.

### **A dangerous corner**

Also discussed during Tuesday's meeting were potential measures to address traffic at the intersection of North Fullerton Avenue and Walnut Street.

Craft said that, while searching a state database on vehicle crashes, she found that Walnut Street and

Glenridge Avenue are both high-collision roadways. After a conversation with a resident, Craft said that she looked further to find that the intersection of North Fullerton Avenue and Walnut Street has been the location of 15 traffic accidents during the past three years, a tally that would warrant a traffic signal.

The township engineer said that a four-way stop with the addition of potential traffic-slowing measures such as speed humps may be more appropriate for that intersection.

Spiller said that he would be concerned how traffic-calming measures at that intersection may impact and potentially funnel the vehicles to a neighboring area. The councilman requested that the Montclair Police Department be included in any discussions on how to address the intersection. First Ward Councilman Bill Hurlock added that the Montclair Fire Department and Montclair Ambulance Unit also be included in discussions.

Councilman-At-Large Rich McMahon recommended that the Montclair Traffic and Parking Advisory Committee look into the intersection. McMahon added that, whatever decision is made should be in the best interest of Walnut Street as a whole.

In addition to Walnut Street and North Fullerton Avenue, Baskerville said that Montclair should look into the intersection of Claremont Avenue and Forrest Street, a similarly dangerous road, according to the councilwoman.

#### Amending affordable housing

Township Planner Janice Talley spoke to the council about a potential ordinance to amend the township's existing affordable housing ordinance.

A large element to the proposed ordinance would be a voluntary affordable housing extension program.

According to the state uniform housing controls, Talley said, municipalities have the right to first refusal when an affordable unit is up for sale. The owner of the property also is constrained to a maximum amount that the property may sell for, able to keep only 5 percent of any profit above the maximum sale price, with 95 percent going to the municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

Rather than go that route, Montclair would pay unit owners \$10,000 to voluntarily extend affordability controls for a minimum of 30 years.

Additional details in the ordinance, according to Talley, would be to formalize the township's down payment assistance program and eliminate a redundancy in the municipal inclusionary zoning ordinance. Different versions of the municipal inclusionary zoning ordinance are present in zoning code and in affordable housing code, Talley said.

Baskerville requested that Montclair Housing Commission review the ordinance before it comes before the Township Council. Talley said that the ordinance has already been sent out to commission members.

The impetus for the new ordinance, according to Talley, is the expiration of affordability controls on 34 units at Montclair Mews at 50 Pine St.

seeking consent

Derek Orth of North Jersey District Water Supply Commission came before the council members to seek their consent on a list of capital projects the commission seeks to move forward with, at a cumulative cost of \$95 million.

Township Attorney Ira Karasick said that Montclair would not incur any debt from these projects, and simply needed to grant its consent to the projects, something the council will vote on during its May 20 meeting.

Dashield explained that Montclair will pay for the projects through its water rates, but that rates are not projected to increase due to other expenditures coming off the books.

Montclair receives, on average, 4.7 million gallons of water per day from North Jersey District Water, roughly 5 percent of the reservoir's daily outflow.

#### Historic Designs

During its May 20 meeting, The Township Council will vote on a resolution whether to enter into a contract with Thomason & Associates to prepare historic design guidelines for Montclair.

Talley said that Montclair received a \$23,500 grant for the project and has a narrow window, until Sept. 30, in which to do the work.

Of the responsive bidders, Talley said that Thomason & Associates is the most qualified and, though located in Tennessee, would be able to meet the deadline.

#### New stop light

With designs completed for a signal light to be installed at the intersection of Bloomfield Avenue and Lloyd Road, Craft reported that the light should be up and running by mid-September.

#### Buckle up, Montclair

The Township Council will vote on a resolution supporting the "Click It or Ticket" campaign during its May 20 meeting. The campaign involving Montclair police verifying that motorists are obeying the law by using their seatbelts, would run from Monday, May 19, through Sunday, June 1.

Cheers!

Tierney's Tavern will be honored for its 80th anniversary through a proclamation given during the May 20 meeting.

Contact Andrew Segedin at [segedin@northjersey.com](mailto:segedin@northjersey.com)

© 2014 North Jersey Media Group