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**Village of Holmen
Public Works Committee
March 5, 2026**

Trustee Anderson called the Public Works Committee meeting to order at 5:31 PM on Thursday, March 5, 2026. Members present: Anderson, Elam, and Wyss. Administrator Heinig, President Barlow, DPW/Engineer Dahl, Assistant DPW/Engineer Mikshowsky, John Parfet, Kristie Parfet, and Doug Cieslak were also present.

Motion by Wyss, second by Anderson, to approve the minutes of the February 5, 2026 meeting – motion passed 3-0.

Public Comment

Doug Cieslak (129 Weston Rd) took the time to raise erosion concerns in the West Ridge development and inform the board that Long Coulee Creek is an impaired (303d) stream. He also questioned water quality and why the Village built Well 8 and removed Well 4.

Director's Monthly Report

SEWER

- Doug's passed his proficiency test. TSS sampling can be done in our lab
- Huber completed work on the sludge press the week of February 23.
- Sludge press is back in operation. Storage area is filling quickly.
- Heat in the control lab has been repaired.

WATER

- Clay valve at Well 6 is not closing 100%. Working with Municipal Well to repair. The well is out of service until repairs are made. The local DNR rep Alex has been informed.
- Water service break in Green Meadows Estates on March 4 was repaired today.

STREETS

- Tending to equipment and shop maintenance. Did a fairly comprehensive overhaul of the street sweeper.
- 2 snow storms during the last month. Monitoring the salt/sand shed inventory for the end of season quantity.
- In preparations for the street sweeping started pruning back boulevard trees in Hale Acres and Lee Addition.

STORM

- Met with the La Crosse Urban Stormwater (LSUG) group on January 15. Discussed Habitat for Humanity contract renewal.
- Village compost site was open for the winter monthly opening on Saturday February 21; 6 residents used the facility.

ENGINEERING

- North lift station project material submittals are being reviewed. Tentatively starting in next 2 weeks.

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- Cory is working with WisDOT to submit an application for funding for new signal installations at the USH 53/STH 35 interchange, and STH 35/Schaller Boulevard. Formal submittal is due to Central Office April 3.
- Cory working on materials for the potential collaboration with Town of Onalaska to replace the structure on Keppel Road. Application deadline May 1.
- Met with SEH design team to discuss Main Street drawings.
- Cory working on the north end of 2nd Avenue storm sewer rehab drawings.
- Asbestos inspection is complete at 406 Main Street. Working to get abatement contractor in-place.

OTHER

- N/A

Action Items

#5 Possible Action for Consideration of and Hearing for Appeal of ROW Policy for Notices Violation at 257 Weston Rd.

Administrator Heinig detailed the item for consideration this evening, which includes a requested appeal for a Notice of Violation and Order to Remediate for a Right-Of-Way (ROW) violation at 257 Weston Road. He stated that the committee was acting directly on behalf of the Village Board to consider tonight's appeal, to allow for special considerations in the ROW, and that tonight's decision would be final and binding.

Administrator Heinig described that the Village's ROW policy has formally and consistently upheld the expectation that the Village's ROW areas be strictly for public and utility use and must be free from debris or complications that could hinder public and utility use and therefore is expressly expected to be maintained as grass or sod, unless there is a defensible justification to consider otherwise. He outlined how this policy has especially been the consistent expectation in all of the Village's new subdivisions, such as in all new R-1 Zoned Single Family areas (which also have zoning design criteria that clearly designate that all street yards be in green space, maintained as grass or sod).

The property owner at 257 Weston Road at the completion of their new home this past summer, placed landscape rock mulch without Village approval in their entire R-1 Single Family ROW area rather than grass or sod as required (and is the only property in a new subdivision to do so). The property owner has since been given a Notice of Violation and Order to Remediate by this Spring, as their actions are a violation of the Village's ROW use and are inconsistent with ROW expectations of a new R-1 subdivision.

For tonight's consideration, the property owner has submitted an appeal to that Notice of Violation and Order to Remediate, seeking special considerations in the ROW. Heinig stated that it was incumbent upon the property owner to provide defensible justification for any desired exception that was paramount to their specific circumstance, to substantiate their desired special considerations.

The property owner was allowed to present their testimony. Owners of 257 Weston Road, Mr. & Mrs. Parfet, provided a handout showing landscape rock mulch in other areas of the Village, outlining that other properties in the Village had done the same as they had. Mr. Parfet then spoke, classifying his landscaping rock mulch as a "rain garden" and then defended the importance of soil conservation and how his rain garden should be left in place as it helps prevent erosive soils

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from making their way to an already impaired (303d) stream. He also stated that the Village ordinance does not clearly depict what is to belong in the boulevard area. He suggested that the community would be best suited if we would allow rain gardens more frequently. He finished by requesting that the committee approve the appeal in this case and allow him to keep his rain garden.

Heinig asked if there was any additional testimony they wished to share. There was none.

Village Staff from the Public Works Department was allowed to present their testimony. DPW/Engineer Dahl spoke to outline that the placement of the Parfet's landscaping materials in the ROW location is a hinderance to both the public works department and any future utility conflicts. The Village has not allowed any other new subdivision home builder to use the ROW in this manner and for good reason, and we simply can't allow this precedent. He then spoke to the Parfet's testimony that this area should be considered a "rain garden," stating that this isn't truly a rain garden as there is proof the area is irrigated and has no documentation of engineered permeable soils existing for this site, so this is simply landscaping. He continued by stating that under no circumstances should the Village ever allow a true rain garden in the ROW, as it could cause direct infiltration under the curb and roadbed, leading to significant long-term infrastructure problems. Thus, if it was a true rain garden, it would need to come out immediately. The fact is, the rock mulch with weed stop, irrigation and small shrubs is clearly just an elaborate landscaping of the ROW and again, should not be there.

Heinig asked if there was any additional testimony staff wished to share. There was none.

Upon conclusion of testimony from Mr. & Mrs. Parfet and DPW/Engineer Dahl, Administrator Heinig directed the Committee to discuss the testimony regarding a possible decision. Heinig outlined the testimony for the Committee and shared his view of the points raised. To be clear, no other property owner in a new R-1 Single Family Subdivision has ever been allowed to landscape their entire ROW area. There have been people who have asked to do so, but they were told no, and complied. Thus, allowing this appeal would be a major precedent that would be inconsistent with all policy decisions and actions of the Board for the past decade. Heinig felt this was especially concerning as Heinig heard and saw no defensible justification from tonight's testimony that would provide the Village PW Committee an exception for special considerations that would defend the precedent for this location and lot.

He outlined that the examples of preexisting locations where rock mulch landscaping existed, were all along very steep slopes that were not maintainable (this is defensible) or were in the 70-year old R-3 (Village's original plat with no sidewalks) Zoning District (not new subdivisions, where these kind of ROW actions were overlooked in the past). Thus, there were no examples provided where a new home was recently built in a new subdivision, in a similar R-1 Zoning District, where rock mulch landscaping was placed throughout the entire ROW front. Heinig continued that it was clear the Village Engineers were adamant that under no circumstances would we ever want a true rain garden in that location, as it would likely destroy the Village's road infrastructure. So that was clearly not a defensible justification either. Heinig also ended with the fact that the R-1 Single Family District also requires that all street yard areas be maintained as grass or sod, and that it has always been the Village's intention to replicate that expectation in the adjacent ROW as well. Thus, an action allowing the ROW to be inconsistent with the street yard zoning requirements would further lack common sense.

Various discussion was had by Anderson, Elam, and Wyss with specific questions about the difference between the R-3 Zoning District and the R-1 Zoning District. Heinig again clarified the differences and outlined the clear intent of the Planning Commission and Village Board when they required all R-1 Zoning Districts to have sod and grass for their front yard areas, because the

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community didn't want fully rocked front yards or yards planted with prairie grasses, etc. Heinig clarified that these Zoning criteria are not codified to apply directly to the ROW (to allow the Village flexibility whenever needed), however it has been the strict policy of the Village Board that nothing be permitted in the ROW anymore whenever possible, and that policy is consistent with the R-1 design criteria requiring seed or sod. R-3 Zoning areas allow modest flexibility because they existed prior to the establishment of these polices and ordinances. Discussion continued between board members. Elam noted that he also believed allowing the rock landscaping would be a terrible precedent that we couldn't defend and noted tonight provided no evidence to the contrary. He recounted that we've consistently not allowed anything in the ROW in our new subdivisions, and that includes the planting of trees or anything. Anderson felt that a precedent such as this was unacceptable and that we just can't allow it. Wyss understood and agreed with the other members, recognizing that tonight's circumstances were not necessarily defensible, but felt that perhaps we should consider new ordinance clarifications in the future that make it clear of what we do and don't want in the ROW. He acknowledged that has no bearing on tonight's item.

Motion to deny the appeal by Elam, second by Wyss. Motion Passed 3-0. The original Notice of Violation and Order to Remediate shall be upheld and enforced.

Adjourn

Motion by Anderson, second by Wyss to adjourn at 6:27 PM – motion passed 3-0.

Cory Mikshowsky
Asst. Director of Public Works/Engineer