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Sidewalk ordinance amended to ease repair costs

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SHELBY TOWNSHIP — In 2014, Shelby Township conducted a sidewalk maintenance program for the first time in many years, which included assessing the majority of the township's sidewalks.

From that experience, the administration and sidewalk committee developed ordinance amendments intended to improve sidewalk maintenance programs going forward.

On July 21, the Board of Trustees adopted the ordinance changes after a second reading. Two votes are required for charter townships to adopt ordinance amendments.

While property owners are responsible for sidewalk repairs, most of the amendments are designed to help finance the work, as well as to provide some township assistance.

The first amendment deletes the section of the ordinance calling for a sidewalk repair fund. Since the inception of the sidewalk repair fund, the board has never authorized a resolution to activate such provisions.

The three additions to the

ordinance are aimed at providing alternative methods for the township to contribute to the expense of sidewalk repairs under certain circumstances.

The first addition waives the 25 percent administrative fee if the property owner voluntarily agrees to have a township contractor perform the repairs.

"The administration believes that many property owners would appreciate the simplicity of using a township contractor rather than hiring a contractor of their own," said Tim Wood, Building Department director.

The second addition allows, in certain instances, payment over time subject to terms and conditions set forth by Board of Trustees resolution. Wood noted that the ordinance language is designed to make a payment program optional.

"The expensive sidewalk that repairs might be financially difficult for property owners, and these provisions are intended to lessen the financial burden by spreading the expense over time," Wood said. "The terms and conditions are yet to be developed at this time, but they must be authorized by the township

board."

The last addition enables the township to contribute toward the expense of certain sidewalk repairs where warranted. Wood gave the example that the Americans with Disabilities Act requires installation of detectable warning pads with the repair of curb ramps, even if the curb ramp never had a detectable warning before.

"Such devices significantly escalate the expense of repairs," Wood said. "(Other) specific circumstances are yet to be determined."

The board approved a sidewalk ordinance resolution, only good through 2015, that will allow for a proposed township contribution amount of \$100 per added tactile warning strip to curb ramps, as required by federal legislation.

Wood said, based on the amount of affected ramps in this year's program, he estimated the township's contribution to be approximately \$9,000. After this year, he said, the administration would need to return to the board to either have the resolution extended or modified.

"As long as the circumstances are limited to the situation that

(Wood) described, I have no problem with that," Trustee Paul Viar said.

The Board of Trustees voted unanimously to adopt the sidewalk ordinance amendments and resolution.

For more information about the sidewalk ordinance amendments or sidewalk maintenance program, call the Building Department at (586) 731-5969.

Call Staff Writer Sarah Wojcik at (586) 498-1029.

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