

## Oronoko residents hesitant about sidewalk idea

By DEBRA HAIGHT - HP Correspondent | Posted: Wednesday, October 9, 2013 6:00 am

BERRIEN SPRINGS - Oronoko Township Board members want more research before deciding whether to build sidewalks along Kephart Lane.

Township Supervisor Mike Hildebrand on Tuesday night reported results of a survey sent to 360 residents on and near Kephart and returned by 84 people. Results varied with more than half of respondents saying they would use the new sidewalks while 40 percent said they didn't want to pay anything extra for it.

The township can get a \$143,000 congestion mitigation and air quality grant from the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission to pay for the sidewalks. However, the township has to come up with a \$78,000 local match.

Hildebrand had a couple of suggestions about how to proceed, and board members approved a plan where survey results will be mailed back to residents. The residents would be invited to a meeting to discuss ways to fund the project.

"My personal feeling is that it will require a lot of feedback," he said. "A few people called me and they were generally not in favor of it, but they thought it would cost them something like \$200 a year. I said if 360 property owners paid \$20 a year for 10 years, it would raise \$72,000. They were surprised.

"Perhaps we should have a meeting with the people. If we talk and listen, a solution may work itself out. There could be enough opposed to it that it's not worth pursuing."

Also Tuesday, board members accepted a \$28,800 grant from the state Competitive Grant Assistance Program. The grant will cover 80 percent of the costs of the M-139 Corridor Study underway to find ways to coordinate zoning and building ordinances in the township and Berrien Springs.

The corridor study will be used to update ordinances that would handle growth coming with the extension of water and sewer lines from the village to the U.S. 31 freeway.

In other action, the board extended its moratorium on certain types of businesses until June 30, 2014. The moratorium was put in place in October 2012 and extended in April until this month.

The moratorium is for businesses ranging from sexually oriented shops, pawn shops and massage parlors to taxi services, home-based businesses, scrap metal dealers, carnivals and dance halls.

Hildebrand said board members have completed much work in the last nine months, they haven't finished work on the review of township ordinances regarding such businesses.