

Presented at the March 16, 2006 Village Meeting by Geri Dominic

Last week I attended a meeting that focused on the "Future of Woodridge." The individual who facilitated that meeting (I apologize as I don't remember his name) asked each of us to bring forth ideas and plans that we foresee benefiting the Village of Woodridge and action steps that would bring those ideas and plans into effect. He further asked us to imagine speaking to a reporter down the road on how these ideas and plans benefited the community.

I would like to address the Village this evening using that individual's format.

The 355 South Tollway Expansion Project is a benefit to the entire community and I believe we could all agree with that. However there is an issue with a lane expansion to the North side of I-55 and Sound Abatement with respect to the homes in the Smoter, Vicente, and Gallagher developments. This project will increase the amount of traffic to the area along with an increasing noise level. Please keep in mind that the same area South of I-55 will have sound abatement along with the area North of I-55 going west on from Woodward. While no one is disputing the noise level and need for sound abatement in our area it seems there is an issue of who is going to pay for it. We all understand that Phil Modaff has put forth a sincere effort in trying to work with the Tollway Authority and bring them to understand and accept total responsibility for a Soundwall at an estimated cost of 1.7 million dollars. From my understanding and communications I have read, there is an issue with the Environmental Impact Study of April, 1999 as to what was platted prior to that date and after. The Tollway's stance on the issue is that the Village and/or the Developer should have responsibility for any properties platted after that date of which the Gallagher and Smoter areas fall in question. I also realize that the properties were annexed into the Village of Woodridge back in 1989 and zoned residential. However, the Tollway Authorities are standing firm to the word PLATTED prior to April, 1999.

I had a conversation with Rocco, Chief Planner of the Tollway project. He stated that there were many ways to achieve sound abatement other than a concrete wall. Perhaps by looking at a wood wall such as what is used along I-355 in our area that could potentially reduce the overall cost by 50%. In addition, I had the opportunity to speak with John Noak from the office of Judy Biggert. He thought a plastic wall may also be an option as it requires less maintenance and would potentially cost less than a wood wall.

Now I get excited, the 1.7 Million was potentially reduced to \$850K. Now we continue to look for sources of reaching that goal.

There is an opportunity to request a grant from IDOT. Unfortunately the citizens of Woodridge cannot make this request; we would need the Village support in requesting the grant. In addition, knowing that IDOT could fund up to 50%, we would like Rocco to join forces with that request in that we may have a stronger chance to achieve the 50% maximum funding. If that happens, we are only looking for about \$425K.

The Smoter subdivision has not started development and from my understanding, homes will be placed within the 500 ft. edge of pavement area from the expressway. With that in mind I would like to submit to the Developer of the project to contribute to the soundwall.

If the developer could see his way to contribute \$200K he could then increase the base price cost by \$2,000 for the 1<sup>st</sup> 100 homes and recover his expense. We all know the developer raises prices on everything from the base price, appliances, and floor plan changes. This should not represent an issue for the builder but rather a significant selling point to the buyers that he also contributed to the cost of the soundwall along with showing concern for the homeowners in the G&H subdivision that were also placed in the 500ft. edge of pavement area of the expressway.

That leaves us with \$225K balance. We would like to look at the Tollway to assume responsibility for the area platted PRIOR to April, 1999, namely the Vicente project. In my conversation with Rocco, he stated that he would look into some type of contribution, but not 100% funding. He also stressed that he can offer no commitment.

We could look to the entire community for assistance in funding \$1-200K as well. Again, the Tollway expansion benefits the entire community. If need be, we could look at a golf outing or Auction fundraiser to assist in achieving our goals.

What we would ask of the Honorable Mayor, Board of Trustees, and Phil Modaff is to bring all parties together to discuss sound abatement for the North area of I-55 from Lemont Road to Woodward Avenue. We would ask that Rocco, Chief Planner from the Tollway Department, John Gallagher, and John Noak from Judy Biggert's office who stated he would be interested in facilitating that meeting, come together to discuss the opportunity of using an alternate material for sound abatement, request a grant based on the cost of the material to be used, and come up with a plan to fund the project. Wonderful things happen when decision makers, leaders, and experts are brought to the table and partner together to achieve a goal. The result is RESULTS.

So in closing, I reflect back to last Tuesday's planning discussion and speaking to the reporter. How wonderful the report would be:

***THE MAYOR OF WOODRIDGE AND GALLAGHER & HENRY COLLABORATE WITH TOLLWAY AND IDOT TO BRING SOUND ABATEMENT TO THE RESIDENTS OF WOODRIDGE. AREA RESIDENTS COME TOGETHER FOR FUNDRAISER.***

What a story, people coming together not focusing on a problem but finding solutions. That is community and that is Woodridge.