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A look down Fairgrounds Lane shows some of the rough patches motorists must travel over on the road just north of the fairgrounds wall. City and county commissioners recently debated what needs to be done to improve the road, which connects Western Avenue with Stadium Road, with the Seward County Five State Fair on the horizon. L&T photo/Robert Pierce

‘Alley’ has a street name, Fairgrounds Lane, and a 4-way stop sign

By ROBERT PIERCE • Leader & Times The road just north of the wall that houses the race track, rodeo arena and grandstands at the Seward County Fairgrounds was the subject of a minor debate recently between city and county commissioners during a joint meeting of those boards and the USD No. 480 Board of Education.

With the Seward County Five State Fair less than three months away, county commissioner Jim Rice said heavy traffic on Fairgrounds Lane has created hazardous conditions for drivers.

“You can go out there about any time of the day and see a vehicle or two running up and down there,” he said.

Rice said Liberal Public Works Director Joe Sealey and county road and bridge supervisor Tony Herrman are already talking about the possibilities of a fix.

“(Herrman) told me the county would be willing to provide all of the equipment and whatever it took to put it down if the city would provide the material,” Rice said.

The commissioner emphasized the importance of improving the road.

“If we wanted to make things look better, that would be an excellent place to start,” he said. “Anybody that drives down has to dodge the holes.”

Rice said a recent drainage project now connects Fairgrounds Lane to 15th Street and Western Avenue.

“If we could work out something on that and get an idea on what it would cost before fair time, if possible, it does need improvement,” he said. “It’s probably one of the worst streets in town.”

Liberal Mayor Dave Harrison said while improving the road is necessary, it is not an immediate need.

“In fairness, it is an alley, and there are streets that go to the fairgrounds, which is Stadium Road at Eighth Road,” he said. “There’s several ways to get there besides the alley.”

City commissioner Joe Denoyer explained what would have to happen in order to fix Fairgrounds Lane.

“In order to get the milling done, you’d have to rip up the existing asphalt that’s there,” he said. “There are several potholes. With the ditch work, it looks like it’s almost doubled the size of what it used to be – width wise.”

County administrator April Warden said she had talked to Herrman about the possibility of ripping up the road and laying new material.

Harrison continued to downgrade the importance of fixing Fairgrounds Lane, and he went on to discuss what he believed were more pertinent needs on the city’s agenda.

“If that was the only avenue to get to the fairgrounds, I would think we need to make improvements, but it’s not,” he said. “Having said that, we have so many streets that have traffic every day. The only way we have to address that right now is the sales tax money, and I think we’ve identified the projects for several years that we are going to attempt to improve.”

Rice disagreed, saying that although there are other ways to get to the fairgrounds facility, the road is still well traveled.

“Maybe we need to put a road counter out there to see if there’s any traffic on that road,” Rice said. “I don’t consider that an alley even though there’s a street on the front of that. Folks run up and down that to go into the races.”

Harrison continued to call the road simply an alley, and he said costs to fix Fairgrounds Lane

were also a concern.

“If there wasn’t any other way to get to where you’re talking about, it would be a bigger concern to me,” he said.

Harrison did say, however, the city may be able to do something about the potholes on the road.

“I might make a suggestion that Mr. Herrman and Mr. Sealey get together and see if they can come up with a suggestion on trying to fix it somewhat to where it’s acceptable to both sides,” he said.

The consensus of both commissions was to do just that.

County commission chairman Ada Linenbroker said her primary concern was safety on Fairgrounds Lane.

“There’s a lot of people that don’t drive the speed limit when they’re flying across there,” she said. “They could have an accident and hit that rock wall, and that’s just not gonna work.”

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