

City hall barriers to go

Informal okay given ramps, doors

Plans for city hall wheelchair access facilities were presented to the city council and informally approved at a special work session Tuesday afternoon.

Kurt Schnellenbach, director of public works, told the council construction would include two concrete ramps and automatic door openers at an estimated cost of \$3,780.

Tentative plans call for a cut in the city hall's west parking lot curb to meet the council chamber walkway. A regular driveway approach would be installed, permitting wheelchairs access to the council chambers.

Immediately to the left would be a second ramp spanning two steps to another walkway. This other walk would lead to the pressure-activated double doors opening onto the city hall offices.

Itemized construction estimates call for the pressure-actuation devices to cost about \$2,450 plus \$970 for the concrete ramp and \$310 for the ramp's handrail.

Plans do not include automatic chamber doors or access facilities to the building's second floor.

Councilmember Carolyn Snider asked Schnellenbach why the city offices' double doors were going to be pressure-padded and the council chamber doors were not.

"It did not come to mind," he said.

He asked Snider if she preferred the plan include the pressure-padding of the chamber doors. Snider replied neither doors needed pressure-actuation equipment since office workers could open the doors manually.

"Do we even need \$2,450 spent on the double doors?" Snider asked.

Councilmember R. G. "Wick" Alexander then said pressure-actuated doors also were useful to elderly citizens, particularly during foul weather and windy days. Elderly citizens using crutches, canes and walkers, he said, would be helped by the modifications.

"It would be a great benefit to a lot of people like that," Mayor S. J. Stovall concurred.

Councilmember Martha Walker asked that the north doors to the central library be similarly modified, claiming that the doors were heavy and a slight vacuum forms between the two sets of double doors. Schnellenbach said he would look into it.

Graduate history student Sam Provence, active campaigner for han-

dicapped barrier removal, said in an interview later he was pleased by the action but added that all city facilities need barrier removal.

A city ordinance states all future city buildings are required to be equipped

with barrier-free access, but Provence said many city structures built before the ordinance's passage do not meet these standards, particularly the city hall and municipal annex on North Cooper.

"All public buildings and all public facilities should be accessible to handicapped citizens as well as average citizens," he said. "We pay the same taxes as they do and should be entitled."

