

City of North Saint Paul
September 21, 2021
Approved City Council Workshop Meeting Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Furlong called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. The meeting was conducted at City Hall in the Council Chambers, and also via Zoom.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Council Member Thorsen
Council Member Petersen
Council Member Wong
Council Member Cole
Mayor Furlong

Staff: Interim City Manager Brian Frandle, Deputy Clerk Jennie Kloos, Finance Director Dan Winek, Public Works Director Ron Ritchie, Public Works Supervisor Randy Miller, City Engineer Morgan Dawley, City Planner Eric Zweber, Communications Consultant Kari Erpenbach.

III. ADOPT AGENDA

On motion by Council Member Petersen, seconded by Council Member Cole, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to approve the agenda as presented.

IV. TOPIC(S)

A. 2483 2nd Ave – Flood Hazard Mitigation Grant Funding Assistance Discussion

Mayor Furlong stated that council would discuss the grant funding and make a final decision on whether to support or deny the funding assistance from the DNR Flood Protection Program this evening.

City Engineer Morgan Dawley gave a brief summary of information surrounding the property located at 2483 2nd Ave. Staff is looking for direction that revolves around the use of grant dollars made available by the DNR through the Flood Protection Program. We've received information that the grant dollars are available should the city proceed forward with using those dollars. The DNR has also communicated that they would like to know one way or the other if the city wishes to proceed and accept the grant as they have other communities competing for those dollars if the city should decide not to proceed with the grant.

This property has experienced flooding over the years, specifically July 2011 when the city of North St. Paul received over 5" of rainfall in a 24-hour period. Opportunities for city infrastructure improvements have been identified but will only mitigate flooding conditions and it is known that they will not eliminate the probability that localized flooding in this area will occur. Recent improvements by the city adjacent to the property do provide an opportunity for better grading on the property to drain surface runoff away from the home and removing the basement/crawlspace window well on the home will provide approximately 4.5 inches greater

flood water separation and flood protection for the garage than currently exists (and approximately 10 inches greater separation from the first-floor elevation) than currently exists.

The City Council has the ability to receive the grant funds from the DNR. What is included in the application for the use of the funds is the purchase of the property, demolition of the home, contingency for asbestos abatement – basically restoring to a general vacant lot with no home and would have to stay like that in perpetuity. It is a 1:1 match up to \$120,000 with the current estimate for overall use of the funds exceeded \$240,000.

City Attorney Soren Mattick stated that staff is looking for direction. In terms of options 1) Accept the grant dollars. This would take the property off the tax rolls and the City would have to commit additional funds. 2) Do not have to use the grant funds and would have no restrictions 3) do nothing – status quo.

Council Member Thorsen asked if anyone from the DNR was in the audience. He then stated that the assumption was that the submission of the application met the DNR criteria for approval of the grant dollars. The criteria being that this is a program to help mitigate flood areas. Mr. Thorsen asked if Mr. Dawley could comment on flood easements. How common are they and do we have others in town? Mr. Dawley commented that the city does have areas that are mapped by FEMA and identified as flood zones that are updated every 10-20 years and are areas that have been identified and are also integrated by code with restrictions and also Watershed rules as well. They tend to be adjacent to water bodies. The property at 2483 2nd Ave does not fall in a FEMA identified flood zone and is not a restricted area and is not a mapped flood zone or a flood area.

Council Member Thorsen asked if the homeowner could address the council. Mr. Thorsen then asked Mr. Rivet if anyone from the city reached out and asked what he would be willing to sell his home for. Mr. Rivet replied, no. Mr. Thorsen asked if the home has been listed for sale? Mr. Rivet replied, no, he would not list it. Mr. Thorsen asked Mr. Rivet what dollar amount he would accept for the property. Mr. Rivet stated he was going to list the home for \$250,000 and would drop down if the city would purchase the home. Mr. Thorsen asked Mr. Rivet if he or anyone from the city has made any promises about the purchase of his property. Mr. Rivet replied no promises have been made, and all conversations about the property have taken place at city meetings.

Mayor Furlong stated that this property was a foreclosed property and the homeowner does take some risk when purchasing it. He stated the issue he sees accepting the grant dollars would be that it may set a precedence to other properties with similar issues.

Council Member Petersen asked Finance Director Dan Winek where the city would get the matching funds? Mr. Winek said he has not come up with a way to fund but if approved he would come back with a recommendation.

Council Member Wong stated that the city often times offers different ways at improving house stock and asked if Mr. Rivet has checked into these options and if other resources or home loans to help supplement home issues. Mr. Rivet replied no.

Council Member Cole recognizes Mr. Rivet's frustration and inquired if in 2011 if Mr. Rivet had a sump pump? Mr. Rivet replied, yes. With the information provided he also inquired if the egress window grade had been increased. Mr. Rivet replied he has not increased the grade.

Mayor Furlong, Council Member Wong and Council Member Cole stated they would not be in favor of the DNR grant.

Council Member Thorsen and Council Member Petersen stated they would be in favor to utilize the DNR grant.

The consensus of the council is to not proceed with the Flood Hazard Mitigation Grant Funding Assistance.

B. ISD #622 North High School Conditional Use Permit, Building Height Variance Requests and Parking Lot Improvements Discussion

City Planner Eric Zweber stated the School District is requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) amendment and a building height variance to facilitate the development of eleven classrooms, three-story addition to the west side of the building. The application also includes improvements to the traffic circulation and a reduction of on-site parking by 102 stalls. The Planning Commission held a public hearing on the requests on April 1, 2021, which no public comment was received. The Planning Commission unanimously recommended conditional approval of the conditional use permit amendment and building height variance. The biggest discussion that was had is parking. The on-site parking will drop by 107. There are currently 427 parking stalls. They are proposing to have 325. They currently have a parking agreement with St. Mark's church which is 104 stalls and is adjacent to the school site. The city and school district partnered on funding for a parking study, which came back such that, with the continued parking agreement with St. Mark's, their proposed parking plan would meet the high school's needs.

Mayor Furlong asked if the School District had a written agreement with St. Mark's. Mr. Zweber stated they currently have a one-year agreement but will be requesting a five-year agreement.

Mr. Dawley stated there will be a formal proposal to approve at the council meeting and added that all other conditions associated with the School Districts application appear to be typical with no significance.

Mike Boland, Operations and Health and Safety Supervisor for the School District stated the School District has been working with St. Mark's for 25 years and would agree to have a formal contract written. Mr. Boland also discussed enrollment in regards to online enrollment numbers and demographics.

City Council would like to see a long-term agreement on parking with St. Mark's.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, on motion by Council Member Petersen, seconded by Council Member Wong, with all present voting aye (5-0), Mayor Furlong adjourned the workshop meeting at 6:22 p.m.

/s/ Terrence Furlong, Mayor

Attest:

/s/ Brian T. Frandle, Interim City Manager/ Clerk