

City of North Saint Paul
January 18, 2022
Approved Regular City Council Meeting Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Furlong called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

II. THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. ROLL CALL

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

Staff: City Manager John Stark, Deputy Clerk Jennie Kloos, Public Works Director Ron Ritchie, Public Works Supervisor Randy Miller, City Engineer Morgan Dawley, City Attorney Leah Koch, Communications Consultant Kari Erpenbach

IV. ADOPT AGENDA

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

V. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Council Member Thorsen requested that Consent Agenda Items F and G be moved to City Business.

On motion by Council Member Thorsen, seconded by Council Member Cole, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to approve the consent agenda, Resolution No. 2022-013 consisting of:

- A. January 4, 2022 workshop meeting minutes
- B. January 4, 2022 regular meeting minutes
- C. General Claims \$2,944,993.50
- D. HRA Claims \$1,130.19
- E. EDA Claims \$1,402.00
- F. 2021 Annual Review of the Attendance of Boards and Commissions – **Moved to City Business**
- G. 2022 Commission Appointments – **Moved to City Business**
- H. Resolution Approving Acceptance of Donations Received December 2021 – Resolution No. 2022-015
- I. Building Permit Report – December 2021

VI. MEETING OPEN TO PUBLIC

There were no comments.

VII. CITY BUSINESS ACTION ITEMS & RECOMMENDATIONS

A. 2022 North St. Paul History Cruzers Car Show Memorandum of Agreement

City Manager John Stark reviewed North St. Paul History Cruzers request for City Council approval to conduct the 29th Annual Car Show. The Car Show features 800-1100 pre-1976 classic cars and draws between 5,000-7,000 people on an average Friday. The event provides significant benefit to area businesses, especially on or around 7th Avenue. In 2021, due to the impact of Covid and related public safety concerns, only 10 shows were held. The History Cruzers Car Shows would run from June 3-September 16, 2022, with a hiatus the week of June 17, 2022 to coincide with the Back to the 50s car show at the State Fairgrounds.

Mr. Stark stated the City provides assistance to the Car Show by allowing the ordering of portable toilets on the City's account at the City's negotiated rate and provide special Police patrol and Public Works crews to provide set up for parking and traffic control equipment. History Cruzers will reimburse the City for these costs as specified in the Memorandum of Understanding up to \$12,275 for 2022, or a 3% increase over 2021 reimbursement.

Mr. Stark stated City Staff have met with History Cruzers planners to discuss downtown construction projects and any potential negative impact on the car show, and how to mitigate impacts and communicate with local businesses.

A representative of the History Cruzers thanked the City Council for supporting them for all these years. He added it will be a good year.

Mayor Furlong thanked the History Cruzers organizers for their hard work and efforts.

On motion by Council Member Petersen, seconded by Council Member Thorsen, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to Resolution No. 2022-016 approving 2022 Memorandum of Agreement between City of North St. Paul and the North St. Paul History Cruzers to conduct the 2022 Friday Night Car Shows.

B. Rollover of Executive Leave

Mr. Stark stated the City Council recently adopted a Resolution approving a pause on the rollover caps on vacation leave for City employees. He added another type of leave, "executive leave", relates to salaried staff who work considerably more than 40 hours per week, outside the normal schedule, due to job requirements. There were 7 employees in 2021 that earn this type of leave, who have been unable to use their executive leave due to turnover of key positions and the impact of Covid.

Mr. Stark stated City Staff recommends that a vacation rollover policy be approved for employees with executive leave, with a cap of 24 hours based on vacation time that they have accrued.

On motion by Council Member Wong, seconded by Council Member Thorsen, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to adopt Resolution No. 2022-017 approving carryover from 2021 to 2022 up to 24 hours of executive leave for eligible employees.

C. 2022 Street and Utility Improvement Project – Approve Plans and Specifications and Order Advertisement for Bids

City Engineer Morgan Dawley reviewed 2022 Street and Utility Improvement Project, authorizing City Staff to go out for bids on February 15, 2022 and to present bids to the City Council in February or March.

Mr. Dawley reviewed the 2022 multiple project area as outlined in the 5-year Capital Improvement Plan approved by the City Council, to be combined into one project to be awarded to one contractor. The three project locations are Area 1 - downtown parking lot, 6th Avenue East, and Charles Street; Area 2 - 10th Avenue East, 2nd Street North and 3rd Street North; and Area 3 - Ariel Street North (joint project with Maplewood), Flanders Road, 13th Avenue, Spirit Hills Lane and 14th Avenue East.

Mr. Dawley stated Area 2 improvements are being coordinated with the School District's plans for North High School renovations. The 2022 bid package does not include Ariel Street as the City of Maplewood is including Ariel Street in their plans and will be the contracting agency to be defined by agreement between the two cities.

Mr. Dawley stated Area 1, including the downtown parking lot, will be updated and improved with new curb and gutter, striping, islands and lighting. Changes on 6th Avenue and Charles include mill and overlay with spot curb and gutter replacement and enhanced storm sewer.

Mr. Dawley stated Area 2 includes pavement reclamation, replacement of some curb and gutter, street widening on 10th Avenue, and sidewalk repair, as well as some storm sewer improvements and reconstruction of watermain and services. He added this is an opportunity to make snow removal easier for Public Works.

Mr. Dawley stated Area 3 includes rehabilitation of Ariel Street to be coordinated with the City of Maplewood. There is potential for a sidewalk from 11th Avenue north to 17th Avenue. Utilities work will be focused on the watermain south of 11th Avenue. Other streets in this project area will be maintenance overlays.

Mr. Dawley stated a recent public meeting was held, and there were questions from the public about why curb and gutter will not be replaced on Flanders Road. He added, for maintenance overlay projects, the character of the roadway will not be changed, and adding curb and gutter is a more costly project.

Mr. Dawley stated the proposed project cost is \$2.3 million which is close to the Capital Improvement Plan estimate. A contingency will be maintained as construction costs are projected to increase by 10%. Joint improvements with Maplewood of approximately \$1 million will be split 50/50.

Mr. Dawley stated the addition of a sidewalk on Ariel Street is planned for an additional \$275,000. Bids will open on February 15, 2022 for construction to start in May with substantial completion this summer.

Mr. Dawley stated City Staff recommends City council approval of plans and specifications and authorization of advertisement for bid, as well as provide direction for City Staff regarding the proposed sidewalk addition on Ariel Street.

Council Member Petersen asked whether Ariel Street will be a full reconstruction. Mr. Dawley confirmed this.

Council Member Petersen asked whether there will be handicapped accessible areas in the parking lot behind K&J. Mr. Dawley confirmed accessible stalls will be added at the corner near Margaret Street where there is public sidewalk access.

Council Member Wong how many EV stations there will be? Mr. Dawley stated believe he believes there will be 1 kiosk for 2 vehicles, but there is an opportunity for a second station depending upon funding availability. He added infrastructure is planned to be added for future EV installations.

Council Member Cole requested clarification in sidewalks. He added it is his understanding that sidewalks are to be addressed on any street that is under construction.

Mr. Dawley stated past discussions about sidewalk replacement have related to whether the roadway will be a full reconstruct. He added a maintenance overlay is focused on pavement replacement, and sidewalks are not addressed. He noted there are some projects that fall in between these two extremes. He stressed that there is no set rule about whether or not a sidewalk can be considered.

Mr. Dawley stated, in his opinion, the City is not missing out on any opportunities for sidewalks in the proposed 2022 project areas. He added the opportune time for consideration of a sidewalk is during a maintenance overlay project. He noted standalone sidewalk projects can be considered, but they are expensive.

Mayor Furlong stated 13th Street was mentioned as a good location for a sidewalk due to its proximity to the Urban Ecology Center. Council Member Cole agreed.

Council Member Cole stated another area for consideration is the alley and parking lot, which does not have a proposed pedestrian walking area. He added it will be a high-use parking lot, and pedestrian safety should be considered.

Mayor Furlong stated people who use the parking lot will be walking out of the parking lot toward the restaurant.

Mr. Dawley stated the safest place to cross the street is always at a signalized intersection. He added he recommends against adding mid-block crosswalks which tend to give pedestrians a false sense of security. He noted data shows motorists do not comply with mid-block crosswalks.

Mr. Dawley stated there is not currently a proposed designated pedestrian way within the parking lot. He added the parking lot was designed to maximize parking stalls. He noted a striped pedestrian way could be added but that would mean the loss of parking stalls, although it would be an easy change.

Mr. Dawley stated another option would be to consider restriping in 5-7 years, after pedestrian patterns have been observed over the years.

Council Member Thorsen stated most parking lots do not have sidewalks or pedestrian walkways that lead you to the street or storefront.

Council Member Thorsen stated, with regard to Flanders Road, he understands that it is a maintenance overlay project. He added most roads in North St. Paul have curb and gutter, with a few exceptions. He noted roads deteriorate more quickly when they do not have curbs. He asked whether there are concerns about Flanders Road.

Mr. Dawley stated there are areas on Flanders Road where bituminous edging will be added for water mitigation. He added the project on Flanders Road will be on par with other maintenance overlays. He noted City Staff is confident that Flanders Road can be brought back to current standards, and the addition of curb and gutter would represent significant investment.

Mayor Furlong asked whether City Staff can provide a proposal for pedestrian striping in the parking lot. Mr. Dawley confirmed this. He stated it may be possible to include it as an addendum to the bid package, and he can report back to the City Council when bids are received. He added striping would not add to the cost significantly. He noted City Staff can provide an evaluation per stall cost.

On motion by Council Member Cole, seconded by Council Member Wong, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to adopt Resolution No. 2022-018 Approving Plans and Specifications and Ordering Advertisement for Bids for the 2022 Street and Utility Improvements Project.

Mr. Dawley stated the recent public meeting was well-attended and included representatives from the neighborhoods as well as the apartments on 10th Avenue. A poll was taken regarding a potential sidewalk on Ariel Street, and the results were as follows: 11% of the Ariel Street residents polled support having a sidewalk, and 5% did not support a sidewalk; and of all the residents who were polled, 26% supported a sidewalk on Ariel Street.

Mr. Dawley stated, according to the City's 2040 Comprehensive Plan, Ariel Street is a Tier 3 pedestrian facility, and a full reconstruction would automatically include a sidewalk. He added there is a 4-5 foot wide striped shoulder on the east side of the road which is currently used as a pedestrian walkway. He noted inclusion of a sidewalk in the proposed plan would cost approximately \$275,000, and City Ordinance requires that homeowners would be responsible for sidewalk snow removal.

Mr. Dawley stated an alternative option would be for the City Council to direct City Staff to include the sidewalk in the project as an alternative to be determined at a later date.

Mr. Stark asked whether there is a downside to delaying the project as opposed to rolling it into the full bid. Mr. Dawley stated the contractor would determine the cost, which would be separate, but there is no disadvantage to the base project.

Council Member Thorsen asked why Maplewood has not included the sidewalk in their project plans. Mr. Dawley the City of Maplewood have not identified sidewalks as part of their project for Ariel Street; however, they are including a sidewalk on the north side of 11th Avenue.

Council Member Thorsen stated the sidewalk on the North St. Paul side would not connect to anything, and there is a similar situation on 17th Avenue. He added this is confusing and does not align with the City's goals for connectivity and walkability. He noted he would support including construction of a sidewalk as an amendment so there can be further discussion.

On motion by Council Member Cole, seconded by Council Member Wong, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to direct City Staff to include a sidewalk alternate to the bid package for the Ariel Street Maplewood Project.

D. Consent Agenda Item F – 2021 Annual Review of Attendance of Boards and Commissions

Mr. Stark stated City Code states, "City Council shall conduct an annual review of the attendance of members of Boards and Commissions established by the City Council." He added this process has not been conducted on an annual basis. He noted Board and Commission members are expected to attend no less than half of the official meetings in a given calendar year unless specifically excused by the Chair and noted in the minutes, and failure to attend is considered formal notice of resignation.

Mr. Stark stated some City Commissions are established by State statute including the Planning Commission, EDA and HRA.

Mr. Stark stated City Staff recommends an annual review of Commission and Board members. He requested feedback and comments from the City Council on policy direction.

Mayor Furlong stated a meeting is planned in February with the Chairs of the City's Boards and Commissions to determine responsibilities moving forward.

Council Member Thorsen stated he pulled this item from the Consent Agenda. He asked whether there is a definition of what is excused or unexcused, and whether there is a process for people to report their concerns.

Council Member Thorsen stated, on a personal note, he resigned from the EDA due to conflicts with the 3:00 p.m. meeting time. He added it is the role of the Commissioners to serve on the Commission and attend regular meetings.

Mr. Stark stated a workshop or retreat with Commission Chairs is planned to review this issue.

On motion by Council Member Thorsen, seconded by Council Member Wong, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to the approve the Annual Review of the Attendance of Members of Boards and Commissions.

E. Consent Agenda Item G – 2022 Commission Appointments

Council Member Thorsen stated he pulled this item from the Consent Agenda as he does not object to individuals being recommended, but rather he objects to the process, through which the City Council appoints individuals by approving the Mayor's recommendations. He added there is no process for selecting candidates. He noted the City Council should have a discussion about how to change the process to make it more transparent.

City Attorney Leah Koch stated, based on language from the City Code, the Mayor and City Council both have responsibility for appointments. She added this is a fairly common practice. She noted it is the duty of the City Council to vote to approve recommendations.

On motion by Council Member Petersen, seconded by Council Member Cole, with Mayor Furlong and Council Members Cole, Petersen and Wong voting aye and Council Member Thorsen voting nay (4-1), motion carried to adopt Resolution No. 2022-014 approving Appointments to Commissions and authority for 2022.

VIII. REPORTS OF CITY MANAGER AND DEPARTMENTS

Mr. Stark stated the City Council's retreat is scheduled for Thursday January 27, 2022 with a start time of 4:30 p.m.

Mr. Stark stated he plans to have a report from a City Department at most City Council meetings. He added this meeting will feature the Public Works Department. He welcomed Public Works Director Ron Ritchie and Supervisor Randy Miller to talk about winter operations in Public Works.

Public Works Director Ron Ritchie stated Public Works staff have been busy dealing with snow events and plowing. He added the hours at which plowing is done varies depending upon safety and traffic. He noted the main roads in town are plowed twice at night in preparation for morning traffic.

Mr. Ritchie stated the salt in the trucks is two different colors because Public Works staff adds beet juice to some of the salt and mixes it themselves to save money. he added beet juice helps the salt work at lower temperatures to -10 degrees.

Mr. Ritchie stated, as a reminder to residents, keep garbage containers on the driveway when the streets are being plowed.

Mr. Ritchie stated there have been 7 watermain breaks so far this year, due to changes in temperature and pressure caused by snow. Watermain breaks that occur on County roads are filled with concrete to get through the winter, and repairs are done later per County standards.

Mr. Ritchie stated Public Works staff have been maintaining ice rinks, but have been unable to hire rink attendants, so the warming houses have been closed.

Mr. Ritchie stated the roof was added to the student build house last Thursday. He added framing is complete but windows are not available until March due to supply chain issues. The City is receiving bids for plumbing and electric contractors are on board.

Council Member Cole thanked the Public Works employees for doing a phenomenal job in keeping the streets clear, and for keeping the skating rinks going, as they do get used.

Council Member Council Member Wong thanked Mr. Ritchie and Public Works staff for their hard work on repairing the community center roof.

Mayor Furlong thanked Mr. Ritchie and Public Works staff for all their hard work, including watermain breaks which take a lot of time and energy.

IX. REPORTS OF COUNCIL, COMMISSIONS & COMMITTEES

Council Member Cole stated the Parks & Recreation Commission is scheduled to meet January 19, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. in City Hall.

Council Member Cole stated the Economic Development Authority met on January 11, 2022, which included a presentation from an outside group interested in developing 2395 Margaret Street.

Council Member Cole stated the next EDA meeting is scheduled for February 8, 2022 at 3:00 p.m. in the Sandburg Room.

Council Member Council Member Wong stated the Planning Commission met on the first Thursday in January 2022. She added there is a vacancy on the Commission. She noted there was discussion regarding outdoor seating in the downtown area, which should be durable and commercial grade.

Council Member Council Member Wong stated the Planning Commission continued its review of the Sign Ordinance.

Council Member Council Member Wong stated the Arts & Culture Commission is scheduled to meet January 20, 2022 and continues to work on by-laws.

Council Member Petersen stated the League of Minnesota Cities met recently to discuss issues related to the insurance trust, including an increase in PTSD cases in police officers.

Council Member Petersen stated she was invited to speak about North St. Paul at a League of Minnesota Cities Open Forum Round Table. Other issues that were discussed include the youth in schools' mental health crisis and related crisis plan, and Covid protocols.

Council Member Petersen stated the Business Association lunch was canceled last week due to Covid.

Council Member Thorsen stated the Master Redevelopment Plan Committee is scheduled to meet January 31, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall.

Mayor Furlong stated he attended the Regional Council of Mayors in Eden Prairie with Police Chief Phil Baebenroth. The first session featured a discussion on affordable housing in Twin Cities, which has a 0% vacancy rate.

Mayor Furlong stated the second session featured a discussion with Minneapolis Mayor Frey, Ramsey County Attorney John Choi, Hennepin County Sheriff John Hutchison, Hennepin County Attorney Mark Freeman, and many Police Chiefs from both Hennepin and Ramsey Counties. The discussion centered around carjackings and increased catalytic converter theft. A follow-up meeting of Ramsey County Mayors is planned.

X. GENERAL BUSINESS

Council Member Petersen stated she enjoyed the holiday lights displays throughout North St. Paul. She thanked all the citizens who participated in lighting up the town.

Council Member Petersen stated she spoke at the funeral of David McClung, Arden Hills City Councilmember. She extended her sympathies to his family.

Council Member Thorsen stated the City Council received an email from Washington County Commissioner Stan Karwoski providing an update on the Highway 36/Highway 120 interchange and Highway 120 corridor projects. A preliminary estimate for the interchange is \$53 million. A resolution of support is being drafted for cities to use to help expedite the process. A Century Avenue coalition is being created, and member communities' representation is being sought, and additional updates will be given.

Mayor Furlong stated new Police Officers were sworn in prior to tonight's meeting: Officer Amber DeCory was promoted to Sergeant; new Officers Brandon Boe and Meeghan McCay, and new CSO Jonah Bomchill. He welcomed the new officers to the North St. Paul Police community.

Mayor Furlong reviewed a recent article in the Star Tribune regarding development in North St. Paul, and the renaissance that the City is experiencing.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, on motion by Council Member Cole, Seconded by Council Member Wong, with all present voting aye (5-0), Mayor Furlong adjourned the meeting at 8:09 p.m.

/s/ Terrence J. Furlong, Mayor

Attest:

/s/ John Stark, City Manager/ Clerk