

City of North Saint Paul
November 15, 2022
Approved City Council Workshop Meeting Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Furlong called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Council Member Thorsen
Council Member Petersen
Council Member Cole
Council Member Wong Absent (present via zoom)
Mayor Furlong

Staff: City Manager Brian Frandle, Assistant to the City Manager Jennie Kloos, Police Chief, Phil Baebenroth, Police Sergeant Ben Badowich, Finance Director Dan Winek, Communications Consultant Kari Erpenbach, Community Development Director Brandy Howe, City Attorney Leah Koch

III. ADOPT AGENDA

On motion by Council Member Petersen, seconded by Council Member Thorsen, with all present voting aye (4-0), motion carried to approve the agenda as presented.

IV. TOPICS

A. Police Department Staffing Update

Police Chief Baebenroth presented an update outlining the staffing shortages and the difficult task of retaining officers. He stated increased population and violent crimes are increasing the demand for more officers. He offered various solutions to help with recruitment and retention.

Mayor Furlong stated the City Council supports the police department and discussed options on the recruitment and retention shortage. The ideas are as follows:

- Statewide healthcare initiative
- Monetary bonus
- Support from City leaders to increase lateral transfers
- “Finder fee” – incentive for both parties
- Change in longevity pay
- Recruitment of retired officers to fill short term shortages
- Creating a committee to help with solutions

Police Civil Service Commission member, Dave spoke and suggested meal purchases at local restaurants for officers as a way to say thank you and show appreciation.

B. Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV)

Chief Baebenroth provided a slideshow on the drone (UAV) program detailing all of its capabilities. His presentation included reasons for usage, community engagement, costs, rules, regulations and authorizations.

Council Member Wong inquired about public perception and community trust. Chief Baebenroth stated a public hearing was held and 3 people emailed comments. He has already reached out to those 3 individuals personally and provided them information on the drone program. Council Member Wong suggested educating the public.

Council Member Wong questioned the emergency calls that require the usage of a drone and staff time allocated for training. Chief Baebenroth stated he does not have those specific numbers but stated there are many and training would be completed while officers are on duty so as to not increase overtime.

There was discussion among the City Council around the state statute language regarding drone usage and if it could be altered to increase restrictions. Council Member Thorsen also suggested putting the link to the presentation on the website to educate residents.

Mayor Furlong thanked Chief Baebenroth for his report and presentations.

Recess to regular city council meeting and reconvene after council meeting

City Attorney Koch suggested tabling items C and D until after the regular City Council meeting.

On motion by Council Member Petersen, seconded by Council Member Cole, with all present voting aye (4-0), motion carried to recess the City Council Workshop until after the City Council meeting.

Mayor Furlong reconvened the City Council workshop meeting at 7:20 p.m.

Council Member Thorsen was absent when the workshop meeting reconvened.

C. Employee Health Insurance Update – Additional Information Requested from November 1st City Council Workshop

City Finance Director Dan Winek updated the City Council on insurance information. He discussed other cities' healthcare costs. Mr. Winek suggested the City help with the 50% increase by allowing City employees' costs to only increase 20% for 2023 only. The health care committee recommended staying with PEIP given the City's one-year financial assistance of the proposed 20% increase.

After discussion with City Council, Mr. Winek provided the following information:

- Detailed the cost of single/family insurance for employees
- With the 20% increase recommendation, it would put the City closer to the average of other cities around the area.
- Concerned with creating an unequitable environment

- Acknowledged the City Council's difficult task

Mr. Winek and City Manager Brian Frandle will put together a proposal and resolution for consideration at the next City Council meeting.

D. 2023 Municipal Fee Schedule and Utility Rate Schedule

Mr. Winek provided the fee schedule and utility rate increase and noted it will be voted on during the December 6th City Council meeting. He provided the City Council with the latest changes and discussed how and why rates and fees were increased or decreased.

There was discussion around the Hause Park open air shelter and pavilion rental costs and times. Council Member Cole will bring this to the Parks and Recreation meeting tomorrow night to get more clarification.

City Attorney Koch clarified the details of public information requests and indicated she will check on State statute regarding what the City can and cannot charge for.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

There were no presentations.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

On motion by Council Member Petersen, seconded by Council Member Cole, with all present voting aye (4-0) Mayor Furlong adjourned the meeting at 8:21 p.m.

/s/ Terrence J. Furlong, Mayor

Attest:

/s/ Brian Frandle, City Manager / Clerk