

City of North Saint Paul
February 21, 2023
Approved Regular City Council Meeting Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Monge 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 Nordby
Council Member Schweer
Council Member Cole absent
Council Member Wong
Mayor Monge

Staff: Assistant to the City Manager Jennie Kloos, Community Development Director Brandy Howe, Police Chief Phil Baebenroth, Fire Chief Jason Mallinger, Communications Staff Kari Erpenbach, and City Attorney Jack Brooksbank

IV. ADOPT AGENDA

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

V. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

On motion by Council Member Schweer, seconded by Council Member Wong, with all present voting aye (4-0), motion carried to approve the consent agenda, Resolution No. 2023-126 consisting of:

- A. February 7, 2023 workshop meeting minutes
- B. February 7, 2023 regular meeting minutes
- C. General Claims \$1,938,979.39
- D. HRA Claims \$9,054.30
- E. EDA Claims \$12,051.00
- F. 2023 Pay Equity Report
- G. Resolution Accepting Donations – January 2023 **Resolution No. 2023-127**
- H. Building Permit
- I. Ordinance Amending the 2023 Municipal Fee Schedule **Ordinance No. 128**
- J. Resolution Accepting Tom Schifsky to the EDA Board **Resolution No. 2023-128**

VI. MEETING OPEN TO PUBLIC

John Schmahl commented on the city council retreat. Mayor Monge thanked Mr. Schmahl for his comments and suggestions.

VII. CITY BUSINESS ACTION ITEMS & RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Resolution Approving a Site Plan at 2231 11th Avenue East

Community Development Director Brandy Howe presented this item and stated the application met all zoning requirements. The Planning Commission approved the development with 2 minor site plan modifications. The plans submitted are consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan and will not provide any adverse impacts on health, safety, or general welfare.

On motion by Council Member Wong, seconded by Council Member Schweer, with all present voting aye (4-0), motion carried to adopt Resolution No. 2023-129, Approving the Site Plan at 2231 11th Avenue E. (Polar Plaza).

B. North St. Paul Support for a State Legislative Solution to the Minnesota Law Enforcement Staffing Crisis

Police Chief Phil Baebenroth presented a possible solution to the law enforcement staffing crisis stating recruitment is at a 25 year low. He provided a brief history of the Police Executive Research Forum and detailed information on a future bill that would provide Minnesota Legislature funding for healthcare costs for all active Minnesota peace officers. The proposed legislation would provide a permanent equitable solution to the recruitment and retention crisis facing all Minnesota law enforcement agencies.

Mr. Baebenroth stated agencies across the State and Nation are facing staffing challenges. North St. Paul has seen 7 resignations since December of 2021. Vacancies in the Police Department continue to affect officer safety, officer morale and proper use of vacation and leave hours. Mr. Baebenroth hopes with the support of this new legislation that overtime hours would decrease, saving the City money. He also pointed out some departments are using financial strategies like bonuses and front-loaded vacation days to entice officers to move to larger departments.

Mr. Baebenroth is looking for support on this piece of legislation and provided an approximate cost. After questions from Council, Mr. Baebenroth provided the following information:

- The applicant pool is so minimal that the Department is still one position short
- If supported by City Council, it would help efforts with the legislature
- Recruitment strategies varied but focused mainly on the culture and environment of the City and the Police Department
- Will share this support with other municipalities
- Provided his current officer's years of service stating it is a fairly young Department

City Attorney ___ stated the next steps would require staff to prepare a resolution and City Council to review and vote on a resolution of support at the next City Council meeting.

On motion by Council Member Schweer, seconded by Council Member Nordby, with all present voting aye (4-0), motion carried to request staff to prepare a resolution in support of

North St. Paul City Council on a future bill that would provide Minnesota Legislature funding for healthcare costs for all active Minnesota peace officers.

VIII. REPORTS OF CITY MANAGER AND DEPARTMENTS

A. Fire Department Update – Chief Mallinger

Fire Chief Jason Mallinger presented the Fire Department's 2022 operational, staffing, training and incident response report to City Council. He explained the Fire Department is a combination of full-time and part-time/on call firefighters.

Mr. Mallinger reviewed calls for service and noted the increase in station all calls. He also commented on the quick response time to calls. He discussed his goals for 2023 to include an additional fire inspector and a part-time code compliance officer that will enhance the Department's ability to return to its pre-pandemic service. Mr. Mallinger also reviewed awards for years of service, bravery, retirees, and firefighter of the year.

Mayor Monge expressed his heartfelt thanks to the Fire Department and Police Department for their hard work and dedication to the residents of North St. Paul. Council Member Schweer was present at the award ceremony and thanked the Fire Department staff. Mayor Monge inquired about staffing and insurance costs if a firefighter is only part-time. Mr. Mallinger stated there are currently 33 on his staff with the possibility of having 40 and part time firefighters make their regular wage when they are required to go to a call.

Mr. Mallinger presented the Code Compliance review of 2022 stating the Department worked on 113 code compliance issues ranging from weeds, snow/ice removal, trash/debris, illegal dumping, and dead and diseased trees. He also discussed the Department's responsibility for chicken and bee keeping, kennel licensing, select zoning permits, fire inspections, and rental housing license inspections.

Mr. Mallinger stated his 2023 priorities as follows:

- Improve rental licensing management
- Fire certificate of compliance inspections (commercial properties)
- Update preplan information in Image Trend for Fire Department response
- Re-start SafeHaven program
- Fire Inspector II training for both inspectors
- Management of difficult properties

After questions from City Council, Mr. Mallinger provided the following information:

- Explained the management process of code compliance concerns
- Second fire inspector is working on the back log of inspections
- Described the SafeHaven program
- Reviewed recruitment ideas and potential retirement benefits
- Noted dates of community engagements in 2023

IX. REPORTS OF COUNCIL, COMMISSIONS & COMMITTEES

Council Member Nordby stated the Planning Commission did have an interview for an open position today but he was unable to attend.

Council Member Schweer stated Parks and Recreation Commission will meet on Wednesday.

Mayor Monge noted there is one open seat available on the Economic and Development Authority.

X. GENERAL BUSINESS

Mayor Monge stated he will be going on a ride-along.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, on motion by Council Member Wong, Seconded by Council Member Schweer, with all present voting aye (4-0), Mayor Monge adjourned the meeting at 8:19 p.m.

/s/ John Monge, Mayor

Attest:

/s/ Jennie Kloos, Assistant to the City Manager