City of North Saint Paul
March 19, 2024
Approved City Council Workshop Meeting Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Monge called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Council Member Schweer
Council Member Nordby
Council Member Cole
Council Member Wong
Mayor Monge

Staff: City Manager Brian Frandle, Assistant to the City Manager Jennie Kloos, Finance Director Dan Winek, Public Works Director Ron Ritchie

III. ADOPT AGENDA

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

IV. TOPICS

A. Community Center

Finance Director Dan Winek discussed the guiding principles and described the workshop format going forward. He introduced Rodney Robbins, with DEED, to help provide a better understanding of the grant process.

Mr. Robbins clarified the grant is not for the stated 37.5 years but rather a more realistic estimate would be 20-30 years for terms within the grant. He described his position as managing the grant process and guiding how the money is spent.

Mr. Robbins described the reimbursement policy once the grant is approved. The City will submit payment first, reimbursement will be submitted to DEED, and then it goes to MMB where it is approved. It then goes back to DEED and the City is supplied with the reimbursement amount. He stated this process takes approximately 2-3 weeks for each reimbursement submitted.

Council Member Cole requested a definition of DEED. Mr. Robbins stated DEED stands for Department of Education and Economic Department. This department oversees projects that are done every 30-40 years, such as stadiums and museums.
Mayor Monge inquired about a grant checklist for certain requirements. Mr. Robbins stated once the budget is set, he will have a tracking system for each invoice submitted. He noted most situations like these are done by direct deposit but there are other options, if needed.

Mr. Robbins also clarified that the language used in the legislation is to ensure the money is being spent correctly and provides checks and balances for this process.

City Manager Brian Frandle inquired about grant requirements, if the City is held to those requirements, and if there is room for options. The grant will provide the City with $4.5 million dollars using the requested items. Mr. Robbins stated the City can shift funding from the grant to other necessary grant related items depending on current or future cost.

Mr. Frandle inquired about future funding if closures are necessary. Mr. Robbins stated the City would have to speak to their representative to get better clarification.

Council Member Nordby inquired about timelines and any necessary deadlines. Mr. Robbins stated the application process is the longest portion and recommended it be completed as soon as possible. He noted the pre-risk assessment should be done as soon as possible.

Council Member Wong inquired about the details of the pre-risk assessment. Mr. Robbins explained it is a background check to make sure the accounting system is on track and there are no financial concerns within North St. Paul.

Mr. Winek inquired if this grant could be used for a different site and if it would require legislation approval. Mr. Robbins stated yes but the City would have to speak with their representative. Mr. Winek inquired about proceeds of a sale if sold before the end of the grant contract. Mr. Robbins stated he will get that information to the City Council.

Mr. Winek inquired about strict grant language. Mr. Robbins stated the City can set up one or several use contracts in order to provide partnerships with other groups. He noted there has to be language in the contract regarding use agreements.

Council Member Nordby inquired about wordage used in the use agreement contract. Mr. Robbins stated as long as the items are described upfront and are acceptable and do not exceed the $4.5 million dollars cap, there should not be a problem.

Mr. Winek summarized that money can be adjusted or shifted into different categories as long as it does not exceed the $4.5 million that was allowed. Mr. Robbins stated costs will be counted down until there is a $0.00 remaining balance.

Mayor Monge inquired about having money upfront. Mr. Winek stated it would require a temporary loan from a fund within the City budget but he would not anticipate any cash flow problem with the reimbursement turnaround of 2-3 weeks.

Mr. Winek reviewed other community center concerns for staff to look into that included the following:

- Library services
- Selling the lease
- Cost of vacating the facility
- Partnerships
- Cost of financial scenarios

- Future impact of community center
- Potential alternative locations
- Potential revenue sources

Mr. Winek stated staff will develop a schedule to deliver information and set future meeting dates. He proposed a representative from Ramsey County attend the next meeting to discuss the library in more detail.

Council Member Wong inquired about the impact the community center could have on the well-being of its residents. She suggested a community impact survey. Mr. Winek stated he will try to make an assessment but Ramsey County may be able to provide more information on that subject matter at the next meeting.

Council Member Nordby expressed his concern about engaging WOLD and suggested other potential architectural firms to oversee this project. Mr. Winek stated the process will require an RFP so it will go out to other firms for the City to choose from.

The floor was opened for public comment.

Kari Blees thanked everyone for all of the information and appreciated the request for information and proposals.

Stacy Maher expressed her support for a community center, noting how it can bring revenue to the City. She encouraged City Council to invest in the City and its residents.

Emily Hagland discussed for the need for a central hub and expressed her support for the community center.

Tom Armchichet stated Ashland Productions would like to partner with the City regarding the community center.

Rob Sutherland, founder and artistic producer of Ashland Productions, described their partnership with various schools, good track record, and how they would help run the community center.

Ben Jarmin expressed his support for the library and thanked the community for keeping the library open.

Andy Weis emphasized his support for the library and reiterated the importance of a community center. He suggested a potential new facility and location for the community center.

Jody McPherson, owner of Inclusive Services, suggested serving the youth and looking at how the community center could bring people together.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no Other Business.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

On motion by Council Member Cole, seconded by Council Member Nordby, with all present voting aye (5-0), meeting is adjourned at 6:31 p.m.

/s/ John Monge, Mayor

Attest:

/s/ Brian Frandle, City Manager / Clerk