

City of North Saint Paul
April 2, 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, Community Development Director Brandy Howe, Public Works Director Ron Ritchie, Communications Kari Erpenbach

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 – Next Steps

Finance Director Dan Winek presented this item and discussed previous and current topics regarding the community center. He noted this discussion is on the importance of the library, noting that selling and vacating the library has been taken off the table. Mayor Monge clarified that City Council would prefer to look at options other than selling or vacating the building.

B. Presentation by Pang Yang – Ramsey County Library

Deputy Director for Ramsey County Library, Pang Yang, provided a brief history of her experience. She noted Ramsey County has seven different library facilities being used in a variety of ways. She shared the 2023-2025 Ramsey County library's strategic priorities and provided the North St. Paul Demographics and Social Vulnerability Index for potential barriers of success. She also discussed the hours, operations, size, and employees for North St. Paul's library. She provided details on how many people enter the library and past and future potential services the library could provide.

Ms. Yang noted residents' comments on what they like about the library are as follows:

- Staff relationship
- Cozy atmosphere

- Walkability
- Computer assistance
- Printer, fax and copier usage
- Meeting spaces
- On site notary
- Children's space

Council Member Wong inquired about programming. Ms. Yang briefly discussed the weekly story time, passive programs, summer reading and learning program, specialty groups, and system-wide youth programs.

Mayor Monge inquired about the comparison between North St Paul's hours of operation versus others. Ms. Yang noted the larger, regional libraries are open more often and for longer periods of time.

Council Member Wong inquired about the State park pass process. Ms. Yang explained they are a seven-day permit. Council Member Schweer inquired about returning the passes after the seven-day period of time. Ms. Yang noted residents will potentially receive a receipt or a pass that can be disposable.

Council Member Wong inquired about limitations or opportunities that are a priority for the near future. Ms. Yang stated the need for outreach work and ways to reach all residents is a top priority.

Mayor Monge inquired about the desired size of the library. Ms. Yang stated they would need approximately 5,000 square feet to accommodate meeting spaces and other uses. Mayor Monge also inquired about safety or security concerns. Ms. Yang stated there has not been any security concerns. She did suggest a change in location of bathrooms to create a clearer sight line.

Ms. Yang noted libraries are not intimidating spaces to meet and are often a way to provide a delivery of service for underprivileged residents.

Mayor Monge stated the previous library was a County-owned building and was sold by the County, not by the City.

Council Member Nordby clarified the lease of the building will be discussed at a future meeting.

Mr. Winek stated the lease expires in 2030 and rent would be charged at that date.

Council Member Nordby inquired about current lease information and the process for the 2030 expiration date. Mayor Monge stated the lease started in 2010 and will expire in 2030. He added there was an earlier lease approved in 2004 but paperwork could not be found.

C. Community Center – Draft Request for Interest (RFI)

Mr. Winek stated he is seeking Council input and thoughts on the RFI to advertise and seek potential interest. He also reviewed the requirements and details of the RFI.

Council Member Nordby noted the grant language for refurbishment of building or program development. Mr. Winek stated the grant language is based on more of a spatial need than a programming need.

After discussion with City Council, the potential RFI changes or additions are as follows:

- Annual reports
- Previous population experience
- Background information or references
- Flexibility in services and programming
- Adaptability to changing demographics
- Potential revenue stream

Council Member Cole expressed his concern with the requirements possibly eliminating potential interested parties and suggested keeping requirements to a minimum. Mr. Winek stated they are not eliminating any interested parties.

Mayor Monge suggested specific dates and times and the importance of scheduling appointments for interested parties in order to eliminate drop-ins to the library.

Council Member Wong suggested sharing this with different news outlets, culturally relevant publications, and culturally relevant organizations.

Elaine Barton suggested the library's presentation be placed into the minutes, noted the doubling attendance from last year, inquired about the cost to operate the library, and placing a condensed version in other paper outlets to gain a broader audience.

John Schmahl recommended mailing lists sent out the Legion and the VFW.

V. ADJOURNMENT

On motion by Council Member Cole, seconded by Council Member Wong, with all present voting aye (5-0), meeting is adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

/s/ John Monge, Mayor

Attest:

/s/ Brian Frandle, City Manager / Clerk