

City of North Saint Paul
February 16, 2021
Adopted Regular City Council Meeting Minutes

North St. Paul City Hall – Council Chambers
2400 Margaret Street

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Furlong called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The meeting was conducted via Zoom and in person.

II. THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. ROLL CALL

Present: Council Member Thorsen
Council Member Petersen
Council Member Wong
Council Member Cole – via Zoom
Mayor Furlong

Staff: City Manager Scott Duddeck, City Attorney Soren Mattick, Deputy Clerk Jennie Kloos.

IV. ADOPT AGENDA

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

V. PRESENTATIONS

~~A. Kevin Wick Retirement Recognition~~ (removed from 2.16.21 agenda)

B. North St. Paul EDA – 2020 Annual Report

Robert Dew, representing the City's Economic Development Authority (EDA), presented the EDA's 2020 Annual Report. He welcomed the new Council Members. He gave a brief history of the EDA, which was founded as a Task Force in 2008, and formally converted to Economic Development Authority in 2010. The EDA was formed to provide focus and stimulus to the City's development activities, and to guide the vision of the City Council and City at large for vacant and available properties.

Mr. Dew stated the community today is vibrant, with a lot of development activity. The EDA has been working on many of these projects for a decade and has been committed and patient in terms of the vision for the City, using guiding documents including the Comprehensive Plan, which provides a broad vision, and the Redevelopment Master Plan, adopted by the City Council.

Mr. Dew stated the EDA is a vehicle and tool for the City Council, working in connection with the City's Commissions, to control and encourage the growth and development of North St. Paul. The EDA must have a good understanding of the goals of the City Council wants through recommendations and direction.

Mr. Dew stated the EDA has overseen significant development in North St. Paul over the past 6 years, adding over \$102 million in property value including \$50 million in 2021. The EDA receives an annual levy of \$140,000 from the City Council through taxpayer dollars and ensures that value is returned to the taxpayers. In terms of future development, there will be dynamic changes in population and City functions.

Mr. Dew stated the EDA will continue to monitor MnDOT's proposals for the Highway 36/120 interchange, which is an important gateway to the community. He added what happened at Highway 36/Margaret Street must not happen again. He stressed the importance of ensuring that North St. Paul is a strong stakeholder in the interchange renovations, and that the final result benefits the community.

Mr. Dew stated the EDA recently added two new members and continues to bring in residents with experience and expertise in different areas. He reiterated the EDA's main goal of providing guidance to the City Council where appropriate and continuing to drive economic growth and development in North St. Paul.

Council Member Petersen asked a question (inaudible at 30:45).

Mr. Dew stated he would not encourage that, as infill and turnover projects will be very challenging. He added the City is in a much better position and has more to offer and can and should be selective about what development can occur. He noted the exodus of residents from the metro area's downtowns will change the City's population and seek opportunities for growth wherever appropriate.

Council Member Thorsen thanked Mr. Dew for his presentation. He stated he agrees 100% about the Highway 36/120 interchange, and another access point to the City must not be lost. He added that should be a topic of discussion at the City Council's upcoming work session. He noted he agrees the free market is the ultimate driver of development, but he supports the EDA's efforts, diverse discussions and healthy debate in everyone's best interests.

Council Member Cole thanked Mr. Dew for his presentation. He stated he has a lot of the same thoughts and directions expressed by Mr. Dew. He added the City Council holds more cards than before in terms of strategy and should approach development with confidence. He noted the EDA has done a great job over the years and expressed his appreciation for their hard work and efforts.

Council Member Wong thanked Mr. Dew for all the hard work and institutional knowledge that he has brought to the EDA over the years. She added ongoing success takes time, support and stability from groups like the EDA, and she appreciates Mr. Dew's contributions to the work of the EDA.

Council Member Wong asked whether Mr. Dew feels that the pandemic will change the market, and the direction in which the City is heading. Mr. Dew stated it is difficult to predict the effects of the pandemic, and what the new normal will be. He added there will definitely be some impacts.

Mayor Furlong thanked Mr. Dew for his contributions. He added the EDA has been receptive and supportive to the many changes in North St. Paul over the past 10 years.

VI. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

On motion by Council Member Petersen, seconded by Council Member Wong, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to approve the consent agenda, Resolution No. 2021-023 consisting of:

- A. January 26, 2021 Special meeting minutes.
- B. February 2, 2021 workshop meeting minutes.
- C. February 2, 2021 regular meeting minutes.
- D. General accounts payable: \$1,144,582.61.
- E. HRA accounts payable: \$5,148.30.
- F. Financial Transparency (Quarterly Finance and Project Reports).

VII. MEETING OPEN TO PUBLIC

John Schmahl, 2750 Chisholm Avenue, stated tonight's online meeting began strangely with Council Member Cole joining the meeting on Zoom, and a photo of him on the screen for 10 minutes before the meeting started.

Mr. Schmahl stated he was pleasantly surprised to see that snow was cleared away from the electric transformers and fire plugs near his home on Chisholm Avenue.

Mr. Schmahl requested that Council Member Petersen please turn on her microphone when she speaks.

R.T. Luczak stated he is the Director of Kokoro Volleyball, and a tenant at the former community center. He added the volleyball center has a wonderful home in North St. Paul and brings over 100,000 visitors to the community every year. He noted programs are run at all hours, most of the year, and parents come to drop off their kids and will be in town for a few hours.

Mr. Luczak stated Kokoro Volleyball has submitted proposals to the City for consideration, including the option to purchase the property, which they would prefer, or do a long-term lease. The facility costs \$400,000 to operate annually, and current profits are used for capital improvements and repairs to the building rather than expanding their operations. The building needs a new roof; the parking lot will need to be redone eventually; and the elevator requires re-certification. A recent appraisal by the City indicated that everything was in good condition, but that is not the case.

Mr. Luczak stated their proposal includes the current worth of the facility and a cap rate, as well as the value of the land. The proposals are unique because it is a unique facility. Mr. Luczak stated Kokoro Volleyball will do whatever necessary to work with the City and get the facility up to date and increase their operations.

Mayor Furlong thanked Mr. Luczak for his presentation. He added Kokoro Volleyball has always been a good tenant, and he appreciates having the volleyball center in the community.

VIII. PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were no scheduled hearings.

IX. CITY BUSINESS ACTION ITEMS & RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Local Road Improvement Program (LRIP) Grant Funding Application & Variance Request

City Manager Scott Duddeck stated City Staff have been working on pursuing a Local Road Improvement Program (LRIP) opportunity that requires City Council support and action. This grant opportunity would provide over \$1 million for construction of the downtown segment of 7th Avenue and does not require matching funds. City Staff believes the City has a strong application due to 7th Avenue construction last year, as well as current redevelopment projects. The application would be submitted in March 2021, and if approved, funds would have to be spent by 2021.

Mr. Duddeck requested City Council approval to pursue the LRIP grant opportunity.

Mr. Duddeck City Staff is also seeking City Council approval for a variance application for State Aid local traffic and parking in the downtown area that does not meet downtown requirements. This variance is required by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and would amend the parking configuration to 45-degree angle parking. He requested City Council approval for the MnDOT variance application.

Mayor Furlong asked whether this parking configuration will affect the State funding that was received during the downtown redesign for parking changes.

Mr. Duddeck stated this application is a little different and 8 parking spaces may be lost to meet the requirements. He added the new angled parking layout would be located on 7th Avenue from Helen Street to 1st Street.

On motion by Council Member Petersen, seconded by Council Member Thorsen, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to adopt Resolution No. 2021-024 Authorizing Submission of a Local Road Improvement Program Grant Application for the 7th Avenue Reconstruction Project.

On motion by Council Member Thorsen, seconded by Council Member Petersen, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to adopt Resolution No. 2021-025 Requesting a Variance from the Minnesota Department of Transportation from Minnesota Rules Minimum Design Standards for 45-Degree and 60-Degree Pull-In Diagonal Parking For 7th Avenue Street Improvements.

X. REPORTS OF CITY MANAGER AND DEPARTMENTS

Mr. Duddeck thanked the Public Works and Utility Departments for working on utilities outdoors in the frigid weather. He added Public Works crews repaired a water main break at McKnight Road and 14th Avenue in -20 degree weather on Sunday February 14, 2021.

Mr. Duddeck stated construction continues in the downtown area. He added the closing on the Anchor View property took place and construction will begin on March 1, 2021. He noted City Staff will be meeting with representatives of Kwik Trip to discuss their construction schedule which will start in the spring.

Council Member Petersen asked a question but was inaudible.

Mr. Duddeck responded to Council Member Peterson, stating traffic signals in the downtown are ADA compliant. He added the system will be adjusted. He noted residents should contact City Staff if they have issues with the traffic signals.

Mayor Furlong stated there was some discussion about an art project on the big box outside of Roddy's. He added a mural may be a possibility. He requested an update.

Mr. Duddeck stated City Staff discussed the possibility of an annual themed art project or mural. He added the area will also be landscaped, while allowing access to the equipment.

Mayor Furlong requested an update on the loud gas valve. Mr. Duddeck stated City Staff met with Xcel Energy, and they are completing a noise study. He added City Staff will work with them to figure out sound mitigation.

XI. REPORTS OF COUNCIL, COMMISSIONS & COMMITTEES

Council Member Cole stated the Silver Lake Improvement Association held a meeting and elections on Monday, but he was unable to attend. He added both Mayor Furlong and Mr. Duddeck attended the meeting.

Mayor Furlong stated it was an annual meeting, and new Board Members were elected. He added the meeting included an update on the health of the lake as well as permits related to invasive species.

Mr. Duddeck stated the Association is interested in looking at sediment in areas where stormwater enters the lake, with soil samples and lake bottom samples, to determine whether sediment is entering the lake, and potentially ways to remove it.

Mayor Furlong stated that issue is currently being reviewed by the Watershed District.

Council Member Cole stated the Association's next meeting is scheduled for April 5, 2021 at 6:30pm via Zoom. Mr. Duddeck stated the Association's meeting dates will be added to the City website.

Council Member Cole stated the Park & Recreation Commission's next meeting is scheduled for February 24, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom. He added the Commission will focus on the Comprehensive Plan and improvement updates for 2021 and beyond.

Council Member Wong stated the Planning Commission met in early February, and reviewed definitions and requirements in City Code that have become necessary due to Comprehensive Plan updates. She added the Planning Commission's next meeting is scheduled for February 25, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom and will be a training session with WSB.

Council Member Peterson stated the Ramsey County League of Local Government recently held a legislative panel. She added she is glad that Ramsey County is taking an approach regarding mental health and developing a plan.

Council Member Thorsen stated the EDA's recent informal meeting was cancelled due to scheduling conflicts. He added the next regular EDA meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 9, 2021 at 3:30 p.m. via Zoom.

Council Member Thorsen stated the Business Association met Tuesday, February 9, 2021, at the American Legion. He added there was a good turnout, and the Association heard a report from the City Manager regarding development. He noted, as a reminder, the Business Association is open to businesses from surrounding communities, and the membership fee is \$150, which is used for the lunch that is provided.

Council Member Thorsen stated the Silver Lake Improvement Association is also available for anyone to join. He added they are a 501 C3 organization, so donations are tax deductible. He noted there is a \$25 membership fee, and donations can be made online.

Mayor Furlong stated the Finance Committee met recently. He recognized Finance Director Jason Zimmerman for his hard work and efforts.

XII. GENERAL BUSINESS

Council Member Wong stated, with regard to a potential public art project, the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) at the Humphrey Institute is offering grant opportunities for community art projects. She added there is potential for funding if the City wants to pursue it.

Council Member Petersen made a statement about a local business (inaudible at 1:12:15). She attended a meeting last week to see how the business is doing. She added the City wants to work with the business, and the City Manager has some ideas for outdoor dining, a fundraiser or pub crawl.

Mayor Furlong stated theft of catalytic converters were discussed at the City Council workshop. He added the Police Chief indicated this is a serious problem, and residents should keep their cars locked inside their garage or parked in a well-lit area. He noted State legislators are reviewing this issue for possible solutions.

XIII. CLOSED SESSION

- ~~A. The meeting will be closed as permitted by the attorney-client privilege (Minn. Stat. 13D.05, Subd. 3 (b)) to discuss the pending arbitration involving IBEW, Local 160 and North St. Paul. (removed from closed session)~~
- B. The meeting will be closed as permitted by section 13D.05, Subdivision 3 (c) to consider offers relating to the City's possible sale or lease of the Community Center Building.

On motion by Council Member Thorsen, seconded by Council Member Wong, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to move into Closed Session at 7:30 p.m.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, on motion by Council Member Petersen, Seconded by Council Member Thorsen, with all present voting aye (5-0), Mayor Furlong adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

/s/ Terrence J. Furlong, Mayor

Attest: /s/ Scott A. Duddeck, City Manager / Clerk