

City of North Saint Paul
April 6, 2021
Approved 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 Cole
Council Member Wong
Mayor Furlong

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

IV. ADOPT AGENDA

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

V. PRESENTATIONS

A. Eagle Scouts – Chimney swift house

Robby Sivill stated he is a Boy Scout with Troop 188, and he would like to build a Chimney Swift house in the Southwest Nature Preserve for his Eagle Scout project. He added Chimney Swifts are small birds that build their homes inside chimneys and they are displaced when their habitats are closed. He noted this project will increase species diversity and keep Chimney Swifts in the area.

Robby reviewed the proposed project and materials: plywood, lumber, siding, rebar, angled steel, insulation and concrete for a 12-foot tall, 1-foot-wide house. The house will be built at the north end of Southwest Nature Preserve, but the exact location has not been determined. The proposed project was inspected by Scott Quale of MnSpect, who provided 5 recommendations regarding installation that Robby intends to follow.

Robby stated he has several ideas for fundraising for the project, including a restaurant night, participation from Home Depot, and contributions from friends and family. Any excess funds will go back to the Parks & Recreation Department.

Robby stated, if the plan is approved, he will complete the project plan in the summer, and finish the project and report by the end of the summer.

Council Member Petersen asked how much money Robby will need for the project. Robby stated the whole project will cost about \$800. He added he does not think he will need any money from Parks & Recreation.

Mayor Furlong and the Council Members all indicated that they would like to make a contribution to Robby's project. Robby stated it will be necessary to have his plans approved before he can solicit donations.

Mayor Furlong stated this looks like a good project. He asked whether there are any residential neighbors close to the project area. Council Member Cole stated that issue was discussed at the Parks & Recreation Commission meeting, and City Staff determined it was not necessary to obtain community approval due to the small size of the project.

On motion by Council Member Cole, seconded by Council Member Petersen, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to approve the Eagle Scout Project proposed by Robby Sivill for construction of a Chimney Swift home.

Council Member Cole offered his congratulations to Robby. He added he has watched Robby learn and grow throughout this process, and Robby has done a phenomenal job in putting this project together.

VI. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Council Member Thorsen requested that Consent Agenda Items C and D be removed and addressed under the Regular Agenda.

On motion by Council Member Cole, seconded by Council Member Wong, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to approve the consent agenda, Resolution No. 2021-035 consisting of:

- A. March 16, 2021 workshop meeting minutes.
- B. March 16, 2021 regular meeting minutes.
- C. General accounts payable: \$716,897.11. **Added to City Business**
- D. EDA accounts payable: \$1312.31. **Added to City Business**
- E. HRA accounts payable: \$706.34.
- F. Authorize General Fund Transfer to Pandemic Response Fund.

VII. MEETING OPEN TO PUBLIC

John Schmahl stated he received two emails from the City about tonight's City Council Meeting Agenda and Workshop Agenda, both of which had previous versions that were no longer available. He added there was no indication what was on the previous agenda versions. He noted he

contacted City Staff and was informed that the software produces two notifications for one agenda posting.

Mr. Schmahl stated he has done a lot of work to try to fix this notification problem. He added the March 16, 2021 workshop meeting packet had an addition, and notification was sent out successfully.

Mayor Furlong thanked Mr. Schmahl for his comments. He added City Staff will work on this issue.

VIII. PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were no scheduled hearings.

IX. CITY BUSINESS ACTION ITEMS & RECOMMENDATIONS

A. 2021 Fee Schedule / Ballfield Rental Fee Amendment

Mr. Duddeck reviewed changes to the 2021 fee schedule on page 107, including ballfield use and registration fees. The previous schedule included multiple fees and various charges associated with organized sports leagues. City Staff recommends one fee of \$75 for field rental per day, to be charged only to adult leagues or for-profit organizations. Field maintenance would be completed during business hours, and requests received after hours or on weekends would incur a fee of \$150 for up to 3 hours of field use.

On motion by Council Member Thorsen, seconded by Council Member Petersen, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to approve 2021 Fee Schedule/Ballfield Rental Fee Amendment.

B. Update Park Fund Donation Brochure

Mr. Duddeck reviewed proposed changes to the Park Fund donations, including an increase for benches from \$1,000 to \$1,200; and an increase for shelter donations from \$15,000 to \$30,000. Donations for picnic tables will remain at \$1,500 and donations for trees will remain at \$500. The online platform will accept all donations. The current brochure will be updated with the proposed changes.

Mayor Furlong asked whether the \$30,000 donation will be the same for all park shelters. He added not all the shelters are the same. He noted he would support at \$30,000 minimum donation. Mr. Duddeck stated City Staff can work with donors to determine appropriate donations.

Council Member Wong asked whether \$30,000 for shelter donations would include labor costs. Mr. Duddeck stated it does not. He added the estimate was determined by Public Works and relates to the cost of materials.

On motion by Council Member Cole, seconded by Council Member Wong, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to update the Park Fund Donation Brochure.

C. General Accounts Payable \$716,897.11

Council Member Thorsen requested clarification regarding an item on page 91, “North St. Paul Historical Soc - \$3,000, 2021 stipend”.

Mr. Duddeck stated that is an annual stipend that the City has given to the Historical Society on an annual basis, going back many years.

Council Member Thorsen stated, regarding an item on page 91, “Termination Settlement”, he would like to note for the record that he voted against the settlement. He added he will vote to approve this Agenda Item in the spirit of getting the bills paid but he does not support the settlement.

On motion by Council Member Wong, seconded by Council Member Cole, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to approve General Accounts Payable of \$716,897.11, Resolution No. 2021-036.

D. EDA Accounts Payable \$1,312.31

Council Member Thorsen requested clarification regarding a February 2021 utility bill on page 101 of the packet. He added he requested information on this item a few months ago. He noted the City Council was informed that utility bills for the Lillie News building will be reimbursed by Amcon Construction. He asked whether the City has been reimbursed for these bills.

Mr. Duddeck stated the City has not yet been reimbursed as it is likely that Amcon Construction will vacate the building soon, and all accumulated bills will be paid, and the account will be closed.

Council Member Thorsen stated there was no actual contract between the two parties. He added he would like to state for the record that it is AmCon’s intent to reimburse the EDA.

On motion by Council Member Wong, seconded by Council Member Cole, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to approve EDA Accounts Payable of \$1,312.31, Resolution No. 2021-037.

X. REPORTS OF CITY MANAGER AND DEPARTMENTS

Mr. Duddeck stated the Spring Clean-up event is scheduled for May 8, 2021 from 8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at the Public Works building. He added information will be added to the City website and newsletter regarding a number of services that will be available that day.

Mr. Duddeck stated the City-Wide Garage Sale is planned for May 6-8, 2021. He added residents can list their garage sale on the City website for a fee of \$10, for which they will receive a list of all the garage sales, a City-Wide Garage Sale yard sign, and an electric utility eco-friendly kit.

Mayor Furlong asked how residents will queue for the Spring Clean-up event. Mr. Duddeck stated there will be directions and guides for traffic. He added City Staff will work out the logistics before that date.

Mr. Duddeck stated two significant staff retirements are coming up: Police Chief Tom Lauth will be retiring at the end of May 2021, and Sergeant Lang will be retiring at the end of April 2021.

Mr. Duddeck stated he has not received any updates from the Parks & Recreation Commission about the City-Wide Park Clean-up event. He added support for this event has been received from the North High School Track Team, but he is unsure whether the event will be cancelled due to the pandemic.

Mr. Duddeck stated work continues on the developments under construction: Anchor View Apartments are pouring concrete and doing footings. The construction project downtown is moving rapidly, with windows, interior wiring and drywall going in. The parking stalls have been left open for general parking until after construction is further along.

Mr. Duddeck stated City Staff's request for State Aid funding for the downtown area was successful. He added all the stalls will be re-stripped.

Mr. Duddeck stated a Business Association meeting is coming up, at which the Association will review the downtown street scape, get input from businesses, and make some final decisions.

XI. REPORTS OF COUNCIL, COMMISSIONS & COMMITTEES

Council Member Cole stated the Parks & Recreation Commission met on March 24, 2021 for a 3-hour meeting. He added the Commission started the process of prioritizing and getting park improvement in place. It was agreed that City Staff will take over ownership of updating the park improvement plan.

Councilmember Cole stated the Parks & Recreation Commission hopes to get back into the parks for their meetings and enjoy the summer.

Council Member Cole stated he joined the Silver Lake Improvement Association meeting, which was his first introduction to the group. He added there are many things going on around the lake, including a week-long clean-up event from April 18-24, 2021, which is open to the community. Information is being sent out to residents via email. There will be signs as well as bags and gloves provided for participants.

Council Member Cole stated there was a discussion regarding dredging, and another meeting is scheduled this week on that subject.

Mr. Duddeck stated City Staff have had discussions regarding the dredging project, the cost of which will be shared between Valley Branch Watershed District and North St. Paul. A meeting of the Watershed District is scheduled for April 15, 2021, at which sediment samplings will be discussed.

Council Member Cole stated Ramsey County has been providing funding for aeration of the lake, but they will no longer provide funding. He added the County has indicated that the Watershed District and City of North St. Paul will be responsible for funding.

Mr. Duddeck stated a proposal has not been finalized. He added the park is in Maplewood, and the proposal from Ramsey County is for maintenance but not total responsibility.

Council Member Cole stated the Silver Lake Improvement Association's next meeting is scheduled for June 7, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom. He asked whether City Staff can add that date to the online City calendar.

Mr. Duddeck stated the Association is not a formal committee of the City of North St. Paul, but meeting dates will be posted on the City website with a link to the Association website for additional information.

Council Member Wong stated the Planning Commission met via Zoom on April 1, 2021, at which three public hearings were held: Conditional Use Permit to construct a security entrance and administrative offices at Covern Elementary; Conditional Use Permit and height variance for a 3-story, 11-classroom addition to North High School; and amendments to the Zoning Code. She added a few public comments were taken, especially related to parking at North High School.

Mr. Duddeck stated school parking at North High School has been a great concern at staff level, as the proposed plan calls for 104 stalls to be eliminated. He added the parking lot is planned to be reconfigured, and to alter traffic flow to accommodate fewer parking spaces. He added, however, it is still a concern.

Council Member Wong stated the Planning Commission's next meeting is scheduled for May 6, 2021.

Council Member Petersen stated the League of Minnesota Cities is planning its annual conference, which will be a virtual conference. She added Minnesota Women in City Government is planning an April 23, 2021 virtual meeting on lessons learned during the pandemic.

Council Member Thorson stated a joint EDA/Planning Commission meeting was held in March, which he was not able to attend.

Council Member Thorsen stated the next EDA meeting will be held April 13, 2021, and the Business Association will hold its next meeting the same day.

Mayor Furlong stated he joined the EDA/Planning Commission online meeting, and it was a very good meeting. Both groups benefited from hearing from each other, and the focus was continued communication between the two groups.

Mayor Furlong stated he reached out to former City Council Member Sonnek regarding a potential downtown Arts Council. He added Mr. Sonnek had indicated he wanted to be involved in initiating an Arts Council for the downtown area. He noted there is grant money and funding available for civic art projects.

XII. GENERAL BUSINESS

Council Member Cole stated many residents have taken advantage of recent warm weather to rake their yards and clean up leaves. He asked whether the yard waste recycling program can start earlier than the last week in April.

Mr. Duddeck stated compost facilities and sites are not open yet. He added the recycling service will begin on April 19, 2021.

Council Member Petersen stated she was disheartened by the horrific event that happened on March 18, 2021 in downtown North St. Paul. She thanked the City's first responders and Police Department, as well as Mr. Duddeck and Mayor Furlong, for their quick response.

Council Member Thorsen stated he forwarded a University of Minnesota article to the City Council regarding a fungus that is being studied as a method of mitigating Emerald Ash Borer infestations. He added some ash trees are being cut down near his home, and he understands this is City policy to prevent the spread of the invasive species. He noted, however, cutting down healthy trees could be temporarily halted until new methods of preventing infestation can be studied.

Mr. Duddeck stated the City Forester can come to a City Council meeting and provide additional information. He added the trees that are being removed have been impacted by Emerald Ash borer, and these efforts are a continuation of the City's program over the last few years.

Mayor Furlong stated he visited local businesses with Council Member Wong at her suggestion.

Council Member stated she and Mayor Furlong visited approximately 15 local businesses to check in and see how they are doing, after recent mass shootings around the country and events in downtown North St. Paul. She added they also talked about funding available due to the pandemic. She noted it was a good opportunity for relationship building.

Mayor Furlong requested an update on the City's meeting with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR) regarding White Bear Lake water usage.

City Attorney Soren Mattick stated he attended a meeting at which the DNR gave a presentation regarding the White Bear Lake lawsuit related to water levels in the lake, and decisions that affect other nearby communities, including North St. Paul. He added the DNR has indicated they intend to review water appropriation permits, water levels, and potential water bans for communities within a 5-mile radius of White Bear Lake, and North St. Paul falls within that area. He noted the City of North St. Paul filed a challenge along with other communities to reserve rights.

Mr. Mattick stated the DNR is considering alternative sources of water, including surface water. He added there are many unknown factors and the DNR has indicated that they will continue to provide information, as this is an important issue for the community.

Council Member Thorsen thanked Mr. Mattick for his update. He added there will be many steps along the way, but the City of North St. Paul should continue to be concerned and stay updated. He noted the idea of switching to surface water seems like a long shot. Mr. Mattick agreed. He added, from an economic and environmentally friendly standpoint, the use of surface water is not seen as a solution.

Council Member Cole asked whether North St. Paul uses 100% of its allotted water. Mr. Mattick stated water consumption has gone down.

Mr. Duddeck stated, with regard to the Highway 36/Highway 120 interchange, there has been some real traction since the last meeting, as the frustration and desire to move forward is obvious

to legislators. He added MnDOT has indicated they cannot take the lead role in the project as they have no funding. He noted City Staff continue to push that along.

Council Member Thorsen stated the project should be added to the DNR project schedule so cities and counties can start negotiations and scheduling with other entities. He added he is glad to hear that legislators are getting on board. He noted this is one of the most dangerous intersections in the metro area.

XIII. CLOSED SESSION

Pursuant to Minn. Stat. 13D.05, Subd. 3(c), the meeting shall be closed to consider offers related to the 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 enter Closed Session at 7:40 p.m.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

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

The next regularly scheduled City Council meeting is Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

/s/ Terrence J. Furlong, Mayor

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