

City of North Saint Paul
May 4, 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 6:37 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
Mayor Furlong

Staff: City Manager Scott Duddeck, Deputy Clerk, Jennie Kloos, City Engineer Morgan Dawley, Finance Director Jason Zimmerman, City Planner Eric Zweber, City Attorney Shana Conklin.

IV. ADOPT AGENDA

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

V. PRESENTATIONS

A. Mike Lang Retirement

Mayor Furlong presented a plaque to Sergeant Mike Lang in gratitude and appreciation upon his retirement after 27 years of service to the North St. Paul community.

Police Chief Tom Lauth expressed his appreciation to Sergeant Mike Lang for his years of service, and all the assistance he has given to the Police Department and City residents over the years. He wished Sergeant Lang all the best in his retirement.

VI. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Councilmember Thorsen requested that Consent Agenda Item D – EDA Accounts Payable be moved to the Regular 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. 2021-045 consisting of:

- A. April 20, 2021 workshop meeting minutes.
- B. April 20, 2021 regular meeting minutes.
- C. General accounts payable: \$455,045.55.
- D. EDA accounts payable: \$1,216.33. **Moved to City Business**
- E. HRA accounts payable: \$496.94
- F. Review of the 2020 financial report with the city's audit firm of Mally, Montague, Karnowski, Radosevich & Co. P.A. (MMKR).

VII. MEETING OPEN TO PUBLIC

Don Bieniek stated it has been many months since he has been able to attend a City Council meeting, and he is pleased and grateful to be here tonight, after many weeks in the hospital followed by months of home health care. He added he wanted to come to tonight's meeting to express his thanks to the City Council who wrote to him and visited him, and sent their best wishes for his recovery. He also welcomed the new City Council Members. He noted he plans to continue to attend City Council meetings, as he has done for many years.

John Schmahl, 2750 Chisholm Avenue, stated he was pleased to see that the online meeting agendas have been improved, with a note as to when the agenda has been amended and the amendment noted in red.

Mr. Schmahl stated his neighbor's electric service runs through his property, and he added he has brought this issue to the City Council before, but nothing has happened. He noted he was told by the Electric Superintendent that he would have to dig himself if he wants to locate the electric cable.

Mr. Schmahl stated he recently had surgery and he is unable to dig. He added there was an item on the agenda regarding Mesabi Circle where there is a dry wash and easement restriction. He noted these issues occur when the City impinges on citizens' rights.

Mr. Schmahl stated the City recently purchased a hydraulic excavator, with City Council approval. He added it is unacceptable that he should have to dig himself. He noted he would appreciate it if the City would tell him what he is supposed to do.

Mr. Schmahl stated there have been closed meetings regarding the community center, which are now over. He asked how he can get an audio recording of the meetings.

City Manager Scott Duddeck stated residents can make a data request, and that can be provided by City Staff. Mr. Schmahl stated he would stop in Thursday to get the recording.

R.T. Luczak stated he would also be interested in seeing a video of the closed sessions regarding the sale of the community center. He added they submitted their offer in February 2021 and have not heard anything back. He thanked the City Attorney for his support in getting a lease in place. He noted they intend to submit three requests as part of the lease: the inclusion of Kokoro Volleyball signage on the building, which they believe is a reasonable request; assurances

regarding the percentage of building space that will be allocated for their business, which is growing; and additional language to address future government shutdown of the facility.

Mr. Luczak asked whether there are any updates on the negotiations. He added they have not received any information. He noted they need to know how long the lease will be.

Mayor Furlong stated the City Attorney and City Manager are working on this issue.

Council Member Thorsen stated there is a simple answer, that at last closed session, the City Council reached a consensus that the building would not be sold to Kokoro Volleyball. He added he is not sure why that has not been communicated to Mr. R.T.

Mr. Duddeck stated City Staff and the City Attorney are working on the language of the lease. He stressed the importance of ensuring that the lease is complete and comprehensive. He noted information will be provided by the City Attorney on Wednesday of this week.

VIII. PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were no scheduled hearings.

IX. CITY BUSINESS ACTION ITEMS & RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Resolution Approving Acceptance of Donations Received January 1, 2021 – March 31, 2021.

Mr. Duddeck stated donations will be added to the City Council Regular Agenda on a monthly basis for acknowledgement and formal acceptance. He added the proposed Resolution includes a list of donor names, dollar amounts, and the City Department to which the funds will be applied.

On motion by Council Member Thorsen, seconded by Council Member Cole, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to adopt Resolution No. 2021-041 Approving Acceptance of Donations Received January 1 – March 31, 2021.

B. Amendments to TIF District No. 4-10 and 4-11.

Mikaela Huot, Baker Tilly, reviewed proposed modifications to existing TIF Districts established in July 2019 to facilitate redevelopment of the Anchor Block North site. TIF District No. 4-10 is related to housing and TIF District No. 4-11 is related to soils condition. The purpose of these modifications is to change the election of the receipt of first increment to be received in 2023, allowing for an additional year of collection.

Ms. Huot stated the recommendation for TIF District No. 4-11 is to increase the budget as the proposed development has resulted in higher taxable value than that which was originally anticipated. The amendment will provide additional flexibility for the City Council.

On motion by Council Member Thorsen, seconded by Council Member Petersen, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to adopt Resolution No. 2021-042 Approving Modification to the Tax Increment Financing Plan for Tax Increment Finance District 4-10.

On motion by Council Member Cole, seconded by Council Member Wong, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to adopt Resolution No. 2021-043 Approving Modification to the Tax Increment Financing Plan for Tax Increment Finance District 4-11.

C. First Reading – Ordinance Establishing the Arts and Culture Commission and an Ordinance abolishing the Design Review Commission.

Mr. Duddeck reviewed the proposed creation of an Arts and Culture Commission, as well as the potential elimination of the Design Review Commission, which has been on hiatus for some time. He added the Design Review Commission's work and activities would be formally taken over by the Planning Commission.

City Attorney Shana Conklin reviewed the two proposed Ordinances, of which tonight is the first reading. The Arts and Culture Commission would be appointed by the Mayor and with approval of the City Council.

Councilmember Thorsen stated the proposed Ordinance language should indicate that there is an expectation of attendance.

Ms. Conklin stated attendance requirements could be addressed in the Commission by-laws, which would be approved by the City Council.

D. Cowern Elementary Addition Conditional Use Permit Amendment

City Planner Eric Zweber reviewed a request from the School District to construct a 1,750 square foot addition to Cowern Elementary School. The addition would include a new security entrance on Margaret Street and administrative offices, a nurse's station and conference room. No new classrooms are proposed as part of this addition. All standards for the R-1 District are met with this proposal.

Mr. Zweber stated the school currently has three parking lots, but the southern-most lot requires pavement and striping, and should be improved. The third parking lot is required to accommodate 70 total parking spaces.

Mr. Zweber stated the Planning Commission held a public hearing and there were no public comments. City Staff and the Planning Commission recommend approval of the Conditional Use Permit request amendment with 6 conditions listed in the Staff Report.

Councilmember Petersen stated School District staff park on Margaret Street and that has always been an issue. She asked whether the improvement of the parking lots will ensure that there will be no staff parking on Margaret Street. She noted signage was installed last year that helped a lot.

Mr. Zweber stated improvement of the southern lot will increase staff parking availability, and that would resolve the issue of street parking.

Councilmember Thorsen stated staff street parking has been a concern for residents on Margaret Street for many years. He added staff cars parked on Margaret Street have obstructed mail delivery and garbage pick-up, and neighbors have made numerous complaints. He noted, if this request is approved by the City, the School District staff must be respectful of the Margaret Street neighbors.

ISD #622 Business Director Randy Anderson stated the School District is very excited about the renovations and security improvements at Cowern Elementary, as well as two other schools. He added the south parking lot is partially paved, and parking for staff has been a struggle. He noted it is their intent to renovate the south parking lot and provide 70 parking spaces there.

Sean Kelly, Wold Architects, stated the preliminary revised layout includes restriping of the parking lot areas for a maximum of 72 parking stalls.

On motion by Council Member Thorsen, seconded by Council Member Wong, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to adopt Resolution No. 2021-044 approving Conditional Use Permit Amendment for Security Entrance Addition for Cowern Elementary at 2131 Margaret Street N.

E. Declaration of Equipment Surplus

Mr. Duddeck reviewed equipment that is proposed to be sold at online auction, including a hydro vac excavator and ditch witch trencher and several other items as listed in the staff report.

On motion by Council Member Petersen, seconded by Council Member Cole, with all Present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to approve Resolution No. 2021-047, Declaration of Equipment Surplus – 2014 Excavator and Ditch Witch, and List of Surplus Equipment.

F. EDA Accounts Payable \$1,216.33

Council Member Thorsen expressed his concern regarding the utilities payment agreement between two private entities. He added he has pulled this issue from the Consent Agenda twice before. He asked why the private utility bills are being paid from EDA funds. He asked whether the City has been reimbursed by Amcon.

Mr. Duddeck stated Amcon has not yet been billed by the City, but the agreement ended in April and they moved out of the building. He added the utilities accounts will revert back to the original building owner, and the fees will be recouped.

On motion by Council Member Wong, seconded by Council Member Cole, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to approve Resolution No. 2021-046, EDA Accounts Payable of \$1,216.33.

X. REPORTS OF CITY MANAGER AND DEPARTMENTS

Mr. Duddeck gave an update on development around the City. The Anchor North apartment complex is bringing in lumber and will begin framing soon. Kwik Trip has estimated their construction project will begin on May 31, 2021, and the storage facility is nearing completion. The final lift of pavement will be added to Anchor Drive and traffic will be going through soon.

Mr. Duddeck stated plans for sidewalk construction in the downtown area is moving forward as approved by the City Council at their last meeting and will commence in the next 2 weeks. Concrete planters near the Post Office will be removed to create additional space for accessibility.

Picnic tables have been put back in the hospitality areas, and sidewalk work should be completed by July.

Mr. Duddeck stated he will be putting out a Council Update letter to provide updates between Council meetings. City Staff has started a month-long test of Google Workspace, including cost analysis and security review. Many other cities, as well as counties and school districts, have been using Google for years. City Staff will report back on the results of this trial.

Council Member Petersen asked when the car show will start.

Mr. Duddeck stated the car show will probably start the first Friday in July. He added the majority of the new sidewalks will be in, and other projects completed, by the beginning of July.

Mr. Duddeck stated City Staff have been using CiviClerk, a software platform for City Council agendas and documents. He added this software will allow for more advanced planning and better quality.

Mr. Duddeck stated the ditch work on Margaret Street south of Cowern School is under way, in cooperation with the Watershed District. He added slopes around residential properties will be softened with erosion control measures, and the area will be restored.

Mayor Furlong stated residents had indicated that there appeared to be a problem on site.

Mr. Duddeck stated there have not been any problems. City Engineer Morgan Dawley stated there are no concerns or problems that he has been made aware of. He added he checks in with Watershed representatives regularly. He noted it is anticipated that they will be on site for a few weeks. A sidewalk was chipped and will be repaired at no cost to the City.

Council Member Petersen asked whether a budget meeting schedule has been set.

Finance Director Jason Zimmerman stated the City Council's May 18, 2021 workshop meeting will include a review of the proposed budget process and set a baseline budget. City Staff hopes to streamline the process to reduce the need for additional meetings. He noted the initial focus will be on levy-supported operations.

XI. REPORTS OF COUNCIL, COMMISSIONS & COMMITTEES

Council Member Cole stated the Parks & Recreation Commission met recently to continue work on the Parks Improvement Plan, which will be ready for City Council review soon. He added a meeting is being planned with Mr. Duddeck, the Commission Chair and himself sometime in May.

Council Member Cole stated the Parks & Recreation Commission will be bringing forward a recommendation to the City Council regarding signage for Rotary Park.

Council Member Cole stated the Parks & Recreation Commission will officially begin holding their meetings in the parks again, beginning with the first meeting in May to be held at Hause Park, beginning at 6:00 p.m.

Council Member Wong stated the next Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for Thursday May 6, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

Council Member Petersen stated the League of Minnesota Cities is planning to hold some in-person meetings, and a retreat is planned in September.

Council Member Petersen stated Women in City Government held a virtual program regarding Covid and how it has changed City government. She added the virtual program was very well-attended.

Council Member Thorsen asked whether Parks & Recreation meetings to be held in the parks will be recorded and televised. Mr. Duddeck stated City Staff will have to look into that.

Mr. Duddeck stated, as a reminder, this Saturday, May 8, 2021 is City-Wide Clean-Up Day at the Public Works Building from 8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. The event is open to residents and businesses and will include document shredding services. The City Council is welcome to come and volunteer.

Ms. Conklin stated the City Council can attend the Clean-Up Day without noticing it as a meeting, due to the type of event. She added it would be prudent for the City Council to avoid discussions if there is a quorum.

Mayor Furlong stated the annual City Manager review has been scheduled for June 1, 2021. He added this will be a closed-door meeting. He noted the City Council will receive a review form to complete before the meeting.

Ms. Conklin stated a motion would be required to place that item on the June 1, 2021 agenda as a closed session.

On motion by Council Member Thorsen, seconded by Council Member Petersen, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to schedule the City Managers Review for June 1, 2021 as a closed session.

XII. GENERAL BUSINESS

Council Member Wong stated the City Council might be interested in reviewing the “Mapping Prejudice” Project, a collaboration between Ramsey County and the University of Minnesota. The project document is available on the County website.

Council Member Wong stated the Ramsey County League of Local Government is hosting a webinar, “Decriminalizing Mental Illness”, on May 14, 2021 from 7:00 – 9:00 a.m. in connection with the City of Maplewood.

Council Member Petersen stated there are 25 garage sales registered for this weekend’s City-Wide Garage Sale from May 6-8, 2021.

Council Member Petersen wish all mothers a Happy Mother’s Day.

Council Member Thorsen stated, with regard to the Ramsey County HRA levy, the City Council is not obligated to vote if there is no interest, although he is fine with bringing it to a vote. He added a public hearing should be scheduled and noticed so residents know that the levy will raise property taxes.

Council Member Thorsen stated he would like to request copies of the last City Manager review be provided for the City Council before the June 1, 2021 closed session. He added these documents might be helpful for the new Council Members.

Council Member Thorsen stated, with the closing of Lillie News, the City lost its local newspaper, and the City Council voted to use the Minneapolis Star-Tribune for notices based on cost and circulation. He added White Bear Press Publications publishes local newspapers for nearby cities, and he contacted the publisher, Carter Johnson, to get information about including North St. Paul in their local coverage. He noted he is unsure whether the City Council can legally make that change, but it could be a cost savings, and should be considered.

XIII. CLOSED SESSION

There was no closed session.

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 8:10 p.m.

/s/ Terrence J. Furlong, Mayor

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