

City of North Saint Paul
July 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.

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: Acting City Manager Brian Frandle, City Engineer Morgan Dawley, City Attorney Leah Koch, Communications Staff Kari Erpenbach, Deputy Clerk Jennie Kloos.

IV. ADOPT AGENDA

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

V. PRESENTATIONS

A. Walter Hause Family Day Proclamation

Mayor Furlong read in full a Proclamation designating July 24, 2021, as Walter Hause Family Day in the City of North St. Paul.

VI. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

On motion by Council Member Petersen, seconded by Council Member Thorsen, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to approve the consent agenda, Resolution No. 2021-064 consisting of:

- A. June 15, 2021, workshop meeting minutes.
- B. June 15, 2021, regular meeting minutes.
- C. General Claims: \$1,891,659.95.
- D. Approval of Special Event – American Legion Annual Brat & Corn Fest
- E. LMCIT Waiver for the Economic Development Authority Liability Insurance.

- F. 2020 Street and Utility Improvement Project – Pay Voucher No. 12
- G. Resolution to Accept the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund Established Under the American Rescue Plan Act. Resolution No. 2021-065.
- H. Resolution Approving Amended Employee Manual Regarding Jury Duty Pay. Resolution No. 2021-066.
- I. Resolution Approving Council Member Thorsen’s Resignation of Commissions and Committees and Reappointments. Resolution No. 2021-067.
- J. Resolution Approving Appointment to the Arts and Culture Commission. Resolution No. 2021-068.

VII. MEETING OPEN TO PUBLIC

R.T. Luczak, Kokoro Volleyball Center, stated he and other coaches as well as students, parents and chaperones have just returned from national competition, with 147 wins, 5 top ten finishes and a third-place finish. He added there will be 220 new athletes coming to Kokoro this summer to train 3-4 times per week, and the Center is growing 25% year over year. He noted Kokoro wants to move forward with the City Council to discuss the community center and how they can partner with the City.

Mayor Furlong stated Kokoro Volleyball Center is on tonight’s meeting agenda.

Sue Springborn, 2573 13th Avenue, stated she recently visited the water tower area at Northwood Park with fellow Parks Commissioners. She added the Commissioners are concerned that electrical boxes on the water tower are not secured. She noted a fence should be considered around the area.

Acting City Manager Brian Frandle stated he walked the area today and locked one box that had been left unlocked. He added the rest of the boxes were secured with no exposed electrical units. He noted a fence was removed from the area several years ago, after which the footprint expanded and the fence was not replaced due to concerns about equipment access. He agreed to look into the possibility of replacing the fence with potential cost sharing with T-Mobile.

Ms. Springborn stated performance evaluations for City Staff should be confidential, which should mean that no one else is privy to that information. She asked why, the day after Scott Duddeck’s performance evaluation, there was information about it in the newspaper. She added she believes it will be difficult to find anyone who would want to work in this City. She noted it is a shameful situation that should be rectified.

Ms. Springborn stated elected officials should be aware of the obligations of their position before they run for office.

VIII. PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were no scheduled hearings.

IX. CITY BUSINESS ACTION ITEMS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. 2020 Street and Utility Improvement Project – Change Order No. 2

City Engineer Morgan Dawley reviewed proposed change order #2 under contract with T.A. Schifsky & Sons, to combine a street segment identified for regular street maintenance with the 2020 street improvement project plans. The additional area is 3rd Avenue E south of the alley on the south side of 7th Avenue E and west of Helen Street N. He stated the segment is in disrepair and in need of immediate attention. City Staff spoke with the contractor for the 2020 project, and they are willing to honor 2020 bid prices for some of this street work.

Mr. Dawley stated, if approved by the City Council, this street maintenance would be combined with remaining work in July, finishing up a final layer of asphalt on 7th Avenue E and other overlays on 4th Avenue E and 2nd Street N, originally part of the contract, and 7th Avenue E north to the frontage road. The additional work is not a significant change in terms of scope of the project, and the estimate change order amount is \$60,870, with final cost to be determined. The change order would be funded from the project fund balance of \$350,000. This change order will not affect any other funding source currently tied to the overall contract for the 2020 Street and Utility Improvement Project.

Mr. Dawley stated City Staff recommends approval of Change Order #2 to the 2020 Street and Utility Improvement Project.

On motion by Council Member Petersen, seconded by Council Member Cole, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried approve Change Order No. 2 for the 2020 Street and Utility Improvement Project, to include bituminous paving and spot concrete curb and gutter replacement in appurtenant work on 3rd Avenue E from 1st Street alley to Helen Street N.

B. Request to Form a Committee Regarding Lease Negotiations

City Attorney Leah Koch reviewed a proposal to form a committee to address lease negotiations with Kokoro Volleyball Center regarding their facility in City-owned property. She added lease negotiations have been going on for a while and City Staff recommends the formation of a small ad hoc committee, including two City Council Members. She noted the committee would have no approval or legislative power, but rather would bring a sense of formality and added security to the situation. The committee would provide an opportunity to move the negotiations forward without violating Open Meeting laws.

Council Member Petersen stated she thinks it is a great idea and will encourage transparency. She added the public and the lessee deserve to know what is going on with the negotiations.

Ms. Koch stated, for purposes of clarification, the committee meetings will not be open, nor will there be a quorum. She added these will be ad hoc meetings with a temporary and particular goal.

Mayor Furlong stated it will be beneficial to have two Council Members at the table, and to ensure that the issue of property taxes is discussed. He added he would like to recommend Council Members Cole and Wong for the ad hoc committee. He requested that City Staff work out a timeline to begin this process as soon as possible.

On motion by Council Member Thorsen, seconded by Council Member Petersen, with all present voting aye (5-0), motion carried to appoint Council Members Cole and Wong to the Ad Hoc Committee regarding lease negotiations.

X. REPORTS OF CITY MANAGER AND DEPARTMENTS

Mr. Frandle stated the downtown project is moving along well, with almost all flat work completed except in front of new apartment complex. He added weekly meetings have been postponed until siding is finished, and then flat work will be done on the south side of the roadway.

Council Member Petersen stated she has had complaints that contractors are not complying with the 7:00 a.m. start time restriction. Mr. Frandle stated that issue was discussed at the construction meeting, and contractors were informed that they must comply with the start time restriction.

Mr. Frandle stated the Car Show was a wonderful success, with many people attending, and many vendors sold out of food quickly. He thanked Public Works staff for doing a great job preparing for the event and cleaning up after the event.

Mr. Frandle stated the 7th Street project is moving along, with curbs in and the first lift of asphalt completed. He added the Electric Department will begin trenching next Monday for installation of electric, gas and cable.

Mayor Furlong asked when the first model home will be open. Mr. Frandle stated no completion date has been set, but they are working on framing right now. He added he believes the first model will be done in the fall. He agreed to get the dates from Doug.

XI. REPORTS OF COUNCIL, COMMISSIONS & COMMITTEES

Council Member Cole stated the Parks & Recreation Commission's next meeting is scheduled for July 28, 2021, at McKnight Field at 6:30 p.m., preceded by a community meeting at 6:00 p.m. He added all are welcome.

Council Member Cole stated the Parks & Recreation Commission's June 23, 2021, meeting was held at Casey Lake Park, and was very well attended. He added a variety of topics and concerns were addressed, including noise disruption from people who are renting the pavilions and what steps are being taken to address this issue. He noted a large gathering occurred in the northwest corner of the park which is secluded and not visible from the parking lot, which may have been called in to the Police Department.

Council Member Cole stated concerns were expressed regarding trash in the parking lots as well as fireworks, as discussed earlier in the City Council workshop.

Council Member Cole stated there were questions regarding removal of vegetation in the lake, which has apparently been done by the Watershed District in the past.

City Engineer Morgan Dawley stated he is not aware of any agency, including the City, that is actively removing milfoil or aquatic vegetation on a regular basis. He added that is something City Staff could explore, and could involve a partnership with the Watershed District.

Council Member Thorsen confirmed they have a pontoon with a conveyor belt that has been used to remove vegetation in Casey Lake. Mr. Dawley agreed to look into it.

Council Member Cole stated there was some discussion at the Parks Commission meeting regarding a cost sharing grant to remove sludge from the north end of Casey Lake. He added City Staff is aware of this grant and is looking into it.

Council Member Cole stated the Parks Commission agreed that the damage deposit for park shelter rentals should be reinstated. He added there has been recent damage to park buildings at Casey Lake Park and Hause Park.

Mayor Furlong requested that the Acting City Manager add this issue to an upcoming workshop.

Council Member Cole stated there was discussion regarding an open space owned by Ramsey County on the west side of Casey Lake which is accessible behind Harmony School. He added there have been concerns about tent communities on the property. He noted this property is not located in North St. Paul, but it is part of the Casey Lake Area.

Council Member Cole stated the Parks Commissioners discussed the cellular boxes at Northwood Park, as referenced by Ms. Springborn earlier in the meeting, and agreed that the safety fence should be replaced.

Council Member Wong stated the Planning Commission's next meeting will be the first Thursday in August 2021, via Zoom.

Mayor Furlong stated a joint Planning Commission/EDA meeting is scheduled for July 15, 2021.

Council Member Petersen stated she recently attended a virtual League of Minnesota Cities conference via Zoom, which hopefully will be held in person next year in Rochester. She added, after recent interviews, 7 new officials have been chosen from around the State to serve on the League Board, including Oakdale City Manager Chris Volkers.

Council Member Thorsen asked whether people who rent park facilities are required to sign a liability form. He added that was one reason that the damage deposit was removed. He noted the plan was for City Staff to assess damage, and the responsible party would be invoiced for the damage they incurred.

Ms. Erpenbach stated she can review the City's parks rental policy. She added she is working on a park study which could be reviewed by the City Council at their next workshop, that reviews policies of other local cities. She noted the previous software program was very cumbersome for issuing refunds, and the ideal situation would be to hold a credit card, which is not currently an option.

Mayor Furlong stated the rental deposit process was time consuming, and the damage deposit was removed. He added charging a deposit would have more bite than trying to recoup damages later and could incentivize people to be more careful with parks property.

Council Member Wong asked whether City Staff could provide additional details regarding how rates are determined.

Ms. Erpenbach stated some cities have a list of specific charges, and she has put together a spreadsheet with additional information regarding additional costs and charges.

XII. GENERAL BUSINESS

Council Member Cole stated he attended the Car Show on Friday, which had a phenomenal turnout, and the downtown businesses were very busy. He added it is good to see things returning to the new normal and what that will be.

Council Member Cole stated he is happy to work on the community center issue with Council Member Wong. He added the volleyball center is a valued City asset and should be treated as such.

Council Member Wong stated the Car Show went really well. She added a potential concern is safety of attendees who may be drinking and driving. She noted the car show is a very popular event, and the City must ensure that everyone is safe.

Council Member Petersen stated the Car show was a big success, and very well attended. She thanked the Public Works Department for their clean-up efforts after the parade, as well as clean-up at Silver Lake Park.

Council Member Thorsen read an email from local Eagle Scout Robbie Sivill, who presented his Eagle Scout project to the City Council recently. He added Robbie has put together an informational flier about Chimney Swifts and his project plans, which could be added to the City website and social media accounts.

Council Member Petersen read a note from the North High School Cheerleaders, thanking the City Council for giving them a permit to hold their recent car wash.

Council Member Cole asked whether plans for the Fall Round-Up are moving forward, and whether City Council support is necessary.

Council Member Thorsen stated the Fall Round-Up has been organized by the Business Association in past years, and they are always looking for volunteers. Interested residents should contact Brent Garry at the Business Association. He noted the Business Association meets every 2nd Tuesday of the month at 11:00 a.m. at the American Legion.

Mayor Furlong requested an update on the Fall Round-Up Parade and events, scheduled for September 23, 2021.

Ms. Erpenbach stated there are 34 parade units signed up, including a possible City Council parade unit. She added the last parade had 55 units, but some groups no longer exist. She noted there has been a lag in registrations as many groups have not met for the past 16 months, but people are excited about having the parade again.

Mayor Furlong stated he was amazed by the number of people who showed up for the Car Show, which could have been a new record. He added there were no major problems. He thanked everyone for their support and for creating a positive atmosphere.

Mayor Furlong stated the City Council's next regular meeting is scheduled for July 20, 2021, at 6:30 p.m.

XIII. CLOSED SESSION

There was no closed session.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, on motion by Council Member Thorsen, Seconded by Council Member Cole, with all present voting aye (5-0), Mayor Furlong adjourned the meeting at 7:19 p.m.

/s/ Terrence J. Furlong, Mayor

Attest: /s/ Brian T. Frandle, Interim City Manager /Clerk