

City of North Saint Paul
July 20, 2021
Approved City Council Workshop Meeting Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Furlong called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Council Member Thorsen
Council Member Petersen
Council Member Cole
Council Member Wong
Mayor Furlong

Staff: Interim City Manager Brian Frandle, Deputy Clerk Jennie Kloos, City Engineer Morgan Dawley, Finance Director Dan Winek, Communications Kari Erpenbach, Acting Police Chief Ray Rozales III, Public Works Supervisor Ron Ritchie.

III. ADOPT AGENDA

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

IV. TOPIC(S)

A. Ordinance Pertaining to Gambling

Mayor Furlong requested that this item be postponed as the City Attorney should be present for the discussion.

B. Park Rental Rates and Policy Review

Communications Consultant Kari Erpenbach reviewed a parks rental rates study that she recently completed. She stated she compared communities within a 20-mile radius of North St. Paul to determine other city's policies regarding rental rates and deposits for parks facilities. She added many cities charge more for open air facilities as well as significant deposits, with 3–4-hour rental periods and higher rates for full days on weekends.

Ms. Erpenbach stated City Staff have been using the CivicRec online portal since December 1, 2020, with 348 reservations to date, and a total of approximately \$38,000 in revenue. She added Casey Lake Park is booked well into October, and some parks have reservations into December. She noted there are 863 system users with 543 non-resident accounts and only 320 residents accounts.

Ms. Erpenbach stated there has been discussion about whether North St. Paul should re-instate a deposit, and how that would be managed and enforced. She added City Staff hopes to get the City Council's feedback and comments on this issue.

Mayor Furlong stated he would support having the Parks & Recreation Commission review this issue and make a recommendation to the City Council. He added the damage deposit is the most important issue for consideration.

Council Member Thorsen stated he is not opposed to bringing back a security deposit, which acts as a deterrent. He added people are required to adhere to the policy if they want to get their deposit back. He added a procedure should be in place to ensure that if someone causes damage, there is follow-up.

Mayor Furlong stated the policy and rates should be reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission, but the City Council can consider the issue of a rental deposit. He added he agrees that a deposit is necessary, as well as a reminder to people who rent parks facilities that they need to clean up before they leave.

Council Member Wong thanked Ms. Erpenbach for her review. She added the security deposit option can be investigated. She asked how much of the deposit goes back into maintaining park facilities, and how much time Public Works spends on cleaning up after rentals. She asked whether preventative measures can be considered, including a review of the policy online to educate renters before they rent, to make the process clearer.

Council Member Petersen stated she agrees with Mayor Furlong about deposits. She added the City has the technology and it is important to keep the parks buildings pristine. She noted she agrees the policies should be reviewed by the Parks & Recreation Commission.

Council Member Cole stated this issue was discussed at the Parks & Recreation Commission's last meeting. He added it is their desire to go back to the deposit-based program. He thanked Ms. Erpenbach for putting this information together. He noted this information can be added to the Parks meeting packet for next week for review and recommendation to the City Council.

Mayor Furlong stated this issue, including potential deposits, should be reviewed by the Parks & Recreation Commission. He added any potential changes would be applied to rentals beginning 2022.

C. Preliminary Discussion and Review of CIP Infrastructure Project Areas

City Engineer Morgan Dawley showed a map of capital project areas updates. He added City Staff wanted to bring this to a workshop to review preliminary ideas and potential approaches, some of which is carry-over from previous staff. He noted some future project ideas come from Ramsey County.

Mr. Dawley stated the CIP was updated early in 2020, and a very short, concise version of the street reconstruction plan was adopted. He added a 6 or 7-year time frame would set this document in place until 2028 or 2029, but they are meant to be a guide, and different things can drive priorities. He noted there is some flexibility, which is a fairly common practice.

Mr. Dawley stated the City embarked on its more modern aging infrastructure program when it was adopted in 2012. He showed a depiction of what has been completed so far and areas of future focus, based on City Council feedback.

Mayor Furlong asked about maintenance overlays.

Mr. Dawley stated that is part of the approach that City Staff is proposing, which is consistent with past processes. He added some projects in the current street reconstruction plan could be pushed into the future, and other potential areas be considered. He noted ongoing financial analysis will be an important part of the process.

Mr. Dawley stated the City of North St. Paul owns and maintains part of the drinking water distribution system that runs north into Maplewood. He added Ramsey County has indicated plans to overlay McKnight Road in 2022, and City Staff is concerned about constructing a new road over the existing water main, which is not a main trunk line, but could experience breaks as there is some history in that area. He noted a joint partnership agreement is being considered, with the project pushed back to 2023, and no major problems are anticipated.

Mr. Dawley stated another project area is Ariel Street, which is owned by both Maplewood and North St. Paul, and is in need of repair. He added the project evaluation calls for a full-depth reclamation with a 50/50 cost share. He noted this project would be completed sooner rather than later based on City Council feedback.

Mr. Dawley requested the City Council's consideration of the joint Ariel Street project with Maplewood to commence in 2022.

Council Member Thorsen stated this should be the City Council's main core focus in my opinion. He added a Casey Lake neighborhood open house was held in 2019 when assessments were still being done, and the overwhelming response was positive. He noted residents recognize that it is not financially feasible to do half the city all at once, and the City should continue to move forward with getting projects done on a yearly basis.

A. (follow-up) Ordinance Pertaining to Gambling

Mayor Furlong stated the Gambling Agenda Item can be tabled to the City Council's next meeting due to the absence of the City attorney. Mr. Frandle agreed.

D. Discussion on Hiring of City Manager

Mr. Frandle stated City Staff are looking for City Council direction on whether to post the City Manager position with the League of Minnesota Cities or post through a firm. He added the budget for that would be \$20,000-30,000 and would take many months.

Mayor Furlong stated he has spoken with the City Attorney who recommends an outside agency, as City Staff does not have time to conduct a search. He requested the City Council's feedback and comments.

The consensus of the council was to hire an outside agency to conduct the search for the City Manager position.

Mayor Furlong stated the City Attorney will have advice about hiring an agency, the bid process, and getting a recommendation. He added the City Council can review this issue with the City Attorney at the City Council meeting and decide at that time.

E. Informational Police Department Staffing Update

Mr. Frandle stated the Police Department is in the process of hiring a new Chief, and the Department is understaffed. He added Acting Police Chief Ray Rozales has been doing a great job, and his staff has stepped up to cover open shifts. He noted, when the new Police Chief is on board, two positions will drop back into their previous positions, and the Department will be fully staffed.

Mr. Frandle stated other local communities have been very supportive. He added there is potential for burnout with the City's existing officers, and overtime has been used up. He asked whether new positions can be posted as soon as possible. He noted 1-2 additional patrol officers and 1 CSO are required.

Acting Police Chief Rozales requested the City Council's consideration of an immediate need to post these positions. He added candidates can be in training and on the streets within a few months, and if they are lateral candidates, they will be coming in with experience from another agency.

Council Member Cole asked whether officers from Ramsey County or St. Paul could be called upon to help backfill the void in the short term, as previously discussed.

Acting Police Chief Rozales stated he spoke with the Director of the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office, and they want to hold off on that possibility right now, due to the requirement of their services at the State Fair.

Acting Police Chief Rozales requested support for hiring of 2 patrol officers and 1 CSO to fulfill required staffing levels and provide 24/7 supervision.

It was the majority consensus of the City Council to authorize the hiring of two patrol officers and one CSO.

Acting Police Chief Rozales expressed the Police Department's appreciation for the support of the City Council.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, on motion by Council Member Petersen, seconded by Council Member Wong, with all present voting aye (5-0), Mayor Furlong adjourned the workshop meeting at 6:30 p.m.

/s/ Terrence J. Furlong, Mayor

Attest:

/s/ Brian Frandle, Interim City Manager/Clerk